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House of Representatives
OF THE
REGULAR SESSION
OF THE
Sixty-ninth Legislature

OF THE
STATE OF TEXAS
BEGUN AND HELD AT
THE CITY OF AUSTIN
JANUARY 8, 1985



HR 3 - ADOPTED

The chair laid before the house the following resolution:

By Laney:

HR 3

WHEREAS, Article III, Section 9, of the Texas Constitution requires that the house of representatives elect a speaker of the house from its own membership; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the secretary of state shall call for nominations from the floor for the election of speaker of the house of representatives for the 69th Legislature and shall recognize every member who desires to make a nomination; that each person recognized shall immediately advance to the front microphone to

make his or her nomination in a nominating speech not to exceed five minutes in length; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That after all nominations have been made, nominations shall be closed; whereupon seconding speeches shall be allowed, one for each nomination, in the order in which the nominations were made; and then other seconding speeches shall be allowed in rotation, with speeches in each round made in the order in which the nominations were made; provided that each nominee shall be allowed a maximum of four seconding speeches, none to exceed three minutes in length, and no person shall be considered a nominee unless his or her nomination is seconded by at least one member; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all votes taken for election of speaker shall be record votes and entered in the House Journal; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the secretary of state shall announce the results of the election; and if one nominee has received a majority of the votes cast, the secretary of state shall declare him or her to be elected to the office of speaker of the house of representatives; but if no nominee has received such a majority, the two nominees receiving the largest number of votes in the first ballot shall be in a runoff election and the procedure shall be repeated a second time with votes being cast for one or the other of the two nominees, the member receiving the higher vote being declared elected; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That after the election, the oath of office shall be administered under the direction of the secretary of state to the speaker-elect and the speaker shall thereupon take the chair.

The resolution was adopted without objection.

ELECTION OF THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The secretary of state announced that the next order of business was the election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 69th Legislature of the State of Texas, and stated that nominations for speaker are now in order.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Charles Evans of Tarrant County who placed in nomination for Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 69th Legislature of the State of Texas, the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis of Tarrant County, speaking as follows:

Madame Secretary of State, members of the judiciary, members of the Texas House of Representatives, ladies and gentlemen: Once again I have the privilege of standing before you to place into nomination a man that I have known personally for over 20 years.

He is a man that exemplifies honesty and fairness and is a recognized leader. His abilities have been recognized by the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Council of State Governments and the Southern Legislative Council, but more important than these faraway organizations, he is known to us in this institution, the house of representatives, as our leader.

I told you two years ago that he would be fair; the record now speaks for itself.

I told you two years ago that he was industrious; the record now speaks for itself.

I told you two years ago that he was strong; the record now speaks for itself.

I have seen this man in about every situation imaginable. He is a man who is in control at all times, a characteristic that is desperately needed in this next session of the legislature.

Never before have the people of this state needed a person whose keel will seek only one path and not be thrown about by the winds of pressure nor the waves of

politics. He is what is needed for the citizens of Texas, who expect a dollar's worth of services for each tax dollar spent.

Being born in Oletha, Texas, and raised in the east Texas town of Mexia gave this man the characteristics that so many men strive for and so few ever develop. These qualities were inbred as a result of his roots and his determination to make this a better Texas. He is a man that through those attributes of fairness, strength, and hard work has sought out and attained goals that most people would have given up on.

In the past two years we have seen this man take a commanding lead in education, workman's compensation, unemployment compensation, drug control, and crime, and accomplish ideas that will reflect upon our lives and our children's lives for many generations. He has had the foresight to attach landing gears to those ideas where only wings were placed thereon in the past.

His service to the state is widely recognized. He has been in every area of the state and in each of the districts which we represent at least once in the past two years. He is experienced in all matters of concern to the state through his service on committees in the house of representatives. He knows the working of the house from the introduction of legislation through final passage.

All who come in his presence see a man who is candid. He will not tell you one thing to your face and something else behind your back. His endorsement by Democrats, Republicans, conservatives, liberals, men, and women of every ethnic background is evidence that he is a man of his word.

His dedication to good government for the State of Texas and his hard work and long hours are exactly the kind of qualities a successful speaker should possess.

