



NOVEMBER 30, 2007- AUSTIN, TEXAS

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STATEWIDE NEWS

Community College Funding

After extensive negotiations, Governor Rick Perry, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst, and House Speaker Tom Craddick have come to an agreement to restore the \$154 million in community college funding that Governor Perry vetoed earlier this summer.

Governor Perry had previously explained that he vetoed the funding because the community colleges did not use the correct formula in calculating the portion of state funding for community college budgets, specifically with regard to the state's share of health benefits. Under the terms of the agreement, the state will allocate \$99 million for its share of health benefits and make a one-time payment of \$55 million. The agreement also calls for the state to study the development of an incentive program for community colleges.

The funds will be allocated by the Legislative Budget Board through a combination of budget execution or other existing transfer authority by September 1, 2008. The restoration will mean an additional \$15.4 million for the Dallas County Community College District.

For more specific information, visit: <http://www.hro.house.state.tx.us/interim/int80-1.pdf>

Teacher Retirement System

In October, it was announced that retired teachers will receive a 13th check, which will be paid sometime in January. This supplemental check will benefit approximately 250,000 retired teachers. While this extra check is possible because the state increased its contribution rate to the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) fund and increased investment returns to the TRS fund, the receipt of the 13th check does not require increased contributions from active teachers to TRS. The average monthly pension check was \$1,800 last year; the amount of the 13th check is capped at \$2,400.

For more information, please visit the Teacher Retirement System website: www.trs.state.tx.us/

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT VOTING RESULTS

The ballots were cast and Texas voters made their voices heard. The results of this month's Constitutional Amendment Election are as follows with all of the 16 constitutional amendments passed.

The Texas Constitution is one of the longest in the nation and is still growing. Since its adoption in 1876, the Texas Legislature has passed a total of 615 amendments. Of these, 439 have been adopted and 176 have been defeated by Texas voters. The text of the

Proposition 1

Reflecting the changes made by the 80th Legislature in 2007, transferring the governance of Angelo State University from the Texas State University System to the Texas Tech University System. The proposition simply changed the wording of the Texas Constitution to reflect that change and did not effect the transfer in any way, or San Angelo State's ability to collect state funds.

For	690,950	66.3%
Against	315,500	33.7%

Proposition 2

Allows the Texas Legislature to issue state bonds, to be used to provide educational loans to students. Additionally, this amendment allows the coordinating board that oversees such bonds to enter into bond enhancement agreements with appropriate entities.

For	713,019	65.9%
Against	369,738	34.1%

Proposition 3

Provides the relief that was intended by the legislature when it first approved the 10% appraisal cap in 1997, by setting the maximum value increase of ad valorem taxes (appraisal value of a residence homestead) at 10% in any year, regardless of the number of years since the property was last appraised.

For	763,901	71.5%
Against	304,717	28.5%

Proposition 4

Allows the legislature to issue up to \$1 billion in general obligation bonds, to be used to pay costs of maintenance, improvement, repair, and construction projects authorized by the Legislature, and maintained by the Texas Public Finance Authority.

For	623,404	58.2%
Against	448,013	41.8%

Proposition 5

Permits the voters of a city with less than 10,000 residents to authorize an owner of real property in an area of the municipality that falls under certain programs to limit the ad valorem taxes imposed on such property to a constant for the first five years.

For	685,298	66.0%
Against	353,085	34.0%

Proposition 6

Allows the legislature to exempt an individual's personal motor vehicle, that is used professionally as well as for personal purposes, from ad valorem taxes.

For	793,793	73.7%
Against	283,380	26.3%

Proposition 7

Authorizes a government entity to sell property that has been acquired through eminent domain, back to the previous owner, or that person's assigned alternates, for the same price at which it was bought.

For	861,201	80.3%
Against	211,240	19.7%

Proposition 8

Clarifies certain provisions relating to the making of a home equity loan and use of home equity loan proceeds.

For	816,811	77.6%
Against	236,474	22.4%

Proposition 9

Allows the legislature to exempt certain disabled veterans from all or part of ad valorem taxes, based on an updated category system separated by ranges of disability.

For	925,225	86.2%
Against	148,272	13.8%

Proposition 10

Removes constitutional references of the now outdated inspector of hides and animals.

For	800,439	76.5%
Against	245,274	23.5%

Proposition 11

Requires that a record vote be taken on final passage of any bill, excluding certain local bills, resolutions pertaining to constitutional amendments, or any other resolution, excluding ceremonial resolutions, in either the House or Senate. This amendment also requires that the record vote be available to the public via the internet for two years.

For	886,742	84.5%
Against	162,514	15.5%

Proposition 12

Allows the Texas Transportation Commission to issue general obligation bonds that would be used to pay the cost of administering highway improvement projects.

For	665,308	62.6%
Against	397,293	37.4%

Proposition 13

Authorizes the legislature to deny bail to certain misdemeanor and family violence defendants who upon release after paying bail commit another offense.

For	908,764	83.9%
Against	175,039	16.1%

Proposition 14

Allows justices and judges to finish the remainder of their current term in office, despite reaching the mandatory retirement age set forth by the legislature. Also, mandating that they will not serve more than four years after their 75th birthday.

For	807,932	75.0%
Against	269,384	25.0%

Proposition 15

Requires the creation of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas, which would support research in Texas to find the causes and cures for cancer. Amendment also creates an oversight body to ensure the proper use of funds dedicated for such purposes.

For	668,543	61.4%
Against	419,709	38.6%

Proposition 16

Allows the Texas Water Development Board to issue general obligation bonds to provide assistance to economically distressed areas as defined by the current Texas Water Development Fund II.

