

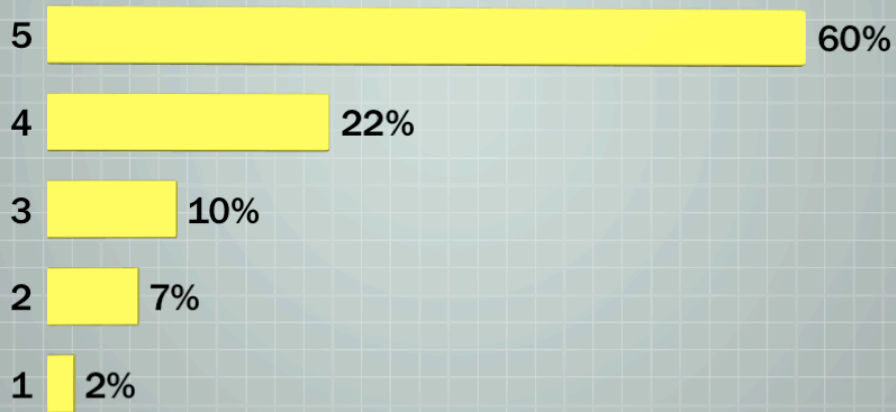
“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider's poll
for the week of October 17.*

INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

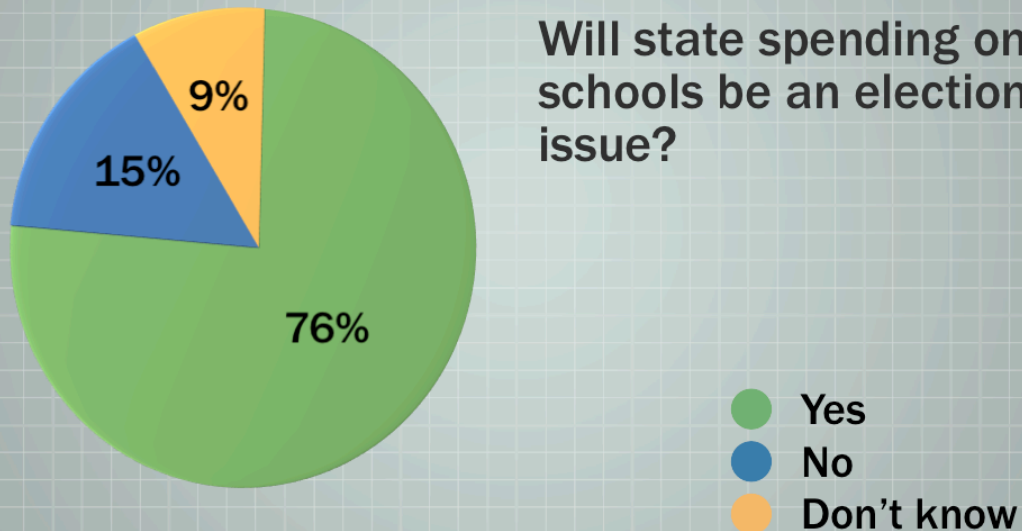
How serious are the school finance lawsuits?

(scale of 1-5)

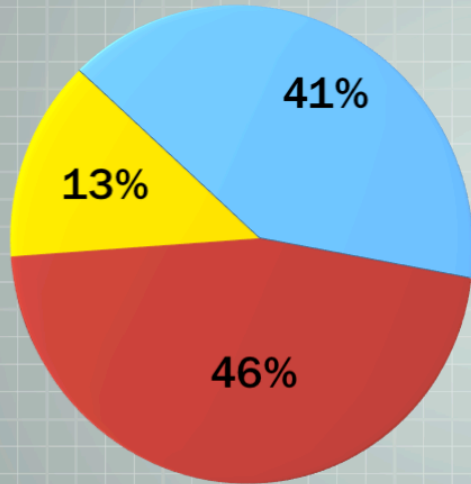


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Will state spending on schools be an election issue?



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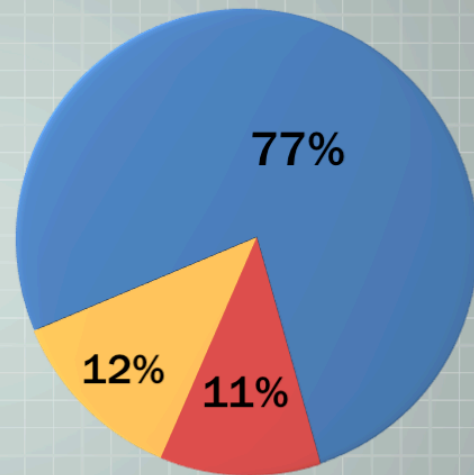


Will the lawsuits impact the elections?



