

# TEXAS EAGLE FORUM TORCH

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## Unmasking The Progressive Grassroots Education Lobby In Texas

By Merrill Hope, [breitbart.com](http://breitbart.com), 3/11/14

**Texas House representative Jimmie Don Aycock (R-Killeen) commended curious tactics used by**

**TAMSA (Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment) in passing House Bill 5 (HB 5) during the 83rd Legislative Session. He told an audience at this week's SXSWedu 2014 conference held in Austin about the grassroots group's behind-the-scenes actions praising them as savvy "political**

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# Unmasking The Progressive Grassroots Education Lobby In Texas

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trades” and deals made to influence legislation.

Aycock made the comments as part of a panel titled “Votes Matter More Than Money.” Also on the panel were TAMSA President Dineen Majcher, board member Joanne Salazar, and Vice Chair of the State Board of Education (SBOE), Thomas Ratliff.

HB 5 is now law. It introduced new high school College and Career Readiness (CCRS) standards that reduced the amount of end-of-course and exit exam standardized testing. It also lowered the credit requirements needed to graduate from high school and it modified the school accountability rating system. Aycock is listed as the lead author of HB 5.

Aycock praised TAMSA for pushing HB 5 legislation. Although the overabundance of standardized assessments is a valid concern, the consensus on HB 5 has been mixed and remains yet to be seen.

Aycock explained how TAMSA disrupted legislative business to accomplish their goal. He said, “There were points when (TAMSA) actually made deals with people.” Aycock admired the group’s deliberate strategy of flooding phone lines until, as he said, the elected official agreed to support HB 5 legislation.

According to Aycock, TAMSA “literally tied up the phone lines in the governor’s office.” Board member Salazar said this was the result of what she called their “silver bullet.” TAMSA e-blasted calls-to-action to their membership throughout the state with specific instructions to call Governor Rick Perry’s office to push him in the direction to vote for HB 5 starting 8 am on Monday and Tuesday of the week he signed the bill into law.

Salazar recalled that this applied pressure was very much felt. Phone lines were being answered in the governor’s office as “Is this about HB 5?” and not “Hello, Governor’s office.” Ratliff jokingly interjected, “Her real name’s Don Corleone” referencing the fictional iconic mobster in the The Godfather saga.

Salazar then described TAMSA as a brand that was trying to educate, engage and empower people to understand they could have a voice in the legislative session. According to their website, TAMSA is a non-partisan grassroots organization of concerned Texas parents who advocated for reduced standardized testing in place of more instruction time. While well intentioned, little is known about TAMSA.

Ratliff praised TAMSA’s efforts as “organic grassroots;” although, Aycock, contradicted this when he said that many scheduled meetings took place well before the last legislative session with TAMSA. Ratliff also identified himself as a paid lobbyist, and he criticized other unnamed group as being paid advocates or front organizations that “use the rank and file moms and dads as a prop.”

Breitbart Texas, however, reported on Ratliff’s history of attempting to silence that same rank and file he claims are being used by shadow organizations, the same moms and dads who are much less politically savvy than TAMSA.

TAMSA is not an ordinary group of moms according to Majcher. She likened the group to a well-organized machine drawing on a board made up of policy experts, lawyers, psychologists and engineers. This may well have explained

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***TAMSA is not an ordinary group of moms... She [Majcher] likened the group to a well-organized machine... made up of policy experts, lawyers, psychologists and engineers.***

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the nuanced and savvy politics that often elude those everyday moms trying to affect change.

Aycock explained the early legislative process, how it works, and who were the interested parties that worked together to make HB 5, which he authored, law. This included lawyers and paralegals, who were brought into shape the bill’s language, unnamed consultants, business leaders, and even some HB 5 opponents. Aycock stated that TAMSA was one of the groups involved since the beginning.

Even TAMSA did not get everything they wanted in HB 5. Their original goal was to reduce the number of annual high school standardized tests to three per year. It became five. Ratliff pointed out that even TAMSA had to make a deal.

“If you go all the way, you’re going to get nothing,” he stated about the reality of grassroots expectations in negotiations. Aycock agreed, insisting that he told TAMSA if they pushed for three tests, they would lose the deal. According to Aycock, the reason for the five tests was political.

