

# Prevent Blindness America Seeks to Educate Public About Growing Threat of Diabetic Eye Disease

CHICAGO -- The diabetes epidemic in the United States continues to have a serious impact on health, especially on vision. Today, it is estimated that more than 25 million Americans have diabetes and 79 million adults aged 20 and older have prediabetes.

According to the 2012 Vision Problems in the U.S. report from Prevent Blindness America and the National Eye Institute, more than 7.6 million people ages 40 and older have diabetic retinopathy, an 89 percent increase from 10 years ago. Additionally, people with diabetes are at greater risk for other eye diseases such as glaucoma and cataract.

Prevent Blindness America has declared November as Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month in order to help educate the public on diabetes prevention strategies, potential risk factors, treatment options and Medicare coverage policies.

Diabetic retinopathy is an eye disease that weakens the small blood vessels in the retina. Retinal blood vessels can break down, leak, or become blocked - affecting and impairing vision over time. In some people with diabetic retinopathy, damage to the eye can occur when abnormal new blood vessels grow on the surface of the retina. Diabetic macular edema is a result of diabetic retinopathy and can lead to loss of central vision.

"The time to address the national crisis of diabetes is now," said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. "The public, our lawmakers and the public health community must be made aware of strategies that can help prevent diabetes before vision loss or other effects of the disease begin to take a toll on the body."

Prevent Blindness America offers several free programs to provide the tools and information needed to protect vision from diabetes:

**Live Right, Save Sight!** - An online program designed to educate the public on diabetes and its potential effect on vision, as well as healthy choices that can be made today to protect vision in the future. Live Right, Save Sight! offers free materials including a risk assessment quiz, basic diabetes facts and a detailed explanation of diabetic retinopathy at [preventblindness.org/diabetes](http://preventblindness.org/diabetes).

**The Diabetic Eye Disease Educator Course** - Offered in both English and Spanish, this program was developed to equip health educators with important patient and client education messages about diabetic eye disease and strategies for maintaining healthy vision that can be delivered through health outreach programs of community health centers, health departments, medical practices, and civic and faith-based organizations to those who are diabetic as well as populations at highest risk for developing diabetes, including African-Americans, Hispanics and Latinos. The online course can be found at <http://diabetes.preventblindness.org/>.

**Healthy Eyes Educational Series, Adult Vision Problems Module** - Community health educators and outreach workers, public health personnel, community and senior center program directors, employers seeking "lunch-and-learn" topics, and safety directors can utilize the Healthy Eyes Educational Series to conduct formal presentations or

informal one-on-one sessions that can be customized utilizing modules most appropriate to the audience or clients. The Adult Vision Problems module covers signs and symptoms, risk factors, and treatment options for diabetic retinopathy, cataract and glaucoma. It can easily be downloaded for any presentation purposes at [preventblindness.org/healthy-eyes-educational-series](http://preventblindness.org/healthy-eyes-educational-series).

For more information on the diabetic eye disease, Live Right, Save Sight!, The Diabetic Eye Disease Educator Series, or the Healthy Eyes Educational Series, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit [preventblindness.org/diabetes](http://preventblindness.org/diabetes).

About Prevent Blindness America  
Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's lead-

ing volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates and regional offices, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](http://facebook.com/preventblindness).

## Lawsuit Over School Finance Will Change System

AUSTIN (AP) — Judge John Dietz has some deceptively simple questions to answer about how Texas finances public schools.

Article 7 of the Texas Constitution requires the Legislature to "make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." The Travis County district judge must decide what amount of money is suitable, and how to define efficient.

The trial that began last week will likely last into January when the Legislature returns to Austin for its biennial, 140-day session. The last time lawmakers met they discovered they didn't have enough revenue to give schools what the school finance law's formula said they deserved, based on daily attendance.

So the Republican-controlled House rewrote the formula and gave them \$4.8 billion less than the previous law required. The Republican-led Senate approved those cuts and slashed grants to schools by another \$600,000. Republican leaders then announced that from then on, they will decide school budgets based on what funds are available, not what a formula says schools need.

