

HOUSE JOURNAL

EIGHTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE, REGULAR SESSION

PROCEEDINGS

TWELFTH DAY — TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2019

The house met at 9:34 a.m. and was called to order by the speaker.

The roll of the house was called and a quorum was announced present (Record 27).

Present — Mr. Speaker(C); Allen; Allison; Anchia; Anderson; Ashby; Bailes; Beckley; Bell, C.; Bell, K.; Bernal; Biedermann; Blanco; Bohac; Bonnen; Bowers; Buckley; Bucy; Burns; Burrows; Button; Cain; Calanni; Canales; Capriglione; Clardy; Cole; Coleman; Collier; Cortez; Craddick; Cyrier; Darby; Davis, S.; Davis, Y.; Dean; Deshotel; Dominguez; Dutton; Farrar; Flynn; Frank; Frullo; Geren; Gervin-Hawkins; Goldman; González, J.; González, M.; Goodwin; Guerra; Guillen; Gutierrez; Harless; Harris; Hefner; Hernandez; Herrero; Hinojosa; Holland; Howard; Huberty; Hunter; Israel; Johnson, E.; Johnson, J.D.; Johnson, J.E.; Kacal; King, K.; King, P.; King, T.; Klick; Krause; Kuempel; Lambert; Landgraf; Lang; Larson; Leach; Leman; Longoria; Lozano; Lucio; Martinez; Martinez Fischer; Metcalf; Meyer; Meza; Middleton; Miller; Minjarez; Moody; Morrison; Muñoz; Murphy; Murr; Neave; Nevárez; Noble; Oliverson; Ortega; Pacheco; Paddie; Parker; Patterson; Paul; Perez; Phelan; Price; Ramos; Raney; Raymond; Reynolds; Rodriguez; Romero; Rose; Rosenthal; Sanford; Schaefer; Shaheen; Sheffield; Sherman; Shine; Smith; Smithee; Springer; Stephenson; Stickland; Stucky; Swanson; Talarico; Thierry; Thompson, E.; Thompson, S.; Tinderholt; Toth; Turner, C.; Turner, J.; VanDeaver; Vo; Walle; White; Wilson; Wray; Wu; Zedler; Zerwas; Zwiener.

The invocation was offered by Walt Landers, pastor, The Life Church, San Angelo.

The chair recognized Representative J. González who led the house in the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE GRANTED

The following member was granted leave of absence for the remainder of today because of important business:

Bohac on motion of Miller.

CAPITOL PHYSICIAN

The chair recognized Representative Longoria who presented Dr. Naomi Davis of McAllen as the "Doctor for the Day."

The house welcomed Dr. Davis and thanked her for her participation in the Physician of the Day Program sponsored by the Texas Academy of Family Physicians.

HCR 44 - ADOPTED
(by Craddick and Landgraf)

Representative Craddick moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HCR 44**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HCR 44, Recognizing February 4-6, 2019, as Midland-Odessa Days at the State Capitol.

HCR 44 was adopted.

On motion of Representative Landgraf, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HCR 44** as signers thereof.

HCR 45 - ADOPTED
(by Craddick)

Representative Craddick moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HCR 45**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HCR 45, Congratulating Frank Salvato on his retirement as assistant city manager of Midland.

HCR 45 was read and was adopted.

On motion of Representative Landgraf, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HCR 45** as signers thereof.

HR 123 - ADOPTED
(by Raney)

Representative Raney moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 123**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 123, Recognizing February 5, 2019, as Orange and Maroon Legislative Day at the State Capitol.

HR 123 was adopted.

On motion of Representative Hinojosa, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 123** as signers thereof.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The chair recognized Representatives Hinojosa and Raney who introduced representatives of The University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University.

HR 151 - ADOPTED (by Wu, Vo, and Button)

Representative Wu moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 151**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 151, Commemorating the Lunar New Year on February 5, 2019.

