

# School Board Advocacy Quick-Start

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The 39th Annual United Women in Faith Texas Legislative Event

Presented by Dr. Ellen Kimbrough Alexandrakis

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## The Basics

Elected school board representative (Trustee):	
Superintendent:	
Who is up for re-election in May 2026? (Check webpage)	Name(s):  How have they voted historically? (Chaplain bill, SB 10 comments, SB 11 vote) Notes:

**How do you want to identify? Choose the role that will best support your position.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent
<input type="checkbox"/> Clergy	<input type="checkbox"/> Faith tradition (specify):
<input type="checkbox"/> Community member	<input type="checkbox"/> Taxpayer
<input type="checkbox"/> ISD employee	<input type="checkbox"/> Former educator
<input type="checkbox"/> Current educator	<input type="checkbox"/> Business owner
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

**What kind of relationship do you have with your current school board members and superintendent?**

They don't know me, and I don't know them.

I could call them right now, and it wouldn't be weird.

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## Get Together

Which sounds appealing to you?

- 1:1 coffee date with your Trustee
- Small group event in your home with neighbors to visit with a Trustee
- Writing letters of support or concern (email is best)
- Making public comments at school board meetings
- Social media activity

## Homework: Getting Your Thoughts Together

Potential topics:

- Separation of Church and State
- America as a Christian nation
- Social-emotional learning vs. religious indoctrination
- Celebration of diversity vs. assimilation
- “But they don’t have to pray if they don’t want to.”
- “They shouldn’t be reading that filth.” (Book bans)

## The Assignment: Email Your School Board and Superintendent about SB 11

Use this structure (feel free to adapt):

1. Briefly explain who you are and why you are writing; use specific bill/policy language.
2. Share 2-3 broad points for supporting or discouraging the policy.
3. Explain personally how this impacts you, your family, students, and/or staff.
4. Thank them for serving and clearly state what you want them to do.

**Sample letters (feel free to borrow language):**

Letter 1

Dear Richardson ISD Board of Trustees and Mrs. Branum,

Since the six-month window for SB 11 has opened, I am writing to ask that Richardson ISD vote against the implementation of a designated prayer time in our school district. Not unlike the Chaplain Bill, SB 11 detracts from our main objective of educating all students and creates non-inclusive spaces which impede the learning environment.

Per Texas Education Code, policy already requires a daily minute of silence on every campus. During this time, each student may “reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity” that does not interfere with others. This framework respects diverse beliefs without elevating one faith over another.

Courts have repeatedly held that school-sponsored or school-endorsed prayer violates the Establishment Clause. Engel v. Vitale (1962) and Santa Fe ISD v. Doe (2000) make clear that official prayers - or policies that effectively endorse them - are unconstitutional and risk coercing students who hold minority or no religious beliefs.

Designating a formal prayer period can unintentionally create a non-inclusive environment, signaling endorsement and social pressure, contrary to the neutrality schools are required to maintain.

Finally, instructional minutes are finite. Texas districts must operate for at least 75,600 minutes each year; adding new mandates reduces time for core academics, interventions, and enrichment while expanding rights which students already possess.

I trust that when SB 11 comes up for a vote in the next six months, you will again think about the needs of all RISD students and vote against implementing this harmful legislation in our wonderfully diverse school district. Please follow suit with what you did on the Chaplain Bill and keep religious indoctrination out of our schools.

Sincerely,

Ellen Kimbrough Alexandrakis, Ed.D.

Letter 2

Dear RISD Board of Trustees and Superintendent Branum,

As the March 1 deadline approaches, I want to reiterate my strong urging that the Board of Trustees vote against implementing Senate Bill 11's designated prayer time in our schools. Students already have the right - and the practical opportunity - to pray during the school day in ways that respect every faith tradition and protect those who practice no faith at all. Creating an officially designated prayer period does not enhance religious freedom; it draws unnecessary public attention.

It invites students to be sorted into "participants" and "nonparticipants," and that kind of visibility can quickly result in social pressure, stigma, and exclusion - especially for religious minorities and nonreligious students. It also places a huge burden on our teachers, who would undoubtedly have to manage disruptions during and related to prayer time.

RISD should lead with what it does best: building a school culture where every student is safe, valued, and able to learn. Our district's diversity - including the wide range of faith traditions represented in our community - is a strength to protect. Our students deserve schools where they are fully welcomed for who they are, and not coerced to conform to a particular religious practice to feel included at school.

Warm regards,  
Ellen Alexandrakis, Ed.D.

**I'm happy to connect with you!**

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