

Resolution Reaffirming RPT Support for Educational Freedom

WHEREAS, at the February 2023 Quarterly Meeting, the SREC passed a resolution reaffirming our support as the Republican Party of Texas for school choice and educational freedom; and,

WHEREAS, the seventh Principle of the Republican Party of Texas, as adopted at the 2024 RPT Convention, is “having an educated population, with parents having the freedom of choice for the education of their children”; and

WHEREAS, for the second primary in a row, a strong majority Republican voters have reaffirmed our support for the following proposition, with 79.5% voting in favor in 2024:

“Texas parents and guardians should have the right to select schools, whether public or private, for their children, and the funding should follow the student”; and

WHEREAS, Texas Governor Greg Abbott made the issue of school choice a centerpiece of his engagement in the 2024 Republican primaries, by raising and spending \$6 million in support of candidates who stand with the vast majority of Republican voters and activists in favor of school choice, including challengers to the 21 House Republicans who crossed over to vote with Democrats to kill the program in the fourth special session of 2023; and

WHEREAS, after the vote in 2023, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick stated, emphasis his, that:

“Some members who voted against school choice attended private schools themselves or send their kids or grandkids to private schools. Now, they are denying that right to their constituents. If every House Republican or Democrat who has used private schools voted for school choice, it may have passed. Speaker Dade Phelan didn’t help either. Phelan abstained from voting on school choice. **Talk about a lack of leadership.** It’s hard to pass school choice when the Speaker is too cowardly to vote for it himself”; and

WHEREAS, a University of Houston Hobby Institute poll released July 23, 2024 shows overwhelming support for school choice benefiting all parents among all racial and political groups, with black Republicans showing the highest level of support at 81%, except for white Democrats, who register only 49% support; and,

WHEREAS, 32 states and Washington D.C. have already adopted some form of school choice; and,

WHEREAS, Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, and Tennessee have long-standing Educational Savings Account (ESA) programs, which allow some families to apply a designated amount of each student’s school funding to private school tuition or homeschooling expenses; and

WHEREAS, since 2021, Indiana, Iowa, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Utah, and West Virginia have adopted ESA programs under the leadership of their Republican Governors and Legislatures; and

WHEREAS, The first two Parent's Rights planks of the Republican Party of Texas Platform set specific guidelines for potential school choice programs that prevent a program from being adopted that could result in an expansion of government:

84. School Choice: We support further empowering all Texas families to choose from public, private, charter, or homeschool options for their children's education and funding which shall follow the student with no strings attached. We oppose regulations on homeschooling or the curriculum of private or religious schools and believe a constitutional amendment should be adopted accordingly. In lieu of funding, citizens may use property tax exemptions.

85. Parents' Rights in Education: Parents are the primary educators and disciplinarians of their children, to which all other entities are inferior. The fundamental parental rights of parents to make decisions regarding the upbringing and control of their children in all aspects, but especially in all aspects of the Texas education system, shall be recognized, affirmed, and protected by changes to the Texas Constitution and Texas law, including codifying the protections currently existing in the Texas Family and Education Codes. No public service entity nor its agents, district personnel, community partners, guest speakers, or District Board of Trustees shall infringe upon these rights. We call for the development and dissemination of the *Parent's Right to Know and Consent* booklet that contains pertinent state and federal law; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Republican Party of Texas urges the establishment of a school choice program available to all Texas students, without carveouts, in the 89th Legislative Session that is consistent with our platform, contains strong protections for private schools and homeschools, and provides a realistic private option to all families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Republican Party of Texas is encouraged to see unprecedented support for school choice coming from our leaders, and applauds the courage shown by Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, and the Senators and Representatives who have declared their support for the cause of educational freedom; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Republican Party of Texas urges Governor Greg Abbott to designate school choice as an emergency item for the 89th Legislative Session; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, by working together, the leaders, activists, and voters of the Republican Party of Texas are committed to accomplishing the monumental task of joining the other states who have passed school choice and bringing true educational freedom to over 6 million Texas children.