

Texas Legislative Update

February 26, 2025

Priorities, Effective Advocacy, and School Choice

The 89th Texas legislative session is already underway. Thousands of bills have been filed with the intent to make them law, and more will continue to be filed up until March 14th, 2025. We have many opportunities to use our voice to promote what is good and prohibit what is evil. We have a critical part in building a blessed future for our families and state.

I. Priorities

1. Since January, we have delivered our [priorities letter](#) to over 100 Texas House and Senate offices in the Austin Capitol. Religious liberty, sanctity of life, orphan care, gender identity, marriage, family and parental rights, exploitation and violence, economic principles and gambling make up the issues we will be focused on.
2. Please share this [priorities letter](#) with your church, friends and elected representatives to reinforce the importance of these issues to our state!

II. Effective Advocacy

We aim to make it easy and keep you informed with our Sentinel alerts, action points and who to contact in order to express your support or opposition to the specific items we help provide. Please share the Sentinel with your church and friends so they too can stay informed by [signing up here](#).

1. To find your Texas Senator, House representative, and other elected officials, along with their contact information, click [here](#).
2. If you would like to know some quick tips about the most effective way to speak with your elected representatives, see [Tips for Effective Advocacy](#).
3. Do you want to know more about the [Texas Legislative Process](#)? Here is a short summary of the Three Branches of Texas Government, the Texas Legislature Online website, and How a Bill Becomes a Law.

III. School Choice/Parent Empowerment and Current Controversies

1. Discussions about Universal School Choice have been in Texas news since the 2023 legislative session when bills failed to pass the legislature. Our state leaders have vowed to make sure they pass this 2025 legislative session.
2. Why it Matters to Southern Baptists of Texas:
 - a. While not an official TERLC priority since the SBTC does not have a consensus on this issue, nor a specific resolution regarding school choice, the SBTC and SBC have acknowledged concerns in

our public education system, affirmed that the education of children is a primary responsibility of parents and they are the ones to direct the education of their children in accordance with their religious convictions without governmental obstruction or interference, and that some educational choice proposals constituted direct aid to churches (i.e. church run private schools); and Baptists have historically opposed direct aid to churches, recognizing that with government funds come

government intrusion and interference. (Articles for reference: [SBTC Resolutions: 2005](#); [SBTC Resolutions: 2004](#); [SBC: On Engaging the Direction of the Public School System](#); [SBC: Resolution on Parental Choice on Education, 1996](#); [SBC: Resolution on Parental Choice on Education, 1991](#)) The BFM 2000 Article XII on Education also speaks to the purpose of education, as well as “The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.”

b. Forbes recently published an [article](#) that people from all sides of politics, including conservatives, do not agree on the current school choice bills, with some concerned that government taxpayer-funded subsidies to private schools, virtual learning, and homeschool families, will end up with government regulations and the same accountability standards for student outcomes.

c. FOX 4 Dallas presented two very different perspectives from conservatives on Texas’ new school choice plan you can see [here](#).

d. [Senate Bill 2](#) recently passed the Senate, and the House just filed a school choice bill, [HB3](#).

e. Our friends at Texas Eagle Forum have listed out some thoughts on the various school choice bills. See their information [here](#).

f. Several states have already passed Education Saving’s Accounts (ESA’s). Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) provides insight into other states who have already passed these bills and what it could mean for homeschool students-
<https://hsllda.org/post/how-esa-funding-could-undermine-homeschool-freedom>

g. We will continue to keep an eye on these bills from the aspect of parental rights, religious freedoms, and economic principles, as we do not want private schools or homeschools to lose their independence. In the meantime, you can ask your representatives questions such as:

- What kind of government requirements would be instituted with any school choice program pertaining to classroom curricula, student testing, approved vendors, hiring standards, and approved school lists?
- Would a new bureaucracy be created to oversee any new program? How much will it cost?
- Will there remain a vigilance to reform the current public school system?
- Could we have traditional tax credits/tax exemptions (sales and property) to help parents fund education choice as this would not grow government, nor create new regulations for private schools or homeschools?