

NEWS RELEASE



Eanes Independent School District
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EANES ISD TRUSTEES UNANIMOUSLY VOTE TO JOIN TEXAS SCHOOL FINANCE LAWSUIT

AUSTIN, Texas – The Eanes ISD Board of Trustees voted 7-0 last week to join a coalition of districts filing suit, contending that the State has not provided adequate funding for schools and has taken away local discretion for districts to raise taxes. Eanes Trustees authorized Superintendent Dr. Nola Wellman to join other revenue-contributing school districts such as Highland Park, Granbury and Plano in the lawsuit.

Trustees emphasized that the suit is about adequate funding and holding the State to its promise that districts would get no less money than 2005-06 funding levels because of the property tax relief legislation passed in 2006. Known as hold harmless legislation, the State is taking away additional money that is currently budgeted for Eanes ISD. This will significantly affect programs and reduce revenue by \$1,350 per Weighted Average Daily Allowance (WADA), essentially decreasing the revenue Eanes ISD receives per student to under \$5,000.

After the 2010-11 legislature decreased public education by \$5.3 billion, Eanes took a \$3.7 million cut in state funding for the 2011-12 school year.

“Eanes ISD absolutely supports equity in public education, but not by these means,” said Dr. Wellman. “We believe that equity must be addressed by ‘leveling up’ the funding from the State rather than taking funds from one district to give to another. This is unacceptable when state expectations for student performance are increasing.”

Haynes & Boone, LLP is representing the coalition of revenue-contributing school districts and will assert claims that districts lack meaningful discretion in setting their local maintenance and operations (M&O) tax rate, such that the tax has become a de facto state property tax, which is prohibited under the Texas Constitution. Additionally, this group will also assert that districts lack sufficient funding under the current system to provide Texas schoolchildren with a constitutionally adequate education.

Eanes ISD is designated as a Chapter 41 district, a group of districts that will pump an estimated \$1.12 billion in locally-generated tax revenue into the state system this school year. Of the 1,030 school districts in Texas, 354 are Chapter 41 districts, up from 303 in 2010-11, and now represent 34 percent of statewide enrollment. Since 1993, Chapter 41 districts have added more than \$15 billion to the state public education budget.

It is anticipated the legal fees for the lawsuit will cost Eanes ISD approximately \$15,000 per year over a three-year period.

The Eanes Independent School District spans 31.2 square miles of scenic Texas Hill Country in Travis County and serves approximately 7,700 students. Schools in Eanes ISD are Westlake High School, Hill Country Middle School, West Ridge Middle School, Barton Creek Elementary, Bridge Point Elementary, Cedar Creek Elementary, Eanes Elementary, Forest Trail Elementary and Valley View Elementary. In 2011, the District and eight campuses were named Exemplary by the Texas Education Agency.

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