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Seventy-Sixth Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF TEXAS

BEGUN AND HELD AT

THE CITY OF AUSTIN

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VOLUME I

HR 2 - ADOPTED
(by Bosse and Goodman)

The chair laid before the house the following resolution:

HR 2

WHEREAS, Section 9, Article III, 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 76th 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 five 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.

HR 2 was read and was adopted without objection.

ELECTION OF THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The secretary of state announced that the next order of business would be the election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas, and stated nominations for speaker would now be in order.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Gary Walker of Yoakum County, who placed in nomination for Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas the name of the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney of Hale County, speaking as follows:

Governor Bush, Mr. Secretary, honored guests, members of the Texas House of Representatives:

Four years ago, on a January day, I cast my first vote as a member of the Texas House of Representatives. That vote was for Pete Laney as speaker of the house. Four years ago, I watched the green light go on by my name, and felt an incredible thrill that I was actually part of this process. It was my first vote and one of my best. A vote for Pete Laney is an easy choice. Four years ago I had the honor to vote for the man who would lead this house well. Now I stand before you to nominate the same man.

In Washington, Speaker Hastert has called on Republicans to work together with Democrats. What incredible perception. Speaker Hastert has learned what Speaker Laney has known all along. It doesn't matter whether you have a "D" or an "R" by your name. Although we are both from West Texas, and have a lot in common, the Texas State Directory shows that Pete and I have different consonants by our names. But what matters to Pete are constituents, not consonants. To him, what matters is that you represent your constituents to the best of your ability. Speaker Laney helps us all to rise to the best of our ability and beyond to do for those we represent, and for Texas as a whole.

We have gone through a cycle of declining trust in the institutions of our democracy. The president, congress, the courts, the political parties all have been weakened by a cross fire of attacks on their integrity. In the Texas Legislature, we haven't suffered quite so much, and I believe it is because we all work together. In this house, the aisle down the middle doesn't separate the Democrats and Republicans. It's the place where we come together to debate and share ideas. The speaker of this house has continued to create an atmosphere where we feel comfortable with each other. That is not an easy thing to do.

Henry Ford said, "The question of who ought to be boss is like who ought to be the tenor in the quartet. Obviously, the man who can sing tenor." I don't know if Pete Laney can sing tenor. But I do know that he can lead. If you want to see the house of representatives led successfully into the new millenium, you elect Pete Laney as our speaker.

Pete commands the respect of those who have served with him. He could pick up his gavel, enjoy the privilege of being called Mr. Speaker, and leave the hard decisions to others. But Pete is not the speaker for the glory. He

works hard and listens well. He respects your right to say what's on your mind even if he doesn't agree with you. His knowledge of the process cannot be equaled. Many of us may think we have seen it all, but Pete truly has. And in spite of seeing it all, he is still here! Pete is sincere in his belief that Texas can be an even better place than it is right now. And best of all, he doesn't want to do it alone. He seeks the support, and the ideas, of each one of us. We are all included in the process. That sincerity carries over to you and me, and makes us better representatives, better people. Our constituents get the true impression that we are trying, and wanting to do what is right for Texas.

Pete is not a lecturer who insists that we see things his way, he is a teacher who guides us to finding our own way.

For some of you, Austin is the real world because it is your home. For most of us, "real Texas" is another place. It is the place we call home and where our constituents live, work, and play. We will stay in this place for approximately five months, then we will go home and explain to our constituents what we did. The best way to represent our part of Texas is to do the best we can to the best of our ability, leave partisan bickering for someone else, and to elect someone who will guide us to doing a better job. That person is Pete Laney.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." We have given Pete Laney power for six years, and his character has stood the test. Let's do it again. It is with great pride, and for Texas, that I hereby nominate the Honorable Pete Laney as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Vilma Luna of Nueces County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney, speaking as follows:

Secretary Bomer, Governor Bush, members of the house, special guests. I am pleased and personally honored to second the nomination of James E. "Pete" Laney as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives for the 76th Regular Legislative Session.

Pete Laney is a house member, just like you and me. And yet, he has never forgotten what that means. He knows that each of us is here to represent our constituents—to be their vote and their voice. He asks little of us. He asks that you work, and work you hard he will. He asks that you represent the interests of your district, and exemplify the best for all Texans. He asks you to be fair and decisive and allows you plenty of resources to be informed on the issues.

He has often said and demonstrates, by his style of leadership, that we must rise above partisan politics and do what is best for all of the people of Texas.

