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## FROSH DEMS ASK PERRY TO CALL SPECIAL SESSION

Say the most important work of the session is yet to be done.

A dozen *freshman House Democrats* gathered this morning to call for a special session on school finance, saying that they still wanted to make good on the promise to “fix school finance” they made to their constituents during their first run for office.

The group asked **Gov. Rick Perry** to call a special session immediately, a request they intend to put in writing in a letter to Perry later today. **Rep. Melissa Noriega (D-Houston)** said now was the time to resolve school finance – before the next session and before the school finance trial – because the state can’t wait.

“This can’t wait two more years. This can’t wait until the court case is done. This can’t wait,” Noriega told reporters. “Every year we’re losing children. Half the kids aren’t graduating from high school, and not just in my district but in many districts. This is a real child that belongs to someone, and this can’t wait.”

**Rep. Veronica Gonzales (D-McAllen)** and **Rep. Mark Strama (D-Austin)** spoke about reviving the Democrats’ “Live and Learn” plan presented early in the session. Strama it was time to find the common denominators in the two chambers’ plan. Strama said tripling the homestead exemption, a component of the Democratic “Live and Learn” plan, could provide the kind of property tax relief that many Texans deserve.

The first-year lawmakers spoke of their commitment to participate fully school finance discussions, pointing out that their districts represent the majority of Texas schoolchildren. **Rep. David Leibowitz (D-San Antonio)** said it was important to make sure that ideology and personality did not get in the way of resolving the biggest stalemate of the session.

Leibowitz said freshman Republicans privately shared the same frustration as their Democratic colleagues on the difficulty in resolving the school finance issue, except it was more politically difficult for them to speak out on the issue.

“As much as each of us would like to get home to our families and our constituents, we believe the Governor should issue an immediate call for a special session focused exclusively on public education,” said **Rep. Rafael Anchia (D-Dallas)**. “The negotiations that seemed to begin in earnest only in the last week and should continue until we have a resolution.”

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