



Race to the Top:

November 26, 2012

# Perry, Charter Schools Split Over Obama's Federal Grants

## Charters Tied to Perry's Sister and George P. Bush Solicit \$17 Million

The Obama administration's \$5 billion "Race to the Top" educational grants appear to be driving a big-government wedge between Governor Rick Perry and a chain of North Texas charter schools that has enjoyed the backing of the governor's older sister and George P. Bush.

In 2009 Education Secretary Arne Duncan invited states to compete for these Recovery Act-funded grants, which many conservatives endorsed. Newt Gingrich and Jeb Bush praised Race to the Top, for example, for making schools, teachers and students more accountable to standardized tests and for promoting tax expenditures on private charter schools.

While many Republican governors competed for the funds, fed-up Governor Perry refused. He stated in a press release that, "We would be foolish and irresponsible to place our children's future in the hands of unelected bureaucrats and special interest groups thousands of miles away in Washington."

This unusual position prompted speculation that Secretary Duncan designed the latest Race to the Top competition with Texas in mind. It invites school districts and charter schools across the nation to individually apply for a total of \$400 million in grants, thereby circumventing a gubernatorial boycott.

Austin's *Quorum Report* recently reported that Texas schools account for 10 percent of all the applications that Duncan has received for the new program.<sup>1</sup> One applicant is Uplift Education, which is asking the Obama administration for \$16.8 million for five charter schools in North Texas.

Governor Perry's lobbyist sister, [Milla Perry Jones](#), sat on the boards of Uplift Education and a related foundation as recently as 2009. Uplift has since added another politically connected board member. It recently recruited George P. Bush, the Jeb Bush son who is exploring runs for Texas state land commissioner or comptroller.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Texas Public and Charter Schools Lead Nation in Race to the Top Applications," *Quorum Report*, November 14, 2012.