

Pastors for Texas Children applauds study of school finance reform

June 8, 2016

AUSTIN— The leader of Pastors for Texas Children commended Texas State House Speaker Joe Straus for calling on lawmakers to study school finance and recommend improvements in the system before the 2017 legislative session.

“In a time when demagoguery so often masquerades as leadership, Speaker Joe Straus responsibly brings our attention back to the most pressing moral issue facing Texans today—the provision of God’s gift of quality education to all children,” said Charles Foster Johnson, executive director of [Pastors for Texas Children](#).

Interim charge to study and recommend reform

Straus, R-San Antonio, issued an interim charge to the House Appropriations and House Public Education committees to study and recommend reforms in the public school funding system.

“We can improve educational quality while also making our school finance system more efficient,” Straus said in a June 2 [public statement](#).

“Ignoring some of the problems in our current system will only make them worse. School finance reform never comes quickly or easily, which is why this work needs to continue sooner rather than later.”

Response to court ruling

The Texas Supreme Court recently [ruled](#) the school finance system passes

the bare standard of constitutionality.

“Our Byzantine school-funding ‘system’ is undeniably imperfect, with immense room for improvement. But it satisfies minimum constitutional requirements,” Justice Don Willett wrote.

In his interim charge to the two House committees, Straus specifically called on them to study how loss of the Additional State Aid for Tax Relief program would affect school districts. The program—slated for elimination Sept. 1, 2017—provides about \$350 million to the state’s public education system in the current school year.

Straus also called on the committees to study the use of local property taxes to fund public education and explore its effects on educational quality and Texas taxpayers.

‘Courage in hitting school finance head-on’

Foster applauded Straus for demonstrating “courage in hitting school finance head-on.”

“It is immoral for a state as prosperous as ours to parcel out provision for our children’s education with such parsimony,” Foster said.

“Our great state of Texas is presently in a grand state of denial. While it is common knowledge that our neighborhood and community schools are woefully underfunded, some of our leaders continue to deny it.

“They persist in a weird alternative universe of serial distraction, obsessing on one irrelevant issue after another while ignoring their sworn constitutional mandate to ‘make suitable provision for free public schools.’”