His leadership has been accompanied by a just and fair understanding of the diversity of the members of this house, which in turn reflects the diversity of the people of the State of Texas.

He has demonstrated his qualities as a man who is trusted without reserve and who is held with deep affection by his colleagues for the sincerity of his friendship.

We can all be proud of the leadership he has provided in the past, and more importantly, we can depend on this leadership to meet the challenges of the coming session.

I hope you will join with me in trying to make the efforts of this house one—a single, unified effort, an effort responsive to the people whose trust we carry today.

I know of few men more uniquely qualified to serve in the capacity of presiding officer of the house of representatives than the man whose name I submit to you now.

I proudly place into nomination for Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 69th Legislative Session, a man whom all members can introduce with pride as our leader, my friend and your friend, the Honorable Gibson D. "Gib" Lewis from Tarrant County.

Thank you very much.

The secretary of state then asked if there were further nominations for the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 69th Legislature.

There being none, the secretary of state then recognized the Honorable Paul Ragsdale, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis, speaking as follows:

Mr. Speaker, members of the house, honored guests, fellow citizens of Texas:

Today marks the beginning of my seventh term as a member of this house of the Texas Legislature. For 12 years, I have had the privilege of serving here with Gib Lewis, who had already served one term before my first election. It has been my pleasure to work with him on committees, on the floor of the house, and here at this podium during his first term as speaker.

A comparison of our voting records and the positions we have each taken during our service here would certainly show areas of disagreement. But one mark of leadership is the ability to disagree without being disagreeable and without destroying the goodwill and mutual respect necessary among members if the people of Texas are to successfully govern themselves through our actions. Gib Lewis has demonstrated that leadership quality.

Another test of leadership is the ability to get people with differing views and interest working toward solutions to the problems they have in common. In his first term, Speaker Lewis very amply demonstrated that ability also; some may disagree with one part or another of the education reform legislation, but no one can deny that Gib Lewis deserves credit for initiating the giant step this body took last summer toward resolving the common problems of all the schoolchildren, parents, and educators of Texas.

Members of the house and fellow Texans, we face a very difficult budgetary task this session. It is crucial that we wisely guide our limited resources to their most prudent uses. Each of us has his or her own views regarding our priorities.

For his ability to work toward workable solutions out of these conflicting views and as your friend and colleague, I recommend to you—and second the nomination of—the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis as leader of this house as we accomplish the very important and difficult work that faces this 69th Legislature and the people of Texas.

The secretary of state then recognized the Honorable Fred Agnich who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis, speaking as follows:

Madam Secretary, members, honored guests: The Honorable Gibson D. Lewis and I entered the legislature at the same time. During the years, I have appreciated more and more his leadership qualities, his fairness, and above all, his dedication to the service of the people of Texas. He has demonstrated his ability to get people of diverse backgrounds to work together for the benefit of all Texans.

I am proud to second the nomination of Gibson D. Lewis for speaker of the house of representatives.

The secretary of state then recognized the Honorable Ernestine Glossbrenner who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis, speaking as follows:

Madame Secretary, honored guests, gentlemen and gentlewomen of the house:

When considering reelection of our speaker, we do not, as on first election, look so much to what he promises to do, but rather we look at what he has done.

The press has reported the large successes and even the few failures of Gib Lewis's first term as speaker, but describing the organization of the house by those reports would be like trying to describe the development of the American people by a listing of all our battles in all our wars. The outcome of the battles is important, but it's how the people work together after the battle that makes the difference. Each of us wears many bonnets and represents many constituencies, so we perhaps place importance on differing aspects of the house organization. As a woman, a teacher, a Texan, and an elected representative from a district whose population is 75 percent minority, here are some things that I see that have happened in these last two years and that I appreciate.

Look at the House Sergeants: I may be showing my age when I admit I like those neat uniforms, but what I really want you to notice that our speaker has found that that uniform seems to fit just fine, young women and young men of every ethnic background we have in Texas, and I appreciate that.

Look at the House Leadership: Our speaker has found talent and has delegated responsibility to members in all ethnic groups and in both sexes, and I appreciate that.

Look at the Commitment to the Future: Our speaker led us in a commitment to the improvement of primary education in our state, an improvement which will finally pay off in making it possible for young children, all children, to obtain the skills early which should insure their success late, and I appreciate that.

