

HOUSE JOURNAL
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January 8, 2019

through

May 27, 2019

J.E.; Kacal; King, K.; King, P.; King, T.; Klick; Krause; Kuempel; Lambert; Landgraf; Lang; Larson; Leach; Leman; Longoria; Lozano; Lucio; Martinez; Martinez Fischer; Metcalf; Meyer; Meza; Middleton; Miller; Minjarez; Moody; Morrison; Muñoz; Murphy; Murr; Neave; Nevárez; Noble; Oliverson; Ortega; Pacheco; Paddie; Parker; Patterson; Paul; Perez; Phelan; Price; Ramos; Raney; Raymond; Reynolds; Rodriguez; Romero; Rose; Rosenthal; Sanford; Schaefer; Shaheen; Sheffield; Sherman; Shine; Smith; Smithee; Springer; Stephenson; Stickland; Stucky; Swanson; Talarico; Thierry; Thompson, E.; Thompson, S.; Tinderholt; Toth; Turner, C.; Turner, J.; VanDeaver; Vo; Walle; White; Wilson; Wray; Wu; Zedler; Zerwas; Zwiener.

Absent — Dominguez.

STATEMENT OF VOTE

When Record No. 1 was taken, my vote failed to register. I would have voted yes.

Dominguez

HR 2 - ADOPTED (by Price and Dutton)

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HR 2

BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the 86th Legislature of the State of Texas, That, in accordance with Sections 9(b) and 11, Article III, Texas Constitution, and the laws of the State of Texas, the House of Representatives of the 86th Legislature shall proceed to 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 each member who desires to make a nomination. The order in which members shall proceed to make a nomination shall be determined by lot.

(b) Each member recognized for this purpose shall immediately advance to the microphone at the reading clerk's desk 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.

(d) The secretary of state shall recognize at any time a member whose name has been placed in nomination for the purpose of withdrawing as a nominee. A member who withdraws is not considered a nominee.

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. MOTION TO ELECT BY ACCLAMATION. If, after the close of all seconding speeches only one member's name remains in nomination for election to speaker of the house of representatives, the secretary of state shall recognize a motion to elect that member as speaker by acclamation.

SECTION 4. OATH. (a) After the election, the secretary of state shall:

(1) appoint a committee of members to escort the speaker-elect to the speaker's rostrum for the purpose of taking the constitutional oath or affirmation of office by the speaker-elect; and

(2) direct the administration of the oath or affirmation of office to the speaker-elect.

(b) The speaker shall take the chair immediately after taking the oath or affirmation of office.

HR 2 was adopted by (Record 2): 147 Yeas, 0 Nays, 0 Present, not voting.

Yeas — Allen; Allison; Anchia; Anderson; Ashby; Bailes; Beckley; Bell, C.; Bell, K.; Bernal; Biedermann; Blanco; Bohac; Bonnen, D.; Bonnen, G.; Bowers; Buckley; Bucy; Burns; Burrows; Button; Cain; Calanni; Canales; Capriiglione; Clardy; Cole; Coleman; Collier; Cortez; Craddick; Cyrier; Darby; Davis, S.; Davis, Y.; Dean; Deshotel; Dominguez; Dutton; Farrar; Flynn; Frank; Frullo; Geren; Gervin-Hawkins; Goldman; González, J.; González, M.; Goodwin; Guerra; Guillen; Gutierrez; Harless; Harris; Hefner; Hernandez; Herrero; Hinojosa; Holland; Howard; Huberty; Hunter; Israel; Johnson, E.; Johnson, J.D.; Johnson, J.E.; Kacal; King, K.; King, P.; King, T.; Klick; Krause; Kuempel; Lambert; Landgraf; Lang; Larson; Leach; Leman; Longoria; Lozano; Lucio; Martinez; Martinez Fischer; Metcalf; Meyer; Meza; Middleton; Miller; Minjarez; Moody; Morrison; Muñoz; Murphy; Murr; Neave; Nevárez; Noble; Oliverson; Ortega; Pacheco; Paddie; Parker; Patterson; Paul; Perez; Phelan; Price; Ramos; Raney; Raymond; Reynolds; Rodriguez; Romero; Rose; Rosenthal; Sanford; Schaefer; Shaheen; Sheffield; Sherman; Shine; Smith; Smithee; Springer; Stephenson; Stickland; Stucky; Swanson; Talarico; Thierry; Thompson, E.; Thompson, S.; Tinderholt; Toth; Turner, C.; Turner, J.; VanDeaver; Vo; Walle; White; Wilson; Wray; Wu; Zedler; Zerwas; Zwiener.

