

# HOUSE JOURNAL

---

EIGHTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE, REGULAR SESSION

---

## PROCEEDINGS

---

SEVENTEENTH DAY — TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2015

The house met at 10:01 a.m. and was called to order by the speaker.

The roll of the house was called and a quorum was announced present (Record 35).

Present — Mr. Speaker; Allen; Alonzo; Alvarado; Anchia; Anderson, C.; Anderson, R.; Ashby; Aycocock; Bell; Blanco; Bohac; Bonnen, D.; Bonnen, G.; Burkett; Burns; Burrows; Button; Capriglione; Clardy; Coleman; Collier; Cook; Craddick; Crownover; Dale; Darby; Davis, S.; Davis, Y.; Deshotel; Dukes; Dutton; Elkins; Faircloth; Fallon; Farias; Farney; Farrar; Fletcher; Flynn; Frank; Frullo; Galindo; Geren; Giddings; Goldman; Gonzales; González; Guerra; Guillen; Harless; Hernandez; Herrero; Howard; Huberty; Hughes; Hunter; Isaac; Israel; Johnson; Kacal; Keffer; Keough; King, K.; King, P.; King, S.; King, T.; Klick; Koop; Krause; Kuempel; Landgraf; Larson; Laubenberg; Leach; Longoria; Lozano; Lucio; Márquez; Martinez; McClendon; Menéndez; Metcalf; Meyer; Miles; Miller, D.; Miller, R.; Moody; Morrison; Muñoz; Murphy; Murr; Naishtat; Nevárez; Oliveira; Otto; Paddie; Parker; Paul; Peña; Phelan; Phillips; Pickett; Price; Raney; Raymond; Reynolds; Riddle; Rinaldi; Rodriguez, E.; Rodriguez, J.; Romero; Rose; Sanford; Schaefer; Schofield; Shaheen; Sheets; Sheffield; Simmons; Simpson; Smith; Smithee; Spitzer; Springer; Stephenson; Stickland; Thompson, E.; Thompson, S.; Tinderholt; Turner, C.; Turner, E.S.; Turner, S.; VanDeaver; Villalba; Vo; Walle; White, J.; White, M.; Workman; Wray; Wu; Zedler; Zerwas.

Absent, Excused — Canales; Gutierrez; Martinez Fischer.

The speaker recognized Representative Springer who introduced Joe Caballero, lead pastor, Montague County Cowboy Church, Montague, who offered the invocation as follows:

First, we would like to say thank you, Lord, for allowing us to be in the Texas House of Representatives. It's an honor to be among men and women who are here in unity to make decisions that will benefit the people who live in the great State of Texas. Father, we know that it is hard to please everyone, and that's why we are turning to you today. We know that if we seek your guidance and counsel, we have a better chance at accomplishing such a great task. Today, Father, I am lifting everyone up in the house of representatives, that you will bless them with the knowledge and wisdom of truth to give them clear understanding of your will and direction for our state. The men and women here today carry such a heavy burden, Lord. I would like to ask you, Father, to lift that burden and give them peace as they carry out their business today. Thank you,

Lord, for the men and women who answered their calling and serve in the house of representatives. Thank you for their service and dedication to the State of Texas, and thank you for being an awesome God. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The speaker recognized Representative Burns who led the house in the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags.

#### **LEAVES OF ABSENCE GRANTED**

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

Gutierrez on motion of Nevárez.

The following member was granted leave of absence for today because of illness:

Canales on motion of Nevárez.

#### **CAPITOL PHYSICIAN**

The speaker recognized Representative Isaac who presented Dr. Sylvia Garcia-Beach of Dripping Springs as the "Doctor for the Day."

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

(Murr in the chair)

#### **REGULAR ORDER OF BUSINESS SUSPENDED**

On motion of Representative Kuempel and by unanimous consent, the reading and referral of bills was postponed until just prior to adjournment.

#### **HR 547 - ADOPTED**

**(by Raney)**

Representative Raney moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 547**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 547**, Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Texas A&M Forest Service.

**HR 547** was adopted.

On motion of Representatives Paddie, Ashby, and Clardy, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 547** as signers thereof.

#### **HR 403 - ADOPTED**

**(by Raymond)**

Representative Raymond moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 403**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 403**, Congratulating the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature on its 30th anniversary.

