




LEGISLATIVE ACTION


2014

Learning Objectives

- Understand and be able to talk briefly about the Texas PTA legislative priorities for the 2015 session.
- Be aware of the decisions that are made at the local/district level, state level and national level. It is important to understand how many decisions are made locally that you can impact without leaving your district.
- Know the importance of a PTA position (Texas and National); a resolution and a legislative priority. These are the 3 ways PTA communicates the importance of any child advocacy issue.
- Rally Day – Prepare now to attend for 2017 and talk with your legislator.




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Vision
Every child's potential is a reality.

Mission
To make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.



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Purposes

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community and place of worship.
- To raise the standards of home life.
- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.
- To bring into closer relation the home and school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth.
- To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education.



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Advocacy and PTA

- Anyone who speaks for another is an advocate. PTA is an advocate for children and their families on a wide variety of child-related issues in the areas of education, health and well being, and parent involvement. The purpose of advocacy is to communicate to decision makers and to inform, educate, persuade or increase the level of awareness about an issue.
- Decision makers include elected and appointed officials, legislative bodies, school boards, and local school campuses



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Advocacy and PTA

- As a legislative representative for PTA, you serve as an information resource for decision makers as a key component for change that affects the lives of Texas school children.
- Promote interest and action.



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Advocacy and PTA

- Every PTA member can be an effective advocate.
- Keep informed about the issues.
- Choose issues important to your membership.
- Build support of members for your cause.
- Learn to work together.



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Legislative Priorities

Texas PTA priorities are identified because they:

- Are “hot” issues that have the potential to have great impact on children or families
- Are issues that Texas PTA has decided to put their energy and effort behind during the legislative session
- Emerge from and support an adopted Texas PTA or National PTA resolution or position.



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Why Legislative Action?

To educate and inform your membership of legislation and issues that affect children/families at all levels

National

- State funding
- Accountability standards

State

- Build relationships with legislators
- School financing
- Accountability
- Standardized testing
- PTA legislative priorities



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Why Legislative Action?

To educate and inform your membership of legislation and issues that affect children/families at all levels

School District

- Testing days
- Budget cuts
- Bonds
- Grading/GPA policies
- Parent programs

Local Campuses

- Testing coordination
- Homework/grading policies
- Healthy lifestyles
- Site Based Decision Making Committees
- Petitions/resolutions
- Elections/Candidate forums



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Resolutions

A document calling for action by the Texas PTA that seeks to address problems, situations, or concerns that affect children and youth and require action for solution.

Example: PTA Testing Resolution



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Positions

A call for new laws or revision to existing laws.

Examples:

- National PTA believes that valid assessment does not consist of only a single test score, and that at no time should a single test be considered the sole determinant of a student's academic or work future.
- Policy alternatives to social promotion and grade retention must be established.
- The National PTA supports nationally agreed upon voluntary standards if they are derived by consensus at the state and local levels. Parents must be involved in this process.
- Standardized multiple-choice tests and school readiness tests should never be used with preschool and early elementary children for any purpose.



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Positions

Do's and Don'ts of Local/Council PTA Positions

- Do get approval of membership
- Do adopt positions that benefit all and are not divisive to the association
- Do not adopt a position that duplicates or conflicts with an existing position/resolution of Texas or National PTA

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Priority

An issue that Texas PTA has decided to put energy and effort behind during the legislative session that will have a great impact or has the potential to have great impact on children or families. A priority must support an existing resolution or position, but not all resolutions or positions become priorities.

Example: STAAR changes

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Priority

84th Legislative Session Texas PTA Priorities

- **Early Education**
 - Support funding full-day Pre-K for eligible children (HB4).
 - Support efforts to increase funding for Texas Rising Star program (over 90 bills filed in this category).
- **Health & Safety**
 - Require access to and training for EpiPens on school campuses (SB66).
 - Regulate electronic cigarettes and restrict access to minors (SB97).
 - Ensure access to healthy foods.
 - Encourage use of farm-to-school programs.
 - Promote healthy advertising in schools.
 - Increase health and physical education for high school students.
 - Increase physical activity requirements for middle school students.
- **Juvenile Justice**
 - Raise the age of mandatory adult prosecution to 18. (HB330 and HB1205)
 - Decriminalize truancy (HB2398).

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Priority

84th Legislative Session Texas PTA Priorities

- **School Accountability**
 - Strengthen the community and student engagement evaluation of schools (SB6 – opposed/failed (A-F); HB2804 and HB1842; HB1891 and HB1892).
 - Support educational choices within public schools (SB14).
- **School Finance**
 - Increase funding for public schools (HB1 and SB496 (vetoed by Gov.)).
 - Ensure public funds remain with public schools.
 - Increase number of counselors at middle and high schools (HB 18).
- **Student Assessment**
 - Reduce STAAR testing in grades 3-8 (HB 742/failed).
 - Strengthen limitations on benchmark testing in all grades.
 - Consider limiting state testing to Readiness Standards.
 - Monitor changes to graduation requirements, assessment, including consideration to separate English Writing EOCs from English Reading EOCs.



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Advocacy Projects

Find your focus issues:

- Anti-bullying program
- Internet safety training for students and families
- Environmental programs
- Recess policies
- Voter registration drive
- Candidate forums
- Visit legislators
- Rally Day

How will this benefit ALL the children in your school? We advocate for all children not just some. It must be inclusive!

Check Texas PTA website for criteria and information on how your local PTA can start your own advocacy project.



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Rally Day

Grassroots Advocacy in Action

PTA members from across the state come to Austin in February in odd-numbered years to support the Texas PTA legislative priorities. Identify members from your local units to attend Rally Day and meet with legislators. Mobilize your members now for February 2017!

- Learn about the issues
- Obtain materials to present to legislators
- Rally on the steps of the Capitol
- Meet and visit with legislators



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Rally Day

Rally Day Schedule

Dome Watchers Legislative Caucus at the Capitol
Student Rally Day event
9:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (Capitol auditorium)

Rally on the Capitol Steps
11:30 a.m. to noon

Lunch and Legislative Meetings
Noon to 5 p.m.

Reception
3:00 to 4:30 p.m. (408 W. 11th St.)



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