For	645,658	60.8%
Against	416,884	39.2%

Total Statewide Turnout: 8.65% of a total 12,587,501 registered voters

For a more comprehensive analysis of the propositions, please visit the following site:
<http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/pubsconamend/analyses07/analyses07.pdf>.

DISTRICT NEWS

County Bond Packages

In addition to these statewide referendums, Collin County passed a bond package of \$348.9 million for transportation, facilities and parks. The Commissioners Court projected that passage of these bonds would not result in an overall increase in property tax rates. The package included \$235.6 million for transportation for up to 179 projects around the county; \$76.3 million for facilities including the courthouse expansion, construction of a new juvenile alternative education program facility, and the expansion of the adult minimum security detention center and juvenile detention facility; and \$17 million for parks and open spaces to be used to acquire land to construct and improve parks and recreational opportunities within the county.

For	56,775	67.2%
Against	27,758	32.8%

Dallas County voters, voted to continue with the Trinity River Corridor Project. Proposition 1, which was voted against, would have prohibit the construction of a toll road through the proposed park on the edge of downtown Dallas along the Trinity River. The measure would have prohibited any road from being built within Dallas' Trinity River levees unless it contained 4 lanes, provided direct park access, and set a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less.

For	37,670	47.1%
Against	42,300	52.9%

Education: TG awards \$5.2 million in competitive college grants

Texas Guaranteed (TG) has awarded more than \$5.2 million in grants to 42 institutions and non-profit organizations to advance access to college, student retention, and educational research. The public, nonprofit corporation that was created by the Texas Legislature in 1979 to administer the Federal Family Education Loan Program, awarded a large part of this money to the North Texas area.

TG's grant funds will help this year's award recipients with efforts in financial aid with need-based grants to students; student mentoring and internships; pre-college outreach to students and families; academic support and instruction; student retention; student transfer guidance and support; and education research.

Some of the TG Public Benefit Grant recipients for 2007-2008 include:

- College Forward (Austin, TX)
- Sam Houston State University (Huntsville, TX)
- Schreiner University (Kerrville, TX)
- South Texas College (McAllen, TX)
- Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX)
- Southwest Key Programs (Austin, TX)
- St. Edward's University (Austin, TX)

- Texas A&M University Agricultural Experiment Station (Edinburg, TX)
- Texas A&M University System Health Science Center (Dallas, TX)
- Texas A&M University (Kingsville, TX)
- Texas Association of Developing Colleges (Dallas, TX)
- Texas State Technical College (Harlingen, TX)
- Texas Wesleyan University (Fort Worth, TX)
- University of North Texas (Denton, TX)
- University of North Texas Health Science Center (Fort Worth, TX)
- University of Texas System
- Vernon College (Wichita Falls, TX)
- Victoria College (Victoria, TX)

For more information please, visit the Texas Guaranteed website at www.tgslc.org.

ARTS: TCA awards \$2.35 million

The Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) has awarded \$2.35 million statewide and \$53,800 in Senate District 8 to support programs that enhance education, create social benefit, stimulate the economy, and attract tourists to the state. All grant recipients were required to make a minimum dollar for dollar match in order to receive state funding.

The organizations who received grants with District 8 include:

- Allen Philharmonic Symphony
- ArtCentre of Plano
- Irving Arts Center/City of Irving
- Plano Symphony Orchestra
- Repertory Company Theatre
- The Classics
- WaterTower Theatre

TCA was organized in 1965 by the Texas Legislature to develop a receptive climate for the arts in Texas. TCA provides funding and other supportive measures, such as arts education and cultural tourism programs, for a variety of arts-related activities, including visual and literary arts, film and multi-media, music, dance, and theater.

For more information, please visit the Texas Commission on the Arts website at www.arts.state.tx.us.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

Texas Commission on the Arts

As a reminder, Texas Commission on the Arts is now accepting applications for its Young Masters Scholarship Program. The scholarship program provides art students, grades 8-12, financial assistance to pursue advanced study in visual art, literature, music, theater, and dance; however the program is not a college scholarship.

Those selected, will receive the title "Young Master" and a scholarship in the amount of \$2,500, renewable up to three years.

For more information, contact the Texas Commission on the Arts: www.arts.state.tx.us/ym/ or call (512) 936-6564

Applications must be postmarked November 15, 2007.

Drive a Clean Machine Logo Contest

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is sponsoring a contest for high-school students to create a logo that represents the value of cleaning up Texas air by removing older, high-pollution cars off Texas roads.

Currently open to students in grades 9-12, the logo must incorporate the program's slogan: Drive a Clean Machine. Winner's slogan entries will be showcased statewide as the logo on AirCheck Texas Repair and Replacement Assistance Program materials. Winners, and their teachers, will receive monetary prizes in the amount of up to \$3,000.

For more information and the rules and regulations, visit: www.driveacleanmachine.org

All entries must be postmarked no later than January 4, 2008.

REMINDER: SENATOR SHAPIRO ESSAY CONTEST

As it was sent on the back of the newsletter, don't forget to send in your child's essay to our Capitol office.

In 250 words or less please respond to the following topic:

- Ages 5-7** "If I were Governor for a day..."
- Ages 8-10** "How I would improve my school..."
- Ages 11-13** "If I had a 5 minute interview with the Governor, I would ask him..."
- Ages 14-18** "Why education is important in Texas..."

Certificates of excellence and \$100 savings bonds will be presented to the winning essays in each of the age categories. Please mail entries to our Austin office, **postmarked no later than December 31, 2007**. Be sure to include name, age, address, and phone number.

Capitol Office address:

P.O. Box 12068
1400 Congress Ave.
Room 1E.3
Austin, TX 78711

Also--Don't forget to complete our Online Constituent Survey, at www.ShapiroSurvey.com.

*If you do not wish to receive **Direct from Shapiro**, please reply to this email with "REMOVE" in the subject line. Thank you!*