

Kolkhurst letter (in part)
Sunday, August 27th 2023 The Banner Press
Underlined words are my additions.

In Kolkhorst's letter to the trustees, she said she sees two issues she sees "as a chance to improve this school district we all deeply cherish." "The deficit spending in Brenham ISD is a concern for everyone and deserves scrutiny," her letter states. "I have visited with many superintendents who tell me there continues to be inflation pressure. The Texas Legislature passed a general appropriations act that includes an additional \$5 billion that would be appropriated to school districts, but lawmakers have yet to pass a school finance bill.

I wrote Governor Abbott in June requesting an immediate special session on school finance. "In the meantime, there are other underlying issues that are causing these deficits. As trustees, you have identified that we still have not reached our pre-COVID average daily attendance. BISD was expecting an additional 230 students to arrive at the start of this school year. That remains to be seen, but we hope that more people will enroll their children in BISD, making your enrollment projection correct.

If not, the overestimation will impact future funding." In the letter, Kolkhorst stated her staff is doing a "deep dive" on the finances of Brenham ISD while enlisting the help of other state agencies. "It has been suggested that the trustees of BISD could call for a Legislative Budget Board School Performance Audit," the letter stated. "In existence since 1990, Senate District 18 has had several school districts undergo such an audit. This is an extensive review performed by a team of professionals that work for the state of Texas. An audit could be a roadmap to future financial solvency at BISD.

"Potentially, there are other issues in a flawed school formula that could be revealed by the audit. My office is researching a potential negative financial impact on certain school districts like BISD that compressed (tax rates) in 2006 from \$1.50 to \$1. This would possibly have punished school districts that were fiscally conservative and had not yet reached the \$1.50 cap in 2006. This is something I am committed to researching and solving if found to be true," Kolkhorst stated in the letter.

"To quickly alleviate financial troubles, both sides of the ledger must be addressed: expenditures and revenue.

I strongly encourage the board to consider a LBB School Performance Review. The state pays for 75 percent of the expenditure. There is also a trigger that the LBB could automatically choose Brenham ISD, leading to zero expenditure by the district."