Pete Laney believes in the importance of each of you and he has worked to open the process to give each member the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way.

Pete Laney knows that we cannot control the wind, but as legislators we can adjust and direct the sails and work to create a government that helps Texans help themselves. Speaker Laney has led this chamber in a positive

and progressive manner. He has backed the adoption of extensive reforms in the process by which the house conducts its business. This process allows each one of us to review proposals and put an end to last-minute surprise legislation.

Under Speaker Laney's leadership and with close bipartisan relationships, past sessions have produced landmark reforms in education, welfare, juvenile justice, children's health issues, and much more. We look for his valued leadership to continue in this session.

Laney's leadership is best described by Aristotle: "Consensus omnium," which means, "What everybody believes is true." In our world that means, "the will of the house." And today, Mr. Speaker, it is the will of this house that you lead us into a new millennium. Today we honor your accomplishments of the past and we look forward to working with you for the future of Texas.

With great respect and pride, I rise to second the nomination of a great leader, a special friend, and a unique mentor, Pete Laney as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Kyle Janek of Harris County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney, speaking as follows:

Mr. Secretary, Governor Bush, members of the house, and honored guests:

For the next 140 days, the eyes of Texas will be upon us—and that's not an easy thing for an Aggie to say. Texans everywhere will be watching this chamber. How we conduct our business, the civility of our dialogue, the quality of our colloquy, and the spirit of our actions will tell the public whether we are mere politicians or true public servants.

The public's first glimpse into what this session will be like is how and whom we choose as speaker of the house. The qualities found in our choice will tell the rest of the world what we want Texas to be like.

James E. "Pete" Laney personifies what people believe our great state is all about.

Pete Laney is hardworking and honest. He respects the views of others, yet never abandons his own principles. You can always talk business with Pete, but don't try to rush it because first he's going to ask how your family is, and—like any good West Texas dirt farmer—what you think about the weather.

That's what I want Texas to be like.

Speaker Laney stands by his friends, even when they're down—in fact, he stands by his friends especially when they are down. His word is his bond—a contract that will not be broken. He understands that just taking a few minutes to listen to the problems of others goes a long way towards helping them find a solution.

That's what I want Texas to be like.

Pete holds a sense of history for this chamber, and a passion for the commitment of its members. As our economy moves into the high-tech and service sectors, I take great comfort in knowing this body is led by a man who has the patience, the endurance, and the faith in God and family to grow cotton for a living.

That is what I want Texas to be like, for me, and for my family. I want Texas to be like James E. "Pete" Laney, and therefore I am very proud to second his nomination as speaker of the house of representatives.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Ruth Jones McClendon of Bexar County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney, speaking as follows:

Mr. Secretary, colleagues, fellow Texans and friends, I am honored to be given the opportunity to second the nomination of James E. "Pete" Laney as speaker of the house.

I finished college in the turbulent '60s and set out on the road to my career working with troubled kids as a juvenile probation officer. Had you told me then that one day, I would be standing here before all of you, I would have sent each of you back for more counseling. Yet here I am.

The great thing about America is that she gives you the opportunity to give your very best. I have found that same thing to be true in the house, under the leadership of Pete Laney.

I am proud today to be one of you.

I am proud today to be part of this historic event.

And I am proud to stand with you in support of a great man and proven leader.

Sam Rayburn once said, "Anyone can be elected once by accident. Beginning with the second term, it's worth paying attention."

Speaker Laney has been elected 13 terms to this body, and today to a fourth term as speaker. It's no accident, and we are paying attention.

I knew from my first meeting with Pete Laney that he was unlike other powerful people I had known. Shortly after I was elected in '96 to fill an unexpired term as a new member, and even though I did not know him well, I asked Speaker Laney to come to my home district to swear me in so that my constituents could attend. I was new. We did not have a relationship then. Yet he made the effort. He came to my hometown and from my first meeting, he made me feel welcomed and an important part of this process. That's Pete Laney.

From our first encounter, I learned that to him, respect and courtesy are always the order of the day. Pete teaches us that respect is earned, not demanded. That power is shared, not monopolized.

All of us know that his West Texas philosophy includes competence and cooperation, not dominance and control. That's Pete Laney.

He empowers us to be the best we can be; to do the best we can do for our constituents and for Texas. He leads by example. While he appreciates our individualism, he helps us find our common ground. That's Pete Laney.

He is a leader who understands the dimension and diversity of our great state. He governs by inclusion, not exclusion. Yet he keeps us focused on what is in the best interest of all of Texas.