**HR 403** was adopted.

On motion of Representative Ashby, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 403** as signers thereof.

**HR 475 - ADOPTED**  
**(by Ashby)**

Representative Ashby moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 475**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 475**, Recognizing members of the Texas Food & Fuel Association.

**HR 475** was adopted.

On motion of Representative Isaac, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 475** as signers thereof.

**HR 115 - ADOPTED**  
**(by Clardy)**

Representative Clardy moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 115**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 115**, Honoring the Stephen F. Austin State University men's basketball team on its achievements during the 2013-2014 season.

**HR 115** was adopted.

On motion of Representatives Farney and Paddie, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 115** as signers thereof.

**INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

The chair recognized Representative Clardy who introduced representatives of the Stephen F. Austin State University men's basketball team.

**HR 501 - ADOPTED**  
**(by Frank)**

Representative Frank moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 501**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 501**, Congratulating Dr. Jesse W. Rogers on his retirement as president of Midwestern State University.

**HR 501** was adopted.

On motion of Representative Springer, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 501** as signers thereof.

**HR 517 - ADOPTED**  
**(by Wray)**

Representative Wray moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 517**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 517**, Recognizing February 17, 2015, as Justices of the Peace and Constables Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 517** was adopted.

**HR 483 - ADOPTED**  
**(by S. Thompson)**

Representative S. Thompson moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 483**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 483**, Commemorating the 50th anniversary of White Rock Missionary Baptist Church in Houston.

**HR 483** was adopted.

On motion of Representative Wu, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 483** as signers thereof.

**HR 516 - ADOPTED**  
**(by P. King)**

Representative P. King moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 516**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 516**, Recognizing February 17, 2015, as Wise County Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 516** was adopted.

**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED**

Representative Nevárez moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time the following congratulatory resolutions.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolutions were laid before the house:

**HR 365** (by Nevárez), Recognizing Culberson County Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 370** (by Nevárez), Recognizing February 17, 2015, as Eagle Pass-Maverick County Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 371** (by Nevárez), Recognizing Presidio County Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 372** (by Nevárez), Recognizing Jeff Davis County Day at the State Capitol.

The resolutions were adopted.

### **INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

The chair recognized Representative Nevárez who introduced a delegation from Culberson, Maverick, Presidio, and Jeff Davis counties.

#### **HR 462 - ADOPTED (by Price, Smithee, K. King, and Springer)**

Representative Price moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 462**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 462**, Recognizing February 17, 2015, as Panhandle Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 462** was adopted.

On motion of Representatives Smithee, K. King, and Springer, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 462** as signers thereof.

#### **HR 522 - ADOPTED (by Zerwas)**

Representative Zerwas moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 522**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 522**, Recognizing February 17, 2015, as Texas Trauma and Emergency Health Care Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 522** was adopted.

#### **HR 137 - ADOPTED (by Lozano)**

Representative Lozano moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 137**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 137**, Recognizing February 17, 2015, as Jim Wells County Day at the State Capitol.

**HR 137** was adopted.

On motion of Representative Hunter, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 137** as signers thereof.

**HR 528 - ADOPTED**  
**(by S. Turner)**

Representative S. Turner moved to suspend all necessary rules to take up and consider at this time **HR 528**.

The motion prevailed.

The following resolution was laid before the house:

**HR 528**, Congratulating the Honorable Harold V. Dutton, Jr., on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

**HR 528** was adopted.

On motion of Representative Rose, the names of all the members of the house were added to **HR 528** as signers thereof.

**FIVE-DAY POSTING RULE SUSPENDED**

Representative Otto moved to suspend the five-day posting rule to allow the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Article III, to consider the Texas School for the Deaf; Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired; Teacher Retirement System; Optional Retirement Program; Texas Education Agency; health-related institutions, including The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Baylor College of Medicine, The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center; and special provisions for the Texas School for the Deaf and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired at 7:30 a.m. Friday, February 20 in E1.030.

The motion prevailed.

**COMMITTEE MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT**

The following committee meeting was announced:

Appropriations, Subcommittee on Article III, 7:30 a.m. Friday, February 20, E1.030, for a public hearing, to consider the Texas School for the Deaf; Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired; Teacher Retirement System; Optional Retirement Program; Texas Education Agency; health-related institutions, including The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Baylor College of Medicine, The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center; and special provisions for the Texas School for the Deaf and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

### **FIVE-DAY POSTING RULE SUSPENDED**

Representative Otto moved to suspend the five-day posting rule to allow the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V, to consider the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Texas Military Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, and special provisions for the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice at 8 a.m. Thursday, February 19 in E2.030.

