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State Senator Florence Shapiro
photo provided by Florence Shapiro

mandated to fix the unconstitutional statewide property tax; and warned that, “It remains to be seen whether the system’s predicted drift toward constitutional inadequacy will be avoided by legislative reaction to widespread call for change.”

Frisco’s recapture payments will decline by \$22 million, thereby reducing the effects of recapture by more than 35 percent.

With HB 1, we responded enthusiastically to the Court, addressing both the charge and the warning, by allowing school districts to raise local funds, in addition to lowering property tax rates, and providing new dollars for excellence in our schools.

Those new dollars include a \$2,000 across-the-board pay raise for teachers, school nurses, counselors and librarians. In addition, Texas has created the largest teacher performance pay program in the country; with \$330 million to reward teaching excellence through locally designed incentive programs. Through these programs and a teacher-mentoring program to keep young educators in the classroom, Texas can take the national lead in rewarding educational excellence and attracting top-performing teachers. This is a landmark step in the fight to give our children the best education possible.

HB 1 will also keep Texas on the forefront of the national education reform movement with stronger curriculum requirements for high school students. Of those Texas graduates who go to college today, more than 30 percent require remedial coursework. HB 1 speaks to that by requiring four years each of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies, in order to better prepare students for success after graduation. Additionally, Texas will create the nation’s first alignment between public and higher education curriculum, to encourage college readiness standards. It is a positive step

Achieving Success from the Statehouse to the Schoolhouse

By State Senator Florence Shapiro

I AM PROUD of the work the Texas Legislature accomplished this spring with the passage of our new public school finance reform package. It was our finest hour. It was the culmination of years of hard work and we accomplished what many said could not be done.

While you have no doubt seen the news coverage about the tax reforms passed this session, I believe an equally exciting achievement was made on the education front.

We delivered more money for schools; along with a teacher pay raise, educational reforms and better accountability for our

schools. And we also brought forth a more equitable school funding system and the largest property tax cut in our state’s history. As a result of House Bill 1 (HB 1), Frisco Independent School District (FISD) will see an additional \$4.5 million, a 4.5 percent increase over what they would have received under the previous law. In addition, Frisco ISD could access an additional \$3.8 million through enrichment, which for the first time is not subject to recapture.

We began this special session with a charge and a warning from the Supreme Court of Texas. The Legislature was

toward the seamless P-16 (Pre-K through College) Pipeline I have always envisioned for Texas education.

Another landmark reform for Texas high schools includes renewed investments in dropout prevention. Texas has one of the highest dropout rates in the nation. One-third of students who entered ninth grade in the Texas public schools do not graduate four years later. To address this trend, the bill provides more than \$1 billion over three years through a High School Allotment of \$275 for every Texas high school student.

Finally, for the first time in over a decade, we have reduced the impact of Robin Hood on local school districts. By 2008, HB 1 will decrease recapture payments statewide by nearly \$1.5 billion. Frisco's recapture payments will decline by \$22 million, thereby reducing the effects of recapture by more than 35 percent. This is a tremendous step toward reducing the impact of Robin Hood while we make a historic investment in funding equity.

The bill also includes a revolutionary provision to allow districts to add four cents of local enrichment by a vote of the

local school board that are not subject to recapture. In 2009, districts can access an additional two cents of enrichment without recapture, by a vote of the people. Those pennies that are paid by local taxpayers in Frisco will remain in Frisco ISD.

We came into this session somewhat fractionalized, but we ended up in one of the most significant compromises I have witnessed in my 14 years of service in the Texas Senate. What we accomplished in this past special session is a very rare opportunity to see a body of people who can find their common ground and truly put Texas taxpayers, educators and students first.

I am reminded of a favorite quote by Frank Lloyd Wright, who said, "I know the price of success: dedication, hard work and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen." We in the Legislature were dedicated to this cause. We worked hard for many years to make this change. And above all, we shared an unremitting devotion to the things we wanted to see happen--lower property taxes, more money for schools and educational excellence for our students.



*State Senator Florence Shapiro
photo provided by Florence Shapiro*

We knew the price of success and we paid it proudly. And now our great state's taxpayers, students and teachers can reap the rewards.

State Senator Florence Shapiro represents District 8, which includes Frisco.



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