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## **ATPE weighs in on completion of 84th legislative session**

**AUSTIN, Texas** – Below is a statement from the executive director of the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE). Gary Godsey weighs in on the completion of the 84th regular legislative session:

"For the education community, legislative sessions in Texas—at least in recent years—are when we find ourselves defending the great work that is being done in our schools and fighting off harmful attempts to deregulate and defund the programs that help students, devalue the education profession, and detour state resources for the benefit of private entities and vendors. The 84th was no exception, with some in the legislature choosing to focus their energy on pushing forward vouchers, proposals to convert public schools to privately managed charters with little accountability to local parents and voters, bills lowering the minimum wage for teachers, and vindictive attempts to pass a payroll deduction ban with no public benefit aimed only at discouraging educators from being politically active.

Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed at the capitol. We were able to defeat harmful legislation while making progress in areas of genuine need for public education. We helped pass bills to further reduce the emphasis on standardized tests and the high stakes those tests have imposed on our students and staff; we enhanced the funding and quality of early education; we secured additional money to help cover retired educators' rising healthcare costs; and we prioritized students' well-being through nutritional support programs, suicide prevention, and a host of other health and safety measures.

It was not a perfect session for public education. The legislature failed to address our broken school finance system, left billions of dollars on the table that could have been used to shore up underfunded schools, and made a few changes we hoped to avoid, such as moving to a system of labeling schools with 'A through F' grades. However, we believe those choices will eventually be corrected, and in the meantime, we are thankful for the lawmakers and legislative leaders who stood up for public education. In a session that had the potential to fling public education backward, the small steps forward that were taken have enormous significance.

Despite the attempts of some to use politics to drown out the voices of pro-public education voters, ATPE believes that the majority of the members of the 84th Legislature acted in the best interest of their districts' schools, students, and school staffs. We are grateful for their dedication to our cause and the progress that was made."

Read more on our blog at <http://www.teachthevote.org/news/>.

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The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school education.