

Swearing-in Speech
Jan. 4, 2011

Thank you. Thank you all for making today possible and sharing in this special moment.

Lt. Governor Dewhurst, Speaker Straus, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Porter, Sec. Andrade, distinguished members of the Texas Legislature, family and friends; it is an honor to stand before you having placed my hand on my father's Bible.

I humbly take this oath with a personal faith in Almighty God and with the firm belief that God governs the affairs of man.

I accept the challenges of our day as opportunities, with the knowledge it is the **free enterprise system** and **individual responsibility** that create prosperity.

These past few years have keenly affirmed the economic philosophy **that jobs and capital will flow** to where they are welcomed...and we know they are welcome in Texas.

Government has a role to play in **ensuring transparency**...that the laws are **applied fairly and impartially**...and that **consumers are protected** ... but government cannot – nor should not – attempt to supplant the private sector's role, particularly in job creation and in providing fiscal security.

Just as we have a **Statue of Liberty** in our country **symbolizing** that all men are free, the **Lone Star State** has become a **beacon** representing **what is possible** when free market principles are **allowed to flourish**.

Each generation is **entrusted** with making decisions that **will benefit** their fellow citizens as well as the next generation.

Our children's future is determined by how we live up to that trust.

Agriculture is **about more** than the food that feeds us, the **fiber that clothes** us and the **fuels that hold promise** for our future.

At **\$100 billion dollars** in economic impact, Texas agriculture is a **driving force for jobs, food security** and a **superior quality of life**.

At your Texas Department of Agriculture, our mission spans from **advancing the continued domestic production** of our **food and fiber** to **protecting consumers**.

We do all this and much more.

And we constantly strive to embrace **quality, efficiency** and **accountability** as we fulfill our duties.

Texans believe a government program should provide a bridge, not an endless highway.

If we **earnestly** have **compassion** for our fellow Texans, we will **equip individuals** to **rise above** their circumstances, and this should be our goal in all assistance provided.

Ultimately, we should meet the needs of our neighbors because of **personal conviction**, not from government coercion.

True charity flows from the **heart**, not from government coffers.

As we work together to **build the Texas of tomorrow**, we do so understanding it all starts and ends with the land.

One of our **greatest legacies** is to **leave our heirs** a piece of property, whether it is a small family home or a part of the rolling Texas countryside.

That is why I asked many of our state's leading land steward organizations to join with me in establishing the "Protect Your Home and Land" initiative to further strengthen our state's eminent domain laws.

Thousands of Texans joined us in saying "**in Texas, our home is our castle and we must end abusive eminent domain now.**"

Gov. Perry has said he will place eminent domain reform as an emergency agenda item for this session, and I am confident our legislative leaders will finish this task with zeal.

Taking someone's land without just compensation is no different than taking their land through excessive taxation.

This is why the next Congress **must correct** a terrible wrong and permanently put a **nail in the coffin** of the unconscionable death tax.

There are now 25 million people living in the Lone Star State, a number that is projected to almost double over the next 50 years.

As a former chair of the Senate Transportation & Homeland Security Committee, I know that **without an effective**, first-class transportation system, we will not be able to **provide jobs** for our children and **prosperity** for our citizens.

Balancing this public need with the fundamental rights of private property owners will be tough.

But as I recently saw on a billboard here in Austin: "If you want something to happen, tell a Texan it can't be done."

As our state grows in population, we also must **grow the job skills** of our workforce.

That's why I established the Parallel Pathways to Success grant program.

We must **capture the imagination** of our students to **embrace higher learning** by preparing them with **both the academic and skills training** to meet the needs of our economy.

Our schools, community colleges and employers must be afforded even greater opportunities to join together to provide training while maintaining rigorous academic standards. Both our **students and our economy** will be the **winners**.

As long as America remains the land of opportunity, people from across the world will aspire to come to our country to **make a better life**.

While we **open our arms** to those who come here with honest intentions to be a part of the American Dream, **it is vital all come legally**.

We demand nothing less from Washington than a complete commitment to securing our border.

Personal and economic security are dependent upon it.

Let me be clear... Texas is a **diverse population of talented individuals** from all walks of life.

Loving our neighbors as ourselves defines our beliefs. Our **diversity** is our **strength**.

Securing our border, providing for **legal** immigration and demanding our immigration laws are complied with **ensures liberty and justice for all**.