ELECTION OF THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Secretary announced that the next order of business would be the election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas and stated nominations for Speaker would now be in order.

The Secretary recognized the Honorable Dustin Burrows of Lubbock County, who placed in nomination for Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas the name of the Honorable Dennis Bonnen of Brazoria County, speaking as follows:

Mr. Secretary, families, friends, and guests, welcome to the people's house. Members, as we begin the 86th legislative session, let us reflect on the fact that Texans from all corners of the state, all walks of life, have entrusted each of us to craft policy that will improve the lives of all Texans, to help our districts be heard and accomplish their agenda, and to do this in a very short 140 days. Members, this session, Texans expect and should expect us to pass meaningful school finance reform and lessen the huge burden of property taxes for homeowners. And these big issues transcend the divides of party, ideology, and even geography.

On this, the first day of the 86th session, the question we have to ask is, will we do it? And I predict at the end of 140 days, the answer is, absolutely yes, because we are the Texas House—the greatest legislative body in the entire country. However, in order to be successful, we need a speaker who will let the body work to realize its fullest potential, to let members represent their districts, and to stand up for the house. That is why I rise today to nominate a speaker that the Texas House deserves, Dennis Bonnen.

Dennis was drafted into this speaker's race not just because of his list of qualifications, which are plentiful, but because of his character and his vision for the house. Dennis is someone who respects the members by telling us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Dennis is willing to jump into the arena and fight for what is right to build consensus. He doesn't wait on the sidelines to see which way the political winds are blowing. Time and time again, I have seen Dennis give voice to what is right without regard for how powerful the other side might be. Most importantly, he deeply respects this chamber and believes every member must be allowed to fully represent their district.

Let me close with this. Texas needs the house to lead this session. We need a speaker with the strength and tenacity to let that happen. It is for these reasons and so many more that I nominate my good friend Dennis Bonnen to be the next speaker of the house, a speaker for the entire house.

The Secretary recognized the Honorable Senfronia Thompson of Harris County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Dennis Bonnen, speaking as follows:

Mr. Secretary, Mr. Chief Justice, fellow members, and distinguished guests, today I'm honored to stand here in the people's house to nominate Representative Dennis Bonnen to serve as the next speaker of the people's house. It has been my distinct privilege to serve under six speakers. I'm eager for Dennis Bonnen to be my lucky number seven.

In my 45 years serving in the Texas House, I've witnessed all kinds of politics. You know during those 45 years, I've witnessed all kinds of people. I've seen tremendous triumphs and devastating defeats. But the one thing that I've seen remain constant through all of this is the house works best when we work together. We come into this building as many different people from many different backgrounds. Each and every one of us carries dreams and ambitions. Some of those dreams are our own. That's the reason why we were on the ballots. Some of those dreams we carry on behalf of our constituents, holding their future and their children's future within each of what we can accomplish. But I cannot

visualize those dreams, nor can you, alone. None of us could. Here in this chamber, every woman and man can and should have the opportunity to work with one another, to serve together, to discuss and debate together the dreams we bring into this chamber. We do our best work when we set aside our differences and find common ground. When we work together and when we are empowered to serve our districts, we succeed.

Representative Bonnen knows this. In his 22 years of experience, he has learned the ins and the outs of the Texas House as well as anyone I've ever served with. As speaker, I can assure you that he would be committed first and foremost to helping us realize our dreams, to realize our potentials. I know this because he told me, and Dennis is a man who keeps his word. When Dennis says he wants the house to be united, I trust him. When he says he wants to reduce the partisan bickering that has at times plagued this floor in recent years, I trust him. When he says he wants to put school finance and the dreams we all carry for our children front and center this session, I trust him.

