



To Members of the Texas Retired Teachers Association:

I am happy to share my thoughts in relation to retired teacher benefit plans. I would also be delighted to answer questions submitted to [campaign@CollierForTexas.com](mailto:campaign@CollierForTexas.com).

### **Health Care**

Retired teachers suffered a cruel blow in the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature, enduring substantial reductions to healthcare benefits. Texans by and large would not support this if they knew what was happening. As Lt. Gov I will work to restore these benefits immediately and set Texas on a path to appropriately fund TRS-Care. While the cost of health care is increasing and putting a strain on budgets, the problem should not be transferred from the state to individual retired teachers.

### **Protecting Pension Benefits**

TRS will soon consider adjusting the underlying assumptions that drive funding requirements. Such an adjustment may very well trigger a choice between increased funding or reduced benefits. As Lt. Gov I will oppose reduction in benefits; rather, I will support increased funding not only to secure promises already made but to build-in cost of living adjustments.

### **Conversion to Defined Contribution Plan**

I do not support conversion from a defined benefit to a defined contribution plan. I consider such conversions to be nothing more than an attempt to reduce overall teacher compensation.

### **Combination of TRS and ERS**

I do not think combining the two plans will solve the fundamental problem, which is the lack of political will to fund teacher retirement. What's needed is a change in leadership so that we design, and then fully fund, compensation systems that attract the best and brightest into the teaching profession. I am concerned that combining TRS and ERS would be nothing more than a gimmick that would not solve the underlying problem.

### **Finding the Money to Fund TRS**

Securing teacher retirement benefits will take money. However, I do not support property tax increases for homeowners and small businesses. Texans are over-taxed already. Instead we must attack the root cause of our fiscal problems in Texas, namely the erosion of taxes paid by large corporations. I will provide the leadership to close loopholes in the property tax system that allow owners of large, commercial, and industrial properties to under-pay their taxes by as much as \$5 billion per year. This is not a tax increase; it is merely collecting taxes that are due under the Texas Constitution.

If this proves insufficient, I will then take my case to Texas voters that we must re-do the failed tax swap of 2006 that created a \$5 billion structural deficit. The margin tax debacle and resulting structural deficit has starved our state of resources, driven property taxes sky-high, and benefited primarily the largest corporations. Republican mythmaking notwithstanding, jamming the tax burden down Texans' throats, in favor of large corporate interests, is not necessary to create jobs.