



From the office of  
Texas State Representative - Dan Flynn

## THE FLYNN REPORT

May 19, 2004

Greetings constituents, supporters and friends:

When the House came to order on Monday May 17<sup>th</sup> many of us were not certain whether we would continue to meet through Wednesday or if we would end the session. After several resolutions were passed the next motion was for the House to adjourn Sine Die, which ended the session. It was a moment of unfulfilled expectations which left a hollow feeling. We had cleared imposing hurdles in the recent past and had reserved hopes that we would reach a consensus with public school finance and changing the tax code. It was not to be in this one session.

Governor Perry called us to do four things this special session. **First**, we were asked to enhance local control and properly fund educational excellence. **Second**, we were to enhance teacher benefits. **Third**, we were ask to pass meaningful property tax relief for taxpayers and homeowners **Fourth**, and finally to allow for statewide voter approval.

There is such a wide range of opinions out there as evidenced by the many cards, letters phone calls, visits and emails we have received in our offices. Many think schools get too much money already and that costs need to be cut; while others believe a lot more money is needed in our public education system. Some believe property taxes should not be an issue in this discussion while others believe that should be the only subject we should be discussing. Some believe we should make extensive changes in funding formulas while others believe they are the best possible formulas now; some believe we should provide more pay to educators and others say no. And what is even more frustrating some legislators feel exactly like you do on whichever side of each of these issues you are on. All hold their opinions very deeply.

Many of the members remain hopeful that continued meetings will bring about more ideas and opinions that will be needed to get consensus. I think this is the right approach to reaching a legislative package that can be acceptable and could be passed even with the broad range of opinions. This appears to be the basis the leadership is using to try to work for a consensus. Committees continue to move towards what they believe will be final completion of a good school finance bill. While not all will agree with everything in it I feel most will soon realize it is a great step forward. I expect it to take a few more weeks of working to get it in a presentable form with good financial data.

Governor Perry, Lt. Governor Dewhurst and Speaker Craddick announced at their recent press conference there would be two joint committees set up to continue to work towards a solution and consensus before the Governor would call another special session

Speaker Craddick said, "The working groups would represent a good cross-section of members," because "It is important to build on what the select committee has already done, and not start over again from square 1."

House Bill 1 that the House passed and sent to the Senate on May 5th produced much-needed property tax relief, formulas that prescribed more money per student and included visionary education reforms aimed both at educational excellence and at-risk students. I think the many critics sadly overlooked the accomplishments called for in this bill.

The struggle will continue to be on the revenue side. The challenge will be to find common ground on a comprehensive revenue plan that is fair to taxpayers, the education community, and gives every Texas student the opportunity to achieve excellence.

Lt. Governor Dewhurst, promised the Senate would continue to actively work on school finance reform and said he remains committed to a plan that will dramatically cut property taxes, maintain equity, create more local funding capacity for each school district, protect local control, provide new resources, and maintain a fair and level playing field for all Texas businesses. This could be a tall order for a body that did not pass anything in this special session.

Speaker Craddick indicated another special session on school finance reform should wait until there was consensus. He feels it might be worth waiting until after the West Orange Cove ISD lawsuit is heard in state District Court. It is believed the courts are going to rule in August. Apparently many school districts, their superintendents and teachers think they are going to get a better deal out of the courts than they are going to get out of the legislature.

Discussion at this point as to what is now on the table and what is not. I think VLTs (slot machines) are probably not going to be part of a bill. I think you can take them off the table at least for right now. I also think the statewide property tax idea does not have the support it needs for passage. The school districts do not like it and many members are also opposed to it. I believe most of the business taxes on professions are off the table; it appears some expansion of the franchise tax; and an increase in sales tax with many of the existing exemptions removed will be considered.

I continue to believe and am confident that with the House Members' and the Senates' legislative experience, the genuine concern for public education and taxpayers we will work together and reach a consensus on school finance reform prior to the next regular legislative session.

I do want to mention an item that is getting a lot of attention in the press due to the number of cases of measles in Mexico. The Texas Department of Health (TDH) is sending notice to physicians to be on the alert when seeing patients, especially persons who have traveled to Mexico, or their contacts. All physicians are being asked to immediately report any suspected cases of measles to the local public health department or TDH regional office.

TDH is aware that Mexico is experiencing an outbreak of measles; at this time there are no confirmed cases of measles in Texas. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notified TDH that two recent laboratory-confirmed cases occurred in the Mexican state of Coahuila in the cities of Acuña and Torreón. Acuña is across the border from Del Rio, Texas (Val Verde County). You may recall an outbreak of measles in Mexico has created problems in the past for Texans and we should be on the lookout to prevent an outbreak here in Texas.

My staff and I welcome your input and your questions. You can reach us in our office located in the Capitol extension: E1.324. Mailing address: **P. O. Box 2910, Austin, TX, 78768** phone number **512-463-0880**. **Canton District office** is located in The American National Bank Building in Canton on Highway 243: **P. O. Box 999, Canton, TX, 75103** phone number **903-567-0921**. **Greenville District office** is located in The Paul Mathews Exchange Building, Suite 802, 2500 Stonewall, Greenville phone number **903-455-0971**. Email: **dan.flynn@house.state.tx.us**.

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God bless you and God bless Texas,

Dan Flynn  
State Representative, District - 2

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