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OF THE

STATE OF TEXAS

BEGUN AND HELD AT

THE CITY OF AUSTIN

JANUARY 14, 2003



VOLUME I

HR 2 - ADOPTED
(by Smithee and Turner)

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 2

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the State of Texas, That, in accordance with Section 9(b), Article III, Texas Constitution, the House of Representatives of the 78th Legislature shall elect a speaker of the house from its own membership as follows:

SECTION 1. NOMINATIONS. (a) The secretary of state shall call for nominations from the floor for the election of speaker of the house of representatives and shall recognize every member who desires to make a nomination.

(b) Each member recognized for this purpose shall immediately advance to the front microphone and make the nomination in a nominating speech not to exceed five minutes in length.

(c) After all nominations have been made, the secretary of state shall declare nominations to be closed.

SECTION 2. SECONDS. (a) A person is not considered a nominee unless the nomination is seconded by at least one member.

(b) One seconding speech shall be allowed for each nomination in the order in which nominations were made, then other seconding speeches shall be allowed in rotation in the same order.

(c) No more than five seconding speeches shall be allowed for each nominee.

(d) A seconding speech may not exceed three minutes in length.

SECTION 3. VOTING. All votes taken shall be record votes entered in the House Journal.

SECTION 4. RESULTS; RUNOFF. (a) The secretary of state shall announce the results of the election. If a nominee has received a majority of the votes cast, the secretary of state shall declare that nominee to be elected to the office of speaker of the house of representatives.

(b) If no nominee has received a majority of the votes cast, the two nominees receiving the largest number of votes in the first ballot shall be in a runoff election conducted in accordance with the voting procedures for the first ballot. The secretary of state shall announce the results of the runoff election and declare the nominee receiving the higher vote to be elected.

SECTION 5. OATH. After the election, the secretary of state shall direct the administration of the oath of office to the speaker-elect. The speaker shall take the chair immediately after taking the oath of office.

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-Eighth Legislature of the State of Texas, and stated nominations for speaker would now be in order.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Peggy Hamric of Harris County, who placed in nomination for speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Eighth Legislature of the State of Texas the name of the Honorable Tom Craddick of Midland County, speaking as follows:

Madam Secretary, distinguished guests, fellow members:

I stand before you on the threshold of a historic event. Not since the turbulent days in the aftermath of the Civil War has our chamber witnessed a transfer of power of this magnitude.

As Texans, and as Americans, we look to the example of our forefathers, first established by the Father of our Country who served his presidency and then allowed the power of government to peacefully pass to others. It is with this inspiration in mind that I am here today, to nominate a new leader for our chamber—a leader who will take up the cause and carry the Texas House of Representatives into the new millennium.

It is altogether proper and fitting that we should first look to the past and acknowledge from whence we came. Many honorable and dignified persons have held the position of Speaker of this House and none more honorable or more dignified than the Honorable Pete Laney. With charm, grace, and distinction, Speaker Laney has steered the people's House—always cognizant of the very tenet upon which American and Texan democracy is founded—government of the people, by the people, and for the people. For his unswerving dedication and guidance, Speaker Laney is to be applauded, celebrated, and most importantly, remembered.

We now turn the page to a new era of Texan democracy—an era of hope, purpose, and expectation. Now is not a time to wander from the path. Now is not a time to falter. Now is a time to select a leader who will likewise embrace the complex challenge that is Texas and will likewise hold hands and step forward with the many diverse faces of Texas. I believe that individual is Representative Tom Craddick of Midland.

Tom Craddick embodies the very qualities that leadership demands and has charted a path few before him dared to tread. For it is no small measure to be elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1968 at the ripe old age of 25 as a Republican from Midland, Texas. It was still within the era of Lyndon Johnson Democrats that Tom Craddick thrust himself onto the Texas political scene. It was from the realization of his surroundings that Tom Craddick learned the skill most essential to leadership of the Texas House, the art of compromise. The political philosopher Edmund Burke said it best, "All government, indeed, every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter."

For as the politics of our nation, and perhaps our state, becomes ever more partisan, should we not look to a leader who has seen firsthand what it is to try to serve a constituency while the odds suggest little chance of success? Nevertheless, it is in the middle of difficulty that opportunity often lies, and despite the political challenges before him, Tom Craddick has endured—he has remained to witness changes in the political landscape time and time again.

