

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF TEXAS RESOLUTION
TRANSPARENCY REFORMS FOR AREAS COMMONLY VIOLATED IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Resolution to amend plank 102 (as underlined):

102. Transparency in School District operations. Enforcement of Open Meetings and Public Information Act: We demand requiring audio or video recordings and publication of minutes for closed sessions with employee and student identifiers redacted and allowing taxpayers to seek civil penalties for government school officials who violate the Texas Open Meetings Act. We believe an open meetings violation should be an affirmative defense to a charge of disrupting a public meeting. We demand recordings of closed meetings to protect good trustees who allege violations of the Open Meetings Act and that these recordings can be obtained by the Attorney General during a formal investigation into TOMA violations. Officers and directors of organizations whose primary and substantial operations are on district property and for the near-exclusive benefit of the district shall be subject to the public information act to the same extent as employees. We further demand enforcement by the Attorney General for violations of the public information act such as obvious patterns of waiting until day ten to release public information. We further demand all legal fees incurred by a school district or school board be subject to release and describe the general category and date for which the taxpayer dollars were used on legal advice. This includes an in-house attorney. Finally, any legal expense over \$5,000 must come to the board for a vote.

A copy of this resolution should be sent to the _____ County/Senate District # _____ Convention Resolutions Committee from Precinct # _____ with the recommendation that it be passed and sent to the State Convention Platform Committee of the Republican Party of Texas.

Rationale:

- It is common knowledge that the board's attorney and Superintendent carry heavy weight over many elected boards of trustees, when it is the elected officials who are supposed to be running the district.
- This has led to many grievances being decided arbitrarily, parental rights being sidestepped, teachers feeling helpless and afraid to speak out.
- Boards are not always told about settlement agreements and other legal expenses and actions including NDAs, taking away the people's oversight of the district.
- Many Special Education parents and advocates assert the attorneys are making more in legal fees to fight against a district's provision of services to students than it would cost to provide those services.
- The boards MUST know how their budget is being spent and there is currently no law or standard board policy requiring its lawyer to disclose his or her activity or intervention in issues, including internal audits.
- Transparency is the best disinfectant. Open Government is a hallmark of liberty.