HR 151 was adopted.

On motion of Representative C. Turner, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 151** as signers thereof.

HR 75 - ADOPTED (by Miller)

Representative Miller moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 75**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 75, Recognizing February 5, 2019, as Texas ALTA Dyslexia Awareness Day at the State Capitol.

HR 75 was adopted.

On motion of Representative Stephenson, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 75** as signers thereof.

HR 171 - ADOPTED (by Leman)

Representative Leman moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 171**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 171, In memory of Austin County Commissioner Douglas W. King.

HR 171 was unanimously adopted by a rising vote.

On motion of Representative Smith, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 171** as signers thereof.

HR 196 - ADOPTED
(by Price)

Representative Price moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 196**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 196, Recognizing February 5, 2019, as CASA Day at the State Capitol.

HR 196 was adopted.

On motion of Representative Harris, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 196** as signers thereof.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The chair recognized Representative Guerra who introduced a delegation from the Rio Grande Valley.

HR 187 - ADOPTED
(by Martinez)

Representative Martinez moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 187**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 187, Recognizing February 5, 2019, as Rio Grande Valley Day at the State Capitol.

HR 187 was adopted.

On motion of Representative Guillen, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 187** as signers thereof.

HR 154 - ADOPTED
(by Reynolds)

Representative Reynolds moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 154**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 154, Recognizing February 5, 2019, as Urban Leagues of Greater Texas Day at the State Capitol.

HR 154 was adopted.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE GRANTED

The following member was granted leave of absence for the remainder of today because of important business:

Herrero on motion of Martinez Fischer.

The following member was granted leave of absence temporarily for today because of important business:

Rodriguez on motion of Martinez Fischer.

HOUSE AT EASE

At 10:40 a.m., the chair announced that the house would stand at ease pending the arrival of guests.

The chair called the house to order at 11:02 a.m.

(Rodriguez now present)

ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT (The House of Representatives and Senate in Joint Session)

In accordance with the provisions of **HCR 38**, providing for a joint session of the senate and the house of representatives for the purpose of hearing an address by the Honorable Greg Abbott, governor of the State of Texas, the Honorable Dan Patrick, lieutenant governor of the State of Texas, and the honorable senators were announced at the door of the house and were admitted.

The Honorable Greg Abbott, governor of the State of Texas, and his party were announced at the door of the house and, being admitted, were escorted by Senators Nelson, Bettencourt, Hinojosa, Lucio, and Taylor, committee on the part of the senate; and Representatives Sanford, Hunter, Ortega, Thierry, and Zedler, committee on the part of the house.

The Honorable Dan Patrick, president of the senate, called the senate to order at 11:08 a.m. and stated that a quorum of the senate was present.

The Honorable Dennis Bonnen, speaker of the house, called the house to order at 11:08 a.m. and stated that a quorum of the house of representatives was present.

Speaker Bonnen stated that the two houses were in joint session pursuant to **HCR 38** for the purpose of hearing an address by the Honorable Greg Abbott, governor of the State of Texas.

Speaker Bonnen introduced Cecilia Abbott, first lady of Texas.

Lieutenant Governor Patrick introduced Governor Greg Abbott who addressed the joint session, speaking as follows:

Thank you, Governor Patrick, for your friendship and for your leadership. It's an honor to work with you as well as Speaker Bonnen as we embark upon this new session. I will say it's a session, by the way, that is going to etch landmark achievements into this already historic chamber. And I want to begin by thanking the deans of the two chambers for the leadership they provide—the longest serving member of the Texas House of Representatives, Tom Craddick, and of course, the dean of the Texas Senate, John Whitmire. And thanks also to all of the members of the Texas House of Representatives, in whose chamber we gather today. Thanks to the members of the Texas Senate. Thanks to the members of the judiciary, to our statewide officials, and especially, thanks to our fellow

Texans who gather with us here today as well as all the Texans across the state for whom we go to work every single day. And it is especially a pleasure for me to have by my side, my wife, Cecilia, the fabulous first lady of the greatest state in America.