To what do we attribute Tom's longevity? Perhaps Tom Craddick's success is a credit to his own intestinal fortitude. Perhaps it is that Tom reminds me of a time when a handshake symbolized more than a thoughtless whim, or perhaps it is that we see in Tom Craddick what we all as representatives of the people of Texas aspire to be—dedicated, resourceful, tenacious, and of course, resilient.

Tom no doubt finds strength in the stability he has fostered in his personal life with wife, Nadine, and children, Christi and Tommy. I do not believe I have ever seen a more close-knit family. In fact, Tom once discounted a run for Congress when he discovered such an endeavor would take away too much time from his family. His simple explanation, "I can't...because I swim with my children every day."

Yet, what more do the people of Texas look for in the leader of their House? Texas history is replete with many great leaders, each of whom embodied a quality integral to our Republic's and our State's evolution. Stephen F. Austin, the pioneer; Sam Houston, the revolutionary; Juan Seguin, the defender; Lyndon Johnson, the idealist; Barbara Jordan, the orator; and George W. Bush, the motivator. Each of these great Texans and the principles for which they stand exemplify the undisputed notion that democracy cannot endure without vision. Tom Craddick is a visionary.

Tom's vision is one of acceptance and inclusion. Tom's vision is one of equal opportunity and cooperation, and Tom's vision is one of allowing every member elected to this house to serve their constituents with undaunted enthusiasm. For in the words of the great American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Tom Craddick is a steward of our institution; one of its senior members; one of its ambassadors. I can assure you that the preservation of the integrity of this chamber is a responsibility not taken lightly by Representative Craddick. And the honor, diligence, and humility with which Tom Craddick has always conducted himself leaves little doubt in my mind that he will carry on the noble standards upheld by his predecessor.

Tom Craddick has undoubtedly reached the heights personally, professionally, and politically. Though Midland will always be in his heart, Tom Craddick has traveled into many members' districts and is well aware of the diversity of this great state—from the wide open spaces in the west, to the piney woods in the east; from the coastal bend and fertile valley in the south, to the prairies in the north—Tom Craddick has seen Texas. From cotton country to oil country; from ocean's bounty to semiconductors—Tom Craddick knows Texas.

Madam Secretary, it is my honor and pleasure to nominate as Speaker of the House for the 78th Legislative Session my friend and colleague, Representative Tom Craddick of Midland.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Phil King of Parker County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Tom Craddick, speaking as follows:

Madam Secretary, members of the house, guests, family, as I was trying to decide what to say today, it occurred to me that selecting a speaker is probably the most personal vote we make. Now, I know we take up a lot of tough bills, but bills are somewhat intangible, they're about concepts and policies, procedures, things like that. Yet, when we vote for a speaker, we're choosing between fellow members and friends, some with whom we've had long, good relationships.

It's also very personal because, to a great extent, a speaker defines our role in the body and our ability to serve our constituents, what we came here for. So, what I thought I'd do in my short time today, is just tell you, member to member, friend to friend, a couple of the personal reasons behind my support for Tom Craddick.

Last session during redistricting, I got to work very closely with Tom, really for the first time, and I learned a lot about him. I learned that he is very adept at being a leader among leaders. I learned that Tom's a team builder. He draws people together, not with manipulation or with pressure, but by being very open, very approachable, and very inclusive. He has that quiet style of leadership that you often see in top CEO's. It's a style that I think can serve this body and the people of Texas really, really well.

That's not to say that we don't have other members who are ready and qualified to do this job. We absolutely do. But I truly believe that Tom Craddick is the right leader, the right person, for this job today.

Now, I want you to know that I struggled with what I'm about to say, and I don't want to sound too partisan here, but, to my Republican friends, I'd also say that Tom has earned the right over 30 years of distinguished service to take these reins. Actually, he paved the way for a lot of us.

And to my Democrat friends who wonder about their role under new leadership, I'd just say that no one knows more what it feels like to be a member of a minority party than Tom Craddick. And no one is more committed to making sure that every member has the opportunity to lead, to represent their district, and to be a player in this great institution.

Tom, I know you are a good man and that you'll make a great speaker, carrying on the long tradition of good men who have led this body well. So, members, friends, I'm proud today to second this nomination. And I hope you'll join me so we can give a unanimous vote of support to our next speaker of this house, Representative Tom Craddick.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Vilma Luna of Nueces County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Tom Craddick, speaking as follows:

Since I first was elected to the Texas House in 1993, I have endeavored to increase the educational opportunities and economic prosperity of the people of my home, Corpus Christi, and the entire Coastal Bend area.