As I look around me today, I wonder if I could lead this bunch. Maybe you have wondered the same. Being speaker is a tough job. The task: bring together 149 unique individuals; each with different ideas about how to best educate our children, how to prioritize state spending, and how best to prepare Texas for the next century.

This tough job needs one tough leader.

So today, even though we come from different towns, different political parties, different cultures, and different religions, we come together in support of Pete Laney.

That is why it is my distinct honor to second the nomination of the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Craig Eiland of Galveston County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney, speaking as follows:

As I was trying to think of a way to express what makes Pete Laney so special, especially to the new members and our fellow Texans, the first thought was to share one of our first conversations, which let me know that he focuses on what's important. It also demonstrates how he communicates with us sometimes. As a brand new freshman member, I went to talk to the speaker about what I thought was an important problem. He asked me questions that he already knew the answers to. Our conversation went like this:

"Eiland, you're from Galveston, right?"

Yes, sir.

"Ya'll got any trees down there?"

Yes, sir.

"Shade trees?"

Palm trees, shade trees, all kinds of trees.

"Ya'll got water down there?"

We're surrounded by water; not always crystal clear, but plenty of water.

"Is it wet? Can you drink it? Can you water crops with it?"

Yes, sir. Most of it.

"Do ya'll have pretty sunsets like we do?"

Bragging, I said, "I can watch the sunrise over the gulf and watch the sunset over the bay, except for when the trees block it."

"How's the education?"

Pretty good. One of my schools, Friendswood, has been the academic state champs for the last three years. We have two fine community colleges, UTMB, A&M Galveston, UHCL up the road a piece. The only unfortunate thing is that we don't have Texas Tech in the area.

"Do you have any hospitals close?"

We have one of the finest medical centers in the country, UTMB, and a Columbia hospital, and if you're more than 20 minutes or so away, they'll send a helicopter.

"How are the jobs?"

Petro-chemical plants, NASA, tourism, maritime, UTMB; there are opportunities if you're looking.

"How's the football?"

Six teams usually go pretty far in playoffs, and La Marque is in the state championship game every year.

"What was it that was so important you wanted to talk about?" he asked.

I realized what he had done to me. We had just touched on the truly important things: jobs, education, health care, and quality of life issues, which my "problem" had nothing to do with, so I acted like my beeper went off and said, "Mr. Speaker, we'll have to talk about that later. I have some constituents in my office."

He told me, "Take care of your constituents. Represent your district. If everyone does that, Texas will be all right."

The next day he called me and said, "Eiland, you know that problem that you came to see me about? I think we took care of it."

I don't know how he knew, and I didn't ask.

Although the anecdote shows that the speaker has the leadership skills and the vision of Texas that make him intellectually qualified to lead us, it doesn't really let you know who he is, and why we have chosen this man of extraordinary character—which complements his vision—to lead us. In my efforts to explain this, I keep coming back to the fact that he is a cotton farmer from West Texas. There must be something to it, Mr. Speaker. Our governor's parents had the good sense to get him a dose of West Texas. I think that is one reason ya'll work so well together.

I will tell you when it struck me. I called about seven o'clock one morning to talk to the speaker. Nelda answered the phone. "Pete's on the tractor. He took his lunch so it will probably be a while, but I'll have him call you when he comes in." About six-thirty, he hadn't called back, so I called again. Nelda answered the phone, and graciously told me, "He's still on the tractor. I'll have him call you as soon as he gets in." Which he did about an hour later.

What is so important about Pete being on the tractor? With the events that have transpired over the last year across our nation, Pete being on the tractor is very important. You show me a cotton farmer who has long, straight rows; who can get on the tractor and plow, alone, for 10 to 12 hours a day, and not be afraid of it, and, in fact, enjoy it; and I'll show you a man who is right with himself, right with his conscience, right with his Lord, right with his family, and right with his friends. Because when you're on a tractor—even though it's loud—the silence can be deafening. If you are not right with yourself, your Lord, your family and friends, you can't sit on that tractor for 12 hours. You show me a cotton farmer with weeds and unplowed fields; I'll show you someone that isn't necessarily lazy; just scared to face themselves or their problems with themselves, their Lord, their family, or friends.

That's why it is important that Pete's been on the tractor, and enjoys being on it. And, he knows when the session is over, he'll be back on that tractor by himself. And he knows what it takes as our speaker to be able to do it.