Think about this: On this very day, about a thousand new residents are going to call Texas home. As you all know, that happens almost every day. Now, whether you like that fact or dislike that fact, we can never lose sight of the reason so many people are making the life-altering decision to uproot their families and businesses and chart new paths—paths that guided them to Texas. They were fed up with big government policies that increasingly run their lives and impose burdensome regulations. They were taxed out of the states that some of their families had lived in for generations. The cost of doing business imposed by heavy-handed special interest groups simply became too oppressive. They needed an escape. They longed for freedom. They wanted hope. They found it in Texas. Now listen, I know that we may not be perfect, but to all the newcomers I talk to, they think that Texas is a governmental holy grail. The newcomers, they have joined together with longtime Texans, and together we have forged what has become the most powerful state in the United States of America.

For example, Texas leads the nation in new job creation. And we have the fastest growing economy in America. A by-product of this success is a prosperity that touches every corner of our state. For example, Texas recorded its lowest unemployment ever this past year, and wages are rising. If you dig even deeper into the stats, you're going to see that we also lead the nation in jobs created by African American business owners and by Hispanic women business owners. And get this, Texas is now number one in America for women entrepreneurs. Women like Tamala Austin—Tamala is a Houston entrepreneur who founded a company called J.I.V.E. Juice. She founded it out of her home about seven years ago. She worked tirelessly to grow her business across the entire Houston region, all while working a second job full time and raising a teenage daughter. Inspiration, hard work, and drive—they pay off in Texas. They paid off for Tamala, because J.I.V.E. Juice recently became the first African American-owned juice company to be carried by Whole Foods. We have this young entrepreneur with us today. Tamala Austin, would you please stand and let us thank you for your inspiration of what a business leader can be? Hopefully, you'll have some samples in the back when we get through here, Tamala. You know, I've seen for myself, when women succeed, Texas succeeds.

And listen, we all know about another number one ranking that Texas holds. Texas is number one in the nation for oil and gas production. So much so, that America will be energy independent by next year. And as Brooks Landgraf knows better than anybody, one word makes our energy independence possible. That word? Texas. And Todd Hunter, with our new LNG export facilities, Texas is helping emerging economies across the entire globe wean themselves off of coal and instead use clean burning natural gas produced right here in the Lone Star State. And get this, even with the increased oil and gas production, we have lowered nitrogen oxide levels by 45 percent. This reduction in pollutants is equal to removing more than 85 million passenger cars off the roads of Texas. Now, as

meaningful as the oil and gas industry is to our economy, the fact is the Texas economy is more diversified than it's ever been. From areas like aerospace to cybersecurity, financial services to manufacturing, from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses and startups, Texas is the premier economic destination in the United States of America. And Texas, I'm proud to say, has led America in exports for 16 years in a row. And Gary Farmer, you'll be interested in this, Texas has led the nation in the export of technology five years in a row. Now more than ever, the most powerful label is "Made in Texas."

Importantly, our economic might is not limited to our large cities. It touches smaller communities across the state. Job-creating projects have broken ground in places ranging from the tip of the state and the northern part of the Panhandle into Amarillo, all the way down to Brownsville, in places like Lufkin and Mount Pleasant and Temple and Paris, Texas, where I joined with Bryan Hughes late last year on a groundbreaking project. These business expansions are a result of the Texas Enterprise Fund that promotes economic diversification across the entire state. Our collective work has led to record-breaking acclaim. And I've got to tell you, it's also led to some pretty impressive hardware. The Governor's Cup is given to the state that leads America for the most new and expanded business facilities, and for the past four years, Texas has been ranked number one in the nation for that category. We are joined today by representatives of the Metro 8 Chambers of Commerce. Would you all please stand? These chambers and their peers across the state work with us to keep Texas number one for business. They are holding the four Governor's Cups that you, the members in this chamber, helped Texas earn over the past four years. These trophies are a tangible reminder of the excellence that we can achieve when we work together. Texas remains America's prime destination for businesses and for job seekers, in part because of the actions taken by the members of the senate and the house in this Capitol. You—the members of the house and senate—it is you that helped to foster opportunities for Texas' economic prowess. You spurred more investment and business startups. You did it by slashing regulations and by cutting the business margins tax. You funded road building strategies that provide more than \$7.5 billion for road construction each year.