The Texas House of Representatives' history is etched by the voices of our predecessors, who stood proudly and spoke eloquently on behalf of their constituents. We are privileged to carry that legacy forward, and in doing so, each member of this hallowed institution becomes a living, active participant in the governing of our state.

When we gather as a legislative body, I believe that it is our responsibility to focus on developing public policy that will lead our state toward prosperity. And I believe it is important to be thoughtful in the important decisions that we make here—decisions that can help provide valuable resources and services to the people in our districts.

My support for Tom Craddick for speaker represents my intent to continue the house's historic tradition of working together to create good public policy. It also represents my determination to pursue my own personal objectives as a state representative for my constituents and the Coastal Bend.

A very popular movie, *Spiderman*, affirms a life lesson to which we all should adhere, "With great power comes great responsibility." I am not the kind of person who normally turns to fictional characters for inspiration. However, this line resonated with me and, incidentally, with my seven-year-old son, Andres. When something resonates among people of different ages, different genders, and different perspectives, I believe that we can trust that it contains an element of truth.

Our status as elected members of the Texas House of Representatives carries great power and a great responsibility to focus on the purpose for which we were sent here. I believe that our biggest responsibility during this session is to be willing to focus on policy without partisanship.

In Tom Craddick, we have a man who is strong enough to include diverse viewpoints in developing public policy. I support him in his efforts to accomplish that goal in the forthcoming session.

Members, I second the nomination of Tom Craddick as speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Kenny Marchant of Dallas County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Tom Craddick, speaking as follows:

Madam Secretary, fellow members, colleagues, distinguished guests:

It is my honor today to add my seconding to the nomination of Representative Tom Craddick of Midland County as the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives for the 78th Legislature.

It has been my privilege to know Tom Craddick for my entire legislative career. In those years, I have come to know him not only as a fellow legislator but most importantly as my friend and my leader.

I discovered early on that his friendship was extended not based on the expectation of some derived benefit from that friendship but was grounded in mutual respect and admiration. I recommend him to you today not only as your next speaker but also as your friend.

As a leader, Tom Craddick has seen a lot in his 34 years of service to Texas. He knows that in Texas, there have been no problems created because of our neglect that cannot be resolved by caring.

He believes that there are no divisions that ignorance has created that cannot be erased through better understanding of each other. Tom is interested in progress and solution, but he doesn't believe that there is a program for every problem.

I believe leadership in times like these should have some predictability to it. Character cannot be summoned at the moment of crisis if it has been squandered by years of compromise and rationalization.

One thing you can say about Tom Craddick is that his philosophy has been consistent from day one. He has no history of signaling right and turning left. Regardless of political philosophy, refreshingly, no one has to guess where Tom stands.

A man named Ted Engstrom once wrote, "The world needs (and I say the Texas House needs) people who cannot be bought; whose word is their bond; who have opinions and a will; who are larger than their vocation; who do not hesitate to take chances; who will not lose their individuality in a crowd; who will be honest in small things as in great things; who will make no compromise with wrong; who are not afraid to stand for truth when it is unpopular; who can say no with emphasis, although the rest of the world says yes."

Our next speaker, Tom Craddick, I believe, is this man.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Dianne White Delisi of Bell County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Tom Craddick, speaking as follows:

Members of this great body, former lawmakers, distinguished guests, family, friends, and fellow Texans, we gather today in this chamber to affirm our oaths to the people of Texas and to choose our leader for this, the 78th Legislative Session.

By virtue of the legendary figures who have held it, and by virtue of the powers granted to its occupant, the office of speaker of the Texas House of Representatives stands as one of the state's premier leadership positions. This office, more than any other in the legislature, shapes the discussion of issues and sets the tone for our service. And this office, more than any other in the state, is the voice of the people, chosen as it is from among the membership of the people's chamber. Today we nominate a leader worthy of the office's high calling: an eagle scout, a devoted husband, a loving father, a man of faith. A man who has dedicated himself to public service longer than almost any among us. A man whose breadth and depth of knowledge of public policies is unequaled. A man whose work ethic is legendary. A man whose leadership abilities have been relied on from Midland to Austin to Washington. A man who answered the calling of his own conscience, always speaking with clarity and civility.