Dennis has fought his entire life and especially his entire legislative career with intelligence and determination. He has work ethics as long and as proud as Texas. And he wants to make sure that everyone—no matter who you are, where you came from, or why you're here—he wants everyone that works hard and fights fair to have every chance to succeed. Dennis will be a fighter and a champion for this house. That's why I'm so proud to nominate him and to lend him support to lead this house and to serve as the next speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

The Secretary recognized the Honorable Matt Krause of Tarrant County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Dennis Bonnen, speaking as follows:

Good afternoon, colleagues. It's so incredible to be back here with you, and I know each of you who got sworn in would know that you would not be here without a support structure from home. I'm no different, so I want to publicly thank my amazing wife, Jenny, and our incredible kids, Jeremiah, Hannah Sue, James, Gracie, and Ruthie for the support and sacrifice you've given me and will continue to give the next 140 days.

On November 12, Dennis Bonnen called a press conference, and at that press conference he said, "The speaker's race is over." And he unveiled a list of 109 names, way more than the 76 he needed. In those two months we got kind of a window into how Representative Bonnen, soon to be Speaker Bonnen, will operate. There's two key aspects I want to look at. One was, right after that press conference he announced a working group to select the next parliamentarian. This is a very private decision for the speaker. As far as we know, in Texas history, this has never been done before, to allow members to have input on who the next parliamentarian should be. And so we appointed five republicans and five democrats. But it wasn't just that he had numbers from equal parties, it was who those republicans and democrats were. They showed a great cross section of the house. Every line of the political spectrum was represented there, and he even had individuals who were not on that list of 109 supporters that he had listed the day before. He made a great decision, and then he made another great decision by

having Four Price and Joe Moody co-chair that committee, two of the hardest working and brightest members we have in this house today, and they did an amazing job during that process. It spoke volumes of Representative Bonnen that he would bring the membership in and allow them to have input on this very important decision.

Then he was in Tyler a few weeks after that, meeting with some members, and the press asked, "What does a Speaker Bonnen administration look like?" And he said, "You know what? My job is to level the playing field, make sure every member is heard, not that they necessarily win the day, but that they have a chance to win the day." And I think that's all you can ask from a speaker, and really all you want from a speaker is to level the playing field and allow the members to represent their districts. And as a part of that, they said, "Well, what's your school finance plan?" He said, "That's the great thing about being speaker. I don't need a school finance plan. My job is to empower the members and get them in a room till we discuss and figure out what's going to happen." And I love that, because we're going to take on some issues that have vexed prior legislatures, right—big ticket items—and we're going to need somebody like him leading us through that.

Those past legislatures, we shouldn't forget their successes and failures. In fact, somebody told me, use the past. Use their hindsight as your foresight as you look for insight into what to do next. And I am confident by learning the lessons of the past, with the cooperation, unity, and hard work of the present, we can ensure a much brighter Texas future. That's why I'm so optimistic about Representative Bonnen. He's one of the rare individuals I've ever known who has a 30,000-foot view, gets the big picture, but can also get into the weeds on policy matters. Some people can do one or two of those things, a couple of people can do both those things, but rarely do you have somebody who can do them both well. He is the leader we need for this time. He's been appointed for such a time as this, and I'm honored to rise today to second the nomination for Dennis Bonnen for Texas Speaker of the House. Let's get to work. God bless you guys.

The Secretary recognized the Honorable Mary González of El Paso County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Dennis Bonnen, speaking as follows:

In December 1993, I was 10 years old. In the middle of the night right before Christmas, my dad, who's sitting with me today on the house floor, rushed into my room to get me and my brother out of the house because our house was burning down. That night, my family lost all of our belongings. And as sad as that moment is in my childhood, it was also very transformative, because that night a local farmer came and picked me and my brother up and took care of us. And for the next few months, people from all over the community came and fed us, clothed us, and helped us rebuild our home.

That moment is the reason that I am here and I work to give back to my community. After serving the last six years, I have learned that we all have stories like mine, the reasons that we serve. I have learned that we all love and care about our districts, our communities, and our state. When I first decided to run for office, my younger brother asked me, "But Mary, why do you want to be a state

rep? All politicians are bad." Sadly, the divisions that exist in politics today encourage people to become disenchanting with the political process. Today and for the next 139 days—well, hopefully 139 days—we can change this. We have the opportunity to change people's minds about politics and politicians. This session, we can come together to work on school finance, infrastructure, and economic development, and we can demonstrate what working together across differences looks like. Because what we do in this building matters, and we have an opportunity to model true leadership for the state, for the country, and for the younger generation. Do we want the younger generation to grow up in a society with divisions and distrust of their fellow Texans? Or do we want them to grow and to learn in a state that honors and respects everybody?