And you helped to make our schools safer and also better. More students are graduating from high school and college than ever before in our state's history. We have more public high schools ranked in the Top 100 and more Blue Ribbon public schools than any state in America. Higher education is also better. In the past four years, we exceeded our goal of doubling the number of Tier One universities. And today, Texas is home to nine Tier One universities. We are on the path to becoming America's epicenter for research and innovation. Take, if you would, just one example: Dr. Jim Allison of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. And J. M. Lozano, you might be interested to know that Dr. Allison is a native of Alice, Texas. And he won the Nobel Prize in Medicine for developing a revolutionary way to treat cancer, proving once again that the minds of Texas are changing the world. I'm proud to say that with us today is Dr. Jim Allison. Would you please stand and let us recognize you for winning the Nobel Prize?

Now, Texas is not only smarter than ever, we're also safer. Last session, you all acted in a bipartisan fashion to protect the most vulnerable children by reforming a broken foster care and Child Protective Services system. And thanks to the leadership of Senator Royce West and Representative Phil King, you all helped ensure that our law enforcement officers would be safer by providing them with rifle-resistant vests. And together, you all passed laws that crack down on dangerous gangs and human traffickers who threaten our citizens. You know, when you combine our legislative achievements with our record-breaking prosperity, you have elevated Texas to rarefied status. And I am proud to tell you that the State of Texas has never been better.

Listen, the fact is that we have accomplished so much. But you all know as well as I do that more must be done if we are going to fulfill the promise of Texas. This session, for just the next few months, we have this very narrow window of opportunity where we can tackle some challenges that have plagued our state for generations. Our mission begins with our students. Yes, we are graduating more students from high school than ever before, but we have more students graduating who simply are not ready for college or a career. Here's the problem: Only about 40 percent of third graders are actually reading at the third grade level by the time they finish the third grade. And not surprisingly, less than 40 percent of students who took the ACT or the SAT were actually prepared to go on to college. To improve this, we must target education funding to help our students achieve in school. That starts with our teachers in the classroom. Other than parents, no one plays a more vital role in our students' education than our teachers. So Texas must recruit and retain the best and brightest teachers to educate our students. This session, we must pay our teachers more. We must provide incentives to put effective teachers in the schools and classrooms where they are needed the most. And we must create a pathway for the best teachers to earn a six-figure salary. The teacher pay system used by the Dallas Independent School District shows this strategy works. When I visited Blanton Elementary School in Dallas, I met an outstanding teacher who was only in his third year of teaching and already making more than \$90,000 a year in salary. Teachers across the state should have that opportunity, and with Senator Taylor and Representative Huberty leading the reform effort, I know we can get this done.

Working together, we will create a Texas where every student is reading at grade level by the time they finish the third grade. Where every child, regardless of their zip code, is going to receive a quality education. And where every student graduates with far more than just a diploma. They will graduate with the tools that are needed for them to be able to succeed in either college or a career. And that is precisely what is being done in school districts across the state, school districts like Dallas, San Antonio, Longview, Pharr-San Juan, and Premont. I want to thank the superintendents who have been leading the way in those school districts, superintendents who are here with us today. They include Superintendents Hinojosa, Martinez, Wilcox, King, and VanMatre. Thank you all for being here. Thank you for the excellence that you've provided to teachers and students in your school districts. Rarely has Texas witnessed such a bipartisan and bicameral support for an issue this substantial this early in a legislative

session. I credit the leadership of the speaker and the lieutenant governor, but I also credit the members of the house and senate for listening to your constituents. And I especially appreciate those who worked this past year on the school finance reform commission. So a very special thank you to Senators Bettencourt, Taylor, and West, as well as Representatives Bernal, Huberty, and Ken King for your leadership and for your tireless work on that school finance commission. So to keep this momentum going, I am declaring school finance reform and increasing teacher pay as emergency items this session.

