

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

ABOUT **Home Rule** **School Districts**

There is an effort, led by Houston billionaire and former Enron trader John Arnold, to convert the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) into a Home Rule Charter School District. Supported primarily by Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings and DISD board trustee Mike Morath—this effort undermines Dallas schools and students, and threatens to undercut public accountability for our city’s schools.

Parents, community members, elected leaders and educators should know the facts about home rule and what it could mean for our community, our schools and our children.

What is a Home Rule Charter School District?

- Established by a bill passed in 1995 in the Texas Legislature, Home Rule provides authority for voters in a school district to choose to convert an entire district into a Home Rule Charter School District.
- This authority has never once been used anywhere in the state.

How does a school district become a Home Rule Charter School District?

- Supporters must gather signatures from 5 percent of the registered voters in the school district (about 25,000 signatures).
- Once the petition is submitted and passed through several reviews, an election is held.
- The election is not valid unless 25 percent of registered voters in the district participate.

Who is behind this attempt to take over of DISD?

There are three key players behind the push for Home Rule, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.

- **John Arnold**
 - A billionaire hedge fund manager and former Enron trader, he has supported the private takeover of public school operations.
 - A major player in ongoing efforts nationwide to eliminate defined benefit pension programs for teachers and public employees.
- **Mayor Mike Rawlings**

- **Dallas ISD board trustee Mike Morath**

- Both Rawlings and Morath have said publicly that they support replacing the district’s elected board with appointed members.

What do the proponents of Home Rule hope to accomplish?

John Arnold, Mayor Rawlings and Home Rule proponents want control over the school district. Specifically, their agenda would:

- Eliminate public accountability.
- Take away the rights of parents and community members to elect their school board.
- Exempt charter schools from most caps on class sizes.
- Silence the voice of teachers, taking away their ability to advocate for students.

What is the real motivation behind this attempted power grab?

- Education profiteers want control over the school district and its \$1.2 billion budget.
- They want to skirt laws that help ensure quality teaching and learning, and to divert public funds into private hands.

What can we do?

- Don’t sign the petition!
- Stand with Dallas students, schools and educators.
- Ask tough questions about the impact of Home Rule and be engaged in the fight to preserve neighborhood public schools in Dallas.