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### **Killeen Chamber Supports Local Education Initiative**

The Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce (GKCC) Public Policy Council and Board of Directors voted March 7, 2018 to endorse the passage of both proposed Killeen Independent School District bond issues.

Proposition A is in the amount of \$235,000,000. Proposition A will address safety, security and accessibility and will provide new schools to accommodate growth. Proposition B is in the amount of \$171,000,000. Proposition B will address the renovation of existing schools and, in some cases, the replacement of existing schools.

Council members and board members cited several reasons for their endorsement, with support for the military and Fort Hood at the top of the list. A recent Memorandum for the National Governors Association dated February 23 reports the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force state that quality of schools will be a significant factor in future basing decisions. Improved school security was another critical factor that influenced the decision to support the bond. At present, KISD must use portable classrooms-which do not contribute to school security-to meet demand. Without this bond issue, the number of portable classrooms will increase and, in some cases, may require space in excess of that available at some schools.

The rising cost of construction and interest rates and the need to serve a rapidly growing population are also considerations. The last bond issue occurred in 2002, at which time the combined population of Killeen and Harker Heights was 114,995. Today it is 173,017, an increase of just over fifty percent. During that period, KISD student enrollment has increased 13,711 students and is expected to continue increasing into the foreseeable future. This bond issue will meet immediate needs plus a very conservative one percent growth rate-much lower than the historic growth rate.

The district's tax rate will remain competitive, with projections setting the rate at \$1.26 per \$100 valuation. At that rate, KISD will have the second lowest tax rate in the region, \$0.34 lower than the highest tax rate in the region and lower than comparable districts around the state.



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Finally, the bond will allow the school district to continue implementing the innovative education model that has enabled students to earn a bachelor's degree for approximately \$18,000. KISD, acting in collaboration with Central Texas College and Texas A&M Central Texas, has created a new education model that focuses on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curriculum and utilizes dual credit opportunities. This unique, affordable degree option produces positive economic benefits for our region and state, creates economic development advantages for our community and positions us as a state leader in education innovation.

"We recognize the challenges our school district faces as a result of the tremendous growth our community has seen," states GKCC Board Chair Abdul Subhani. "We are pleased that KISD has developed a solution with student safety in mind, and that will allow the district to continue providing a quality education to our students."

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