Now, as we improve our schools, it's simply not enough just to give our students a better education. We must also create a learning environment that is safe. No student should be afraid to go to school. No parent should be fearful when dropping their child off at school. Texas must act now to make our schools safer. So I am declaring school safety an emergency item this session. After the horrific shooting that took place at Santa Fe High School, I held roundtables here in the Capitol—roundtables with parents, with students, with educators, with law enforcement, and with mental health experts. We developed some innovative solutions to better protect our students and teachers. It's time to turn those ideas into solutions. We must do all that we can to make our schools safer. Working together, we will deliver on our promise—our promise to our parents, to our teachers, and to our students. When it comes to improving school safety, there is one solution that everybody agreed upon. It was the need to address mental health in our schools. And I commend Senator Nelson, who wasted no time in crafting a strategy that does exactly that. She has pointed out that many of our universities already have mental health programs—programs like the Telemedicine Wellness Project at Texas Tech. It partners with school districts in West Texas to identify and remove students who pose a potential threat, and it provides students with the help they need. School districts across the entire state deserve access to these very same services. And listen, as we all know, mental health issues are not confined to our schools. They touch our entire society. Well, to better address these issues, Senator Nelson also provides a broad-based plan, a plan that creates the Texas Mental Health Care Consortium to collaborate on statewide mental health needs. In typical Texas fashion, her idea is big, and it is bold. To ensure it has enough time to become law this session, I am declaring it an emergency item.

Speaking of emergencies, I think we can all agree another emergency is property tax reform in Texas. Listen, if we are going to keep Texas the economic engine of America, we must rein in a property tax system that punishes families and businesses and prevents younger Texans from being able to achieve their dream of homeownership. We can no longer sit idly by while property owners are reduced to tenants of their own property with taxing authorities playing the role of landlord. Our constituents are counting on us. I applaud both the house and the senate for working together in unprecedented fashion on identical bills that limit the ability of taxing authorities to raise your taxes. I want to call out Senator Bettencourt as well as Representative Burrows for your tireless work early on in this session, working pretty much around the clock to crank out the identical **HB 2** and **SB 2** and getting them on file already. Thank you for your hard work. It is important to emphasize and for everybody to know that along with this

property tax reform, Texas will also be making new investments in education and investments in reducing the burden of Robin Hood in our state. This reform isn't just about restraining the growth of property taxes, it's also about restoring power to the people of Texas. That is why I propose giving taxpayers the ability to fire their property tax appraiser and to elect a better one. By taking these actions, we're going to do far more than just reform our property tax system. We will ensure that seniors who have worked their entire lives are going to be able to afford to retire in a home that they've already paid off. We will give hope to the next generation of Texans, that they too can realize their dream of homeownership. And we will ensure that middle-income and low-income Texans will be able to remain in the neighborhoods they cherish. It is for those Texans that I am making property tax reform an emergency item this session.

