



June 8, 2011

The Honorable Diane Patrick
PO Box 2910
Austin, TX, 78768-2910

Dear Rep. Patrick:

During the regular legislative session, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce supported House Bill 400, the initiative characterized as providing “mandate relief” to school districts in light of the reduction in state assistance that was built into the proposed budget.

You are aware that HB 400 did not pass. However, we understand that crucial elements of that bill have been reintroduced as House Bills 8, 18, 19, 20 and 21. These bills are set for hearing on the House floor Thursday, June 9.

The Arlington Chamber continues to support the concepts in this package of legislation. In particular, we support:

- Flexibility in managing employee pay, including allowing furloughs and/or salary reductions when resources are reduced.
- Providing termination notices to contract employees closer to the end of school than the current 45-day requirement.
- Allowing termination appeal to be heard by a hearing examiner at a location in the school district.
- Removing requirements that, in case of a reduction in force, contract employees hired last are the first to be removed.
- Allowing the size of classrooms in the first four grades to contain as many as 25 students, as long as the overall school average remains at 22 students per teacher.

These are difficult times for school districts, and the Chamber’s preference is still that the state use its available resources, such as the Economic Stabilization Fund, to reduce the impact of the projected budget cuts on school districts. We support the above measures as a way to both preserve jobs and to make coping with this difficult process more manageable by our school board and superintendent. From our perspective, private-sector companies already have this management flexibility; it only seems right that, going forward, our school officials should have these choices as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wes Jurey'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Wes Jurey
President and CEO
Arlington Chamber of Commerce