



Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Contact:  
Kyle DeBeer, Assistant Superintendent of  
Communications and Community Engagement  
254.755.9454 (office)  
254.307.8494 (cell)  
kyle.debeer@wacoisd.org

## Perez resigns from Waco ISD board citing health problems

*He is the longest-serving Hispanic school board member in the district's history.*

**WACO, Texas** – After 17 years as a member of the Waco ISD Board of Trustees, Larry Perez is stepping down. First elected in 2002, Perez is the longest-serving Hispanic trustee in the district's history.

In an email to the board, Perez said that he was resigning due to health problems. Perez's current term representing Trustee District 3 would have expired in May 2020.

"I'm honored that voters in South Waco trusted me to represent them for nearly two decades," Perez said. "When I was first elected, some families in our community told me that the district didn't listen to them. As a school board member, I set out to change that. With every decision, I asked what it would mean for kids in South Waco. I made sure that our voices were heard."

That approach became clear as the board considered the projects to be included in the 2008 bond program. After reviewing the district's facilities plan, which prioritized numerous projects over the construction of a new University High School, Perez offered a candid assessment.

"In my district, the community will not support a bond election without a new University High School," Perez told his fellow trustees at the time.

After Perez's comments, the proposed bond package was reworked to include the construction of a new University High School. The \$172.5 million bond issue was approved by voters in May 2008, and the new campus opened in 2011.

"When I walk through the halls at University High School today, I see more than a building," Perez said. "By 2008, the old University High campus was in terrible shape. Kids take note of those things. It had gotten to the point that the condition it was in made it harder for teachers to teach and students to learn. The new campus tells students that we value them and are invested in their success."

During Perez's tenure, the board also faced difficult decisions about how to close a \$3.4 million budget gap after state legislators cut funding for public education in 2011. Ultimately, the district closed nine campuses but avoided large staffing cuts or eliminating programs.

-continued-

“That was difficult,” Perez said. “We knew what we didn’t want to do. We didn’t want to shortchange students by laying off teachers or getting rid of programs. In the end, many of our campuses were underutilized, and the best solution was to close about a quarter of our schools. It wasn’t ideal, but at least if kids were going to have to move campuses, they wouldn’t be missing out on opportunities.”

Dr. Hazel Rowe, interim superintendent, said, “Larry has been a powerful voice for students and their families – not just the students in South Waco but all of our students. Over the past 17 years, he has volunteered his time investing countless hours in our schools and in our community. A generation of students have already benefited from Larry’s leadership, and generations to come will have better schools and more opportunities thanks to his vision for Waco ISD’s future.”

At their monthly meeting on May 23, school board members will discuss how to fill the vacancy created by Perez’s resignation and the vacancy created by Pat Atkins’ resignation earlier this week. State law and board policy allow the remaining board members to either fill the vacancies by appointment until the next trustee election in May 2020 or call for a special election in November 2019.

Perez’s last meeting as a board member will be May 23.

*Note to editor: A photo of Perez and his email to the board are attached.*

###

The Waco Independent School District (District) as an equal opportunity educational provider and employer does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, or genetic information in educational programs or activities that it operates or in employment matters. The District is required by Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as Board policy not to discriminate in such a manner.

For information or complaints regarding compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Title IX, please email [titleixcoordinator@wacoisd.org](mailto:titleixcoordinator@wacoisd.org) or contact Waco ISD Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and/or Waco ISD Coordinator of Student Management at 254-755-9410 and/or Waco ISD Director of Athletics at 254-745-2250. For information or complaints regarding compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Title VI and Title VII, as amended, contact the Waco ISD Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources at 254-755-9410. For information or complaints regarding compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, contact Waco ISD Special Education Director at 254-755-9472 or; P.O. Box 27, Waco, TX, 76703.