I am lucky that this has been modeled to me my entire life by my father, Alfred González. He's my best friend, my mentor, my next-door neighbor, and my favorite and most difficult constituent. To love and respect someone who is the political opposite of me allows me to enter the political space wanting to find common ground. And while he may worry about what his republicans will say about his democratic daughter, at the end of the day he has always shown me love and respect. That is why I am honored today to second the nomination of Chairman Bonnen. Chairman Bonnen shares the same characteristics as my father—a stern, fierce republican with the space in his heart and in his leadership style to treat everyone with respect and fairness regardless of ideology. He creates an environment where each of us can share our stories so we can serve our districts and the state. His tenure in the house will enable him to build a culture where members and our districts come first. I second this nomination not just for our Texas House but for future generations of Texans. May we make our state stronger for them. God bless Texas.

The Secretary recognized the Honorable Lyle Larson of Bexar County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Dennis Bonnen, speaking as follows:

"With all due respect"—how many times have you heard Dennis Bonnen say that on this house floor? "With all due respect"—that is his signature phrase. He's in good company. There's been many an English lord that has used this in parliament when engaged in civil discourse. But there's also, more recently, an American cinema icon, Ricky Bobby. He used it famously in *Talladega Nights*.

The first time that Dennis Bonnen imparted his sage advice to me, it was about three weeks into my first session. I had a bill that was going to elect TxDot commissioners, and my legislative director, Emily Eppright, who worked for Dennis Bonnen before, said, you need to go down and talk to Dennis about this bill. So I walked down there and laid out the merits of the bill, trying to convince him that it was a great bill. He listened patiently. Then he sat back in his chair, and he smirked, and he said, "With all due respect, the governor appoints those people, and you don't want to upset the governor, do you?" It was good advice. I probably should've listened a little bit more. He's given counsel to many of us. He talked about policy. He talked about procedure. He talked about political realities. And I don't want him to hear this, but he was about 90 percent right on the advice that he gave.

Confucius, the great East Texas philosopher, said, if your plan is one year, you plant rice. If your plan is for 10 years, you plant trees. If your plan is for 100 years, you educate children. Dennis Bonnen has been training for this position for over two decades, and I truly believe that he will have a multigenerational impact on our state. He's willing to tackle the giants—public school finance; comprehensive property tax relief and reform; water policy, which would include the post-Harvey flood challenges we had; and many other issues. His wit, his intellect, and his procedural genius—it has stirred us. It has entertained us. But most importantly, it has led us through some of the most fierce fights that we've had on this Texas floor over the past decade. He'll be undaunted by any naysayers that rise from this body or across the hall, but he'll guide us with precision and conviction.

So with all due respect, to anyone that would suggest that Dennis Bonnen shouldn't be our speaker, I submit to you that he will lead us with purpose and with passion like he always has. And that's why it's my honor to nominate him to be the next speaker for the Texas House of Representatives.

The Secretary recognized the Honorable Eddie Lucio III of Cameron County, who seconded the nomination of the Honorable Dennis Bonnen, speaking as follows:

Good afternoon, members and invited guests. It's an honor to stand before you and give the final second nomination of my friend Dennis Bonnen for Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives. My first session was in 2007. Right before I came to Austin, I attended a family reunion for my mother-in-law's family in Angleton, Texas. As you know, Dennis is from Angleton. I had the pleasure of meeting Dennis's parents at this party and learned that my in-laws were very close to the Bonnen family—like grew up next door close.

As luck will have it, my first committee assignment was to serve as vice-chair of Environmental Regulation, a committee that Dennis chaired. The first thing I learned serving on that committee was that you better come prepared. Whether you were a member laying out a bill or a witness testifying, Chairman Bonnen expected you to come fully informed and prepared to deliver honest testimony. See, Dennis works hard and expects people to deliver the same work ethic and intensity as he does. As a small business owner, I can relate to that.