So, members and fellow Texans, late in the session when things are tense, take comfort: Pete's been on the tractor; the house will be all right.

It is my privilege and honor to second the nomination of James E. "Pete" Laney as speaker of the house. We have a man of extraordinary leadership skill, a vision for the future of the entire state, and the character to make them

work for us without grandstanding or seeking recognition for himself. We are truly fortunate to have him lead this house, servants of Texas, into the next century. We have found a good one, let's keep him.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Kip Averitt of McLennan County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney, speaking as follows:

Mr. Secretary, Governor Bush, honored guests and members:

In 1891, Speaker R. T. Milner opened the 22nd session of the Texas House of Representatives in this very chamber, articulating a rule of reason that still resounds over 100 years later. He said, "I believe with Jefferson, the greatest advocate of popular government, that the will of the majority, in all cases, should prevail. But, in the same sentence in which he laid down this wise axiom, he declared that we should, at all times, bear in mind the sacred principle that the will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possesses their equal right...."

Today, I am honored to rise on behalf of my friend, and our leader, Pete Laney, for speaker, not only because he embodies these historic principles of reason and fairness, but also for what he has done and what he will do for all of Texas. As a former committee chairman, and now, as the speaker of the Texas House, Pete Laney has contributed honor and integrity to this chamber. Pete Laney keeps our Lone Star State shining. Consider just a few examples: Under his able leadership, we have a house of representatives that is more open and accessible to the people of Texas than at any point in our state's history. When the very first Texas Legislature convened on February 16, 1846, the house took the same actions to swear-in and elect their officers as we are doing here today. The very next day, one of the first resolutions passed guaranteed public accessibility to the proceedings of this house. Our speaker has continued and enhanced this Texas tradition. This session, for the first time, the house's legislative proceedings will be broadcast not only on television and radio, but on the Internet as well and let me take advantage of this opportunity to say, "Hi Mom!"

As you can see, indeed, Texans and their elected representatives will be brought even closer together.

Internally, the speaker has also made us proud by making the legislative process more manageable and accessible for members. He has embraced rule changes that allow all voices to be heard. You know, I've even heard a rumor—that he intends to extend this courtesy to freshmen members this session—just as long as they don't spend too much time at the microphone.

Under the guidance of Speaker Laney, the house committee structure is better than ever. Today, committees and chairmanships are appointed on the basis of ability, and not along party lines. Pete believes that a strong committee system is the foundation for building good legislation, and that this process must include representatives with a variety of views.

Under the leadership of Speaker Laney the past several years, we've passed far-reaching legislation that includes a major tax-reduction package, significant education funding and reform, practical juvenile justice reform, and other major efforts too numerous to mention. As you know, Pete has played a major role in this and has always acted in the best interests of Texas.

Speaker Laney has also allowed us to benefit from his gracious and kind wife, Nelda, who contributes her own distinction to this house. She has ever-present grace and a heart as big as Texas. Her contributions will endure throughout the years. Thank you, Nelda.

I know I've only scratched the surface of what the Laney's have accomplished, but all of these things—large and small—are the result of a man who walks and acts with integrity.

But members, I support Pete Laney not only because of what he has done. I am for him because of what he will help us accomplish for our state in the coming session.

It's said that the only thing worse than a tax bill is a budget surplus. As we work with our surplus this session, we need a wise and strong leader to guide us through what will be a formidable challenge with competing priorities.

We also have other issues that we must face with equal strength: a possible revision of our constitution; proposals to deregulate the electric industry; health insurance issues; and other major legislation that will weave the fabric of a better Texas. It is for these issues that we know—as well as those that we don't know—that we need the experience of Pete Laney.

Finally, as we begin this 76th session, we all know that house bills and senate bills will go through many changes, and the dynamics of the ever-evolving legislative process will keep us busy. But as a member of this house, I want to rest assured that through all of this change, we will still have a reliable, solid constant in our speaker, Pete Laney. I want to know that we have his wisdom and fairness guiding us through this process.

Members, it is for these reasons and because he is a good friend, that I am honored to rise and second the nomination of James E. "Pete" Laney as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives for the 76th Legislature.

Representative Averitt moved that nominations cease and that the chief clerk of the house of representatives be instructed to cast the vote of all members of the house of representatives for the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney of Hale County for Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Sixth Legislature, and that the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney of Hale County be unanimously elected speaker 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.

The secretary of state directed the chief clerk to cast the ballots of all members for the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney for Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas.

