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Texas musicians back school programs

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Willie Nelson, Ray Benson and Michelle Shocked are among the artists behind "Don't Mess With Texas Music," a public awareness campaign to help music programs survive in Texas schools amid budget cuts.

The campaign, being launched by the Texas Music Project, is similar to VH1's national "Save the Music" drive.

Nelson is honorary chairman of the Texas Music Project. Benson, leader of the band Asleep at the Wheel, and Shocked, a Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter, are on the advisory board.

"Everyone supporting the project is doing it because they love music, and because they understand music education helps kids reach their full potential, regardless of what they grow up to be," Nelson said in a recent statement.

"Don't Mess With Texas Music" also is the name of an upcoming benefit CD with songs by 21 artists with state ties. Other musicians joining the effort are Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Lucinda Williams and Erykah Badu.

The \$15 CD will be released next month. Proceeds will fund grants for music programs in schools.