



KIRK WATSON

TEXAS STATE SENATOR

Austin Capitol Office
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711
(512) 463-0114

Kirk.Watson@senate.texas.gov

FOR THE GOOD OF TAXPAYERS

If you own a home or business, you'll soon be getting a Notice of Appraisal that shows how much your property value has increased over the past year. For many people, that notice causes frustration and anxiety over being able to keep up with rising property taxes.

Read the fine print on the appraisal notice and you'll find the following state-mandated language: "*The Texas Legislature does not set the amount of your local taxes. Your property tax burden is decided by your locally elected officials...*".

But something is missing from that statement: the state is the biggest culprit in your rising property taxes.

Who's paying for schools?

The property taxes paid to school districts make up more than half of your total tax bill, and those taxes are likely to rise along with property values. But that additional tax revenue doesn't necessarily benefit our local schools — it helps the state.

As your property values increase, the state's financial obligation to public schools goes down. In the next two-year budget, the state expects to save \$3.6 billion because local taxpayers will be picking up an even bigger portion of the tab for schools.

Fixing school finance

The best way for the Legislature to lower your property tax bill would be to fix our school finance system, much of which is more than 30 years old and doesn't reflect the true cost of educating our kids.

Austin taxpayers, in particular, are bearing the brunt of the Legislature's failure to update our school finance system. As a so-called "property rich" school district, Austin ISD sent 38 percent of our tax revenue to the state this year to share with other districts. By 2019, we'll be sending more than half of the taxes collected by AISD to the state.

Updating our school finance system is complicated, but it would help you pay less and get more for the investment you're making in schoolchildren.