On the motion to elect the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney of Hale County for Speaker of the House of Representative of the Seventy-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas, the chief clerk cast the ballots of the members as follows:

Yeas — Alexander; Allen; Alvarado; Averitt; Bailey; Berman; Bonnen; Bosse; Brimer; Brown, B.; Brown, F.; Burnam; Capelo; Carter; Chavez;

Chisum; Christian; Clark; Coleman; Cook; Corte; Counts; Crabb; Craddick; Crownover; Cuellar; Culberson; Danburg; Davis, J.; Davis, Y.; Delisi; Denny; Deshotel; Driver; Dukes; Dunnam; Dutton; Edwards; Ehrhardt; Eiland; Elkins; Ellis; Farabee; Farrar; Flores; Gallego; Garcia; George; Giddings; Glaze; Goodman; Goolsby; Gray; Green; Greenberg; Gutierrez; Haggerty; Hamric; Hardcastle; Hartnett; Hawley; Heflin; Hilbert; Hilderbran; Hinojosa; Hochberg; Hodge; Homer; Hope; Howard; Hunter; Hupp; Isett; Janek; Jones, C.; Jones, D.; Jones, J.; Junell; Keel; Keffer; King, P.; King, T.; Krusee; Kuempel; Laney; Lengefeld; Lewis, G.; Lewis, R.; Longoria; Luna; Madden; Marchant; Maxey; McCall; McClendon; McReynolds; Merritt; Moreno, J.; Moreno, P.; Morrison; Mowery; Naishtat; Najera; Nixon; Noriega; Oliveira; Olivo; Palmer; Pickett; Pitts; Puente; Ramsay; Rangel; Reyna, A.; Reyna, E.; Ritter; Sadler; Salinas; Seaman; Shields; Siebert; Smith; Smithee; Solis, J.; Solis, J. F.; Solomons; Staples; Swinford; Talton; Telford; Thompson; Tillery; Truitt; Turner, B.; Turner, S.; Uher; Uresti; Van de Putte; Walker; West; Williams; Wilson; Wise; Wohlgenuth; Wolens; Woolley; Yarbrough; Zbranek.

The Honorable Elton Bomer, Secretary of State of the State of Texas, then declared the Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney of Hale County to be the duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED

The secretary of state announced the appointment of the following committee to escort speaker-elect James E. "Pete" Laney to the speaker's rostrum for the purpose of the taking of the constitutional oath of office by the speaker-elect: Representatives Uher, chair, Dukes, Dutton, Flores, Hawley, D. Jones, McCall, McReynolds, Naishtat, Pitts, Puente, and Smith.

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

OATH OF OFFICE TAKEN BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

The Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney of Hale County, having been escorted to the speaker's rostrum, took the constitutional oath of office as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas, which was administered by the Honorable Bob Bullock, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Texas.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Brian McCall, who introduced the following members of the speaker's family: Nelda Laney, his wife; KaLyn Laney, his daughter; Jamey and Ronald Phillips, his daughter and son-in-law; J Pete Laney and Melonie McCutchin, his son and his son's fiancée; Ryan Laney, his nephew; Helen McQuien, his mother-in-law; Larry, Carol, John, and Scott McQuien, Nelda Laney's brother and his wife and children; and Jan Bullock, Lieutenant Governor Bullock's wife.

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.

ADDRESS BY SPEAKER LANEY

Representative McCall recognized the Honorable Tom Uher of Matagorda County, who introduced Speaker James E. "Pete" Laney.

Speaker Laney addressed the house as follows:

Members of the house of representatives, distinguished guests, families and friends, thank you.

I thank you for your continued support, your friendship, your help, and for the trust that you have placed in me to serve as your presiding officer. I thank every member for giving me the opportunity to serve you and to serve the people of the great State of Texas.

And there is one person here today who deserves the special thanks of all of us. He is a person who has had more impact on public policy in our state than anyone else in the last half of this century. I ask everyone here to join with me in expressing our warmest and most sincere appreciation to a great Texas leader: Bob Bullock.

Governor Bullock, we are grateful for all you have done for our state and we will miss you. May God bless Texas and you forever.

We are gathered here today for this opening session of the Texas Legislature at an historic time; at the close of a century of great progress for the State of Texas.

When the 20th century began, Texas was still emerging from the American frontier. We were fighting over water, and everyone was carrying a gun. Maybe that part hasn't changed much. But as we approach a new century, we are the nation's second most populous state: an industrial, technological, and financial giant on the world stage.