The motion prevailed.

### **COMMITTEE MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The following committee meetings were announced:

Appropriations, Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V, 8 a.m. Thursday, February 19, E2.030, for a public hearing, to consider the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Texas Military Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, and special provisions for the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Appropriations, Subcommittee on Article II, will reconvene at 1 p.m. today in JHR 140.

### **COMMITTEE APPOINTED**

The following committee was appointed to escort Governor Greg Abbott to the speaker's rostrum: Geren, chair; D. Bonnen, Oliveira, Parker, and Giddings.

### **HOUSE AT EASE**

At 10:52 a.m., the chair announced that the house would stand at ease pending the arrival of guests.

(Speaker in the chair)

The speaker called the house to order at 11:03 a.m.

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

In accordance with the provisions of **HCR 48**, 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.

At 11:05 a.m., the speaker announced that the house would stand at ease pending the arrival of the Honorable Greg Abbott, governor of the State of Texas.

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, Nichols, Huffman, Schwertner, and Whitmire, committee on the part of the senate; and Representatives Geren, D. Bonnen, Parker, Oliveira, and Giddings, committee on the part of the house.

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

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

Speaker Straus stated that the two houses were in joint session pursuant to **HCR 48** for the purpose of hearing an address by Governor Greg Abbott.

Speaker Straus introduced Cecilia Abbott, first lady of Texas.

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

Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Straus, I look forward to working with both of you as we unite to make Texas even better. To the members of the house and senate, our coauthors in the next chapter of the greatest state in America; to the members of the judiciary, where I once served; to our statewide officeholders, distinguished guests, and my fellow Texans. Let me start by recognizing someone who represents the richness of our heritage, our culture, the strength of our values, and the promise that is Texas—the first Hispanic first lady in Texas—my wife, Cecilia.

As your governor, I'm proud to report that as the sun rises on 2015, the state of Texas is strong, and together we're about to make it stronger. We are at the pinnacle of America's economy. Texas has been number one in the nation for creating jobs for so many years, it's hard to keep count. But in 2014, we literally outdid ourselves. We created more jobs than any year in the history of Texas. And already this year, reports show that our economic engine continues to gain steam. Last week, Comptroller Hegar reported that sales tax revenue in January increased by 11 percent, surging to an all-time record. It's the 58th consecutive month of year-over-year sales tax growth. The reason Texas leads the nation is because of our greatest natural resource—the people of Texas—who've built a strong and diversified economy. Texas leads the nation as a beacon of individual liberty and economic opportunity. Our job is to make sure we keep it that way.

Today, I submitted a budget that charts a course that will keep Texas number one. Our journey begins with striving to create the best education system in America. We've seen that we can do it. In Dallas, African American and Hispanic students pass AP exams at a higher rate than anywhere in America. In the Rio Grande Valley, I visited the IDEA Weslaco charter school where about 99 percent of the high school seniors go on to college. And I'm very proud to say that Irving ISD has been recognized as the 2015 Advanced Placement District of the Year. Irving is the best in the entire nation. The leader of Irving ISD is Superintendent José Parra. He is with us today. Dr. Parra, congratulations. We must not rest, we



must not relent until we replicate success like this across the state. We can be number one in education if we apply the same tenacity and commitment to education as we do to job creation.

I'd like to recognize Representative Will Metcalf from Montgomery County. Congratulations on your election; you are unique among your peers. Representative Metcalf, you were born in 1984. For your entire life, the State of Texas has been mired in litigation about school funding. Members, whether this is your first session or you're Tom Craddick, I think we can all agree it's time to put school finance litigation behind us. It's time to stop fighting about school finance and start fixing our schools.

To improve our schools, we must begin by building a strong foundation at the very beginning. Our goal should be to ensure all Texas students are performing at grade level in reading and math by the time they finish the third grade. To begin that process, my budget provides additional funding for schools that adopt high quality pre-K programs. My plan also provides pre-K through third grade teachers with world-class literacy and math teacher training. I want to thank Senators Judith Zaffirini and Donna Campbell and Representatives Dan Huberty, Helen Giddings, and Joe Deshotel for carrying my pre-K legislation to improve early education. To begin the process of building a better education system in Texas, we must improve early education. This is why I'm declaring early education as my first emergency item as governor. Our children and their future have no time for delay.