Look at the Commitment to the People of Texas: Our speaker has moved legislation through this house, allowing the house to work its will. He has seen to it that on questions of major import to the citizens of this state and on which the state legislature has an effect, there is a record of how each of us stands. But our speaker has also refused to allow our time to be wasted with debate on issues over which we have no control, and I appreciate that.

Gib Lewis has not done everything I would wish him to do. He has done some things differently than I would have wished. He has done a few things just exactly right and the most important thing he has done right is to give each member her or his chance to succeed as a representative of the people who sent us here. I appreciate that and I am proud to second the nomination of Gibson D. Lewis for reelection as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives. Thank you.

The secretary of state then recognized the Honorable Al Luna who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis, speaking as follows:

Madame Secretary of State, fellow members, honored guests: It is my sincere privilege to second the nomination of Gib Lewis to the office of speaker of the house.

Two years ago, in his acceptance remarks before this body, Speaker Lewis quoted the great Hubert Humphrey in senate debate. Part of the quote was, "the moral test of government is how it treats those in the dawn of life—the young." Speaker Lewis laid this out as a challenge. How true those words ring now.

For years the Texas Legislature grappled and delayed any substantive reform in education and the fair distribution of the state's resources to properly fund education.

Many of our state's schoolchildren—our state's future—were being denied a proper education (an equal education) because the legislature failed to address a problem that threatened the future of our great state.

Speaker Gib Lewis changed that. I will always be proud to have served during that special session and to have participated in the passage of one of the most important pieces of legislation in this century. Members, you and I both know that HB 72 and the sweeping reform it encompassed would not be law today were it not for the effective leadership provided by Speaker Gib Lewis.

True to his acceptance remark pledge, Speaker Lewis displayed the awesome power and responsibilities of his office on behalf of the schoolchildren of this state and on behalf of equal education opportunity.

Others may grab the credit or garner the laurels, but when all the talking has stopped, and all the crowds have stopped cheering, the historians will look back and say it could not have been done without Speaker Gib Lewis.

Members, this session has already been labeled as the most important in recent history. There are tough issues that have to be addressed by this body. There are decisions that will be made that will affect not only the direction of state government and the services it provides for its people, but more importantly what effect we will have on the quality of life in Texas.

The task before us is awesome and difficult. We have a rough 139 days ahead. We need a speaker that can tackle the difficult issues. We need a speaker that can consider the diversity of the needs of the 150 districts and the some 15 million people represented. We need a speaker that has our confidence—that will lead us—during a session that they say has "no answers." Members, we need Gib Lewis as speaker of the house.

Representative Al Luna moved that nominations cease, and that the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives be instructed to cast the vote of all the members of the House of Representatives for the Honorable Gib Lewis for Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 69th Legislature, and shall cause same to be entered in the House Journal, and that Gib Lewis be unanimously elected Speaker of the House of Representatives by acclamation, with any member being permitted to cast a "present" or "nay" vote by providing such information to the Journal Clerk.

The motion prevailed without objection.

Chief Clerk Betty Murray cast ballots of all members for Gibson D. Lewis as the Speaker of the 69th Legislature of the State of Texas. (Fox and P. Moreno recorded voting present, not voting; C. Smith, no.)

The Honorable Myra McDaniel, Secretary of State of the State of Texas, then declared the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis of Tarrant County to be the duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 69th Legislature of the State of Texas.

HOUSE NOTIFIED

A committee from the senate was announced at the door of the house and, being admitted, notified the house that the senate is organized and ready to transact business.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED

The secretary of state announced the appointment of the following committee to escort the Honorable Gibson D. Lewis to the speaker's rostrum for the purpose of taking the constitutional oath of office as speaker: Representatives Millsap, chairman; Carter, G. W. Thompson, C. Evans, Williamson, Gibson, Willis, C. Harris, Leonard and McKenna.

Speaker-elect Lewis and his party were escorted to the speaker's rostrum.

OATH OF OFFICE TAKEN BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

The Honorable Gibson D. Lewis of Tarrant County, having been escorted to the speaker's rostrum, took the constitutional oath of office as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 69th Legislature of the State of Texas, which was administered by the Honorable Joe Spurlock, Judge, 231st Judicial District, Tarrant County.

