



TEXAS CLASSROOM TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
NEWS RELEASE

DATE: Tuesday, September 25, 2007 CONTACT: Kristina Tirloni, (512) 477-9415
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Funding Requested for Required Educator Fingerprinting

(AUSTIN) — The Texas Classroom Teachers Association (TCTA) applauded the state's top leaders for requesting of the Texas Education Agency's acting Commissioner Robert Scott that TEA pay for state-mandated fingerprinting of current certified educators. Pursuant to a letter signed by Governor Rick Perry, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst and Speaker of the House Tom Craddick, funding for the new law is being sought directly from the Texas Education Agency's budget. Senate Bill 9, passed during the 2007 session, requires national criminal background checks, including fingerprinting, for all employees and certain other individuals who will have direct contact with students.

"We realize the need for safety measures to be put in place to protect the staff and students in every classroom; we simply felt the personnel affected by the new law should not be penalized by paying for a measure the state is imposing," explained TCTA Executive Director Jeri Stone. "We appreciate the message from our state leaders that they feel similarly and have taken the necessary steps to help educators comply with the law."

Prior to the passage of SB 9, only new applicants for certification were required to undergo a criminal background check by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC). Although these individuals will not have to re-submit their fingerprints, staff at TEA have estimated approximately 400,000 certified educators must submit their fingerprints to SBEC for a criminal history review before September 1, 2011.

In order to accomplish this goal, at its September meeting SBEC proposed rules designed to establish the requirements and procedures the agency will follow to govern the process when collecting and processing fingerprints. Although numerous details have yet to be worked out, SBEC has proposed the following general procedure for collecting fingerprints:

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(TCTA news release, continued)

- School districts will receive notification of upcoming deadline for compliance
- Districts must provide names and other identifying information for all certified educators employed by the district
- Educators will receive initial correspondence from SBEC via e-mail, allowing for 80 days to meet fingerprinting obligation
- Educators will receive a reminder notification if obligation to submit fingerprints has not been met after an initial 25 days
- Educators' certification will become inactive if obligation to submit fingerprints has not been met after 80 days

SBEC hopes to begin the fingerprinting process by January 2008. Educators should review, and if needed update, any information with SBEC to ensure the notification to submit fingerprints will reach them in a timely manner.

“TCTA has informed our members that the reality of the new law is that it could expose a previously unknown criminal history,” said Stone. “Under SBEC’s proposal, it is indicated the agency will conduct a review of the educator’s history in the same manner as it would had it received the information through any other means, on a case-by-case basis.”

SB 9 provides that an educator’s criminal history information may be reviewed by an employer school district. Although SBEC may choose to not take action on certain types of criminal histories, there may still be employment ramifications for educators at the local level, depending upon local policies.