



TEXAS ON THE BRINK

**A Report from the
Texas Legislative Study Group
On the State of Our State**

**February 2011
82nd Regular Session of the Texas Legislature**



Legislative Study Group

Texas House of Representatives

Chair Rep. Garnet Coleman Vice Chair Rep. Lon Burnam
Treasurer Rep. Elliott Naishtat Secretary Rep. Rafael Anchia

February 15, 2011

Fellow Texans,

In 2003, State Senator Eliot Shapleigh released the first edition of *Texas on the Brink*. With this effort, Senator Shapleigh made quality statistics and policy research that affects the lives of Texas' future easily available to the public. Today, the Texas Legislative Study Group has the distinct pleasure of carrying on the essential public policy service Senator Shapleigh championed with the publication of *Texas on the Brink: Fifth Edition*.

We hope *Texas on the Brink* will be a recurring resource for elected officials and the public as we work together on solving the public policy challenges Texas faces in our new century.

We invite you to download a copy of this report at www.texaslsg.org/TexasOnTheBrink. On that site, we will also post reports from policy organizations from here in Texas and throughout the country that detail the impact our public policy decisions have on the lives of Texas families.

Sincerely,

Garnet F. Coleman
Chair, Texas Legislative Study Group
State Representative, House District 147

Texas on the Brink

How Texas Ranks Among the 50 States

February 2011 ~ Fifth Edition

Since 1836, Texas has stood as an icon of the American dream.

Blessed with land, rivers, oil, and other abundant natural resources, early Texas welcomed everyone from cattle ranchers to *braceros*, from cotton farmers to Chinese railroad workers. These pioneers built a great state, and together we fulfilled a destiny.

From humble beginnings, we built a state with the firm belief that *every* Texan might rise as high and as far as their spirit, hard work, and talent might carry them. With education and determination *every* Texan might achieve great success – home ownership, reliable healthcare, safe neighborhoods, and financial prosperity.

In Texas today, the American dream is distant. Texas has the highest percentage of uninsured children in the nation. Texas is dead last in the percentage of residents with their high school diploma and near last in SAT scores. Texas has America's dirtiest air. If we do not change course, for the first time in our history, the Texas generation of tomorrow will be less prosperous than the generation of today.

Without the courage to invest in the minds of our children and steadfast support for great schools, we face a daunting prospect. Those who value tax cuts over children and budget cuts over college have put Texas at risk in her ability to compete and succeed.

Let us not forget that the business of Texas is Texans. To 'Close the Gap' in Texas, we must graduate more of our best and brightest with the skills to succeed in a world based on knowledge. If we invest in our greatest resource – our children – Texas will be the state of the future. If we do not, Texas will only fall further behind.

Texas is on the brink, but Texas can do better. The choice is ours.

State Rankings



State Taxes

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Tax Revenue Raised per Capita¹ 46th
- Tax Expenditures per Capita² 47th
- Sales Tax per Capita³ 15th



Education

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Public School Enrollment⁴ 2nd
- Average Salary of Public School Teachers⁵ 33rd
- Average Teacher Salary as a Percentage of Average Annual Pay⁶ 34th
- Current Expenditures per Student⁷ 38th
- State & Local Expenditures per Pupil in Public Schools⁸ 44th
- State Aid Per Pupil in Average Daily Attendance⁹ 47th
- Percent of Elementary/Secondary School Funding from State Revenue¹⁰ 37th
- Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Scores¹¹ 45th
- Percent of Population 25 and Older with a High School Diploma¹² 50th
- High School Graduation Rate¹³ 43rd
- Percent of Adults with at Least a Bachelor's Degree¹⁴ 31st
- Percentage of Higher Education Enrollment¹⁵ 9th
- Per Capita State Spending on State Arts Agencies¹⁶ 43rd



State of the Child

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Birth Rate¹⁷ 2nd
- Percent of Population Under 18¹⁸ 2nd
- Percent of Uninsured Children¹⁹ 1st
- Percent of Children Living in Poverty²⁰ 4th
- Percent of Children Fully Immunized²¹ 34th
- Percent of Children Overweight²² 19th