INTRODUCTION OF PLATFORM GUESTS

The secretary of state then recognized the Honorable Billy Hall of Webb County, who addressed the house and introduced members of Speaker Lewis's family present on the speaker's rostrum, as follows:

Mr. Speaker, Madam Secretary of State, distinguished guests, members of the house of representatives, ladies and gentlemen and dear friends:

In all the years in which so many of us have had the honor and privilege of knowing and working with our distinguished speaker, he has always stood "tall" in the tradition of so many of our great Texas leaders.

For truly our speaker has always been, as so aptly expressed in the language of Cervantes:

"Un hombre de su palabra"—a man of his word—
And no kinder word can ever be said of any leader.

The membership of the 69th Legislature has today, with overwhelming urgency, pressed one of our colleagues to accept the responsibility of the highest office within their power to confer.

On this day, the members of the Texas House of Representatives have called upon the Honorable Gibson Lewis to accept "a call to glory."

Such a call commands that together we uphold the trust and the hopes and the aspirations of the people we represent and serve.

Such a call demands dedication, sacrifice, and a total commitment to serve in the light of truth and to walk in the way of honor while serving the people of Texas.

Such dedication, sacrifice, and commitment reaches beyond the individual elected to the speakership.

The trials and tribulations of which we speak must also be shared and accepted by the members of the speaker's family.

These fine people I am about to introduce have shared their dreams, their lives, and invested their most basic feelings of love and understanding with Gib and Sandra Lewis.

On this occasion we acknowledge and offer our most sincere thanks to these fine individuals who have given fully and so unselfishly of their time, their love and their energies in order that the speaker and his lady could respond to a call to duty, a call to public service.

At the outset, permit me the honor of presenting one of the most lovely and charming young ladies ever to serve as the first lady of the house of representatives.

Ladies and gentlemen, help me greet and make welcome the gracious and popular wife of our speaker, the beautiful Sandra Lewis; the speaker's mother, Marie Croft; the speaker's father and stepmother, Jack and Florida Lewis; the speaker's brother and niece, Warner Croft and Candace; the speaker's sister and her husband, Dorothy and Billy Merritt; the speaker's stepsister and brother-in-law, Sandra and Larry Sokoloski; the speaker's daughter, son-in-law, and new granddaughter, Cammie, Cole, and MacKenzie Morvan; the speaker's aunt, Hazel Stanford; the speaker's uncle, Billy Lewis; the speaker's cousin, Johnny Jack Stanford; the speaker's cousins, Curtis and Lee Lewis; the speaker's cousin Larry Stanford and his son Ronnie; the speaker's aunt and uncle, Grover and Pauline Gibson.

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER LEWIS

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Hugo Berlanga of Nueces County, who introduced Speaker Lewis to the house, speaking as follows:

Madame Secretary, Judge Spurlock, Sandra, Lewis Family, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen: It is truly an honor to be here before you today to present to you someone for whom I have a tremendous amount of respect.

I have had the pleasure and honor of working with Speaker Lewis for four sessions.

As I begin my fifth term as a legislator, I look enthusiastically at the challenges ahead of us.

There is no doubt that we will be facing tremendous obstacles that will require large doses of innovative thinking.

The deficit in the budget, for one, is making many of us wish we were back home reading the developments in the newspaper instead of being here in Austin making those difficult decisions on who and where to cut.

Nevertheless, we were all elected to do a job here and what better way to proceed than with a speaker at the helm like Gib Lewis—the member's speaker.

In his first term as speaker, Gib Lewis displayed solid leadership.

He guided us through the first meaningful educational reform package in over a decade.

Under his leadership this past summer, the first true equalization formula was approved.

It was not an easy task, as all who experienced it will attest.

The 68th session was full of tense moments, personal confrontations and close votes.

It was a session, however, that witnessed a speaker taking command of his own house. It was a session that saw a sincere attempt made to start building a better Texas.

Watching Speaker Lewis in action was, as Mr. H. Ross Perot, was quoted as saying in an article in Texas Business magazine, "like watching ex-Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach in the last two minutes of a game."

We saw a tough, strong, determined, and compassionate person in action who is credited with "single-handedly saving the reform effort."

