

## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Group of Parents and Community Members Draft Proposed Charter for Home Rule Commission Consideration**

DALLAS, TEXAS. A group of Dallas ISD parents and community members have drafted a proposed home-rule charter for consideration by the commission to be formed by the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees.

The proposed “accountability charter” leaves the district’s nine single member districts intact and proposes no changes to district borders, trustees or election cycles. True to its name, the “accountability charger” adds term limits that allow trustees to serve a maximum of three terms and also includes a recall provision for trustees that mirrors the Dallas city council’s recall provision. The charter also empowers the Board of Trustees to set the first day of the school year at their discretion and requires that the district give (at least) an annual report of educational outcomes against established benchmarks. Under the “accountability charter,” the district remains subject to all other provisions in the Texas Education Code, as it is currently. Specifically, teacher protections in chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code remain in place, without change.

“Our hope is that the commission will consider adopting this charter,” said Mark Melton, a Dallas ISD parent and member of the group. “It’s in the best interest of our city and the district to address the issues of home rule sooner rather than later, as opposed to allowing such a potentially-divisive fight to drag on for years.”

Another member of the drafting group – and Dallas ISD parent – Eric Cedillo, added that, “it is important to note that our group does not endorse home-rule, generally. Rather, we are advocating for this proposed charter in an effort to focus the debate on substantive issues and in the hope of avoiding a prolonged political dispute that could set back race relations in Dallas by decades. We need to use this opportunity to build bridges – and consensus – throughout the community. Above all else, we refuse to allow this issue to sew, anew, the seeds of division in Dallas ISD.”

“As surprising as it may seem, some members of this group may, ultimately, oppose home-rule at the ballot box. But, for now, the most important aspect of this debate is that we end it as quickly as possible by bringing home-rule to a vote so we can avoid a protracted, divisive fight that returns Dallas ISD to the days of recrimination and racial suspicion and, instead, allows us all to focus our efforts on the business of educating all of our community’s children as effectively as possible,” said long-time educator and committee member, Dr. Thalia Matherson.

The “accountability charter” can only be approved in an election where at least 25% of registered voters cast a ballot in the election. Of the elections that fall within the lifespan of a proposed charter, only the November, 2014 or November, 2016 election could potentially bring the required quorum of voters to the polls. Carla De Leon, parent and drafting committee member, pointed out that, “if the commission fails to produce a charter in time for the November, 2014 election, Dallas taxpayers will be forced to pay millions for elections that, if history is any guide, cannot possibly produce the quorum required to approve or reject the proposal. And, those are millions better spent in the classroom.”

Committee member Chief Greywolf added, “We need to get through this quickly so we can all get back to working together toward our common goal of ensuring that every child of every color and creed receives a quality education in Dallas ISD. Let’s address the question promptly, and head on, and let the voters approve or reject this measure.”

For more information, contact Mark Melton at 214-908-4829 or at [mmelton@hunton.com](mailto:mmelton@hunton.com).

#### **About the Drafting Committee**

The drafting committee is composed of delegates selected by the leadership from each group of stakeholders represented. Its members are:

- Mark Melton, a Dallas ISD parent and attorney practicing in Dallas;

- Eric Cejudo, a Dallas ISD parent and attorney practicing in Dallas;
- Carla De Leon, a Dallas ISD resident and attorney practicing in Dallas;
- Dr. Thalia Matherson, a retired educator; and
- Chief Greywolf, the Principal Chief of the Sovereign Cherokee Nation Tejas.

This group is not associated with Support Our Public Schools and neither endorses nor opposes home-rule. Its purpose is to avoid the divisiveness within the community that must, necessarily, flow from a drawn-out debate and, instead, to foster a productive dialogue among the various groups, constituencies, and ethnicities that comprise the city of Dallas – and Dallas ISD – in an effort to build trust and consensus for future collaboration to benefit the city and, importantly, its children.

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