Health Care

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Percent of Population Uninsured²³ 1st
- Percent of Non-Elderly Uninsured²⁴ 1st
- Percent of Low Income Population Covered by Medicaid²⁵ 49th
- Percent of Population with Employer-Based Health Insurance²⁶ 48th
- Total State Government Health Expenditures as Percent of the Gross State Product²⁷ 43rd
- Per Capita State Spending on Mental Health²⁸ 50th
- Per Capita State Spending on Medicaid²⁹ 49th
- Percent of Population Physically Active³⁰ 36th
- Health Care Expenditures per Capita³¹ 44th
- Hospital Beds per 1,000 Population³² 27th

Health Professionals per Capita:

- Physicians³³ 42nd
- Dentists³⁴ 39th
- Registered Nurses³⁵ 44th



Health and Well-Being

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Percent Living Below Federal Poverty Level³⁶ 4th
- Percent of Population with Food Insecurity³⁷ 2nd
- Average Monthly Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Benefits per Person³⁸ 47th
- Prevalence of Obesity in Adults³⁹ 16th
- Rate of Death due to Heart Disease⁴⁰ 22nd
- Prevalence of Diagnosed Diabetes⁴¹ 14th
- Diabetes Death Rate⁴² 16th
- Percent of Population Who Visit the Dentist⁴³ 46th



Women's Issues

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Overall Birth Rate⁴⁴ 2nd
- Teenage Birth Rate⁴⁵ 7th
- Births to Unmarried Mothers⁴⁶ 17th
- Percent of Women with Pre-Term Birth⁴⁷ 9th
- Percent of Non-Elderly Women with Health Insurance⁴⁸ 50th
- Percent of Women Who have had a Dental Visit within the Past Year⁴⁹ 45th
- Rate of Women Aged 40+ Who Receive Mammograms⁵⁰ 40th
- Rate of Women Aged 18+ Who Receive Pap Smears⁵¹ 37th
- Breast Cancer Rate⁵² 42nd
- Cervical Cancer Rate⁵³ 11th
- Percent of Women with High Blood Pressure⁵⁴ 16th
- Family Planning⁵⁵ 37th

- Percent of Pregnant Women Receiving Prenatal Care in First Trimester⁵⁶ 50th
- Women's Voter Registration⁵⁷ 45th
- Women's Voter Turnout⁵⁸ 49th
- Percent of Women Living in Poverty⁵⁹ 6th
- Percentage of Women with Four or More Years of College⁶⁰ 30th
- Percent of Businesses Owned by Women⁶¹ 17th
- Percent of Median Income for Full Time Work⁶² 26th



Access to Capital

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Percent of Mortgage Loans that are Subprime⁶³ 9th
- Mortgage Debt as Percent of Home Value⁶⁴ 47th
- Foreclosure Rates⁶⁵ 10th
- Private Loans to Small Businesses⁶⁶ 30th
- Asset Poverty Rate⁶⁷ 36th
- Median Net Worth of Households⁶⁸ 47th
- Average Credit Score⁶⁹ 49th
- Retirement Plan Participation⁷⁰ 47th
- Median Credit Card Debt⁷¹ 19th
- Average Credit Score⁷² 49th



Environment

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Amount of Carbon Dioxide Emissions⁷³ 1st
- Amount of Volatile Organic Compounds Released into Air⁷⁴ 1st
- Amount of Toxic Chemicals Released into Water⁷⁵ 1st
- Amount of Recognized Cancer-Causing Carcinogens Released into Air⁷⁶ 1st

- Amount of Hazardous Waste Generated⁷⁷ 1st
- Amount of Toxic Chemicals Released into Air⁷⁸ 5th
- Amount of Recognized Cancer-Causing Carcinogens Released into Water⁷⁹ 7th
- Number of Hazardous Waste Sites on National Priority List⁸⁰ 7th
- Consumption of Energy per Capita⁸¹ 5th



Workforce

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Average Hourly Earnings of Production Workers on Manufacturing Payrolls⁸² 38th
- Government Employee Wages and Salaries⁸³ 24th
- Percent of Workforce that are Members of a Union⁸⁴ 41st
- Workers' Compensation Coverage⁸⁵ 50th



Quality of Life

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Income Inequality Between the Rich and the Poor⁸⁶ 9th
- Income Inequality Between the Rich and the Middle Class⁸⁷ 5th
- Median Household Income⁸⁸ 34th
- Home Ownership Rate⁸⁹ 44th
- Homeowner's Insurance Affordability⁹⁰ 46th
- Auto Insurance Affordability⁹¹ 24th
- Personal Bankruptcy Filings Rate, Per Capita⁹² 39th
- Percent of Households with Internet Access⁹³ 42nd



