

Hardy, Hall vie for state ed board

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PAT HARDY



BRANDON HALL

The local race for the State Board of Education pits an incumbent who wants to complete social studies text choices against a pro-voucher challenger.

Springtown youth minister Brandon Hall initially planned to challenge Texas Rep. Glenn Rogers, R-Graford, over the voucher issue.

His entrance in that Texas House of Representative race, though, would have divided the pro-voucher ticket with Aledo voucher backer Mike Olcott already in the GOP race.

“But I looked at the SBOE 11 race and saw we didn’t have someone who is a voice for choice,” Hall said. “So, I think what we need is a solid, conservative fighter.”

That last line could be a slogan for Patricia “Pat” Hardy of Fort Worth, after 22 years on the elected panel that selects text books and oversees investment of the \$45 billion Permanent School Fund.

Hardy spoke to the *Weatherford Democrat* fresh off a week in Austin fending off what she called a one-sided presentation of climate change in eighth grade science texts.

“I took the stand that, whatever we teach, we need to teach there’s two sides of thought,” Hardy said. “If you’re going to tell them electric cars are good, you need to tell them what’s not good. It was a real effort to get balance.”

As for vouchers, which Gov. Greg Abbott forcefully but unsuccessfully pushed during the regular and three special legislative sessions last year, Hardy notes the SBOE has no voice in that issue.

For the record, though, the retired, 47-year public school educator in Castleberry and Weatherford ISDs opposes diverting taxpayer money to private schools.

The reasons she cites start with the lack of adequate funding public schools already receive and a lack of accountability required of private institutions. She adds to those concerns her caution that the public funds would be sought by a “School of Satan” or a madrassa teaching Sharia Law.

In selecting text books for the state, the first thing the state board does is set the standards, formally called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

Subject matter experts, teachers and the industry members design those TEKS, under the board’s scrutiny, and send them on to publishers.

The resulting product from publishing houses, which court Texas’ massive textbook market, is then voted up or down by the board. There can be some back-and-forth if the board wants the publishers to make tweaks.

“They were very willing to cooperate,” Hardy said of the science book offerings.

Still, the board rejected seven of 12 eighth grade science books it looked at Feb. 5-9.

Hall, who’s mother’s family was in Parker County in the 1800s, is in his first political race.

The two are vying in SBOE District 11, comprised of Parker, Tarrant, Hood, Johnson, Somerville and part of Dallas counties.

The winner on March 5 will face teacher Rayna Glasser, who is unopposed for the Democratic nomination, in the Nov. 5 general election.

On investing the Permanent School Fund’s billions, both candidates agree with recent state policy to avoid putting state resources into investment firms that include so-called Diversity, Equity and Inclusion assets in their portfolios.

“I am against DEI in any form,” Hall said, after describing the investment philosophy he would bring to the board. “I think it’s just by being a solid conservative, looking out for taxpayers and also parents — not just schools and teachers.”

Hardy said the state board rooted out investments it formerly made in BlackRock, a firm which avoids the Texas oil and gas industry.

She also reported the legislature recently combined the state board with the General Land Office for investment purposes.

The resulting Permanent School Fund Corp. — comprised of five education board members, the land commissioner and three gubernatorial appointees — has both the education board’s \$45 billion and the land office’s \$10 billion to invest.

The new investment corporation is one of two reasons Hardy said she seeks a final term.

“I would love to see us through the end on things like social studies standards,” she said. “I can rest easy once that is done. and I’d like to see the PSF corporation off to a good start.”