



TEXAS EAGLE FORUM TORCH

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Keeping The Lights On In Texas

By Trayce Bradford, Dallas Eagle Forum and Tarrant County Eagle Forum President

On January 21, 2015, Texas Eagle Forum facilitated an education session to equip legislators and their staffs to understand the criticality of protecting the Texas electrical power grid from a terrorist attack. Hosted by Sen. Kelly Hancock and Rep. Tan Parker, on behalf of TEF, the featured speakers and experts included Dr. Peter Pry and Frank Gaffney. Dr. Pry heads the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, a

Congressional Advisory Board dedicated to protecting the United States from an electromagnetic pulse (EMP), and Frank Gaffney is the founder and president of the Center for Security Policy.

Exceeding expectations, over 80 representatives, senators, and “staffers” attended our breakfast meeting, “Securing Our Texas Grid.” An issue often perceived as ambiguous, and promulgated by conspiracy theorists, moved center stage and discussions

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Keeping The Lights On In Texas

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highlighted practical concerns and issues.

Texas has a unique situation in that 85 percent of the state is covered by its own grid. Although communities in the western region of the state, including El Paso, Amarillo, and Lubbock, and sections of East Texas, are outside the Texas grid, the complexities and barriers to change fall upon a single state jurisdiction. The “Don’t Mess With Texas” anti-regulation sentiments run deep and impacted the construction and management of the independent grid.

Several small generating plants throughout the state delivered power to the cities in the late 1800s. With the onset of world wars in the 1900s, especially WWII, several of these utility groups joined together to form the Texas Interconnected System (TIS), ensuring power to support factories that ramped up during the war effort. The TIS avoided federal regulations by not crossing state lines, limiting intrusion from the federal government, which suited Texans just fine.

Formed in 1970, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) is responsible for securing and protecting the Texas grid. Today, ERCOT manages the flow of electric power to 24 million Texas customers, and schedules power on an electric grid that connects more than 43,000 miles of transmission lines and 550 generation units. The grid remains beyond the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Texas is not completely independent, as electricity is imported from the East Coast grid and Mexico, yet Texas remains outside the federal domain.

Because of the relative independence from other states and federal jurisdiction, Texas has the autonomy and expediency to make important decisions that secure its resources and prepare for future events: natural atmospheric conditions, man-made attacks, and population growth. Both the historical precedence for natural disasters and man-made threats have become prominent concerns.

One such concern is the likelihood of an EMP, which is a burst of electromagnetic radiation. The resulting rapidly changing electric fields and magnetic fields may couple with electrical/electronic systems to produce damaging current and voltage surges, exponentially more dangerous than strikes of lightning.

An EMP can be triggered by a natural event, such as a solar super storm (a monster blast of geomagnetic particles from the sun). If this were to happen today, the result would be catastrophic. Because of our dependency on electronics, most

things we operate would shut down. NASA estimates such an event would create darkness in three minutes. Historically, solar super storms are projected to occur every 150 years, and we are already six years beyond that documented and validated trend.

Additionally, our political enemies can initiate a variety of attacks on our grid. A small-scale attack in California transpired in 2013. Communications cables were cut and 17 giant transformers were impacted by a few snipers at a PG&E station. Many believe this was an exercise on a small scale to be repeated in a broader and more destructive attack.

Another example of an enemy attack would involve a foreign country or coalition that would initiate a high-altitude EMP by using radio frequency weapons or nuclear weapons detonated above our country. We must also be aware of the increasing risks associated with cyber-attacks for which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reports are increasing in both frequency and sophistication. The proliferation of cyber-attacks against individuals, businesses and government entities have demonstrated the vulnerability that we live in today. **Hacking the power grid software and creating havoc on the electrical supply system would be one of the quickest ways to strike powerfully at the economy.**

Numerous studies have been conducted, including eleven by our own government. *Guilty Knowledge: What the US Government Knows about the Vulnerability of the Electric Grid*, produced by Frank Gaffney at Center for Security Policy, contains executive summaries of these eleven studies, and depicts significant concerns regarding the validity and immediacy of an EMP threat.

