

# **TEXAS TAXPAYER & STUDENT FAIRNESS COALITION**

September 23, 2013

Mr. Donny O'Dell, Superintendent  
Celina ISD  
205 S. Colorado Street  
Celina, TX 75009

## **REMINDER:**

**Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition Meeting  
September 27, 2013, 2:30 – 3:45 p.m.  
Room C-146, Dallas Convention Center**

Dear Mr. O'Dell:

As a member of the Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition, you are well aware of the successes our Coalition has experienced. First, we prevailed in the District Court trial and the state's school finance system was declared unconstitutionally inequitable and inadequate. In addition, we also prevailed on the issue that the school finance system has created a de facto statewide property tax.

Then, as the legislative session progressed throughout the spring, our victory on the issue of equity became the major driver in school finance decisions. So much so, that the legislature put \$2.4 billion into raising the Basic Allotment from \$4,765 in 2012-13 to \$5,040 in 2014-15. In addition, the legislature put another \$1 billion into the elimination of the Regular Program Adjustment Factor. These actions will result in substantive funding increases in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years for most of our members, ranging on average from \$250 to \$340 per WADA over the 2013-15 biennium. In addition, on several occasions, the need to address equity issues was used on the floor of each house as justification for passing the main school finance and appropriations bills.

Your work and willingness to contribute and finance the Fairness Coalition lawsuit are the reason for our success.

But, as you also know, our Fairness Coalition is having to go back to court in January to defend our gains and prove that even though some progress was made, the equity and adequacy gaps are still large and still unconstitutional.

This new retrial at the District Court level does represent an unanticipated expense and is the reason we are asking you and all Fairness Coalition members to contribute an additional \$0.50 per WADA to cover the additional cost.

Obviously, *we need every Fairness Coalition member to participate in this funding request*, but as we promised from the beginning that choice is completely up to you and your Board. Hopefully, you will join us in funding this additional litigation cost. Remember as you visit with your board, because we have prevailed. That means we have the expectation our legal fees will be refunded.

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**Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition · 400 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300 · Austin, Texas 78701  
(512) 478-7313 · Fax: (512) 478-6433 · email: [info@equitycenter.org](mailto:info@equitycenter.org)**

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***Jerry Vaughn, Taylor ISD - President  
Cathy Booth, Nixon Smiley ISD - First Vice-President  
Brian Gray, Union Grove ISD - Secretary***

***Berhl Robertson, Lubbock ISD - VP, Litigation  
Robert Westbrook, Milano ISD - VP, Finance  
Doug Killian, Hutto ISD - VP, Communications***

An invoice for your district is attached. As always, thank you for your help and if you have any questions or need any assistance, please call.

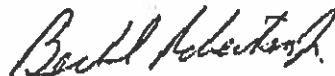
Sincerely,



Jerry Vaughn  
President, Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition  
Superintendent, Taylor ISD  
512-352-6361  
[jvaughn@taylorisd.org](mailto:jvaughn@taylorisd.org)



Robert K. Westbrook  
Chair, Finance Committee  
Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition  
Superintendent, Milano ISD  
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Berhl Robertson, Jr., Ed.D  
Chair, Litigation Committee  
Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition  
Superintendent, Lubbock ISD  
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# ***Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition***

400 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300  
Austin, Texas 78701  
512-478-7313

## **INVOICE**

September 23, 2013

Mr. Donny O'Dell, Superintendent  
Celina ISD  
205 S. Colorado Street  
Celina, TX, 75009

RE: School Finance Litigation

Total Invoiced Amount:     \$1278

*If the WADA we have calculated is higher than your estimate for 2013-14, please feel free to change the WADA estimate and lower your district's fee to the correct amount.*

***Please make check payable to:***

**Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition**

**And note the NEW MAILING ADDRESS:**

***Mail to:***

**Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition**

C/O Equity Center  
400 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300  
Austin, Texas 78701

Thank you!

9/20/2013

## **The Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition's Litigation Fact Sheet**

*At the Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition, et. al. v. Michael Williams, Commissioner, Texas Education Agency Trial:*

- Lawyers and witnesses for the *Fairness Coalition* presented testimony and massive documentation providing the primary sources of data that established facts that the state's school finance system was inequitable and inadequate.
- Data and testimony included nearly 200 specific exhibits, and several days of testimony from our expert witnesses and superintendents.
- Additional testimony and documentation was presented that showed the state's school finance scheme established a de facto statewide property tax.

Accordingly, Judge Dietz issued a verbal ruling on February 4, 2013, that the *Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition* plaintiffs were correct and the Texas school finance system was found to be unconstitutional on the grounds that it was inequitable, inadequate, and established a de facto statewide property tax.

Additionally, the *Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition's* success in court was viewed as the major driving force behind the school funding actions taken by the Legislature during the 83<sup>rd</sup> regular legislative session. As a result:

- The Legislature increased funding by \$1 billion for the biennium in order to eliminate the Regular Program Adjustment Factor (RPAF).
- Most importantly, the Legislature increased the basic allotment (BA) from \$4,765 to \$4,950 in 2013-14 and to \$5,040 in 2014-15.
- These appropriations changes are projected to deliver average funding gains of almost \$250 per WADA for *Fairness Coalition* districts in 2013-14.
- In 2014-15, the average projected funding increases per WADA over 2012-13 levels for school districts in the *Fairness Coalition* should be nearly \$340.