Now, we can't talk about homes in this state without also talking about all the homes that have been devastated by Hurricane Harvey. When I look back upon this past year and a half, I remember the more than 75 trips that I took to regions hit by Hurricane Harvey, all the way from Rockport over to Orange County. And every trip I made, there were legislators there by my side. In fact, if there is any legislator with us here today who joined with me on those multitudes of trips, why don't you stand up and let us thank you for the tireless work that you put in to work for your constituents? Thank you for what you guys did in helping respond to Hurricane Harvey. Listen, as you all saw and, in fact, as everybody saw—even if you weren't down on the coastal region, you saw it on TV—in the face of the greatest natural disaster our state has ever seen, our fellow Texans showed the world that no earthly force is more powerful than Texan spirit. From our first responders and emergency workers to community leaders and faith-based groups, from our partners at the federal government to the citizens who gave their time and their own resources, Texans stepped up to help those in need—Texans like Morgan McCullough and Casey Aslan. They are nurses at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center in Houston. Morgan and Casey were unable to drive to work during the flooding that amassed Houston, Texas, because the flooded streets of Houston had turned into rivers. So undeterred, they packed up their gear in an inflatable kayak, and they paddled for two hours to get to the hospital so they could take care of their patients. Morgan and Casey, they embody what it means to be a Texan helping a Texan, and they are here with us today. Morgan and Casey, will you please stand up and let us thank you for the way that you helped respond to Hurricane Harvey?

To help our communities and residents harmed by Hurricane Harvey, Texas has already committed more than a billion dollars. Additionally, the federal government has already appropriated more than \$30 billion in aid. But I think we all know more resources are needed if we are going to help Texans rebuild. So I commend both the house and the senate, which have both proposed using rainy day funds to help rebuild Texas—rebuild stronger and more resilient than before disaster struck. And I think we also all agree that we must apply the lessons of Hurricane Harvey to improve the way that Texas responds to natural disasters. For example, I support ideas proposed by Senator Perry and by Representative Phelan. What they propose is to extend disaster solutions beyond just funding and

to extend it beyond just the coastal region. And in addition to that, we must create a system that cuts through all the red tape that slows the recovery process. To give legislators the time they need this session to make Texas more resilient to future disasters, I am making disaster response an emergency item.

In addition to rebuilding our communities from disasters, we must do more to keep those communities safe from crime. We must do more to crack down on the treacherous gangs that bring drugs, weapons, and violence into our communities. Fortunately, Texas has already developed a winning strategy with six Texas Anti-Gang Centers. These Texas Anti-Gang Centers are hubs where law enforcement agencies work together to crack down on gang activity and put these dangerous criminals behind bars. And we know these centers work. For example, in Houston, more than 1,400 gang-related arrests were made in 2017 alone. Nearly 250 of those arrests involved violent or high threat offenders. And last year, 57 members of a white supremacist gang in Dallas were charged for drug trafficking and conspiracy to kidnap. This was the result of a DPS-led investigation aided by the Texas Anti-Gang Center in Dallas. More communities need these tools, so I am calling for two new anti-gang centers—one in Waco, Senator Birdwell, and another in Tyler, Senator Hughes. We want to rid those regions of dangerous gangs. Together, we will put more gang members behind bars. We will dismantle their criminal enterprises, and we will make our neighborhoods safe for Texas families.

And I'll add this: Listen, I know that everybody in this chamber has long waited for the day when Texas would not have to provide any more funding to secure our border. And yet the federal government still has not fulfilled its responsibility. As a result, I am once again asking that Texas step up and fully fund our border security program. And we must also work together to crack down on human trafficking and to protect the victims of that heinous crime. I ask the legislature to increase funding to create six regional human trafficking squads. These squads will investigate and shut down human trafficking operations across the entire state. And I believe and ask that we agree that absolutely every trafficker should get mandatory jail time. These predators should be locked up, not freely roaming our streets looking for their next victim. And we must also do more to ensure justice for survivors of rape and sexual assault. One of the most important tools that we have is forensic testing of rape kits, and yet thousands of these kits have languished untested for years. This session, we must right this wrong. Together we must provide more funding to eliminate the backlog and to deliver justice that has been denied far too long. So whether it's cracking down on human trafficking or eliminating the backlog of rape kits, I know we can get the job done. I know because of leaders like Senator Huffman, as well as Senator Hinojosa, and Representative Senfronia Thompson and Representative Neave. They are working on legislation to get this fixed this session.