He said, **“We presently know with five tests, one in four seniors will not graduate. If that number had been less, 40-50% wouldn’t graduate.”** He said that would have been politically disastrous.

After HB 5 passed, TAMSA were called heroes by self-admitted progressive Diane Ravitch, the education historian and author who originally hails from Houston.

TAMSA is already gearing up for the next legislative session. They want to replace the statewide STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) with nationally recognized assessments such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Stanford, ReadStep (Pre-SAT) or EXPLORE (pre-ACT). The STAAR tests are taken in grades 3-8 and for high school end of course exams. They are aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum standards.

**However, the national assessments TAMSA would like to use to replace STAAR are all aligned to the Common Core State Standards, the federally led education mandate that Texas rejected in 2013.**

Follow Merrill Hope on Twitter [@OutOfTheBoxMom](https://twitter.com/OutOfTheBoxMom)



# Some Thoughts On An Article V Convention

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Condensed from an article by Tom DeWeese, The New American, 3/11/14

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**Recently there has been a new twist in the effort to amend the Constitution to preserve freedom. It's called an Article V Convention of the States.**

**Proponents say it answers my concerns over the dangers of a Con Con [Constitutional Convention], and so many activists have asked me where I stand on this new effort. So here are a few thoughts.**

I certainly feel the pain of patriotic Americans over the state of our Constitution. The original document has been basically put in a museum in Washington, D.C., and forgotten. We are told it is old and outdated. Not relevant to today's age of technology and moral reality. How could it possibly be relevant to us today?

Well, you've all heard those arguments. The result is a government out of control. Something has to be done. There are those who argue that we can't wait to try to elect the right kind of representatives in Congress and the White House. We have to take matters into our own hand immediately.

Radio host Mark Levin wrote a compelling book suggesting that there is a pressure valve written into Article V of the Constitution that shows us the way, through a convention of the states — an Article V Convention, as it is called. And we are assured that this is not a Constitutional Convention (Con Con) through which states call on Congress to convene. Too dangerous, they tell us — and I agree.

Specifically, an Article V Convention is a meeting of the states — out of the control of Congress and the Pelosis of the

nation. Each state will get one vote, and that will prevent a runaway convention that could result in the gutting of the Constitution. And through such a process, the states can control the agenda of the convention and therefore pass Mark Levin's freedom amendments. It's that simple. Moreover, the idea has captured the support of well-respected leaders and advocates of limited government and Constitutional law. I believe most are sincere in their concern and desire to save our Republic. But I have a few questions and observations.

First, what is the real reason why we have to even consider trying to redefine what the Founders meant our government to be? After all, it's all in the Constitution already. Article V advocates will readily tell you that the real issue is that our government is failing or refusing to follow Constitutional Law. So, we must amend the Constitution to assure our freedoms are guaranteed.

But, if government today refuses to follow the Constitution, what will change once it is amended with the Articles of Freedom? The Progressives who are in charge simply do not believe in balanced budgets, gun rights, and control of our borders. In addition, they really don't care what a majority of Americans want, either.

Second, ...the Progressive movement today controls nearly every aspect of our governing process. What do Article V proponents think these forces are going to do while the convention process is going on? Progressive groups such as the Open Society Institute, the Center for American Progress, and the American Constitutional Society, to name a few — all groups funded by George Soros — are behind a movement for a more "Progressive Constitution." They are simply not going to let conservatives have the playing field to themselves. They will use every trick, spending every dollar in their bulging war chests, to assure they control the process.

Third, I have a great concern over how the Article V Convention is being promoted. I have seen pretty much every tactic used by powerful forces who are trying to railroad the people. The tactics always seem to be the same. Use the facilitation process to bring people into the fold, control the debate, and attack the opposition with accusations of deceit and fringe ideas.

...these are exactly the tactics I see being employed today by Article V proponents. Some of my associates have attempted to speak out at meetings where Article V is being promoted, and are not allowed the floor. A couple of my friends have been asked to represent the anti-Article V position. But, while the Article V proponent is given all the time he wants, the opposition is usually allowed only a few minutes to make their case. A deliberate attempt to silence opposition should cause people to question the motives of the perpetrators.

