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When Texas Kids Can't Wait, a statewide bi-partisan advocacy organization, formed almost two years ago, members were motivated by their belief and understanding that citizenship is not a spectator sport, that when good citizens see a problem, they must shine a light on it and encourage others to join with them for change.

One important strategy to shine the light is the release of their first bi-annual Legislative Report Card, according to co-founders Bonnie Lesley and Linda Ethridge. "We looked around," said Ethridge, "and we didn't see any other pro-public education group informing the public about how their elected representatives in Austin were voting on issues relating to public education. So we decided to do so by creating a Legislative Report Card."

Texas Kids Can't Wait did not themselves do the research and write the report, explained Lesley. Instead, they met with a team of researchers led by Dr. Randy Hendricks at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton and asked them to do so. [See the attached copy of the report.]

The voting records of every state representative and senator on the 22 bills either specifically supported or opposed by Texas Kids Can't Wait were examined, said Ethridge. "These bills were related to one or more of our goals," she said. "We are advocates for adequate and equitable funding for

public schools and for significant reduction of the focus on assessment and accountability as substitutes for authentic teaching and learning.” She added that the group also strongly opposes any form of school privatization.

Several school privatization bills were proposed in the 83rd session, noted Lesley. Among them, she said, were “bills promoting expansion of charter schools and online courses or schools; vouchers and so-called taxpayer savings grants; parent triggers that are simply a back-door to turning over schools and property to private management; and establishment of a statewide school district of so-called low-performing schools that is controlled by TEA instead of elected officials.”

“Using the data in Dr. Hendricks’s report, Texas Kids Can’t Wait established descriptors of legislator performance that mirror the language adopted by the legislature in evaluating schools,” said Lesley. “Based on their records, we classified them as either ‘Exemplary,’ ‘Recognized,’ ‘Acceptable,’ or ‘Unacceptable.’” These performance labels are the same ones prescribed by the legislature in evaluating schools, she explained. “It should be noted,” she said, “that ‘Acceptable’ definitely means ‘Needs Improvement.’”

Ethridge agreed that the standards this first year for achieving the “Acceptable” designation were “truly minimal.” Just as the legislature imposes higher academic standards for schools each year, she said, “we will considerably raise our expectations in our report on the 2015 session and each session thereafter. We will expect more for each level of the rating system.”

“Texas Kids Can’t Wait wishes to extend, on behalf of public school students for whom we advocate, our warmest congratulations and appreciation to all those legislators who rated Exemplary, Recognized, and Acceptable in this year’s Report Card,” said Lesley. “We encourage those at the Acceptable level to sponsor good bills and vote in ways that will enable them to move up next year,” she said. “There is a lot of room for improvement,” she added.

Highlights of the Texas Kids Can’t Wait ratings follow.

The members of the House of Representatives are rated as follows:

Exemplary (7 of 150 or 5%)

Nicole Collier, representing Tarrant County

Joe Farias, representing Bexar County

Sergio Munoz, Jr., representing Hidalgo County

Abel Herrero, representing Nueces County

Trey Martinez Fischer, representing Bexar County

Jim Pitts, representing Ellis and Henderson Counties

Ron Reynolds, representing Fort Bend County

Recognized (35 of 150 or 23%)

Joe Straus, Speaker of the House, District 121, representing Bexar Co.

Jimmie Don Aycock, Chair of the House Education Committee,

District 54, representing Lampasas and Bell Counties

Alma Allen, District 131, representing Harris County

Terry Canales, District 40, representing Hidalgo County

Philip Cortez, District 117, representing Bexar County

Dan Huberty, District 127, representing Harris County

**Oscar Longoria, District 35, representing Cameron and Hidalgo
Counties**

Ruth Jones McClendon, District 120, representing Bexar County

Joe Moody, District 78, representing El Paso County

Diane Patrick, District 94, representing Tarrant County

**Four Price, District 87, representing Sherman, Moore, Potter, Carson,
And Hutchinson Counties**

Eddie Rodriguez, District 51, representing Travis County

Justin Rodriguez, District 125, representing Bexar County

Hubert Vo, District 149, representing Harris County

Roberto Alonzo, District 104, representing Dallas County

**Trent Ashby, District 57, representing Angelina, Houston, Leon,
Madison, San Augustine, and Trinity Counties**

Lon Burnham, District 90, representing Tarrant County

Bill Callegari, District 132, representing Harris County

Dawnna Dukes, District 46, representing Travis County

Jessica Farrar, District 148, representing Harris County

Helen Giddings, District 109, representing Dallas County

Mary Gonzalez, District 75, representing El Paso County

Roland Gutierrez, District 119, representing Bexar County

Donna Howard, District 48, representing Travis County

Armando Martinez, District 39, representing Hidalgo County

Borris Miles, District 146, representing Harris County

Poncho Nevarez, District 74, representing Brewster, Culberson,

**Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Kinney, Loving, Maverick, Pecos, Presidio,
Reeves, Terrell, and Val Verde Counties**

Rene Oliveira, District 37, representing Cameron County

Mary Ann Perez, District 144, representing Harris County

**Larry Phillips, District 62, representing Delta, Fannin, and Grayson
Counties**

Toni Rose, District 110, representing Dallas County

**J. D. Sheffield, District 59, representing Erath, Comanche, McCullouch,
Mills, Hamilton, Coryell, San Saba, and Somervell Counties**

