



ROBERT DUNCAN
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 28

Senate Finance on Education

Senator Robert Duncan

Feb. 24, 2009

The legislative process is starting to heat up a little bit. This week the Senate Finance Committee finished hearing all of the public testimony with regard to Senate Bill 1, which is the budget for the State of Texas. We are also reviewing, very carefully, the proposed stimulus funds for the State of Texas and how they will impact Texas positively.

Currently, I am working on Article III of the budget. That is the part of the budget that funds public education, which is K-12 and higher education- including our community colleges, our general academic institutions like Texas Tech and Angelo State, along with our health related institutions like the Texas Tech Medical School.

Our number one goal this session is to take the money that we have and make sure it actually reaches the classroom in all of these elements of public education, higher education and K-12. We do have money in the budget right now to make an impact, and I think, a significant impact on improving our public education product. The key is to make sure the money flows to the schools and doesn't get too tied up into different types of programs that operate outside the formula funding.

We have heard from many of our school districts in West Texas about their concerns with regard to the school finance program we passed in 2006. Some of the concerns that many of our school districts have been raising is the inadequacy of a concept called, "target revenue." That was a concept we used back in 2006 to flow money to school districts based on what they had received in the past. That number has not been updated. we are going to update those formulas so that school districts are getting an adequate amount, and a more equitable amount per person in order to adequately operate our schools without raising taxes.

We are working around the clock, literally 10-12 hours a day, to get this right. The bill will first pass the Senate, probably in about the first part of April. Then it will go over to the House, and hopefully by the end of May, we will have a final bill.

Even though funds are tight this session, I do believe we are going to be able to make a major address of problems in our public education system.