Tom Craddick is a determined man of vision, a leader who has been tested, an individual who is uniquely qualified to lead this body. Tom Craddick knows that the principle that guides us, doing what's best for the people of Texas, is also the principle that unites us.

Today, we are witnessing a leadership change that has been years in the making, but this vote today is larger than any political party, it is about the leadership attributes that have transcended time in defining our leaders. Sam Houston implored us to "do right and risk consequences." Throughout the history of this state, our leaders have taken the words of Sam Houston to heart. We are their heirs, heirs to their vision. We are the generation to whom the torch of leadership has now passed.

For 34 years, Tom Craddick has shown his persistence, and he has sacrificed for what he believes in. 34 years ago, a young man from Midland, Texas, full of fire and a desire for change, secured a seat in the Texas House the old fashioned way, campaigning from door to door. Tom has known the lonely struggle of the minority. He has lived the words of Andrew Jackson: "One man with courage makes the majority." Did Tom know 34 years ago, when he was chased off a front porch by a voter with a broom, that someday he would be elected speaker of this great body? Here we are, all these years later. Tom Craddick's heart is still full of fire and a desire for change. But today, instead of stepping onto a porch, he is stepping onto the speaker's dais.

New members, the hope of this story is the hope for all of us here today; do your best, always stay in touch with the home folks, make the votes that are best for Texas, and someday, dear members, you may find your own hand gripping the gavel.

We all know it is easier to lead when times are good. True leadership is demanded when times are troubled. Sam Houston knew that. All of Texas is looking to us to lead for these next 140 days, and they will judge us by how well we rise to the challenges we face. Sacrifice and persistence, vision and faith. These are the attributes Tom Craddick holds in great degree. He is the right man, in the right place, at the right time, for this job. Tom Craddick is uniquely experienced in the history of this legislature and he is uniquely qualified to lead this body in these most serious times.

Today is Tom's day. Today is 34 years in the making. It is my high honor to second the nomination of Tom Craddick for speaker of the Texas House.

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable Glenn Lewis of Tarrant County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Tom Craddick, speaking as follows:

Thank you Madam Secretary, members, honored guests, family, and friends. I, too, have known Tom Craddick for the entire length of my service in the Texas House of Representatives. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, every member of this body has known Tom Craddick for the entire length of their service.

When I first arrived on this floor in 1995, one of the first people to meet me practically at the door and extend the hand of friendship and cooperation was Tom Craddick. And through those eight years there have been many times when I have found myself with my shoulder to the wheel trying to move issues forward for the State of Texas and to my right or to my left I've seen Tom Craddick with his shoulder right next to mine.

But you know, the essence of our relationship was not forged in those thousands of times that we agreed with one another. The real essence of our relationship was forged in those few times when we disagreed with one another. But when we disagreed, given the fact that he was such a senior member and had much more experience, Tom Craddick could have easily taken the position that my disagreement with him was a result of his intellectual or moral superiority. And he could have used that to try to circumvent my efforts, but he didn't.

Tom Craddick was one of those that recognized that disagreements are most often the product of all of us coming from diverse backgrounds and having viewed life from different perspectives. And the best way for us to work those things out is not to try to circumvent one another, but to try to broaden our minds and take a broader view of the world so that we can attempt to see things from the perspective of our colleagues and through that find some common ground.

Now I'm sure all of you have heard the dire predictions of the 78th Session and the difficulties we're going to have, and there are people outside that door and maybe inside this chamber who are predicting a disastrous session. If we are to have any hope of putting to rest those predictions, each and every one of us is going to have to come through those doors with the same type of spirit, of being willing and desiring to recognize that there are differences, and recognize where most of those differences come from and be willing to try to work to find common ground.

It is with the highest honor and privilege that I stand here to second the nomination of a man with whom for eight years I have enjoyed a relationship of mutual respect, the Honorable Thomas Russell Craddick from Midland, Texas.

Representative Lewis moved that nominations cease and that the Honorable Tom Craddick of Midland County be elected speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Eighth Legislature.

A record vote was requested.

The Honorable Tom Craddick of Midland County was elected speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Eighth Legislature by (Record 1): 149 Yeas, 1 Nay, 0 Present, not voting.

