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Susan Pape, Executive VP, Chief Operating Officer

## Give school employees living wages

School districts try to produce graduates who will earn enough to support their families and communities. In another fashion, districts can give the same kind of help to certain families and communities — by giving school workers a living wage.

This is what some of these workers — aided by organizations such as COPS/Metro and the Southwest Workers Union — are advocating for school districts in San Antonio.

School boards, in preparing their next budgets, should make this happen. San Antonio Independent School District can set the example.

In an ideal world, the Texas Legislature would have put a measure on the ballot this year that would have asked voters if they wanted to up the state's minimum wage — now matching the federal level of \$7.25 per hour. That proposal by Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer, D-San Antonio, floundered in the last session, legislators not trusting voters with a basic decision on fairness, though the boost would have taken the wage up to only \$10.

No worker should earn less than a living wage for full-time work. But absent legislative action, taxpayers can still help the employees who essentially work for them by supporting this effort.

The city of San Antonio and Bexar County have already taken such action for their employees — a move urged by COPS/Metro. School districts can do the same. And the Legislature can help by upping the amount of state financing for schools no matter how the Texas Supreme Court rules on a pending case on the constitutionality of the current funding method.

An Express-News article recently by Alia Malik and Greta Kaul explained that the alliance pushing this proposal is urging a wage floor of \$13 per hour next fiscal year and a move to \$15 within three years.

An SAISD spokeswoman said fewer than 1,000 of the district's 3,500 full-time, nonexempt workers make less than \$13 per hour. The alliance estimates that 2,000 could also be affected if they get "decompressed" wage increases — more senior workers who make more than \$13 an hour also getting a boost.

The alliance will also campaign for such increases in Harlandale, Northside and North East ISDs.

The article told of workers who have second jobs to support their families. Their children often attend SAISD. And that provides another reason for increasing this pay. Children with absent parents often do not fare well in school.

Mostly, however, living wages for public employees is simply a matter of fairness.