



Northwest ISD

## 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Summary

The 87<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Texas Legislature began on January 12, 2021. The historic session was shaped by the COVID pandemic and the unusual February winter storm which impacted the state's electric grid. Of the 1,073 bills passed during the regular session, approximately 116 bills related to public education. A total of 21 bills were vetoed. The 87<sup>th</sup> Regular Session adjourned on May 31, 2021.

Governor Greg Abbott called the First Special Session for July, but no bills were passed and little resulted due to a lack of quorum. The Second Special Session began August 7 and ended earlier than expected on September 2. Of the 338 bills that were filed, 10 were passed.

A Third Special Session began September 20 and by the close of the session on October 19, legislators had passed six of the Governor's 10 priority items, including the redistricting maps for Congress, Texas House, Texas Senate, and the State Board of Education.

The following highlights the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature in relation to Northwest ISD's 2021 Legislative Priorities.



### State Budget Loss and Fast Growth

Unfortunately, the Legislature did not make adjustments to the state's school funding formula to make up NISD's \$10-\$15 million loss in state funding following changes made during the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. While there are still some unknowns, it appears that state funding for NISD will remain steady as a result of the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

Northwest ISD advocated to reverse the rate, known as the "Golden Penny Yield," to its previous value (\$135.92 per penny per WADA) to allow more local tax dollars to stay in the district to help address the district's fast growth. While the "Golden Penny Yield" was not restored, it also was not cut further and remains at \$98.56 per penny per WADA.

The Legislature did approve positive changes to the Fast Growth Allotment, shifting the allotment to a tiered weight system of 0.48 weight per student enrollment growth in the district for the top 40% of districts, 0.33 per student enrollment growth for the middle 30% of districts, and 0.18 per student enrollment growth for the bottom 30%. NISD is currently in the middle tier at .30 weight.

**SB 1** (Nelson), the state's budget bill, continued to support public education, fully funding the Foundation School Program and HB 3 approved during the last legislative session. However, it reduced the New Instructional Facilities Allotment, important for fast-growth schools, by \$60 million (\$30 million per year).

**HB 1525** (Huberty), known as the HB 3 Cleanup Bill, included changes to the school finance system and lots more. School finance highlights include changes to the Fast Growth Allotment, modifications to the CTE Allotment, and reinstatement of the Gifted and Talented Allotment.



## Reading Academies

NISD advocated for local control of professional development to be allowed to develop and deliver literacy training in a manner that supports the district's goals. While flexibility or a waiver for the required teacher literacy achievement was not approved, an extension for completing the required training was approved.

**HB 1525** (Huberty) extended the deadline for completing teacher literacy achievement academies to the 2022-2023 school year and allows completion of the academy during a teacher's/principal's first year in such a role, rather than before taking a new position.



## Election and Ballot Requirements

The 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session did not bring about modifications to the bond ballot language or election date requirements; however, it also did not see the approval of other detrimental election bills. Bills requiring 20-25% of voter turnout to issue bonds or a TRE, along with a requirement of 2/3 voter approval to issue bonds were introduced and scheduled for public hearing but not approved. The required - and oftentimes misleading - ballot language "THIS IS A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE" continues to be mandated, along with required November election date for Voter Approval Tax Rate Elections.



## Transportation Needs

The Legislature did not directly address transportation and infrastructure needs of fast-growth communities, but progress continues to be made at a local level. Voters approved Tarrant County's \$400 million bond to improve roads, which includes Avondale Haslet, Bonds Ranch/Wagley Robertson, Intermodal Parkway, and Keller-Haslet. Representative Krause, NISD, NCTCOG, and local leaders continue to collaborate to address local railway crossing concerns as well.



## HB 4545 Accelerated Learning

Approved by the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature during the Regular Session, HB 4545 went into effect immediately with the intent to assist students who did not perform satisfactorily on the state's standardized test – STAAR. Implementation of the requirements of the bill carry grave concerns, and Northwest ISD, as well as other districts across the state, advocated for changes due to the mandates and limitation of parental and local control over blanket decisions for students. Unfortunately, the Second Special Session was called to an early end before HB 233, which was on the move, was able to be passed to address those concerns. NISD continues to address student, parent, and campus concerns as students are required to attend the Accelerated Learning.



## **NISD Delegation and Redistricting**

Governor Greg Abbott signed Texas' new redistricting maps into law on October 25, 2001. Following a delay in the release of the 2020 census data due to the COVID pandemic, the bills were approved during the Third Special Session. Congressional and state legislative district lines are redrawn every decade following the United States census.

Northwest ISD's delegation has changed as a result of redistricting. Three US Congressional districts will continue to cover NISD, albeit the areas have changed. NISD's Senate seats reduce from three to two, and the House of Representatives will increase from five to seven representatives. The district boundaries for the SBOE changed but did not impact Northwest ISD's delegation. Between redistricting and some of the current legislator's intent to run for a different office, the NISD delegation will be very different for the 2022 elections.