

StanfordResearch

To: Interested Parties
Fr: Jason Stanford
Dt: Wednesday, March 9, 2005
Re: Grusendorf and taxes

Kent Grusendorf, the Republican point man for higher taxes, has never previously supported school finance reform. Mr. Grusendorf has not always paid his own taxes and said that he didn't think it was important.

Cyco Manufacturing, owned by state Rep. Kent Grusendorf, is listed as owing personal property tax on a boat of \$ 3.10, including penalties and interest. Despite the small amount, it has gone unpaid for 11 years. Grusendorf said he didn't know of the tax because he never received a bill. Tax bills are often not sent on such small amounts, tax officials acknowledged.

Grusendorf said he did not call to check on the tax after being told by a reporter in October because **he didn't consider it a priority** and forgot. He said that the 14-foot fishing boat was provided as "an employee benefit" and that he no longer owns it.

His firm also paid nearly \$ 500 in penalties and interest for late tax in 1993 and 1994, records show. (Ft. Worth Star-Telegram, January 26, 1997)

Additionally, he frequently provided partisan opposition to previous attempts to reform school finance, even when then-Gov. George W. Bush tried to pull this off in 1997:

Rep. Kent Grusendorf, a staunchly conservative Republican from Arlington, delivered the response for the tax bill's opponents, including 33 of his GOP colleagues.

His voice hoarse from laryngitis, Grusendorf told members there are too many new taxes and fees in the plan. He also complained that a key goal of the plan - having the state pick up nearly 80 percent of cost of public education - is not worth the local control that school districts would forfeit.

"Robin Hood hasn't gone away," he chided. "He's just disguised himself as a sheriff." Grusendorf expressed hope that the Senate, where the package might face a \$ 1 billion reduction, will take a more conservative approach.

... Gov. George W. Bush, who has faced resistance in his own party because of the tax increases envisioned in the plan, warmly embraced the package in a statement issued just after the vote.

"Thanks to a lot of hard work and a full and fair debate in the House of Representatives, Texas is a major step closer to cutting school property taxes, cutting our overall tax burden and funding our schools," Bush said. (Ft. Worth Star-Telegram, April 27, 1997)

"We're not talking about spending cuts, we're talking about expanding state spending," said Rep. Kent Grusendorf, R-Arlington, who voted against the plan. "The word Texas, you just shift a couple of letters and you've got taxes." (Dallas Morning News, April 27, 1997)

When Gov. Bush came back again in 1998 with another attempt at reshuffling taxes, Mr. Grusendorf appeared at a press conference to deny that Republicans wanted to tax food, as they recently proposed with the Snack Tax.

"We did not vote to tax food and medicine," said Rep. Arlene Wohlgemuth of Burleson, who held the event with fellow GOP House members Kent Grusendorf of Arlington and Carl Isett of Lubbock. "It's time for a little truth. " (Dallas Morning News, Jun. 27, 1998)

Mr. Grusendorf also opposed the 1993 school finance plan because it removed local control over property tax rates, a major objection to the current plan.

Grusendorf opposed the constitutional amendment because he said it allowed the state rather than local districts to set the tax rate. (Houston Chronicle, May 2, 1993)

It should come as no surprise, then, that Mr. Grusendorf opposed the concept of equality in education from the get-go, which the Republican tax plan would largely unravel.

Rep. Kent Grusendorf, R-Arlington, a member of the House Public Education Committee, said he objected to the "'Robin Hood" concept of redistributing tax dollars from rich to poor districts and predicted it will be "'almost impossible" to pass a school finance plan in November.

"It's probably going to be difficult to get a consensus in January," he said. (Houston Chronicle, October 21, 1992)