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New Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Textbook Funding *83 Percent of Texas Voters Across All Political, Ideological Lines In Agreement*

AUSTIN, Texas – Eighty-three percent of Texans, whether they are conservative or liberal or Democrat or Republican, want state legislators to include full funding for textbooks and instructional materials for public school students in this year’s state education budget, according to a new statewide poll released today.

Baselice and Associates, Inc. conducted the poll for Texas Association of Business (TAB), Texas Citizen Action Network and Texas Curriculum from Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2011. The 1,002 voter sample, statewide telephone survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent.

“These survey results indicate a large majority of voters want the legislature to set aside the funding requested for textbooks or new instructional materials. Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, suburban and rural voters overwhelming share this viewpoint.” said Austin-based pollster Mike Baselice.

“When asked to choose between cuts or funding these materials at a time when the state has less revenue, 71 percent of respondents still select the viewpoint that up-to-date instructional materials need to be funded as part of the state’s education budget,” Baselice said.

The Texas Legislature has received \$3 billion from the Permanent School Fund, which the Texas Constitution specifies must be spent on textbooks and instructional materials and other educational programs. Neither the initial House nor Senate budget includes the \$550 million from that amount requested by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for new instructional materials.

Survey findings include:

- 83 percent of Texans, and 81 percent of conservatives, favor requiring the legislature to include funding for textbooks and instructional materials in the education budget.

(more)

- 78 percent support requiring the legislature to use \$550 million of the \$3 billion generated by the Permanent School Fund to guarantee funding for textbooks and instructional materials in the education budget.
- 71 percent of respondents, and 68 percent of conservatives, agree the new instructional materials are needed to meet new curriculum standards, rejecting the argument that the state budget shortfall justifies cutting textbook funding.
- 66 percent said they would be less likely to vote for a state legislator who ignored the constitutional mandate to provide instructional materials for all Texas public school students.

TAB President and CEO Bill Hammond said he was not surprised by the strong support for textbook funding because the public understands the legislature must guard against being penny-wise and pound-foolish when it comes to education.

“When it comes to education, smart budgeting and reforms will offer a significant return on our investment by way of an educated, skilled workforce. Legislative budget writers should prioritize \$550 million for the new digital and print materials due to classrooms this fall,” Hammond said.

“This poll clearly shows the public expects the entire \$550 million to be funded and to include every subject area specified in Proclamation 2011,” Hammond said.

Proclamation 2011 is the textbook adoption requested by TEA in the following subjects:

- Pre-kindergarten Systems
- English Language Arts, Grades 2-8
- Spanish Language Arts, Grades 2-6
- English as a Second Language, Grades K-8 - students and teacher editions
- Spelling, Grades 1-6
- Handwriting, Grades 1-3
- Speech, Grades 6-8
- English, Levels I-IV

Jim Cardle, president and CEO of the conservative Texas Citizen Action Network, said the poll should be of particular interest to legislators vowing to hold the line against new taxes.

“The State Board of Education has done its job by sending \$3 billion in new money to legislators to help them address the budget crisis and not a single cent of that money came from taxes. This is six times more than the cost of the new textbooks. Now it is time for legislators to do right by the schoolchildren of Texas and buy them the instructional materials they were promised,” Cardle said.

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