



## Using “Stimulus” Education Funds for Instructional Materials and Educational Technology

March 2, 2009

Dear Colleague,

As the House Select Committee on Federal Economic Stabilization Funding meets to consider how the Texas Education Agency (TEA) might disperse any additional revenue it receives under the American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, we urge legislators to support using “stimulus” funds to purchase learning materials such as textbooks and technological equipment that contributes to student learning, including electronic textbooks and other devices appropriate for the use of technology in the classroom.

On February 11, 2009, the Texas Conservative Coalition Board of Directors implored fellow legislators to ensure that federal “stimulus” funds are used only for “non-recurring expenses for capital outlays [such as transportation and infrastructure construction], equipment purchases, [and] technology enhancements.” Learning materials for Texas’ public schools meet those requirements:

- Using some portion of the federal “stimulus” education funding to pay for instructional materials such as textbooks and other learning technologies will help ensure that the “stimulus” funds are not used to permanently grow government or create ongoing obligations for TEA or Texas’ school districts.
- Currently, revenue from the Permanent School Fund (PSF) is used to purchase instructional materials for public schools. However, as a result of declining market conditions over the past year, available revenues from the PSF could leave the state with a shortfall of anywhere from \$300 million to \$1.4 billion. Using “stimulus” funding to purchase instructional materials will help meet this shortfall.
- Using federal “stimulus” funding for school instructional materials will also help the state retain revenue in the Economic Stabilization (Rainy Day) Fund which might otherwise have to be diverted to meet these most fundamental obligations. Retaining revenue in the Rainy Day Fund is a crucial part of ensuring that the state can maintain a favorable bond rating and be prepared to meet any future budget shortfalls.

Testifying before the House Appropriations Committee on February 16, 2009, TEA Commissioner Robert Scott underscored the point that “stimulus” funds must not be used to create ongoing financial

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obligations for the state or its school districts, noting that TEA is “trying to identify things that don’t require recurring expenses... textbooks are a perfect opportunity.”

We strongly urge our colleagues to disperse education-related “stimulus” money accordingly:

1. Instructional tools and materials: \$895 million
2. Technology Allotment: \$271 million
3. Per Capita Distributions to schools: \$267 million

Making instructional technologies available was also a recommendation of the House Select Committee on Higher and Public Education Finance. In its January 2009 report, the Committee argued that:

Expanding access to digital content and learning tools should be a priority for the state...this is about meeting high state standards with different forms of instructional delivery that incorporates more technology and enthusiasm in the classroom.

It is imperative for us that students have the instructional materials and technologies with which to learn. Funding this educational priority with the federal “stimulus” will also help keep the Rainy Day Fund intact and is a fiscally responsible, one-time obligation.

We urge our colleagues in the Legislature to join us in support of this position.

Sincerely,



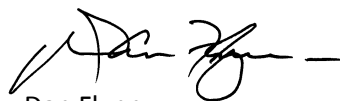
Wayne Christian  
House District 9 – Center



Warren Chisum  
House District 88 – Pampa



Linda Harper-Brown  
House District 105 – Irving



Dan Flynn  
House District 2 – Van



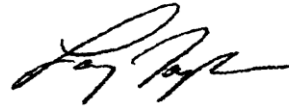
Ken Paxton  
House District 70 – McKinney



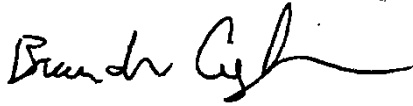
Phil King  
House District 61 – Weatherford



Leo Berman  
House District 6 – Tyler



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House District 24 – Friendswood



Brandon Creighton  
House District 16 – Conroe



Dan Patrick  
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House District 81 – Odessa