Throughout all this, the Lewis administration never lost those traits for which it is now known—traits of fairness and of openness.

With such leadership, there is no issue too great that we cannot work together to resolve—and this session will certainly put us through another crucial test.

I, for one, am ready for those challenges under the guidance of a strong leader.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you that strong leader—Speaker Gib Lewis—the member's speaker.

ADDRESS BY SPEAKER LEWIS

Speaker Lewis then addressed the house, speaking as follows:

The Chinese philosopher Confucius wrote that "Even the longest journey starts with but a single step."

Today, 30 of you have begun what I hope will be a long and distinguished career in this legislature by taking that first step with the oath of office as members of the Texas House of Representatives.

I join with your 119 colleagues in wishing you every success.

I can recall, as clearly as if it were only yesterday, that day in January—14 years ago—that I took that same first step as a freshman member of this great body.

Little did I know then that the journey upon which I was embarking would carry me to this podium and the honor you have bestowed upon me here today by electing me to a second term as your speaker.

Since 1971, when I became a member of this house, I have witnessed many changes and significant milestones in the history of our great state.

But through all this time, one thing has remained constant.

That is the dedication of the vast majority of the members of this house to the service of the people of Texas regardless of political philosophy or party affiliation.

In good times, and in bad, when the difficult decision had to be made, the overriding consideration—as reflected in the final outcome—has been in favor of what is right.

That, more than anything else, is what makes me so proud to be a member of this house and your speaker.

The winds of change, like the sands of time, are constantly shifting.

As we enter this 69th session of the Texas Legislature, those winds have a certain chill to them.

For the first time in recent history, we are entering a session minus the financial surplus we have enjoyed for so many years.

No longer is Texas an island surrounded by a sea of vast natural resource riches.

Forces beyond our control—declining world oil prices and our own declining reserves, a recession from which we are just now recovering, the financial troubles of our good neighbor Mexico, and even the weather—have had a direct bearing on our fiscal shortfall.

And all of this has led to this session of the legislature having to face one of its most difficult decisions in recent years.

The easy decision in this case would be the generation of new revenues to meet our needs.

The easy course would be to undertake a program of new taxes to bolster our flagging revenues.

But, as I said before, when the difficult decision has had to be made, the overriding consideration has been in favor of what's right for the people we serve.

And so, today, I would ask you to join with me in this pledge to those people:

We will ask no more of you than we are ready to ask of ourselves.

We will do with what we have, or we will do without.

In the recent special session of the legislature, we enacted the most sweeping reform of this state's public school system in history.

We asked the people of Texas to support it.

They have.

We undertook a program to revitalize Texas' rapidly crumbling highway system.

We asked the people of Texas to support it.

They have.

It is now our turn to keep faith with the people of this state.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will have to demonstrate beyond a doubt the truth of the statement that biggest is not always best, and this goes double for state government and state spending.

We will have to make difficult decisions across the board to trim state spending whenever and wherever possible.

It is my intention, with your help, to sine die this session with an appropriations bill on the governor's desk that is within the available revenues of this state.

Nor do the difficult decisions end there.

During this session, you will be asked to set aside personal and regional differences and come face to face with the fact that if Texas is to survive one of its greatest crises of all time, we must enact a statewide water plan that will meet the needs of generations to come.

For several years now, we have heard the dire warnings that Texas is rapidly running out of this most precious of all natural resources.

This past summer, I think, we had more than ample evidence that these warnings were not merely the utterings of doomsdayers.

From one end of this state to the other, in more than 200 of 254 counties, we experienced a drought that impacted on every segment of our population and economy.

It brought home dramatically the fact that water is not an issue that concerns only agriculture, industry, utilities, or the harvest of our Gulf Coast.

It concerns everyone everywhere.

Each interest has its individual and legitimate concerns.

And each represents a vital slice of Texas' economy.

No one is immune.

If a farmer fails in West Texas or a shrimp fisherman goes broke down on the coast, the ripple spreads through our entire economy.

The banks, insurance companies, suppliers, and service people that depend on that farmer or fisherman will feel the pinch.

So you see, having enough water and managing it wisely doesn't mean just being able to water your lawn or take out the bass boat.