And we are here at the end of a remarkable decade for the State of Texas.

We began the 1990s struggling to emerge from the depths of economic recession and with a continuing financial crisis in state government. When the house convened in this chamber in 1991, we faced the task of dealing with a three billion dollar shortfall in financing state government; a shortfall that stands in stark contrast to the budget surplus we enjoy today.

Only one-third of the 150 members who took the oath of office today were members of this body when that session began in crisis in 1991.

We should all remember how and why our state's financial situation has changed from crisis to surplus during this decade.

Two factors have led to this budget surplus: economic growth and responsible management of state finances.

The Texas economy in the 1990s has been the greatest job creating engine in our nation. Today, two million more men and women are employed in Texas than when this decade began. But even more amazing is the fact that in this decade, Texas has generated nearly one out of every six new jobs created in the United States. Not only do we have more people working in Texas but they are earning more than ever before.

That does not mean that all is well in every sector of our economy.

Agriculture and oil have contributed more to our state's wealth in this century than any other industries. And both industries approach the end of

this century depressed, due to circumstances beyond the control of this legislature. We cannot solve the underlying economic problems of agriculture and oil production but we should attempt to address the financial hardship facing thousands of Texas families and many of our communities.

The fact that our overall economy has prospered in spite of the depression in these two industries is a mark of our success in diversifying the Texas economy.

There is no question that our remarkable economic growth in recent years has increased state revenues. But that does not tell the entire story of our state's progress from budget shortfalls to budget surplus.

We have managed wisely.

The legislature has demanded accountability and performance for every dollar appropriated to every agency of government.

We have used the Texas Performance Review, the Sunset Commission, the State Auditor, the Legislative Budget Board, and our appropriations process to eliminate wasteful spending, to improve efficiency, and to increase performance.

Above all, we have exercised fiscal restraint.

A large part of our current budget surplus is composed of dollars that we deliberately and prudently chose not to spend in the past.

Economic growth and sound budget management have served us and our citizens well. As we begin this session today, we should keep in mind how the budget surplus was created. If we continue on our course for economic growth with responsible budget management, our state will enjoy budget surpluses long into the future.

The worst mistake we could make is to view this budget surplus simply as a pie to be divided up and parceled out among many competing interests. It should be used to set our course for a secure and prosperous future for all Texans.

The best way to ensure continued economic growth is to invest in our greatest economic development tool: public education.

Investing in public education does not mean simply appropriating more money for the sake of saying we are spending more on education. Investing in education means addressing specific problems in ways that we know will produce results. We must invest in education in ways that will develop the tremendous potential of every child in Texas.

Our greatest resource is our children. We must not only invest in developing that resource but we must also protect our children. We can do that by continuing to build on the progress made last session in making health care available for children. And we must address the alarming and tragic increase in child abuse and neglect in our state.

Educating and protecting our children should be among the highest priorities of this session.

In addition to making wise investments in our future, we must continue to manage every state dollar carefully. Every agency in state government should be on notice that this legislature will continue to demand accountability and performance for every dollar spent. A budget surplus is not a license for wasteful spending.

Many good and worthy proposals have been made for how the surplus should be used for the benefit of our citizens. In the months ahead, we will examine and debate every idea and consider every option.

My main goal for this session is for our deliberations and actions—on the budget and every other issue—to earn the approval and respect of the people of Texas.

We must continue to build public confidence in the Texas Legislature for the work we do here. We have made great progress in that regard in recent sessions but I believe more can be done to raise the level of confidence in our system.

When the ever-increasing cost of political campaigns is fueled by many millions of dollars from a small number of individuals and groups, it undermines public confidence in our political system.

It adds to the perception that the average citizen does not have a voice in their political process. It discourages many qualified people from giving their time and their talents to serving their communities in public office. And it contributes to the alarming decline in voter participation.

I hope this legislature will consider solutions to the growing problem of financing campaigns for public office.

I believe public service is an honor. My service to my district and to the members of this house has been personally rewarding and one of the greatest honors I could have.

I know that you, members of the house, are here for the same reasons that I am: to do our very best to serve every person in our districts; to give voice and action to the opinions, the ideas, and the hopes of the people we represent.

Today, I renew my pledge to serve the members of this house and ensure that each of you has every opportunity to do your job of representing your district.

We have 139 days of hard work ahead of us.

In the weeks and months ahead, let us work together to give the people of Texas the kind of representation and leadership they want; the kind of representation and leadership that the people of this great State of Texas deserve.

Let's get started.