Public Safety

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Number of Executions⁹⁴ 1st
- Rate of Incarceration⁹⁵ 9th
- Crime Rate⁹⁶ 35th
- Violent Crime Rate⁹⁷ 16th
- Murder Rate⁹⁸ 20th
- Percent of Murders Involving Firearms⁹⁹ 23rd
- Rape Rate¹⁰⁰ 21st
- Robbery Rate¹⁰¹ 14th
- Property Crime Rate¹⁰² 9th
- Larceny and Theft Rate¹⁰³ 6th
- Rate of Motor Vehicle Fatalities¹⁰⁴ 13th



Democracy

(50th=Lowest, 1st=Highest)

- Percent of Voting-Age Population that is Registered to Vote¹⁰⁵ 43rd
- Percent of Voting-Age Population that Votes¹⁰⁶ 45th

Key Facts and Figures

Children and Families:

- In Fiscal Year 2010, there were 78,718 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect.¹⁰⁷
- Over 280 children died due to abuse or neglect in 2009.¹⁰⁸
- The rate of immunization in the 4:3:1 series (most basic vaccination series) for Texas children ages 19-35 months was 80.2 percent in 2009, below the national average of 81.5 percent.¹⁰⁹
- 49 percent of children in Texas live in low-income families – families whose household income is twice the federal poverty level – as opposed to 42 percent nationwide.¹¹⁰
- 87 percent of children whose parents do not have a high school degree live in low-income families, compared to 30 percent of children whose parents have some college education.¹¹¹
- In Texas, 66 percent of Latino children and 59 percent of black children live in low-income families, compared to 25 percent of white children.¹¹²
- 48 percent of children in urban areas and 55 percent of children in rural areas live in low-income families.¹¹³
- The maximum Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grant for a family of three with no income is \$250 per month in Texas, ranking 45th amongst the states.¹¹⁴
- In FY 2010, the average monthly benefit for Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) recipients in Texas was \$26.86, the lowest in the nation. The national average was \$41.52.¹¹⁵
- 24 percent of poor children in Texas are uninsured as compared to 17 percent nationwide.¹¹⁶

Education:

- In the 2008-2009 school year, Texas 4th graders who were proficient in reading fell 4 percent below the national level with reading levels of 28 percent proficiency.¹¹⁷
- In the 2008-2009 school year, Texas 8th graders who were proficient in reading fell 3 percent below the national level with reading levels of 27 percent proficiency.¹¹⁸
- 79% of 4th graders in families with low incomes were at a basic performance level in math in comparison to 95% of whites.¹¹⁹
- 69% of 8th graders in families with low incomes were at a basic performance level in math in comparison to 89% of whites.¹²⁰
- One in three high school teachers serving the highest percentages of low-income students lack full certification in the subjects they are teaching.¹²¹
- Nearly 30 percent of the teachers in the highest-poverty schools are not fully certified in mathematics including algebra I, one of the most important courses in high school.¹²²
- Almost half of English I teachers working in high schools with the highest proportion of African-American students lack certification in English.¹²³

Achievement Gaps:

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics. It is a nationally recognized assessment of what America's students “know and can do in various academic subjects.” According to the U.S. Department of Education website, “Achievement gaps are calculated by subtracting the scale scores of one subgroup from the

scale scores of another subgroup. NAEP scores are based on a scale from 0 to 500. The scale scores are a measure of student performance on the NAEP.”¹²⁴

The following are the differences – or achievement gaps – between the average scale scores of the following groups of Texas students in the 2008-2009 school year:

Whites & Hispanic Students

- 4th grade math: 20
- 8th grade math: 24

- 4th grade reading: 22
- 8th grade reading: 22

White & Black Students

- 4th grade math: 23
- 8th grade math: 28

- 4th grade reading: 19
- 8th grade reading: 25

Higher Education:

- In Texas, only 30.7 percent of the population aged 25-35 has an associate’s degree or higher, far less than the national average of 41.6 percent.¹²⁵
- Texas is ranked 42nd in residents 25-35 with an associate’s degree or higher.¹²⁶