Another essential ingredient to better schools is ensuring we have the best teachers in our classrooms. In part, that means saying no to Common Core. We can bring out the best in all of our teachers by getting rid of the one-size-fits-all mandates and trusting our teachers to truly educate our students. My budget invests in more STEM teachers and in teachers who serve our most disadvantaged students. We must also return genuine local control to our schools. Last session, you took a big step in that direction. Now, let's take another step. This book contains all the education-related laws in Texas. It's absurd to micromanage educators with all of these laws. Let's cut it down to size by allowing school districts to opt out of parts of the Education Code so they can design an education plan that best fits their community's needs.

Local control, however, doesn't end at the school district level. Real local control rests with parents. Parental involvement is critical to student advancement. The ultimate parental involvement is giving parents more choices in their child's education. No one said it better than Keisha Riley from Houston. She tearfully pleaded for the opportunity to send her young daughter to a better school. Keisha said, "Having a school in my area that doesn't fit my needs is frustrating. It makes me feel helpless because I want her to be in a good school, and I want her to get a good education so she doesn't have to struggle like I have." As she spoke, her little girl reached up and wiped tears away from her mother's cheek. This story forces us to look Keisha in the eye and ask ourselves: Are we working for her and her daughter, or are we working for the status quo? The truth is when parents have more options, students win. For example, Grand Prairie ISD is an open enrollment school district that allows parents to choose the

school that's best for their children, and the results show substantial improvement in student achievement. Grand Prairie ISD's graduation rates improved dramatically over seven years with 20 percent point gains among Hispanic, African American, and economically disadvantaged students. Our parents deserve these choices. Our children deserve these results.

We also want to see more of our high school graduates go on to college. To assist that goal, we must make college more affordable and accessible. We must restrain the spiraling cost of higher education so more Texans can reap the rewards that come from college. Just like with primary and secondary education, higher education doesn't work in a one-size-fits-all approach. Different students have different needs, and our employers are demanding that we better prepare our students for workforce needs. For many, a two-year degree is far more than a piece of paper. It's a key that opens the door to economic freedom. As just one recent example: Justin Friend attended Texas State Technical College in Waco and received a two-year degree in welding. In 2013—his first full year as a welder—his income was about \$130,000. Last year, this 24-year-old's income rose to about \$140,000. I'm thinking if this governor thing doesn't work out, I'm going to TSTC to get a welder's certificate. The fact is not everybody needs a four-year college degree. We need to expand and support our community colleges that serve as the gateway to better jobs and as a step toward further education opportunities.

We also need to elevate the national research standing of our universities. My budget jump-starts the process of elevating Texas higher education into the highest echelons by committing a half billion dollars to enhance research programs and attract nationally recognized researchers and Nobel Laureates to Texas universities. The trail for this game-changing success is already being blazed. The Chancellor's Research Initiative at The Texas A&M University System has been recruiting the world's foremost research scholars to College Station and Prairie View A&M, including three Nobel Laureates and 11 members of National Academies. One of these great minds is with us here today. Dr. Chris Floudas, a member of the National Academy of Engineering, was recruited from Princeton and serves as the new director of the Texas A&M Energy Institute. Please welcome Dr. Floudas. Because of the vital role higher education plays in transforming our state, I'm declaring higher education research initiatives my second emergency item.

In addition to educating our students, another fundamental responsibility of government is to build the roads Texans need. With the passage of Proposition 1 this past November, Texans sent a loud and clear message that they are tired of being stuck in traffic. It's a sad day in Texas when a guy in a wheelchair can move faster than traffic on our congested roads. My budget adds more than \$4 billion a year to build more roads in Texas without raising taxes, fees, tolls, or debt. This funding comes from three places. One is the funding received from Proposition 1. Two, it ends diversions of state highway funds; tax dollars paid for roads should be spent on roads. Third, my plan constitutionally dedicates one-half of the existing motor vehicle sales tax to fund roads. The plan, including the constitutional amendment, is needed to ensure TxDOT has the sustainable,

recurring, and predictable revenue needed to plan large-scale, multi-year construction projects. Regardless of the priorities that may exist in this Capitol, the voters made unequivocally clear their priority: They want roads funded; and I thank Senator Robert Nichols and Representatives Joe Pickett and Larry Phillips for their work to make this happen. Because this funding is so essential to the people of Texas, I am declaring transportation as my third emergency item.