So, how will Texas respond to these realistic threats and what actions will commence in the coming months and years? TEF is currently collaborating with our state legislators and experts to construct a plan that secures our Texas grid. Legislation has been drafted authorizing a commission to study the costs and best practices to harden the Texas grid. Protecting the grid requires an immediate response to find the most efficient and effective plan that benefits Texas and other states. The Governor’s office held a meeting to start discussions for legislators and the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). We need all those with the expertise, wisdom, power, and concern to be at the table while the lights are still on.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: For those interested in helping with this important issue, please contact Leigh Wambganss (leigh@southlakerealty.com), Tarrant County Eagle Forum, and Legislative Coordinator for Secure the Grid; and Trayce Bradford (trayce3@me.com). For more information on the grid, check out securethegrid.com.

Opening The Door To Universal Pre-K Education

By Carole Hornsby Haynes, Ph.D.

For nearly a decade Texas politicians have been increasing the role of government in childhood education. Implicit is that government can do it better than parents. Now Texas legislators have introduced seven bills for pre-K.

These pre-K bills are a Trojan horse for the implementation of universal pre-K. The bills expand pre-K from the current state-paid half-day to state-paid full-day which will cost approximately \$7,300 per year, per child. Additionally, children who are not eligible for free pre-K can enroll with payment by tuition or by district funding.

- **House Bill 1100:** “gold standard” program with full-day care, parental engagement, and program assessment.
- **House Bill 4:** free pre-K program study- parental involvement- program assessment report to education commissioner by December, 2018.
- **House Bills 124, 186, 391, and 424:** expand from half-day to full-day, enroll four-year-olds ineligible for free pre-K with payment by tuition or district funding.
- **Senate Bill 23:** enrollment of four-year-olds ineligible for free pre-K paid for by tuition or district funding

In a nutshell, the proposed pre-K legislation will grow the Texas government even bigger, expand government schools when the public is demanding other choices for educating their children, create new spending for taxpayers when the facts do not support the claims of pre-K advocates, open the door to universal pre-K even though ALL studies have shown there is only a short term gain for students and can be detrimental to mainstream children, and kill school choice for early childhood by siphoning off private preschool and daycare students.

Governor Greg Abbott has stated that his goal is to insure that children are reading by the third grade. A major concern of pre-K supporters is that, if disadvantaged children do not have parents to prepare them for kindergarten, they will trail their classmates and will never be able to catch up. **However, reading specialists say that good reading teachers in K-3 can catch these children up.**

Researchers report that it is difficult to maintain lasting effects of a pre-school program because early elementary school children are in their major development years and are learning four times as much material during a regular school year as in the preschool years.

State Representative Eric Johnson (D) who filed HB 1100 along with Marsha Farney (R) stated, *“The research is in, and it shows that full-day pre-K is one of the best investments we can make in education. It can cut the achievement gap for children in poverty in half and will reduce future spending on remedial*

education, special education and the criminal justice system. If we’re serious about improving public, we’ve got to get serious about full-day pre-K.”

According to Rep. Johnson, research proves we can reduce crime, poverty, and illiteracy if we just implement full day pre-K. His bill calls for a “gold standard” pre-K program. Two well-known contemporary studies have been done since the year 2000 using the experimental design, the “gold standard” for evaluation studies in education.

One program is the Head Start Impact Study and the other is Vanderbilt University’s evaluation of a Tennessee statewide high-quality program. Neither of these studies shows long-term effects of pre-K. And from the U.S. Department of Health: *“In the long run, the cognitive and socio-emotional test scores of former Head Start students do not remain superior to those of disadvantaged children who did not attend Head Start.”*

Supporters ignore the Head Start data or simply imply that it is not high quality. They cite historical studies not comparable to contemporary studies or have methodological flaws as well as contemporary programs with methodological flaws.

Since the 1960s, billions of dollars from federal, state, and local governments, as well as private sources, have funded early-education programs. There have been meaningful short-term benefits but the academic gains “fade out” after the third grade. This phenomenon is considered important because either early schooling is immaterial to a child’s later education, or the current education system is an impediment to sustaining those early gains.

The Texas pre-K bills that have been filed include making the programs available to mainstream children. For mainstream children there is little evidence to support the theory that formal preschool and kindergarten are necessary for academic achievement. Research shows that early school can be detrimental to the behavioral development of mainstream children.