Yeas — Allen; Alonzo; Bailey; Baxter; Berman; Bohac; Bonnen; Branch; Brown, B.; Brown, F.; Callegari; Campbell; Canales; Capelo; Casteel; Castro; Chavez; Chisum; Christian; Coleman; Cook, B.; Cook, R.; Corte; Crabb; Craddick; Crownover; Davis, J.; Davis, Y.; Dawson; Delisi; Denny; Deshotel; Driver; Dukes; Dunnam; Dutton; Edwards; Eiland; Eissler; Elkins; Ellis; Farabee; Farrar; Flores; Flynn; Gallego; Garza; Gattis; Geren; Giddings; Goodman; Goolsby; Griggs; Grusendorf; Guillen; Gutierrez; Haggerty; Hamilton; Hamric; Hardcastle; Harper-Brown; Hartnett; Heflin; Hegar; Hilderbran; Hill; Hochberg; Hodge; Homer; Hope; Hopson; Howard; Hughes; Hunter; Hupp; Isett; Jones, D.; Jones, E.; Jones, J.; Keel; Keffer, B.; Keffer, J.; King; Kolkhorst; Krusee; Kuempel; Laney; Laubenberg; Lewis; Luna; Mabry; Madden; Marchant; Martinez Fischer; McCall; McClendon; McReynolds; Menendez; Mercer; Merritt; Miller; Moreno, J.; Moreno, P.; Morrison; Mowery; Naishtat; Nixon; Noriega; Oliveira; Olivo; Paxton; Peña; Phillips; Pickett; Pitts; Puente; Quintanilla; Rangel; Raymond; Reyna; Riddle; Ritter; Rodriguez; Rose; Seaman; Smith, T.; Smith, W.; Smithee; Solis; Solomons; Stick; Swinford; Talton; Taylor; Telford; Thompson; Truitt; Turner; Uresti; Van Arsdale; Villarreal; West; Wilson; Wise; Wohlgemuth; Wolens; Wong; Woolley; Zedler.

Nays — Burnam.

The Honorable Gwyn Shea, secretary of state of the State of Texas, then declared the Honorable Tom Craddick of Midland County to be the duly elected speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventy-Eighth Legislature of the State of Texas.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED

The secretary of state announced the appointment of the following committee to escort Speaker-elect Tom Craddick to the speaker's rostrum for the purpose of the taking of the constitutional oath of office by the speaker-elect: the Honorable Tom DeLay, house majority leader, United States Congress, honorary chair, Representatives Hill, co-chair, Giddings, co-chair, Berman, Chavez, Corte, Denny, Driver, Dukes Dutton, Flores, Hope, J. Keffer, Morrison, Mowery, Reyna, Ritter, and Seaman.

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

OATH OF OFFICE TAKEN BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

The Honorable Tom Craddick of Midland 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-Eighth Legislature of the State of Texas, which was administered by the Honorable James R. Nowlin, chief justice of the United States District Court, Western District of Texas, as follows:

"I, Tom Craddick, do solemnly swear, that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of speaker of the Texas House of Representatives of the Seventy-Eighth Legislature of the State of Texas, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this state. So help me God."

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The secretary of state recognized the Honorable David Swinford of Moore County who introduced the following special guests: Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn, Attorney General Greg Abbott, Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson, Railroad Commissioner Charles Matthews, Railroad Commissioner Michael Williams, Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs, Congressman Joe Barton, Congressman Henry Bonilla, Congressman Kevin Brady and Mrs. Brady, Congressman John Culberson, Congressman Tom DeLay, Congresswoman Kay Granger, Congressman Sam Johnson and Mrs. Johnson, FEMA director Joe Allbaugh and Mrs. Allbaugh, Congressman Jeb Hensarling and Mrs. Hensarling, and the Honorable Denis Simonneau, consul general of France.

The secretary of state introduced the Honorable Beverly Woolley who introduced the following members of the speaker's family: Christi, his daughter; Tommy, his son; Jo and Fred Nayha, his parents-in-law; Betty and David Wintroath, his sister and brother-in-law; Judy and Tony Worden, his sister and brother-in-law; Bonnie and Lee Kelley, his sister and brother-in-law; and Jeanne and Keith Brewer, Nadine Craddick's sister and brother-in-law.

The secretary of state introduced the Honorable Terry Keel who introduced Nadine Craddick.

ADDRESS BY SPEAKER CRADDICK

Representative Keel recognized the Honorable Ron Wilson of Harris County who introduced Speaker Craddick.

