TREA Legislative Priorities

FIVE PILLARS FOR STRONGER RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Predictable funding. Meaningful local control. Opportunity for every student. TREA's 2027 agenda puts rural realities at the center of state policy.

01 Basic Funding & Operational Stability

WHY IT MATTERS

Rural districts must sustain staff, transportation, safe campuses, and facilities despite limited tax bases and higher per-student costs. Funding should reflect the students served and the real cost of operations.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- Increase the Basic Allotment and establish automatic, inflation-based adjustments.
- Replace Average Daily Attendance (ADA) with enrollment-based funding, with protections against funding losses during the transition.
- Increase transportation funding allocations to reflect true resource requirements, incorporating route distance, fuel consumption, ongoing fleet maintenance, and rural service areas.
- Strengthen school safety funding so security requirements do not disproportionately burden local budgets.
- Expand state support for facility construction, maintenance, and modernization.

02 Assessment, Accountability & Instructional Flexibility

WHY IT MATTERS

State testing should protect instructional time and fairly reflect rural school performance. Small student populations, limited broadband, and technology costs require practical flexibility.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- Replace the arbitrary 3% cap on paper-and-pencil testing with a flexible, needs-based approach for all students.
- Transition away from a test-centric accountability system for grades 3–8 by incorporating multiple indicators of school performance beyond standardized test scores.
- Implement the new state assessment system with minimal instructional disruption, administrative burden, and technology expense.
- Ensure assessments and A-F accountability recognize student growth and account for statistical volatility in small rural campuses.
- Expand reliable broadband and technology infrastructure for instruction, assessments, cybersecurity, and digital learning.

03 Local Control & Governance

WHY IT MATTERS

Rural communities need authority to shape school operations around local needs. New mandates and unnecessary compliance work consume resources that small districts need for students.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- Protect local board authority over innovative calendars, including four-day weeks that meet state instructional requirements.
- Preserve local voter authority over bond elections, fair and transparent ballot language, and reasonable election scheduling flexibility.
- Require full, sustainable state funding for new legislative and regulatory mandates.
- Reduce unnecessary reporting and compliance burdens; preserve local decisions on programs, staffing, operations, and resources.

04 Educator Workforce & Cost Containment

WHY IT MATTERS

Rural districts need workable ways to recruit and retain qualified educators while managing compensation, insurance, and essential operating costs.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- Expand certification pathways, staffing flexibility, and recruitment incentives while maintaining educator quality.
- Expand statewide purchasing and cost-sharing for fuel, utilities, property insurance, cybersecurity, and other essential services.
- Increase state contributions toward employee health insurance to reduce premium costs for educators and districts.

05 Equitable Student Funding & Rural Protections

WHY IT MATTERS

Enrollment, geography, and local property wealth should not determine access to specialized instruction, early learning, or student support services.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- Fully fund special education through the state's service-based model, including rural staffing, transportation, evaluation, and service-delivery costs.
- Provide adequate, sustainable funding for full-day prekindergarten.
- Strengthen and protect the Small and Mid-Sized District Allotment to reflect economies of scale and higher rural per-student costs.
- Repeal Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) to safeguard state resources and secure sustainable funding for public schools.
- Ensure equitable access to specialized programs, student supports, and educational opportunities across all districts.