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Will the lawsuits impact the state budget?



On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how seriously do you take the school finance lawsuits being filed against the state?

- "School finance legislation (and the consequential impact on revenue policies) will be the central issue during the next legislative session."
- "The Legislature has never been proactive on health, prison, or education issues. They always are looking for Judicial intervention to give them an excuse to do what they should have done before."
- "This is the way we set policy. The Legislature needs the cover of the court to act. Given the hybrid (read shotgun wedding) style plan adopted during the special, its anyone's ballgame."
- "Equity is not defined in the state's constitution... the grounds of the lawsuit are flawed. Keep the current system, and you move closer to equity."
- "If you're not taking education cuts seriously, you're obviously not spending time outside the big 5 metro areas. Education cuts are invisible in large cities. They're the fiscal and likely political apocalypse everywhere else."
- "Not like there's anyone who didn't see this coming."
- "Responsible education funding is led by the courts every so many years, not the legislature."
- "I believe school finance lawsuits are becoming the norm and people are getting use to them."
- "The lawsuit is very serious. Inequities in the distribution of state money (put in place in 2006) coupled with the law's stranglehold on local districts to generate resources will be indefensible by state lawyers."
- "On top of all the regular horror show problems with school finance, Perry & the legislature changed the social compact with schools. They changed the state law requiring that funding change with population to letting the state pay whatever cash it has left over under the sofa cushions. I'm not sure that passes constitutional muster."
- "Could result in a Special or modification to the margins tax."
- "Constitution does not make public education an entitlement it makes it a Duty!"
- "I think the State will lose the lawsuit"
- "By the time this hits the district court over half of Texas schools will be involved. The suit also will include parents, small business owners, and other taxpayers."
- "This is the second lawsuit within 10 years, so why wouldn't someone take it seriously?"
- "Historically, don't the schools always win?"
- "There will never be a good answer to adequacy."

Will state spending on public schools — independent of the lawsuits — become an election issue next year?

- "Not an election issue until the Legislature does something. Look to 2014."
- "Robin hood is an easy target. Those who get less want more. Those who give more want to give less. Everyone needs more (whether they do or not)."
- "Education is, will be, and has been, a "top three" issue in legislative races for the last 20 years and will be for the next 20."
- "If they do it correctly."
- "With minor exceptions."
- "School districts out touting how they have been forced to cut their budgets — eliminating positions in all areas outside the classroom. Isn't this what many taxpayers have been asking for?"
- "It all depends on whether or not parents and business leaders "feel" the impact of the current cuts. Our business leaders need to "Cowboy Up" and demand accountability from soundbite politicians. It's sad knowing that everyone in Texas is getting accustomed to and accepting mediocrity."
- "Parents are noticing the larger class sizes, the lack of support for the new, more onerous STAAR test, and absence of teachers who've been around before. Got to hand it to the legislature. Cutting \$4 billion in school funding is a color-blind screw-up. They're even pissing off middle-class white people now. Have fun with that."
- "Again, the impact on an election will depend on the conditions of local schools and voter motivation."
- "Only if voters connect the dots between what happens locally, but timing works against this. More layoffs and other cuts to ISD budgets will be made for the 2012-13 academic year, but are likely to be announced in late March or April, after the primaries are over. Even then, voters would have to know/remember the cuts made by the legislature in 2011."
- "In some places yes, in some places no."
- "Yes, in certain areas of the state, mainly middle class suburban areas."
- "There are already republicans running in primaries this year, highlighting their very conservative credentials, but saying the republican incumbent neglected education"
- "Gutting public education will be an issue"
- "Marginally."
- "I would like to think that state spending on public schools would have an impact on the elections next year, but considering that not even our own governor considered public education funding an emergency issue last session makes me wonder where the priorities lie for our state."
- "When schools are closed and teachers are fired."

- "But only in a handful of the handful of the competitive November House elections, and even there it won't be the primary issue driving voter choice."
- "Local chambers already fretting over how the school cuts gut their ability to attract business to Texas"

- "Election issue, yes. Winning election issue, probably not."
- "Already making headlines/blog posts in HD 40 and HD 52."

Will the school finance lawsuits have any impact on next year's elections?