The perfect example of Dennis's work ethic and commitment to the process can be seen in his work on the border security bill during the 2015 session. That was the key bill of that session and very important to stakeholders in Dennis's party. It would have been easy for him to manage the passage of that bill in a way to maximize the extent to which he appeased only members of his party. Instead, Chairman Bonnen worked tirelessly to craft a piece of legislation that was rooted in stakeholder input. He held countless meetings with members from the border and took seriously all the input they provided. He sought out chiefs of police, sheriffs, and various stakeholders to hear directly from them about the situation on their border. He used what he learned to invest the money of the people of Texas as effectively and meaningfully as possible. That was when I learned what it takes to work and craft a big, comprehensive bill.

See, people don't go as fast as they can; they go as fast as they are led. And let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, good luck keeping up with Dennis Bonnen. I can provide many examples like this, but I want to share another side of Dennis, a side that the media doesn't see. I was elected at the tender age of 27. Much of my time becoming husband, father, and professional has occurred while serving in the legislature. Serving in the legislature is tough and can take its toll on you mentally and physically. Without knowing, or maybe he did, Dennis personally mentored me throughout this journey. He immediately took an interest in my family. For example, my wife, Jaime—who is here with me today—and I had a scare with one of our pregnancies during a particularly important week a few sessions back. Dennis found me in the hallway and recognized something was wrong, and immediately told me that the most important thing was family. He walked me to my office and out of the Capitol to ensure I went home. Throughout the years, if Dennis recognizes that the emotion of a legislative day has gotten the better of me, he will seek me out and make sure I am okay. Dennis is the person many of us turn to when things get tough between our parties, asking him to forge compromise and keep the decorum of the house intact. He has embodied for me the true meaning of a mentor and friend.

Dennis takes mentorship seriously and has mentored several young people in his district. As tough as he is in Austin, members, there is no one better than him when it comes to relationships and constituency work back home. Today, we have a special guest from Speaker Bonnen's district. With us, we have Pahola González. She is a graduate of Brazoswood High School. In 2014, Dennis nominated Pahola for the Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program. This scholarship enabled her to be the first in her family to attend and graduate college. Shortly after graduation from UTSA, Pahola received her commission into the United States Army. Pahola personifies what we want young Texans to achieve. Please help me congratulate and welcome Pahola to the Texas House.

Chairman Bonnen, thank you for your mentorship for not only myself, but countless young members, and most importantly for mentoring and caring about the future of the people you serve. For these reasons, members, Dennis is the right man, right now, to lead this body. I second the nomination of my good friend Dennis Bonnen.

Representative Lucio moved that the nominations cease and that the Honorable Dennis Bonnen of Brazoria County be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas by acclamation, with any member being permitted to cast a "present" or "nay" vote by providing such information to the journal clerk.

A record vote was requested.

The question occurring on the election of the Honorable Dennis Bonnen of Brazoria County as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Sixth Legislature, the motion prevailed by (Record 3): 147 Yeas, 0 Nays, 0 Present, not voting.

Yeas — Allen; Allison; Anchia; Anderson; Ashby; Bailes; Beckley; Bell, C.; Bell, K.; Bernal; Biedermann; Blanco; Bohac; Bonnen, D.; Bonnen, G.; Bowers; Buckley; Bucy; Burns; Burrows; Button; Cain; Calanni; Canales; Capriglione; Clardy; Cole; Coleman; Collier; Cortez; Craddick; Cyrier; Darby; Davis, S.; Davis, Y.; Dean; Deshotel; Dominguez; Dutton; Farrar; Flynn; Frank; Frullo; Geren; Gervin-Hawkins; Goldman; González, J.; González, M.; Goodwin; Guerra; Guillen; Gutierrez; Harless; Harris; Hefner; Hernandez; Herrero; Hinojosa; Holland; Howard; Huberty; Hunter; Israel; Johnson, E.; Johnson, J.D.; Johnson, J.E.; Kacal; King, K.; King, P.; King, T.; Klick; Krause; Kuempel; Lambert; Landgraf; Lang; Larson; Leach; Leman; Longoria; Lozano; Lucio; Martinez; Martinez Fischer; Metcalf; Meyer; Meza; Middleton; Miller; Minjarez; Moody; Morrison; Muñoz; Murphy; Murr; Neave; Nevárez; Noble; Oliverson; Ortega; Pacheco; Paddie; Parker; Patterson; Paul; Perez; Phelan; Price; Ramos; Raney; Raymond; Reynolds; Rodriguez; Romero; Rose; Rosenthal; Sanford; Schaefer; Shaheen; Sheffield; Sherman; Shine; Smith; Smithee; Springer; Stephenson; Stickland; Stucky; Swanson; Talarico; Thierry; Thompson, E.; Thompson, S.; Tinderholt; Toth; Turner, C.; Turner, J.; VanDeaver; Vo; Walle; White; Wilson; Wray; Wu; Zedler; Zerwas; Zwiener.