When it comes to our state's responsibilities, our first and foremost obligation is to protect our citizens' safety. We cannot be naïve to the threat posed by drug cartels, transnational gangs, and human smuggling and traffic operations. In the face of such evil, we cannot respond with apathy, but resolve. On one of my many visits to the Rio Grande Valley, I met a young Latina who pleaded with me to keep my promise to secure the border. She told me about her younger brother being in a pick-up soccer game where kids were choosing teams, but one of the boys was a child of a known cartel member. Should her brother pick the boy for his team? What would be the consequences if he did? If he didn't? Our children should not be faced with such tough choices. We will not fail that young Latina. We will not fail my fellow Texans. We will do what the federal government has failed to do. We will secure our border.

The first step in securing our border is enforcing the rule of law. The last lawsuit that I filed as attorney general was a lawsuit to stop President Obama's lawless executive action. I'm happy to report that late last night a federal judge halted the president's executive action plan. In Texas, we will not sit idly by while the president ignores the law and fails to secure the border. That's why I have a comprehensive border security plan. My plan more than doubles current spending on border security. It adds 500 new state troopers, more Texas Rangers who can focus on corruption, more funding for local law enforcement, and more technology to stop transnational criminal activity that threatens every community in Texas. By hiring more DPS troopers for border security, it allows officers displaced from places like Longview, Lubbock, and from around the state to return to their communities to keep them safe. It also expands the anti-gang efforts across the state, helping us to disrupt dangerous gangs in places like Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin. This legislation is essential, which is why I am declaring border security funding the fourth of my emergency items.

But the reality is that DPS cannot recruit, train, and deploy 500 new troopers overnight. It takes time to ramp up. That's why this morning I met with the commanding general of the Texas National Guard and the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety. I ordered them to remain deployed on the border until my security plan is implemented. As governor, I have identified funds to keep the National Guard in place until the legislature acts. As soon as DPS has the permanent resources needed to secure our border, we can bring home our dedicated National Guard troops.

We must remember the hardship such long deployment puts on our National Guard troops, on their families, and on their careers. We should all be deeply grateful for their dedicated service. With us today is the commander of our National Guard, General John Nichols, and the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, Colonel Steve McCraw. Through them, let us show our thanks

to the men and women who serve. The National Guard is part of the larger forces that secure our safety and protect our freedom. America is the brightest beacon of freedom the world has ever known because of men and women who've worn the uniform. Some are in this room today. If there is any member of the legislature or a statewide official who has ever worn the uniform of the United States military, will you please stand and let us thank you for your service.

And let us recognize all the veterans and active duty members in this room. Because of those who have fought on battlefields around the globe, we have the freedom to fight on the battleground of ideas in capitols like this. No generation represents that more than the greatest generation—those who brought us through World War II. Few of those heroes remain, but one is with us today. I'd like to recognize a special guest who, at 108 years young, is our nation's oldest World War II veteran. Ladies and gentlemen, a great Texan, Mr. Richard Overton.

Saying thank you is not enough for those who risked their lives. We must do more to help veterans return to civilian life. Texas leads the nation in job creation, and yet the unemployment rate for our veterans remains high. That is unacceptable. That's why my budget exempts new businesses formed by veterans from having to pay state registration fees to open their businesses. My budget also exempts new businesses formed by veterans from paying state franchise taxes for the first five years, and I'm calling for legislation to waive licensing exams and fees for veterans with the required education, training, and practical experience gained in the military. If the training you received as an electrician, a technician, or some other job meets the standard of the United States military, it should be good enough for the State of Texas.

We must also do more for our veterans who return broken from battle. Not all wounds are seen. My budget includes funding to provide mental health screenings to veterans and service members to help them deal with some of their deepest wounds.

It's not just our veterans who need better access to health care. We also need to provide more funding for women's health programs for more access to care like cancer screenings and checkups. My budget does that. My budget also increases funding for screening and treatment for post-partum depression. To get and keep more doctors in Texas, my budget increases the number of residency positions funded in Texas. And to help people with disabilities and seniors, my budget adds more funding for in-home care attendants.

