

## The Value of a Local Education Agency

Texans have a strong tradition of independence that is witnessed by our storied past. Fortunately, that spirit of independence has continued after joining the United States.

Community or local control of the education of our children is a right or privilege with which Texans have become accustomed. Fortunately, our desire to maintain control of local education is underscored by federal law. The Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution explicitly states that the federal government is limited only to the powers granted in the Constitution, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Throughout our nation’s history, state agencies have generally been responsible for the support of a variety of public education venues which include early childhood, elementary, secondary, and higher education educational. Typical state functions include managing state and federal grants, maintaining educational standards through uniform testing and professional certification, developing curricula, coordinating statewide planning, and promoting education excellence.

The majority of Texas school children are taught by local public school teachers employed by the local school district. The local school district has been effectively serving the families of the surrounding community for decades. Rural school districts, in particular, are the social center for the associated community.

Texans have, for the most part, maintained local control of public education to a level not afforded most communities in the United States. Unfortunately due to a declining economy and universal government overspending, the grand Texas tradition of a locally controlled public school system is in very real danger of under going dramatic change.

Most of us are well aware of the deep cuts public education funding in Texas has endured this past year. The trend toward reduced public education funding is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. The small rural public school is the most vulnerable agency to deep budget cuts. It, therefore, falls on the local citizenry to actively support the local rural school district by voluntarily increasing property taxes.

State law requires a Tax Ratification Election if a district sets a Maintenance and Operations rate of more than \$1.04 per \$100 valuation of property. Many Texas school districts will be presenting local voters with the opportunity of increasing property taxes in the next few months. The sole purpose of this action is to insure that our children receive a quality education, and local communities have control in the decision making process of their education.

The most likely eventual result of not voting favorably in a local Tax Ratification Election is a wide spread move toward county consolidated school districts. While there may be some advantages to large school districts, meaningful local control such as personnel selection/retention, programs, curriculum, and overall community values are not among them. Local control of rural school districts are an important

issue even if you do not have children or grandchildren attending the local public school. Today's local students will be your future associates, employees, and customers.

If you value rural public education in Texas and believe that a locally elected school board can best govern your local public school, then support your public school district by voting favorably when presented with a Tax Ratification Election.

Evan Todd Yeager, Ed.D.