



EDUCATION: Texas Near Bottom in Spending for Public Schools

Texas ranked 45th nationally in kindergarten through 12th grade public education spending per pupil, according to the recently released 2013 U.S. Census Bureau Public Education Finances report. The state spent \$8,299 per student compared with a national average of \$10,700. While greater expenditures do not guarantee better outcomes, schools with more resources tend to have students with higher educational attainment.

Following the recession, Texas expenditures per student declined in 2011 and 2012 from a high of \$8,746 in 2010. State spending picked up in 2013, though Texas' rank has slipped steadily since 2010. Relative to per-pupil spending in other states and the District of Columbia, California ranked 36th (\$9,220), while New York was first (\$19,818). There are about 5 million students in Texas public schools—the second-largest enrollment after California. Of the Texas total, 13 percent are black, 30 percent are white and 51 percent are Hispanic.

Texas public education received 11 percent of its funding from the federal government, 39 percent from the state and 50 percent from local resources in 2013. Nationally, including Texas, about 60 percent of per-pupil expenditures was spent on instruction and roughly 35 percent on support services. The remaining 5 percent in Texas funded items such as textbooks, transportation and employee retirement.

—Emily Gutierrez



TAXATION: Dallas County Property Values Rise 7.5 Percent in 2015

The Dallas Central Appraisal District—Texas' second-largest appraisal district by market value (behind Harris County)—reported a 7.5 percent increase in the taxable value of property, totaling \$188 billion this year. This follows a 6.7 percent increase in 2014.

While residential makes up the largest of the three categories of Dallas County property values (45 percent), commercial property rose the most in 2015, accounting for almost half of the overall increase. Property taxes, typically accounting for more than 60 percent of Dallas County government revenues, are expected to rise 5.3 percent in the current fiscal year. A steeper increase is likely next year.

Of the school districts located entirely within Dallas County, Sunnyvale Independent School District recorded the largest percentage increase in property values—10.8 percent—while the Dallas Independent School District had the highest total property value.

The appraisal district determines the value of properties—preliminary values are released in May and the final valuations in July—located within Dallas County; taxes are collected by the Dallas County tax assessor and then distributed to cities, school districts and other local jurisdictions. Proposals for how to spend the additional dollars abound and include more funds for schools, hospitals, jails and animal control.

—Sarah Greer



INCOME: Obama Plan to Give More Managers Overtime Pay

Workers sometimes find that becoming a manager means a little extra pay and many more hours. An Obama administration plan may change that. It would almost double the Fair Labor Standards Act minimum weekly salary of \$455, allowing management employees to become salaried and excluded from overtime. Retail and hospitality industries generally pay managers less and have them work longer hours than many other businesses and, thus, the change may affect them most.

The act, approved in 1935, exempts “executive, administrative and professional” employees from overtime—generally 1.5 times the hourly wage—provided their pay exceeds the threshold.

The president's plan, which requires U.S. Labor Department rulemaking after a public comment period, comes at a time of relatively low unemployment. The retail and accommodation and food services sectors account for more than a quarter of employment in San Antonio, compared with just over a fifth in Dallas and Houston, according to data compiled by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Overall, wage rates in Texas tend to trail nationwide averages.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce predicts that employers may respond by promoting fewer managers and reducing hours worked. Some firms could use more part-time workers. However, in a still-tight labor market, those options may be limited.

—Michael Weiss