

**December 16, 2005**

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### **Texas Two-Step on Schools**

Dallas -- The political fallout from the Texas Supreme Court school financing case continues to reverberate throughout the state, especially as the education blob tries desperately to put a smiley face on a devastating setback in the courts.

In its ruling three weeks ago, the court declared that the Texas school system has not violated rules of equity or adequacy of financing. "We cannot conclude that . . . school districts are not reasonably able to afford all students the access to education and educational opportunities to accomplish a general diffusion of knowledge," said the ruling. It also said that more money won't guarantee better academic results.



*Rick Perry*

The teachers unions and school districts were aghast that their request for more funding had been repelled. Sarah Winkler, president of the Alief Independent School District Board, said, "I'm a little afraid that this means we're not going to get any more money". Northeast school superintendent Richard Middleton called the decision is "a huge disappointment." And Chris Bell, the Democratic candidate for governor, said, "I strongly disagree with the decision of the Republican Supreme Court."

But now, incredibly, the left is trying to spin the decision as a victory. Editorial pages and the education establishment insist that what the court really said was: spend more money. David Thompson and George Bramblett, two of the losing attorneys in the case, recently wrote: "Some politicians in Austin have asserted that the Supreme Court's decision does not require the legislature to provide any new money into the system. This is a fundamental misreading of the court's decision." That view is now being repeated throughout the state by the school lobby, which is also downplaying the court's assertion that "perhaps competition" could help the schools.

The good news is that GOP Governor Rick Perry and conservative Republican legislators aren't persuaded by the spin. Mr. Perry says he will use the special session that starts next spring primarily to cut property taxes and fight off anything that looks like an income tax. He also will bring up a voucher bill that failed narrowly in the House earlier this year. State Senator Florence Shapiro, who heads the education committee, announced at a recent Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) event that the Senate will use this court decision to "find innovative ways to promote competition and improved standards to get schools to perform better."

The bottom line, said TPPF's president, Brooke Rollins, is that "we in Texas have an opportunity to put in place school reforms, including vouchers, that make this state the show case for the nation in education improvement." That's the last thing the school boards and unions want to hear.

-- *Stephen Moore*



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