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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 29, 2007

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**HOUSE DEMOCRATS PASS HISTORIC TEACHER PAY RAISE,
KILL SCHOOL VOUCHERS**

~ BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC PRIORITIES ~

AUSTIN—Texas House Democrats passed an historic increase in teacher pay and killed efforts to fund private school vouchers today, flying in the face of opposition from Republican Speaker of the House Tom Craddick. Led by Reps. Rick Noriega (D-Houston) and Joe Heflin (D-Crosbyton), Democrats in the House led a bipartisan coalition to convert a controversial and divisive teacher incentive pay program—which is opposed by teachers across the state—into an across-the-board pay raise for every teacher in Texas and drove a nail into the coffin of private school vouchers.

During today's debate on the \$165 billion Texas budget, Rep. Noriega authored a measure to increase teacher pay by approximately \$900 annually for every Texas teacher, librarian, counselor, and nurse.

"Hardworking Texas teachers deserve to be paid what they are worth. Texas teachers are paid thousands of dollars below the national average. The teacher pay raise we passed today will help to get Texas teacher pay closer to the national average," commented House Democratic Leader Jim Dunnam.

Following the vote increasing teacher pay, Rep. Heflin led a bipartisan coalition to kill efforts to rob public schools to pay for private school vouchers.

"Texans have spoken and we've been on their side—we hear them loud and clear," said Rep. Dunnam. "Texans support our public schools and they simply do not believe it is right to rob our public schools to pay for more failed social experiments. Today, a bipartisan majority of the House rejected the radicalism of Rick Perry, Tom Craddick, and James Leininger."

"By passing an across-the-board pay raise for Texas teachers and killing vouchers, House Democrats are delivering on the promises we have made the people of Texas. We will continue to work hard for hard-working families," Rep. Dunnam concluded.