Legislators Encourage Students in Pinkston's Early College Program to 'Not be Complacent'

By John Turner | December 17, 2018

Newly elected Texas Rep.-Elect John Turner and Texas Sen.-Elect Nathan Johnson (D-Dallas) spoke with more than 40 students from L.G. Pinkston High School during a special event at Haynes Boone's Dallas office Monday.

The duo enlightened the room full of juniors about upcoming issues in the 2019 Texas Legislative Session, which convenes Jan. 8. Turner and Johnson encouraged the students to get involved in their community and politics at the local level.

"You can make more of a difference than you think," said Turner, a partner at Haynes Boone and a Democratic member-elect for the Texas House of Representatives.

The speakers noted four important funding areas that the state government will discuss in the new legislative session: education and public schools, healthcare, the state's transportation network, and criminal justice.

"There are hundreds and hundreds of laws that are considered every legislative session, and we wanted to give you an idea of some of the issues we will be addressing," Turner said.

Johnson added: "The kinds of things we are doing in Austin will have a profound effect on all of your lives. We want to encourage you to stay engaged in politics in your state and be a part of the conversation. Care about what the legislature is doing."

The event got the students thinking.

George Rivera, 17, said he believes education and school funding are the most critical of the key upcoming state budget issues.

"We need to make sure kids are educated. If we don't have proper education, we don't have people in good jobs or in good positions in government making decisions for us," he said.

Rivera and his classmates are enrolled in Pinkston High's Pathways in Technology Early College High (P-TECH) School program, which allows students to earn a high school diploma and an industry-recognized associate degree and gain relevant work experience in a growing field.

Most of the students are first-generation college students, said Brian Lusk, chief of strategic initiatives for Dallas Independent School District.

"These early-college high school students have the determination to attend college and are historically underrepresented in higher education," Lusk said. "This is an important way of giving the kids exposure to a professional work environment and community leaders like Turner and Johnson."

Haynes Boone's Diversity & Inclusion Committee sponsored today's event, which was the firm's second event for Pinkston High students in a week. The programs are an important component of

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Haynes Boone's pipeline programs that aim to help develop a diverse network of young people interested in pursuing legal careers.

Johnson, whose wife Anne Johnson is a partner at Haynes Boone, encouraged the students to get great jobs, be kind to everyone, and not be complacent.

"We want to make sure you have the opportunities to become the young professionals that you deserve to be," Johnson said. "You are valuable citizens in the state of Texas."

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