# School District Discipline Policies Labeled 'Ridiculous'

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**At a time of budget cuts and teacher layoffs, the 11 biggest districts in Texas spent a quarter BILLION dollars on discipline**

At a time when Texas school districts are dealing with major cutbacks in funding, a new report shows the eleven largest school districts in Texas, including the San Antonio Northside ISD, spent a total of nearly a quarter billion dollars in the 2010-2011 school year on discipline, and punitive actions toward students, 1200 WOAI news reports.

Members of the Senate Education and Criminal Justice Committees were outraged by the expenditures, and what they said are 'out of control' school disciplinary programs which frequently result in minority and special needs students facing more discipline than other pupils.

Kathryn Freeman, an analyst with the Texas Appleseed Coalition, a liberal group, says in districts like Northside, about half of the $13.1 million lost in discipline and security programs is due to 'out of school suspensions,' students being sent to alternative schools for code violations which do not involve lawbreaking or anything that endangers other students or faculty, things like running in the halls, talking out of turn, and being in the hallways without a pass.

"Most of the out of school suspensions are made by administrators by local code of conduct violations," Freeman said.

She said in Northside, which was the only Bexar County district studied, costs to taxpayers include $208,000 on discretionary expulsions, $5.718,000 for operating the district's three alternative campuses, and $679,000 in state dollars lost to the district because students who are on out of school suspension are not in the classroom, so the districts are not reimbursed for the state.

She pointed out that 93% of the 12,329 out of school suspension referrals made during the 2010-2011 school year were made for 'discretionary reasons,' which have nothing to do with

safety or criminal activity, and come at a time, ironically, that Northside is implementing a very controversial RFID identification chip program designed to make sure students are in their seats so the districts can be reimbursed by the state.

State Senators say the problem, not specifically at Northside but across all school districts, are so called 'zero tolerance' program which, in the words of State Sen. Florence Shapiro (R-Plano), "trump common sense."

Many lawmakers suggested changes which would limit the use of 'zero tolerance' policies, which have famously resulted in honor students being suspended for bringing a Tylenol to class.

State Sen. Royce West (D-Dallas) also complained again about school district police officers, who write tickets for minor offenses which in previous years would have resulted in a visit to the principal's office.

He says on average, more than 80% of male Black students have faced disciplinary action at least once, a figure West called 'ridiculous.'