Let me mention one more thing that we must do. We must not turn our backs on the service and sacrifice of the men and women who have worn the uniform of the mightiest military in the history of this entire world. Some serve with us here today as legislators in this majestic Capitol. In fact, if there is anyone here, whether you be legislators or anybody else in the crowd, if you have ever worn

the uniform of the United States military, would you stand and let us thank you for your service to our country? For you legislators know how much we appreciate your service, but know this also: We are honored to work with you now in this Capitol and serve by your side to perpetuate the democracy that you fought for. But I think we all know that some returned broken from battle, with injuries both seen and unseen. Some cannot find a job; others don't know how to find a job. Still others are homeless, possessing only a glimmer of the glory for which they once fought. They fought for our freedom. Now, we have the obligation to fight for their future. Texas is the proud home to more than 1.6 million veterans. And yes, I know that we've already made tremendous strides to better support our veterans, and in that regard I thank our leaders like Senator Donna Campbell for her leadership, as well as the work of Representative Dan Flynn. Thank you for what you've already done to address the needs of our veterans. But this session we have the opportunity to do even more. That includes fully funding the mental health program for veterans at HHSC. We must also fund the Texas Veterans Commission to help veterans receive the VA health care benefits they have earned. This session we will ensure that veterans get the best services Texas can provide, so that the men and women who fought on the front lines will go to the front of the line for accessing health care here in Texas.

Now listen, no doubt what I've outlined today is a transformative agenda for Texas. We have the opportunity to make Texas far better. And I want to assure you, people both inside the Capitol as well as outside the Capitol—they can see. They can see that we are on the threshold of doing something extraordinary. But we all know that whenever you try to do something extraordinary, it is never easy. Yes, there's going to be naysayers. There's going to be people who want to cling to the status quo. So of course it's going to be hard, but I believe that you were made for this moment. We were made for this moment. We serve at a unique time in Texas history, a time where we are going to be able to seize an opportunity to submit a legacy for Texas. We have the power to ensure that Texas is a state where our citizens realize their dream of owning a home or starting a business, where we prioritize student achievement and create safer schools, a state that puts public safety first whether it's in the face of natural disasters or in the face of dangerous gangs, a Texas where we expand economic opportunity and freedom to every single corner of our great state, and a state where we provide our veterans with the support they have earned.

I want you to know I'm inspired by the comradery and the collaboration that have already infused this session. It seems unprecedented. And I've got to tell you, I'm feeling it myself. I'm feeling moved, and I want to set the example. For example, I'm willing to step up and put aside past differences and work with Lyle Larson to reinstate the rivalry game between the Aggies and the Longhorns. Listen, what we must accomplish is going to require all of us working together on bold ideas. But Texas was built on bold ideas. It was built by the men and women who came before us, men and women who worked together to make Texas the most exceptional state in America. Now it is our time to chart a course, a course that will make Texas even better not for just the next four years but for the next

40 years. We have an opportunity to turn bold ideas into reality. We have the opportunity to grasp the brass ring that belongs to Texas. And when we do that, we are going to keep Texas the greatest state in America. God bless you all. And God bless Texas as we have a very successful session this year.

INTERPRETER FOR THE DEAF

The interpretation of the proceedings of the house was provided today by Alan Sessions.

SENATE ADJOURNMENT

At 12:02 p.m., Lieutenant Governor Patrick stated that the purpose for which the joint session was convened had been completed and the senate would, in accordance with a previous motion, stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

HOUSE AT EASE

At 12:02 p.m., the chair announced that the house would stand at ease pending the departure of guests.

The chair called the house to order at 12:11 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Representative Raymond moved that the house adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow in memory of David Newman of Laredo.

The motion prevailed.

The house accordingly, at 12:12 p.m., adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