- Only 15.9 percent of Hispanics in Texas earned an associate's degree within a three-year time frame, compared to 43.8 percent for whites.¹²⁷
- Undergraduate students in Texas borrowed on average \$4,723 in student loans in 2007, up from \$2,873 in 1995.¹²⁸
- Texas currently ranks 42nd in the number of high school graduates going to college, with 55.4 percent.¹²⁹
- In El Paso County, 18.8 percent of the population has a Bachelor's degree or higher, as opposed to 43.1 percent in Travis County.¹³⁰
- The University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University at College Station are the only Texas public institutions of higher education ranked in the top 100 in U.S. News and World Report's Best Colleges in the U.S., with UT is at #45 and Texas A&M at #63.¹³¹
- 50 percent of college freshman in Texas are enrolled in remedial or developmental classes, compared with 28 percent across the U.S.¹³²
- Texas funds only 32 percent of need-based financial aid, as opposed to 89 percent by the top-investing states.¹³³
- The share of Texan family income needed to pay for college expenses at public four-year institutions increased from 18 percent to 26 percent between 2000 and 2008.¹³⁴
- 36 percent of blacks and 38 percent of Hispanics graduate from a four-year institution within six years, compared with 56 percent of whites.¹³⁵
- 50 percent of first-time, full-time college students earn a Bachelor's degree within six years of entering college.¹³⁶

The Elderly:

- In a 2009 report, Texas had an 18 percent poverty rate among the elderly population (ages 65 and older), compared to the U.S. that had a 14 percent national elderly poverty rate.¹³⁷
- In 2009, there were 33.1 different prescriptions filled at retail drug stores by the elderly in Texas; in the United States, there were 31.2 prescriptions filled by retail drug stores for the elderly.¹³⁸
- The population in Texas that is over 65 years of age will be expected to grow from 2.1 to 7.4 million, or 258 percent, by 2040.¹³⁹
- The National Center on Elder Abuse reports that only one of every 14 elder abuse cases is reported. Only 1 of every 25 cases relating to financial abuse or exploitation – usually committed by family and trusted community members – is reported.¹⁴⁰

The Uninsured

- In 2009, about 50 million people in the United States, or 17 percent, of the non-elderly population were uninsured.¹⁴¹
- 28 percent or 6.1 million of the population of Texas is uninsured, the largest share of uninsured in the nation.¹⁴²
- From 2000 to 2009, the annual family health insurance premiums in Texas rose from about \$6,600 to \$13,221, or about 50 percent. During the same time period, median earnings rose only 38 percent.¹⁴³
- Less than 51 percent of Texas workers under age 65 had employer based health coverage in 2008-09; which is down 9 percent from 2000-2001.¹⁴⁴
- 16.3 percent of children in Texas were uninsured in 2009, compared to 8.6 percent nationally.¹⁴⁵

- In Texas, 63 percent of adults between the ages of 19 and 64 living in poverty do not have health insurance.¹⁴⁶
- Of those uninsured, 59 percent or 3.6 million, are Hispanic.¹⁴⁷
- 59 percent of Hispanics under age 65 had no health insurance compared with 11 percent of blacks and 26 percent of whites.¹⁴⁸
- 1.3 million Texas children or 21 percent of the population aged 18 and under, were without health insurance in 2009.¹⁴⁹
- Texas does not provide Medicaid to parents making even poverty level incomes; therefore, a working parent of two does not qualify for coverage if he or she makes more than \$4,943.70 in a year.¹⁵⁰
- A working parent in Texas is eligible for Medicaid if his or her income does not exceed 27 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). The FPL for a family of 3 is \$18,310.¹⁵¹

Health Professionals:

- Texas will have over 27,000 nursing vacancies by 2010, and that number is expected to double by 2015.¹⁵²
- By 2015, Texas would need more than 4,500 additional primary care doctors and other medical professionals in order to serve all of the state's medically disenfranchised population.¹⁵³
- Harris County, which includes Houston, Texas, has 28,274 licensed Resident Nurses; 20,220 of whom are employed as full-time nurses while 2,921 are unemployed.¹⁵⁴
- Travis County, which includes Austin, Texas, has 7,984 licensed Resident Nurses; 5,118 of whom are employed as full-time nurses while 956 are unemployed.¹⁵⁵
- Bexar County, which includes San Antonio, Texas, has 16,363 licensed Resident Nurses; 11,920 of whom are employed as full-time nurses while 1,582 are unemployed.¹⁵⁶