We will do all of this while still fostering the economic model that creates more jobs than any other state. While our job creation is legendary, many states are overhauling their economic development programs to compete with Texas. We will rise to the challenge by making the Texas enterprise fund more efficient, more effective, and more transparent to help grow even more jobs in Texas. If a business receives a grant from the enterprise fund, taxpayers must know that the decision was based only on merit. But the best way to create more jobs is to permanently reduce the business franchise tax. I will reject any budget that does not include genuine tax relief to Texas employers and job creators. I will also insist on property tax reduction. It's time for property owners—not government—to truly own their property. My plan calls for a \$2 billion reduction

in the business franchise tax and a \$2.2 billion reduction in the property tax burden. My budget includes an appropriation that makes school districts whole for any tax revenue they might lose. But the property tax reduction must be lasting. It can't be allowed to evaporate by rising property valuations.

To keep Texas fiscally strong, the time has come to begin reducing the state's debt. Debt today becomes taxes tomorrow. Debt service unnecessarily burdens the state's budget and limits the economic freedom of future generations. We must begin the process now to create a structure to pay down our state's debt. To keep Texas the premier model for opportunity, we must constrain the size of government and maximize the liberty of individuals. To protect taxpayers from government growing too big, we need a constitutional amendment that limits the growth of the state budget to population growth plus inflation.

Many of us have ridiculed states like California and Illinois as bastions of failed big government. You'll be surprised to learn that Texas has more full-time state employees per capita than California and Illinois. That's shocking, and it must be changed. That's why my budget requires most state agencies to reduce their general revenue spending by three percent. Some of those cuts can come from hiring freezes and reductions in fuel and travel costs. Excepted from these budget cuts are public and higher education formula spending, pension obligations, and amounts required by the federal entitlement programs. To lead by example, I'm cutting the governor's office budget by more than 10 percent. I can do it. I know every other agency can do it, too. The more we restrain the growth of government, the more we will empower hardworking Texans. These budget cuts will make our budget even leaner while helping us prioritize spending that will make our state even stronger.

Let me briefly follow up on a word I mentioned a moment ago—liberty. In a single word, it encapsulates what this country stands for, what Texas symbolizes. I will expand liberty in Texas by signing a law that makes Texas the 45th state to allow open carry.

I want to mention one more topic. Let's dedicate this session to ethics. I want to work with you to strengthen the faith and the trust Texans deserve from us. It's a reminder of who we work for—the citizens of Texas. In my blueprint for the future of Texas, I outlined multiple ethics reforms—things like requiring elected officials to disclose contracts they have with public entities, prohibiting lawmakers from voting on legislation from which they could profit, and more disclosure of campaign finance information. I want to thank Senator Van Taylor and Representative Charlie Geren for spearheading the effort to pass my blueprint ethics reforms. The most important commodity we have as elected officials is the bond we share with our constituents. Transparency and rising above even the appearance of impropriety will strengthen that bond. Rejection of ethics reform will weaken that bond and rightfully raise suspicions about who we truly serve—ourselves or the people of Texas. Because these ethics reforms are so important, I'm adding this to my list of emergency items.

Many of you have heard me say that our lives are not defined by how we are challenged; instead, they are determined by how we respond to the challenges we face. That principle applies to us this session. Our fellow Texans face so many

challenges: the need for better schools, more roads, border security, better health care, more jobs. They want more liberty and less government, and they deserve ethics reform. We can't let their future be defined by these challenges. Instead, it is our responsibility to work together and respond to these challenges. Texas needs us to succeed. America needs us to succeed. Working together, we will keep Texas the leading state in this nation. May God bless you and your families, and may God forever bless the great State of Texas.

#### **SENATE ADJOURNMENT**

At 12 p.m., Lieutenant Governor Patrick stated that the purpose for which the joint session was called had been completed and the senate would, in accordance with a previous motion, stand adjourned until 10:30 a.m. tomorrow.

#### **INTERPRETER FOR THE DEAF**

The interpretation of the proceedings of the house was provided today by Shawn Whitley and Billy Collins, Jr.

#### **HOUSE AT EASE**

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

(Geren in the chair)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Representative Galindo moved that the house adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow in memory of Mark Wayne Spickerman of Helotes.

The motion prevailed.

The house accordingly, at 12:12 p.m., adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.