



Thursday, September 4, 2014

PRESS RELEASE

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Dallas Friends of Public Education Responds to Representative Villalba's Plan to Divide DISD

Dallas Friends of Public Education concurs with Representative Jason Villalba's call for more local control and the involvement of teachers and parents to say how they want their schools run. However, we disagree on the means to achieve this end. We would like to clear up some of the confusion caused by unfortunate misinformation in Villalba's recent public statements regarding the Home Rule Commission and his plan to divide the Dallas ISD.

Rep. Villalba is understandably very busy with state matters and certainly, by his comments, is perhaps just unaware of the recent action by the Dallas ISD Home Rule Commission to do exactly as he has suggested: get community input on how they want to see their schools operate.

The Home Rule Commission was formed June 19, 2014. To get community input from school associated persons, or anyone in Dallas for that matter, during the months of July and August is not feasible. To meet the mid-August deadline required to get a charter on the November, 2014 ballot was never an achievable objective. Further, it is somewhat surprising that the representative was not aware that the law has nothing to do with his preferred November 2014 election date. In fact, the time line set in the code grants the Commission a full year to research the district conditions and to determine if a home rule charter proposal is needed to make the improvements that Dallas families want for their children. If such a proposal is appropriate, it can be presented to the voters on any general election date.

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Unlike some government bodies, the Commission met during the summer. In the 2 months since their selection by the Dallas Board of Trustees, the Commission has already selected officers, formed committees, set its meeting times and scheduled opportunities in each trustee district to hear from the community. Additionally, the Commission set in place a plan to hear from organizations wishing to speak for or against the formation of a Charter Proposal and discussed what education resources they would like to invite to address the Commission. Villalba has not attended a single meeting, nor has he sent a representative. If he had, he would have been impressed, as we have been, with the speed and efficiency with which the Commission has organized and set its priorities.

Once the Commission has received input from all the various areas of the Dallas community and deliberated, it will decide whether or not a charter needs to be written, or if the existing Texas Education Code and the oversight and protection it provides and the many options it allows simply needs to be applied and enforced equally throughout the district.

There is much that Rep. Villalba, as a state legislator, could do to restore sufficient funding to all of our public schools, especially in view of the recent court decision which declared Texas school funding unconstitutional. Since he has children in DISD, he should be doubly motivated to make sure that our schools have adequate funding and support from the state. We would encourage Rep. Villalba to use his political power to that end in order to help the Dallas ISD reach its greatest potential, rather than condemn a hard working Commission without knowing what it had done, had planned, or was charged by the law to do.

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