

Why Texans Should Vote NO on Prop 4

Submitted by mjsamuelson on Mon, 10/05/2009 - 9:01pm.

I've held back on this because I wanted to give readers a chance to read the initial analysis of [Proposition 4](#). There are a lot of arguments out there in favor of it (the Fort Worth Star-Telegram has their endorsement [here](#)). I think you need to know, Prop. 4 is a bad idea.

One of the "elephant in the room" problems in Texas is higher education funding. The legislature "deregulated" tuition in 2003 to help balance the budget, and since then, Texas' public universities have become less affordable for many, if not most, Texas families. The Texas Tomorrow Fund has ceased to exist as a direct result of tuition dereg, and the Texas Tuition Promise Fund will eventually collapse as well. Since tuition deregulation, [tuition has skyrocketed](#), increasing by an average of 86% since 2003 (and there's a great breakdown of where that money has gone, at least in the case of UT-Austin, [here](#)). The result of all of this is a higher demand for financial aid, most of which is backed by state or federal tax dollars. Meanwhile, the university systems pay lobbyists to head to Austin and Washington to beg for more money.

Now, the "Tier 2" schools in Texas (specifically UT-Arlington, UT-Dallas, the University of North Texas, the University of Houston (home of the [tuition funds scandal](#) I discussed in [May](#)), Texas Tech, UT-El Paso and UT-San Antonio) want to receive special funding to attract federal research grants for their professors.

At the expense, of course, of classroom education.

Proponents of Prop 4 like to talk about how many "Tier 1" research universities there are in California (11) and New York (8) as opposed to Texas (3 - UT, Texas A&M, and Rice). What they don't tell you is that the graduates of those schools in California and New York come to

MOST RECENT POSTS

[The KBH Factor still looms](#)

[Taxing Your Home As A Hom](#)

[Welfare processing: What th](#)

[Vehicle Miles Tax: Bad news Americans](#)

[Wrong, Costly, Bad](#)

[Prop. 4: Discriminatory, Exp Unnecessary](#)

[GreenChoice is no choice for](#)

[Another Czar ... for Texas?](#)

[Why Texans Should Vote NO](#)

[Info on Texas Constitution A Election](#)

[Archive](#)

Texas - because we have an excellent business climate (have you seen the list of [Fortune 500 companies](#) headquartered in Texas? [We have more than New York](#)).

Tier 1 university is not a term that means "higher enrollment rate" or "higher graduation rate." It does not mean affordable tuition. UT, A&M, and Rice are three of the most expensive schools in the state. UT and A&M are certainly the most expensive public schools in Texas. Time was, a student who was smart enough for those schools but who couldn't afford or didn't want to go into debt to attend them went to one of the listed "Tier 2" schools. There used to be something approaching legitimate competition. Becoming more "prestigious" research campuses might be the perfect excuse to continue raising tuition. After all, you're getting a better education from a Tier 1 school, right?

Wrong. It isn't about education - it's about marketing. What is your university known for, and how easily do prospective employers recognize your alma mater? That's where these Tier 2 schools are rooting their argument for more money (Texas Tech in particular, if the Star-Telegram's statement about Sen. Duncan is to be believed). Nothing is there to stop them from raising tuition at the same time - in fact, some use "being competitive" as an excuse to raise tuition, like UT-Arlington's student body president argues [in this 2008 article](#), or like the Texas Tech student leadership approved of [earlier this year](#).

And tuition hikes are vicious things. Higher tuition cost = [higher demand for financial aid](#) = higher taxes to pay for federal loans, federal grants, etc. It isn't just tuition, either - universities like "Tier 2" and Prop 4 beneficiary UT-Arlington get around tuition caps and other such accountability measures with [increases in student fees](#). The point is, the more it costs to get a post-secondary education, the more the government is going to step in to [subsidize](#) it.

The really insidious thing about Prop. 4 is that it creates a whole new constitutional fund, but doesn't create a mechanism for sunset. Which means the initial money will eventually run out, and the universities will come back and ask for more. The people of Texas have one chance to vote on this: now. If this is approved, the legislature will have to address reauthorizing funds down the road - and we all know that the university lobby will make sure this is funded in perpetuity, with YOUR

tax dollars.

The Star-Telegram says "the money is available. We should use it." That is a rotten argument. The money is available now, sure. But what about after 2011? What about in 2031? When government spends money one time, it rarely (read: NEVER) stops spending.

Make no mistake - until we address university funding and accountability, no time will be a good time to create new funds. We need to say NO to Prop. 4.

Bookmark/Search this post with:



[mjsamuelson's blog](#) [Printer friendly version](#)

Post new comment

Your name: *

E-mail: *

The content of this field is kept private and will not be shown publicly.

Homepage:

Subject:

Comment: *

[Input format](#)

[Captcha](#)

This question is for testing whether you are a human visitor and to

prevent automated spam submissions. Capitalization does not matter.

FTRS **diamond**

Type the two words:



Preview comment

Post comment

Search

Texans for Fiscal Responsibility
P.O. Box 200248, Austin, TX 78720
919 Congress Ave., Ste. 1135, Austin TX 78701
Ph: 512-236-0201
A Project of Empower Texans, Inc.