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J.O. Combs Unified School District #44

As you may have seen in recent news coverage, nine East Valley districts, including J.O. Combs Unified School District filed a lawsuit on December 1, 2025 against the East Valley Institute of Technology (“EVIT”). We want to ensure our community has clear and accurate information about this action and why our district chose to participate in an action supported by 82% of EVIT’s total district membership.

EVIT is an important partner for providing meaningful, hands-on learning. Nothing in this effort is meant to diminish EVIT’s value or change Career and Technical Education (“CTE”) from the rigorous, skill-building pathway it is intended to be. Our district strongly supports CTE programs, whether students take classes at their home high school or at EVIT’s central campuses. As many of you know, our school pays all the expenses to transport students to and from EVIT’s central campuses, if that is what students elect to do. The goal is to keep high-quality CTE opportunities available for all students in the learning environment that works best for them.

For nearly a year, the nine districts named in the lawsuit tried to work collaboratively with EVIT to update the central agreement that controls how CTE programs are offered on local high school campuses. The districts submitted multiple proposals, requested to meet jointly with EVIT to collaborate on solutions that would benefit all districts, and repeatedly requested mediation to work through roadblocks. EVIT rejected all of those efforts.

The districts turned to the courts only after EVIT clarified that it would not seriously engage with the districts’ concerns regarding EVIT’s proposed changes, which include: (1) limiting student access to CTE, (2) denying or retroactively stripping students of academic credit unless an entire multi-year CTE program is completed, and (3) redirecting millions of dollars of funding away from home-campus programs for reasons that remain unexplained. These changes would have reduced home-campus course options by making many CTE opportunities available only through the EVIT campuses and put students’ graduation at risk. The nine districts found these impacts unacceptable.

Please be assured that while the legal process moves forward, districts are continuing to fund and offer all current CTE programs so that students experience no interruption. This effort is intended to preserve strong, reliable CTE pathways for every student and to honor what you – the voters – expected when they approved a tax to fund local schools’ participation in EVIT. We will continue to keep families updated, and our focus will remain on protecting students, their credit, and their future opportunities.