

Band-Aids on society's sores?

By Ivan Arceneaux | Posted: Sunday, March 12, 2006 11:00 pm

Our children's education is this year's top priority for Galveston County Interfaith an organization whose members represent faith-based groups.

They are currently conducting "Achievement Academies" for parents at two schools one of which at Rosenberg Elementary School in Galveston was featured recently in The Galveston County Daily News.

Galveston County Interfaith's devoted members are committed to eradicating the root causes of the social problems in our county instead of merely putting Band-Aids on the sores of society public education among them.

"School financing" and "tax reform" have been boiling in the political pot in Texas since at least the early 1980s.

The Texas Supreme Court ruling that the current school property tax system is unconstitutional mandated a June 1 deadline for a legislative solution to school financing without which public schools may not open in the fall.

After several regular and special legislative sessions failed to act Gov. Rick Perry named a 24-member Tax Reform Commission chaired by John Sharp a former state comptroller "to develop proposals to modernize the state tax system and provide long-term property tax relief as well as sound financing for public schools."

The commission conducted a public hearing in Houston last week.

The Galveston County Interfaith testified before the Tax Reform Commission together with their sister faith-based groups the Metropolitan Organization of Houston and the Southeast Texas Organization of Beaumont.

The dynamics and the dilemma on tax reform seem straightforward to me.

Here are some of the dynamics of the workings of the commission and its public hearings: The major proposals seem to favor an increase in the sales tax rate and or a broad-based business tax and some added "sin" taxes.

The Galveston County Interfaith favors a tax structure that is fair and equitable to all segments of society plus being able to grow. Group members reject substituting a sales tax increase to replace the property tax as the major funding for schools because sales taxes affect lower income families far more than they do higher income families.

In Texas a family of four living on \$21000 (considered low income) currently pays 14 cents on every dollar they earn (14.2 percent) in sales tax while a family earning \$100000 pays only five cents (5.1 percent) in sales tax; 14.2 percent versus 5.1 percent? They don't call that fair. Neither do I.

Business support is crucial to any tax overhaul. It was business opposition that helped kill efforts in the past to trade higher state taxes for lower school taxes.

As your Silver-Haired Legislator I have heard unbelievable reports that businesses are shifting from paying their fair share of the tax burden in Texas.

Please do bone up on all tax reform proposals.

Call Gov. Perry your state senator and your state representative with your questions and concerns so that our nation may not be replaced by a nation of by and for the rich during the coming special session of the Texas Legislature.

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