- Dallas County, which includes Dallas, Texas, has 16,718 licensed Resident Nurses; 12,208 of whom are employed as full-time nurses while 1,521 are unemployed.¹⁵⁷
- El Paso County, which includes El Paso, Texas, has 5,424 licensed Resident Nurses; 4,081 of whom are employed as full-time nurses while 517 are unemployed.¹⁵⁸
- Lamar County, which includes Paris, Texas, has 650 licensed Resident Nurses; 491 of whom are employed as full-time nurses while 67 are unemployed.¹⁵⁹
- Potter County, which includes Amarillo, Texas, has 1,228 licensed Resident Nurses; 858 of whom are employed as full-time nurses while 143 are unemployed.¹⁶⁰

Income Disparity and Employment

- The personal per capita income for Texans in 2009 was \$36,484.¹⁶¹
- 4.26 million Texans live in poverty, representing 17.3 percent of the state's population.¹⁶²
- Only 5.5 percent of Texas workers are members of a union.¹⁶³
- 47 percent of Texas children live in low-income families.¹⁶⁴
- Starr County led the state with 78.6 percent of the population considered low income.¹⁶⁵
- The richest 20 percent of Texas families have average incomes 7.9 times larger than the poorest 20 percent of families, ranking as the 9th highest gap in the nation. This ratio was 7.0 in the late 1980s.¹⁶⁶
- The richest 20 percent of Texas families have average incomes 2.8 times larger than the middle 20 percent of families, ranking as the 5th highest gap in the nation. This ratio was 2.3 in the late 1980s.¹⁶⁷

- From the late 1980s to the mid-2000s, the average income of the poorest 20 percent of families increased \$2,657, from \$13,430 to \$16,088.¹⁶⁸
- From the late 1980s to the mid-2000s, the average income of the middle 20 percent of families increased \$4,528, from \$40,046 to \$44,574.¹⁶⁹
- From the late 1980s to the mid-2000s, the average income of the richest 20 percent of families increased \$32,813, from \$93,846 to \$126,658.¹⁷⁰

Taxation:

- A 2009 study named Texas' tax system as one of the ten most regressive states in the nation.¹⁷¹
- A 2009 study found that Texas requires families in the bottom 20 percent of the income scale to pay more than three-and-a-half times as great a share of their earnings in taxes as the top one percent.¹⁷²
- The poor in Texas pay 12.2 percent of their income in taxes, the fifth highest percentage in the country.¹⁷³
- According to *Americans for Prosperity*, local government debt in Texas is over \$175 billion.¹⁷⁴

Transportation:

- Dallas-Ft. Worth and Houston were ranked 5th and 6th respectively among the 15 largest metropolitan cities in the yearly number of hours delayed in traffic.¹⁷⁵
- Over the next 25 years, road use in Texas will grow by 214 percent, much of it concentrated in the state's most congested metropolitan areas.¹⁷⁶

- Texas has 50,189 bridges, about 40 percent more than any other state.¹⁷⁷
- In 2009, there were 3,071 traffic fatalities.¹⁷⁸

Sex Education:

- In 2008, the birth rate for ages 15-19 in Texas was 63.4 per every 1,000 people, compared to 41.5 in the U.S., giving Texas the third highest teen birth rate in the nation.¹⁷⁹
- According to a 2009 study of sex education materials from 96 percent of all Texas schools, only 4 percent of schools in Texas teach about pregnancy and STD prevention in schools.¹⁸⁰
- 3.7 million Texas students are not taught basic information in public schools about STD prevention and unplanned pregnancies, and 25 percent of Texas school districts have no formal policy regulating sex education.¹⁸¹
- 41 percent of sex education materials used in Texas school districts contains factual errors.¹⁸²
- 53 percent of Texas students have had sexual intercourse, compared with 48 percent nationwide; 17 percent of Texas students have had sexual intercourse with four or more persons in their life, compared with 15 percent nationwide; and 43.6 percent of Texas students did not use a condom during their last instance of sexual intercourse, compared with 38.5 percent nationwide.¹⁸³

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Joe Madden, Executive Director
Phillip Martin, Policy Director
Jasie Boyd, Policy Analyst
Cappreese Crawley, Policy Analyst
David Kanewske, Policy Analyst
Lisa Mathews, Policy Analyst
Ashley Reeder, Policy Analyst
Kira Ruben, Policy Analyst
Mimi Tran, Policy Analyst
Rachel Watson, Policy Analyst
Kimberly Willis, Policy Analyst

If you want an additional hard copy for your organization, you may e-mail info@TexasLSG.org or write to us at the address below. *Texas on the Brink: Fifth Edition* may be downloaded at www.texaslsg.org/TexasOnTheBrink.

Endnotes

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