It is the very foundation of our continued prosperity.

Our entire economic future is tied directly to our ability to meet this demand, not only today but for generations to come.

That is why this legislature, and this house, must leave here in 140 days with a water plan in place that addresses the needs of our state for development and conservation.

It is our challenge and it will take the best in us all to meet that challenge.

There will also come before you, in this session, a series of bills aimed at strengthening our criminal justice system.

They call for the continuation of wiretapping capabilities for the department of public safety in felony narcotics cases and the continuation of the "triplicate prescription" requirements when certain categories of dangerous drugs are prescribed by physicians.

Also, there is proposed legislation to inform juries of the effect of our parole laws when considering the punishment for a defendant already found guilty of a crime.

Justice may be blind.

But there's no reason why our juries must be blind also.

I think our good citizens who serve on juries are becoming increasingly frustrated by the fact that, after passing sentence on a convicted felon, they find that individual is all too soon turned loose on society once again due to conditions in the parole laws unknown to them at the time they passed what they thought was a sentence that fit the crime.

Another would change the law in such a manner that the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals will no longer be able to reverse a criminal conviction on the basis of technical defects in the original indictment.

Again, we are aiming at a source of frustration that has plagued our citizens and our prosecutors who carry a criminal case to its conclusion only to see it reversed due to some insignificant error in the indictment.

The cost of retrial, the delay in the execution of justice, and even the fact that in some cases a guilty party is allowed to evade punishment entirely due to a technicality is a travesty which must be ended.

And finally, there is a proposal to make the crime of multiple murder subject to the death penalty.

I think it is high time that we levy adequate punishment for those convicted of the ruthless, cold-blooded taking of innocent lives.

The health of our citizens is a constant challenge to us all.

In this area, we will be asked to undertake new advances in the constant battle to deliver better health care to our citizens, especially those who lack adequate means to always provide for themselves.

Cancer, which costs this state millions annually in lost productivity, to say nothing of suffering and heartbreak to victims and loved ones, is the target of legislation proposed by a special committee created during the past interim.

Even though we are faced with major crises in the areas of our budget, water and crime—to name but a few—we must never lose sight of the fact that compassion is an equal responsibility of government.

We can no more afford to ignore the crisis that faces our families of this state due to the burdens of illness and disease than we can in these other areas.

During this session you will be asked to cast votes and make decisions on a wide variety of difficult issues.

Not the least among these will involve our prison system and mental health and mental retardation, both embroiled in legal action at the federal court level.

All too often in the past, when dealing with the federal courts, Texas—and other states—have been too prone to throw up our hands and say there's nothing we can do about it but accept the edicts of a judge.

I am here to say right now that the United States Constitution says there is something we can do about it.

The tenth amendment to that constitution, adopted in 1791, clearly states that "The powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people."

And I am also here to say that I am not ready to abdicate that constitutional guarantee to any judge until Texas has pursued its right to the highest courts in this land.

I am tired of trying to make reasonable deals with unreasonable people!!

In short, there will be many difficult votes ahead of us in the next 140 days.

But as I have said before, and forgive me if I repeat myself one more time, the outcome in the past has always been determined by the overriding consideration of what is right for the people who have asked us to represent them here.

I have no reason to expect the outcome will be any different this time.

I have merely touched on the legislative menu that is about to be placed before you.

I know that I have drawn less than a happy picture in some cases.

That this will be a difficult session there is no question.

But I am encouraged as I have never been encouraged in the past 14 years.

Because all I have to do is look out upon this body and know that it is equal to this, or any, challenge that may be thrust upon it.

I see before me a body of men and women possessed with the ability, intelligence, and dedication to get the job done right.

I see before me a blend of the new and old that promises wisdom and innovation.

I see men and women of all facets of our citizenry.

I see before me democracy at its best.

I see hard work and good works.

I see success.

And to this end, I would leave you with this promise.

When I first was elected to this position two years ago, I promised to be a member's speaker.

I renew that promise today.

I serve you and we all serve the finest people in the finest state in this nation.

That we will succeed together there is no doubt.

And in the face of monumental challenge, when all is said and done, they will say of us, as it was said in the past:

"Indeed, this was their finest hour."

Thank you, and God bless you.