Speaker Craddick addressed the house as follows:

When I took office as a freshman representative, we had a Texas president in the White House. Today, as I accept this honor, we have a Texas president in the White House. And I would prefer that none of you mention that 34 years have passed between these two events.

Madam Secretary, members of the house, distinguished guests, families and friends, I welcome you and thank you for being here. In particular, I thank my colleagues for their support and confidence in electing me as their speaker. I am humbled and grateful for the trust you have placed in me.

I want to start my speech by remembering my father and his support in my first election as a candidate for state representative in 1968. As parents do, he provided love and support, even though his belief was that it was a foolish undertaking—that Republicans couldn't win in Texas.

Much has been made of the fact that I am the first Republican speaker of the Texas House in modern history. That is a historical fact and one that speaks to the changing political face of this great state. Our election system is a partisan one.

We run as Democrats or Republicans because that's how the system works, but our system of government also expects that we will work together for the common good of all Texans.

Remember, we are only temporary trustees of this great institution and this great state. We should never forget, in either word or action over the next 140 days, that what we do in this chamber is not about personal gain or glory. This is about Texas.

While partisan issues may arise from time to time, legislative action and certainly, legislative leadership, must be truly bipartisan. I believe that was reflected in the comments you have just heard from Democrats and Republicans who spoke on my behalf. Effective leadership means leadership that is fair, honest, balanced, and inclusive. Our mutual goal here is to solve the many issues and challenges facing this state and to make Texas a better place to live.

One part of our state that has been overlooked is our 800-mile border with Mexico. Consequently, I am recommending the establishment of a House Border Committee, which will strive to help the hundreds of thousands of Texans who occupy this still-developing region.

In a broader sense, we face challenges in the coming session concerning a large slate of issues that are important to all Texans.

Without a doubt, the budget will be a complicating factor this session. We are faced with billions of dollars in shortfalls, the retirement of 16 committee chairs after the last legislative session, and 75 percent of our house members having never served with a deficit. There will be a learning curve.

I have proposed creation of the House Committee on Government Reform, which will have jurisdiction over all state agencies, departments, institutions, and advisory committees. Simply put, this committee will eliminate inefficiencies and duplications in government that waste tax dollars that otherwise could be used in worthwhile state programs.

One of the ways that we can eliminate the state's deficit is to create opportunity and prosperity through expanded economic development. I intend to work closely with the governor and the lieutenant governor to streamline and simplify the steps that businesses must go through in order to operate in Texas. By making it easier for individuals and companies to come here, establish, and expand their operations, we create jobs and increase individual prosperity.

The governor has marked two proposals as emergency legislation, and both of them have my strong support. The first is homeowners insurance. There are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of homeowners who either lost their insurance, as I did, or are still suffering sticker shock from premiums they are paying to maintain it. We are going to make homeowners insurance available, affordable, and we are going to make it happen.

The other emergency issue cited by the governor is medical malpractice insurance. Our front line for Texas healthcare is the physician community. Texas physicians cannot afford to practice in Texas because of soaring insurance costs and our legal system. We are not going to just look at this problem. We are going to fix it.

One other issue of note, perhaps the most significant of all, is education, because from education springs opportunity. If we shortchange our children, we will have failed as leaders. A number of proposals regarding education will be examined. We will also look at the relationships between institutions in Texas and the best ways to manage them. Public education in Texas must evolve into a new system. I cannot promise that we will achieve the final result during this session. However, we will make progress. It is a goal that must be achieved.

As we enter this new era in our state's history, I wish to acknowledge the many individuals who have served Texas before us. This institution has been honored by their presence and their contributions. Because of their efforts, Texas has become the greatest state in America—a magnet for people, both nationwide and globally. It is a historical and undeniable fact that Texans are a unique, proud, and diverse people whose spirit, determination, and tradition are unmatched anywhere.

Today, as I look upon my 149 colleagues, I see enormous talent and potential greatness. The house of representatives is Texas, and in our deliberations and actions, we will honor the diversity and individuality of all Texans.

It is a privilege to have been elected by my colleagues to serve as speaker of this great body. The foundation of our future will be built upon friendship, accessibility, and cooperation. I promise to discharge my duties with dignity, and I salute you—the men and women of Texas who will lead the house of representatives in the days ahead.

In closing, putting politics aside, I am a father and a husband, and in those roles, I want to thank my family for their love and support. I want to thank my partner and best friend. Nadine, I love you. And I want to thank God for giving me this opportunity. May God bless you all.