Senfronia Thompson, District 141, representing Harris County

Sylvester Turner, District 129, representing Harris County

Armando Walle, District 140, representing Harris County

Acceptable

Fifty-seven of the House members (38%) met the “Acceptable” standard. {See attached report for complete list.}

Unacceptable

A very disappointing 51 members (34%) of the House of Representatives received “Unacceptable” ratings. {See attached report for the complete list.} Among those with the lowest scores were the following in descending order:

**Brandon Creighton, representing Montgomery County
Bryan Hughes, representing Camp, Morris, Rains, Smith, Titus, and
Wood Counties
Matt Krause, representing Tarrant County
Jodie Laubenberg, representing Collin County
Scott Sanford, representing Collin County
Matt Schaefer, representing Smith County
Bill Zedler, representing Tarrant County
Eddie Lucio III, representing Cameron County
Jonathan Strickland, representing Tarrant County
Giovanni Capriglione, representing Tarrant County
Jason Isaac, representing Blanco and Hays County
Scott Turner, representing Collin and Rockwall Counties
Ron Simmons, representing Denton County
Steve Toth, representing Montgomery County**

The members of the Texas Senate were rated as follows:

Exemplary (2 of 31 or 1%)

**Jose Rodriguez, representing El Paso, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis,
and Presidio Counties
Sylvia Garcia, representing Harris County**

Recognized (9 of 31 or 30%)

**Bob Duell, representing Dallas, Delta, Fannin, Hopkins, Hunt,
Kaufman, Rains, Rockwall, Smith, and Van Zandt Counties
Robert Nichols, representing Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee,
Hardin, Henderson, Houston, Jasper, Liberty, Montgomery,
Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine,
San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, and Tyler Counties
Carlos Uresti, representing Atacosa, Bexar, Brewster, Crockett, Dimmit,
Edwards, Frio, Kinney, Maverick, Medina, Pecos, Real, Reeves,
Terrell, Uvalde, Val Verde, and Zavala Counties
Kirk Watson, representing Bastrop and Travis Counties
Tommy Williams, representing Chambers, Galveston, Harris,
Jefferson, and Montgomery Counties**

Kirk Watson, representing Bastrop and Travis Counties
Wendy Davis, representing Tarrant County
Rodney Ellis, representing Fort Bend and Harris Counties
**Kel Seliger, representing Andrews, Armstrong, Bailey, Briscoe,
Carson, Castro, Cochran, Collingsworth, Dallam, Deaf Smith,
Donley, Ector, Gaines, Glasscock, Gray, Hall, Hansford, Hartley,
Hemphill, Howard, Hutchinson, Lipscomb, Loving, Martin,
Midland, Moore, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Randall,
Roberts, Sherman, Swisher, Wheeler, Winkler, and Yoakum
Counties**
**Tommy Williams, representing Chambers, Galveston, Harris,
Jefferson, and Montgomery Counties**
**Judith Zaffirini, representing Atacosa, Bee, Bexar, Caldwell, Duval,
Guadalupe, Hays, Jim Hogg, Karnes, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen,
San Patricio, Starr, Travis, Webb, Wilson, and Zapata Counties**

Acceptable

Thirteen Senators (42%) met the “Acceptable” standard. {See attached report for the complete list.}

Unacceptable

Seven of the 31 Texas Senators (23%) were “Unacceptable.” They are, in descending order, as follows:

**Brian Birdwell, representing Bosque, Ellis, Falls, Hill, Hood,
Johnson, McLennan, Navarro, Somervall, and Tarrant
Counties**
Larry Taylor, representing Brazoria, Galveston, and Harris Counties
Royce West, representing Dallas County
**Glenn Hegar, representing Aransas, Austin, Burlison, Calhoun,
Colorado, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Goliad, Gonzales,
Harris, Jackson, Lavaca, Lee, Matagorda, Nueces, Refugio,
Victoria, Waller, Washington, and Wharton Counties**
Ken Paxton, representing Collin and Dallas Counties
**Donna Campbell, representing Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, Hays,
Kendall, and Travis Counties**
**Dan Patrick, chair of the Senate education committee, representing
Harris County.**

Lt. Governor David Dewhurst, who presides over the Senate, also earned an “Unacceptable” rating, given his appointment of Sen. Dan Patrick to chair the Senate education committee and the ways in which he used his leadership role to promote privatization bills on the floor. Sen. Patrick received the lowest rating of any legislator in either house.

“It is our hope,” said Lesley, “that Texas citizens will review our report and use the information in evaluating candidates for state representatives and senators in both the primaries in March and the general election in November.”

“What we saw in all these bills,” said Lesley, “was a strong attack by about one-third of the legislators in the House and about one-fourth of the Senate on the vast majority of Texas’s five million public school students, on local control, on local school boards and educators, and on the whole concept of the common good.” She added that “Some privatization advocates like to call it ‘school choice,’ but what it amounts to, if enacted, is no choice at all for children from low- and moderate-income families who simply will not have access to good schools.”

“Without public schools, there is no future for children or for Texas or for America. We have to understand that education is not a cost without benefits to us all. It is an investment in the future of America,” concluded Lesley.

[The rating for each legislator can be found on the attached report, including a list of the counties that each one serves.]