No one (pause), through actions nor words, should define Texans differently.

Just as **economic security** and **regulatory predictability** are needed to make the American Dream possible, we need **confidence** in the **safety of the food we eat** and the **products** we buy.

This demands **increased vigilance** at our livestock, crop and food processing facilities in a way that **complements and encourages** the **innovation and financial commitment** made by our private sector.

Thankfully, Americans enjoy the safest, most abundant and most affordable food supply in the world. I'd like to keep it that way, how about you?

Aside from the preposterous policies emanating from Washington, the single greatest issue facing agriculture in Texas over the next 50 years is the availability of **water**.

It's **imperative** we develop **water resources** to meet our **food production** needs along with the requirements of **other industries**, our eco-systems and the **public at large**.

An **essential element** to achieving an **abundant supply** begins with protecting the rights of landowners to access and use their groundwater, **because no one – I mean no one – is a better steward than those who have a vested right to property**.

At the Texas Department of Agriculture, our **mission goes beyond** production agriculture and includes efforts to promote **healthy lifestyles**, particularly among our children.

I'm not talking about cupcakes versus carrots; **a healthy people determines the economic destiny of Texas as well as the military preparedness of America**.

Unhealthy lifestyles are creating health care costs that are immediate budget busters for our state and nation.

These **avoidable costs** are now counted in the **billions of dollars**, and are leading us down a path taxpayers cannot sustain.

Some today question government's role in this arena, and some in government, feel compelled to **micromanage every food choice**.

Make no mistake; there is no substitute for personal responsibility.

A proper education must be provided to **equip and empower** individuals to make these choices **because a family dining table is a thing of the past in too many Texas homes**.

Much of our **nation's recent health care debate** could have been **averted** if our attention and energy were focused on **preventive medicine** rather than expanding government's role.

Government should not be in the business of mandating whether or not a toy can be provided with a meal.

But the **government should not turn a blind eye** toward the fact that **taxpayers are picking up the tab for poor eating choices.**

I will push for investment that will yield **savings and measurable results** as I relentlessly remind policy makers, both in Texas and Washington that we cannot regulate, mandate Nor confiscate our way to a healthy lifestyle.

And just as a little belt tightening reflects improved **physical health**; our agency is tightening our **budget belt** to aid our state's **fiscal health.**

Having worked on the state's budget as a member of both the House Appropriations and Senate Finance committees, and now administering an agency budget, I know we need our state agencies to **offer solutions, not just fiscal notes.**

The Texas Department of Agriculture has consistently come in **under budget**, met the expectations of recent reductions and achieved a greater level of efficiency through the use of **technology, best practices** and **good, old-fashioned thrift.**

As we deal with the effects of the recession, government at all levels **must resist the urge to spend more when we can do with less.**

Let's not be fooled: revenue shortfalls are temporary, but tax increases are permanent.

We **must remember** what made Texas the strongest economy in the entire nation. And it wasn't banning Happy Meals.

Here in Texas, we have created an environment where **no matter your ZIP code, no matter the color of your skin, no matter how poor or wealthy you happen to be**, you have opportunity for success and an **obligation to compete.**

In Texas, it **isn't pedigree**, but **performance that counts**. It isn't **connections**, but **competence that is rewarded**.

I'm proud to be from a state that **values risk-taking**, because we know **innovation** and **imagination** are the fuels that drive the engine of achievement.

I'm proud to be among Texans who understand that it is **we the people** who must **demand** that our federal government **respect state's rights and the constitutional principles of limited government**.

I'm **proud to be from a state** where people **look at a problem** and don't ask what someone else will do about it, but **roll up their sleeves** and get to work.

It's a **legacy we inherited** from our earliest settlers – whether they were the **Spanish** who settled **San Antonio** or the **colonists** who came with Stephen F. Austin.

They arrived in a **bleak wilderness** with no **shelter**, no crops, no security. Faced with **immense challenges**, many people **would look on the future** with **despair**.

Instead, our forefathers looked on it with dreams, and Texans have been turning those dreams into a **prosperous reality for generations**.

Texas is **bigger, bolder, more open, more free** and **more successful** because the people of this state have made it so and because a **gracious God** has blessed our efforts.

Thank you, Texas, for the opportunity to serve.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless Texas.