

Northwest Democrats News

32 YEARS
And
Still Kicking



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February 18th Program

Our guest will be **St. Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer**. The Hon. Martinez Fischer is head of the Democratic caucus in the State House. He will be giving an update on the current legislative session. We are meeting at **Luby's** (Huebner@Floyd Curl). Meeting begins at 8:30 am. Continental breakfast: \$7

FEBRUARY SPECIAL PROJECT



Don Green Tree Fund

We are currently accepting donations for our tree fund. Each planting includes a 15ft Monterey Oak, digging an appropriate hole, transportation, fertilizer, instruction for care to school personnel. The cost per tree is approximately \$1,200.

Contact Gene Marck, 210-273-9201, if you have any questions.

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To submit an article or other info, email Brenda Middleton at: bkdmiddleton@yahoo.com

School vouchers

After the Uvalde school shooting, many predicted that this legislative session would be focused on school safety, but it turns out the top of the education agenda for lawmakers is privatization with vouchers. This was demonstrated last week by Governor Greg Abbott and the State Board of Education (SBOE). "When a school does fall short of excellence, parents should not be helpless. They should be able to choose the education option that is best for their child," said Gov. Abbott at the Annapolis Christian Academy in Corpus Christi. "The way to do that is with ESAs—Education Savings Accounts."

This would give parents public dollars to spend on private school. The bill to create Education Savings Accounts was introduced by State Senator Mayes Middleton*, a Republican from Galveston. "Every child in Texas deserves the opportunity to have an education that fits their unique needs, and one of the problems in this state is we don't have educational freedom and true educational opportunities," Middleton said.

But opponents of school vouchers point out there already is education freedom in Texas with charter schools, home schooling and options presented with an I.S.D.

Joshua M. Cowen, Professor of Education Policy in the College of Education at Michigan State University, said there isn't education freedom at voucher supported private schools. "It's nice to kind of stand on a podium and say education freedom but a parent whose child is rejected by the school they are trying to get into on the private side, doesn't have a lot of freedom—and there's nothing in these bills that required a private school to take any of these children."

Speaking on behalf of Pastors of Texas Children, public education advocate Louis Malfaro said school vouchers have an ugly origin. "The whole notion of vouchers. They were originally called segregation vouchers," Malfaro said. He said this idea was a *white supremacist response* to the landmark Supreme Court Brown v. Board of Education decision. "So it makes me sad that our state leaders don't see the value of the common school. Hispanic children now are a majority of the students in public schools in Texas. So now the state has all of a sudden lost the will to invest in its public school system," Malfaro said.

But another main point that Abbott offers in support of vouchers is that it will improve school outcomes. "When students are given education options—it's a proven fact*—that it leads to better education results for all schools across the entire state," Abbott said.

Cowen said that's wrong. He said based on vouchers in other states, it leads to the de-funding of traditional public schools. And the education results are worse. "On the academic side in states like Indiana and Ohio we're seeing devastating effects on student outcomes." In Indiana, students who used vouchers, on average, suffered learning loss on par with New Orleans kids after Katrina. Ohio kids who used vouchers had an average learning loss twice the size of the COVID effect, according to Cowen.

(This article was reprinted from Texas Public Radio, published February 6, 2023 at 2:16 pm CST)

*St. Sen. Mayes Middleton is no relation of any member of Northwest Democrats.

*Gov. Abbott cited no data that education options lead to better education results for all schools.

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IMPORTANT DATES

- February 12** NWD Superbowl Event
- February 18** Northwest Democrats Meeting
- March 18** Northwest Democrats Meeting
- April 15** Northwest Democrats Meeting
- August 3** Pat Maloney, Sr. Public Service Award Dinner