Speaker of the House Joe Straus insists it was the best they could do, and that public education in 2012 comprised a larger proportion of state spending than ever before. Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst argues that actual dollars spent on schools went up, even if per student spending went down. Both claims are true.

Yet for 615 out of Texas' more than 1,200 school districts, the cuts broke the camel's back. Now they are in court arguing the Legislature failed its constitutional duty.

A key part of their complaint is that lawmakers have raised standards by requiring students to pass ever-more difficult standardized tests, while cutting teachers' resources to teach. The cuts also come as an increasing percentage of Texas school children are disadvantaged.

Lawyers for the schools will point to disappointing scores on the new STAAR test to illustrate the point.

Last week former state demographer Steve Murdoch explained that more children are entering school from poor, non-English speaking households where parents are not teaching them basic skills needed to start school. That means schools spend more time and money catching those children up to the level of wealthier, English-speaking children

whose parents can afford pre-K and other opportunities.

An attorney for the schools, Rick Gray, told Dietz that when lawmakers raise standards and then cut per student spending for less-prepared children, they set the schools up for failure.

"The bar has been raised and yet one hand has been tied behind school administrators' backs," Gray said.

Conservatives reject this argument, insisting that public schools waste money and could do more with less. The assistant attorney general representing the state, Shelly Dahlberg, echoed this argument in court and insisted that the system is not bad enough to warrant Dietz's intervention.

"I would suggest that we might have an impending crisis, but today it is not a crisis," Dahlberg said.

The schools will spend the next five weeks trying to prove otherwise.

Based on Dietz's comments and questions so far, most observers expect he will rule the school finance system inadequate. The only question is how he will do it, and how much he will expect lawmakers to change it.

Whatever the outcome, the losing side will certainly appeal to the Texas Supreme Court. In the meantime, lawmakers will spend this spring drafting a new budget for public schools. Conservatives have already drawn a line in the sand, insisting that more money is not the answer, while Democrats have made the issue the cornerstone of their campaign to rally support and regain relevance in Texas politics.

Lawmakers may also find that by spring, parents will be angrier than ever. Most of the cuts made in 2011 did not kick in until the 2012-13 school year and parents are just now seeing them. Democrats and moderates will try to use that anger to bring change, but many observers warn not to count on it immediately.

The Republican leadership will likely delay any major changes until Dietz's ruling winds its way through the courts and only attempt to fix the system in a special session later this year or in early 2014. But one thing is certain, the system will change; the only question is in what direction and how much.

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The screenshot shows the website interface for SeminoleSentinel.com. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation links like 'Home', 'News', 'Classifieds', 'Calendar', 'Subscribe', 'Advertise', 'Local', and 'Contact'. A main banner reads 'We Are Local News' with a 'Subscribe' button. Below this, there are several content blocks:
 

- Latest News:** A list of recent articles including 'Tickets for 'Beauty and the Beast' to be Sold Beginning Oct. 22', '2012 PBJOS Slated for Tuesday, Wednesday', 'Kaci Fairchild', 'Cowboys Dominate Stats, But Fall to Ravens 31-29', 'Rogers, Packers Hand Texans 1st Loss of Season', 'Texas HS Volleyball, Football Polls', 'A&M Outlasts Louisiana Tech, 59-57', and 'TCU Downs Baylor 49-21'.
- Weather:** A section for 'AccuWeather.com' showing 'Sunny 78°F' and a forecast for the next few days.
- Opinion Poll:** A poll titled 'Who do you think won Thursday's Vice Presidential Debate?' with options for 'Vice President Joe Biden', 'Rep. Paul Ryan', and 'Undecided/Neither'.
- Up and Coming Events:** A list of events, including 'Nov. 6 Early Voting Process' on various dates in October 2012.
- Trunk Treat:** An advertisement for a 'Trunk Treat' event on October 28th at the Westside Church of Christ.

 The bottom of the page features social media icons and the website URL 'www.seminolesentinel.com'.