It’s irresponsible for our elected officials to even consider expanding public education when K-12 has failed so miserably. And it’s irresponsible for them to expand pre-K when the facts do not support what they are trying to sell to the Texas voters. Texas should continue half-day pre-K as currently required in Education Code 29.51, not expand to full-day, not permit children who are ineligible for free pre-K to enroll, continue to improve what is currently in place, and provide grants or tax cuts for parents to have school choice for their young.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: TEF opposes the proposed pre-K bills. Let your legislators know your opinion on these “progressive” education bills. For more information on early education, go to drcarolehhaynes.com. Dr. Haynes can be reached at 469-867-3086 or drcarolehaynes@drcarolehhaynes.com.

Faith And Family Day In Austin A Success!

Faith and Family Day didn't let bad weather stop the gathering of Texans from across the state to celebrate faith, family, and freedom on February 24. A highlight of the event was our celebration of the 10th anniversary of Texas' marriage amendment. Numerous State Representatives and Senators joined together in honor of our state's recognition of marriage between one man and one woman. Earlier in the day, Governor Greg Abbott reminded Texans of his commitment to continue to fight for marriage stating, "The Constitution gives states the right to define marriage." In addition, the "Houston 5" pastors encouraged the crowd to stand up for their faith without fear. Sen. Donna Campbell gave a stirring speech for protecting our religious liberty and was followed by Lt. Governor Dan Patrick who closed the ceremony by stressing the importance of faith in God and the need for "difference makers" in Texas "who stand for life, who stand for marriage, and who stand for the Constitution." TEF was a sponsor of this event.

Source: Texas Values Update



Governor Greg Abbott with Hannah, Ella, and Lyric Adams on Faith and Family Day

Church Attendance In The U.S.

A new Gallup poll offers some clues about Americans' church attendance—and the sizeable difference depending on the state where you live. Gallup ranked all 50 states and the District of Columbia according to how many responded that they attend religious services "at least once a week." Residents of Utah are most likely to attend a religious service weekly. According to Gallup, Utah owes its No. 1 ranking to Mormons, who "have the highest religious service attendance of any major religious group in the U.S." Utah is followed by Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Arkansas. Residents of Vermont are least likely to attend church weekly, followed by New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts and Washington State. **Texas ranked 39th.** The New England region reports the lowest levels of church attendance in the nation, while residents of the South report the highest church attendance rates. Gallup also notes that states with the highest levels of church attendance "are traditionally red states."

Source: The Daily Signal, 2/22/15

Young Republicans: Legalize Marijuana

A poll by the Pew Research Center last year found that 59 percent of Republicans opposed legalization of marijuana, compared to 34 percent of Democrats and 38 percent of Independents. A Gallup poll showed that nearly two-thirds of Republicans opposed legalization, compared to about a third of Democrats. But now, a Pew survey shows that 63 percent of Republican millennials, those born from 1981 to 1996, say marijuana use should be made legal, up from 34 percent in 2006. Among Democratic millennials, 77 percent agree. The growing support for legalization in Pew polls comes as Oregon, Alaska, and the District of Columbia passed ballot measures in the 2014 election legalizing marijuana use, joining Colorado and Washington. However, misgivings about marijuana legalization remain. Most Americans (54 percent) believe legalization would lead to use by more underage individuals; and 15 percent say marijuana is more harmful to people's health than alcohol, while 23 percent think it is more harmful to society than alcohol.

Source: Newsmax.com, 3/8/15

Ed. Note: Rep. David Simpson (R) has proposed HB 2165 that would legalize marijuana in Texas.

Quote of the Month

"The average American can fill out our taxes on a postcard, put down how much you earn, put down a deduction for charitable contribution, for home mortgage, and how much you owe. It ought to be just a simple one-page postcard and take the agents, the bureaucracy, out of Washington and limit the part of government."

Senator Ted Cruz, calling for replacement of the IRS with a simple tax or flat tax.

Famous American Quote

"It does not take a majority to prevail...but rather an irate, tireless minority keen on setting brushfires in the minds of men."

Samuel Adams, "The Father of the American Revolution"

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