- "Couple of races, but NO major impact on direction of policy"
- "Everyone always for more school money as long as no one has to pay."
- "This lawsuit may help Wendy Davis win re-election in her re-drawn district. Legislators may talk about reforming the school finance system on the campaign trail, but it's not a big issue in the scheme of things. It feels 'good.'"
- "I can hope!"
- "The bi-partisan fury at \$5.4 billion in education cuts is only now emerging. When the public understands that the second year of the biennium's cuts are even more God awful, there will be (political) blood."
- "Nothing will be settled by March. Many legislators won't have an opponent after the primary."
- "Yes along with the thousands of teachers, administrators, and others who will be unemployed as a result of the legislature's underfunding."
- "It's too early to tell. Most believed there was going to be a parent outcry

- against politicians, but it has not occurred."
- "School funding? Yes. Lawyerball over school finance? No."
- "The lawsuits will tend to keep the issue of underfunding schools in the public eye. But the impact will depend on the conditions of local schools, varying substantially across the state."
- "Most districts can still raise revenue locally. This implies that people who are upset with the level of their school's funding can remedy it through a tax rate election, rather than having to wait to elect government officials."
- "In those suburban areas with concentrations of teachers, and middle class parents with kids in grade and middle school."
- "It remains to be seen whether the issue resonates with Republican voters in their primary. The maps are so packed that most of the House races will be decided well before the general."
- "The lawsuit itself won't have an impact on next year's election; however, couple voting records and

redistricting and you'll see a new freshman class coming in to tackle the mess left behind by the 82nd Session."

- "If it turns into another Robin Hood moment the R's will go crazy."
- "Only as a benchmark metric tied to the CUTS which will be the real issue"

- "Minimal"
- "You mean schools claim they are underfunded? Hold on, let me act surprised."

Will the lawsuits have a major impact on the budget written in the 2013 legislative session?

- "A new budget under current law would be strained but achievable. The additional state cost to achieve a constitutional school finance system and maintain other critical priorities won't fit in to current revenue scenarios"
- "If the court directs the Legislature to act, it could indeed gum up the works."
- "School finance always is a prime budget driver, with or without a law suit."
- "If they do it correctly."
- "Odds are the courts will not complete their work until late or after next session. No legislator will make the hard revenue vote until the judiciary puts a gun to his or her head."
- "Yes if there's a court decision by then."
- "Legislators will be forced to up the funding. This is what happens when you keep putting an issue off year after year."

- "Depends on court outcomes by next session."
- "At some point, Texas as a whole will have to come to grips that without an educated workforce, our tax dollars will diminish. The less a person makes, the less amount he/she contributes to Texas."
- "These monkeyshines could come back to Austin under court order to stop sucking while the state senate chooses a new lite gov and a new gov. I'm buying popcorn futures."
- "Depends on how (or if) the economy/state tax collections recover in the next two years."
- "No question."
- "Maybe...but the courts a not likely to move that fast.... during next session, the suit will still be in the appellate court."
- "The final Supreme Court judgment is not expected before the regular session thus it probably will not impact the appropriations bill. However, it could

cause several special sessions like we saw in 2006"

- "If the courts act prior to the session and require major funding changes."
- "Too soon to tell, depends on how the suit goes"
- "You needed a choice for "Most Likely" because there is not certainty in anything the Legislature does. I think it will be their intention to improve things."
- "Money"

• "But they were going to have to do something to fix the state's broken (actually it never really worked) school finance system."

• "Unfortunately the slow movement on addressing the issue now makes anything they do look reactionary, rather than proactive."

• "They will only have a big impact if the courts have ruled on them by that time. If not, then it is not an emergency, so the legislature will punt"

• "2015"

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Brandon Aghamalian, Victor Alcorta, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Jay Arnold, Louis Bacarisse, Charles Bailey, Mike Barnett, Reggie Bashur, Walt Baum, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Hugh Brady, Steve Bresnen, Chris Britton, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Marc Campos, Snapper Carr, Tris Castaneda, George Cofer, Rick Cofer, Lawrence Collins, Harold Cook, Hector De Leon, Eva De Luna-Castro, Anne Dunkelberg, David Dunn, Jeff Eller, Alan Erwin, Jon Fisher, Terry Frakes, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Daniel Gonzalez, Michael Grimes, Anthony Haley, Bill Hammond, Sandy Haverlah, Albert Hawkins, Jim Henson, Ken Hodges, Shanna Igo, Deborah Ingersoll, Carl Isett, Mark Jones, Tom Kleinworth, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, Donald Lee, Leslie Lemon, Richard Levy, Ruben Longoria, Homero Lucero, Vilma Luna, Luke Marchant, Bryan Mayes, Dan McClung, Scott McCown, Bee Moorhead, Craig Murphy, Pat Nugent, Todd Olsen, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Bill Pewitt, Wayne Pierce, Kraege Polan, Jay Propes, Ted Melina Raab, Bill Ratliff, Tim Reeves, Carl Richie, Jason Sabo, Andy Sansom, Stan Schlueter, Julie Shields, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Larry Soward, Jason Stanford, Bob Stein, Colin Strother, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Sherry Sylvester, Trey Trainor, Tim Tuggey, Wendell Ware, Darren Whitehurst, Seth Winick, Peck Young.