It is with great pain that I acknowledge that some people I really respect have joined the Article V effort. But I can't join them because, to me, something really smells about this Article V movement. Its arguments don't pass scrutiny. Its tactics are underhanded. Its source of funding is not in the open. I think honest Tea Party members and dedicated freedom activists should ask a lot of questions before risking our precious Constitution to their lot.

*Tom DeWeese is one of the nation's leading advocates of individual liberty, free enterprise, private property rights, personal privacy, back-to-basics education and American sovereignty and independence.*

Go to [americanpolicy.org](http://americanpolicy.org) for more information.



# Eagle Cliff Notes

## TEF Recognized As Expert In Grassroots Politics

After the March 4 Primary, Mike Hailey of *Capitol Inside* writes, "The Texas Eagle Forum and the Texas Home School Coalition are tied here in the ratings on which endorsements carry the most weight for candidates who are trying to prove to prospective GOP primary voters how and why they are the most conservative options in their particular races. Both of these groups are led by former Republican National Committee members who have legendary status on the GOP right in the Lone Star State. Texas Eagle Forum's president, Cathie Adams, served as the state Republican Party chair here as well for a while before Munisteri took over. Tim Lambert is the home school group's leader and founder. For official technical purposes, Adams issues endorsements individually without attributing them to the group that she leads specifically. But Adams and Lambert are experts in grassroots politics when it comes to pushing the buttons and doing the homework that keep their troops up to date on hot button issues and ready to go to battle at a moment's notice. They can rally volunteer armies in no time thanks to the infrastructure and networking systems that they've spent years cultivating and nurturing. These are the kind of folks who are going to be top of the line with or without social media, email and texts."

## A Tax Code For The 6%

Rasmussen recently released a survey revealing that a mere 6% of those surveyed thought the U.S. has the best tax system in the world. That's half the number of those who approve of Congress. Turns out that the 94% of doubters are right; our tax system fails us at every turn. The 40% U.S. corporate tax rate remains the highest in the world. Combine that federal rate with state rates and the U.S. has the highest capital gains tax in the world. Personal income taxes are no better. The labyrinthine tax code is inherently unfair because of the burden it places on individuals for compliance that even tax professionals find challenging. The code is written and enforced by government for the benefit of the government with little thought given to the complexity that an average taxpayer can barely understand. Likely no single act of Congress would be more beneficial to the economy than reform of the personal and corporate tax codes.

SOURCE: The Institute for Policy Innovation, 3/5/14

## DHS Orders Border Patrol To Stand Down

Top administration officials have directed 21,000 border patrol officers to retreat whenever illegal immigrants throw rocks at them, and to avoid getting in front of foreign drug-smugglers' vehicles as they head north with their drug cargoes. "Agents shall not discharge firearms in response to thrown or hurled projectiles... agents should obtain a tactical advantage in these situations, such as seeking cover or distancing themselves," said the instructions, issued March 7, under the signature of Michael Fisher, chief of U.S. Border Patrol. Agents were also directed to keep their weapons holstered when drug smugglers drive by.

SOURCE [MinutemanNews.com](http://MinutemanNews.com), 3/9/14

## Earth Day Condoms To Combat Overpopulation

"April 22 is the 44th Earth Day, and this year we want to bring the holiday's focus back to its origins: runaway human population growth and overconsumption, the root causes of our most pressing environmental crises," the Center for Biological Diversity wrote to its supporters. "We need people across the country to help distribute 44,000 Endangered Species Condoms in time for Earth Day," the Center continued. "These colorful, fun condom packages feature six species threatened by our growing human population — already more than 7 billion — along with talking points to help get the conversation started." Environmentalists have been increasingly turning back to arguments that the world is on its way to having too many people to

sustain life. The emphasis on population control comes as more and more evidence casts doubt upon the validity of the theory of man-made global warming. SOURCE: [dailycaller.com](http://dailycaller.com), 3/21/14

## Quote of the Month

*"If citizens cannot stand out in the open on a public road and voice their disapproval of their government, its representatives and its policies without fearing prosecution, then the First Amendment with all its robust protections for free speech...is little more than window-dressing—pretty to look at but serving little real purpose."*

John Whitehead,  
"Free Speech, RIP: A Relic  
of the American Past,"  
Rutherford Institute, 3/3/14

## Great American Quotes

*"To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical."*

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826),  
3rd President of the United States

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