The Secretary declared the Honorable Dennis Bonnen of Brazoria County to be the duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED

The Secretary announced the appointment of the following committee to escort Speaker-elect Dennis Bonnen to the Speaker's rostrum: the Honorable Tom Craddick of Midland County, chair; the Honorable Rhetta Bowers of Dallas County, the Honorable Angie Chen Button of Dallas County, the Honorable Terry Canales of Hidalgo County, the Honorable Sheryl Cole of Travis County, the Honorable Garnet F. Coleman of Harris County, the Honorable Craig Goldman of Tarrant County, the Honorable Stephanie Klick of Tarrant County, the Honorable Jeff Leach of Collin County, the Honorable Oscar Longoria of Hidalgo County, the Honorable Chris Paddie of Harrison County, and the Honorable Drew Springer of Cooke County.

HOUSE AT EASE

At 12:58 p.m., the Secretary announced that the House would stand at ease.

The Secretary called the House to order at 1:08 p.m.

OATH OF OFFICE TAKEN BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

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

The Honorable Dennis Bonnen of Brazoria County took the constitutional oath of office as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Sixth Legislature of the State of Texas, which was administered by the Honorable John D. Rainey, United States District Senior Judge for the Southern District of Texas, as follows:

"I, Dennis Bonnen, do solemnly swear, that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Sixth 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."

The Secretary recognized the Honorable Craig Goldman of Tarrant County who introduced family members of Speaker Bonnen: Kim Bonnen; Jackson and Gregory Bonnen; Matina Bonnen; Penelope Bonnen; Pax, Luca, and Sebastien Bonnen; Mark Bonnen; David and Jessica Bonnen; Representative Greg Bonnen; Kim Bonnen; Lindsay and Janae Bonnen; Mike and Gail Martin; Jaclyn, Clay, and Jack Madison Abernathy; John Martin; and Clarence and Susan Bonnen.

ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER

Representative Goldman introduced the Honorable Dennis Bonnen, Speaker of the House of Representatives, who addressed the house, speaking as follows:

I'm humbled by the opportunity to serve as your speaker. I have so many people to thank today, starting with my wife, Kim. People who spend just a little bit of time with me figure out very quickly that Kim is destined for sainthood. You, Jackson, and Gregory are the center of everything I do. I also want to say hello to my namesake, Uncle Dennis Psoras, who is watching online at his home in Baltimore, Maryland. Thank you, Uncle Denny. Mom, you and dad have given us everything—thank you. Elected leaders and distinguished guests, thank you for being here today. Your presence speaks volumes about the opportunities we have before us. I look forward to working with each one of you. I want to thank my good friend Brian McCall, who has mentored me through this transition. Brian honorably served as a member of the Texas House for almost 20 years and is one of the most honest and upstanding individuals I've ever had the privilege of working with. Thank you, Chancellor McCall.

I also want to thank Speaker Straus for his leadership in this chamber and his friendship during his tenure and during this transition. And I want to thank Speaker Tom Craddick for his continued service to the State of Texas. He's represented his district for the last 50 years and is the longest-serving member of the Texas House of Representatives in our state's history. He was entering public service just when I was entering the world. Thank you, Speaker Craddick. When I was first elected to the Texas House, Pete Laney led this chamber. He did so with a spirit of bipartisanship and fairness. Thank you, Speaker Laney, for honoring all of us with your presence here today. We're also blessed with another former speaker with us today, Speaker Gib Lewis. He was the first speaker to be elected to the post five times, and I am grateful that he joined us here today. Thank you, Speaker Lewis. It is their leadership of this body that is the foundation on which we stand and from which we will build. I am humbled to have my name mentioned with yours, and I hope to uphold your legacies of leadership. Truthfully, one of my greatest personal moments was being speaker pro tempore and serving in that role as my mentor and great friend did, Tom Uher. I wanted and still want to be just as good a member as Tom was. Through his example, he showed me how to be a good member of the Texas House and

how to be a good representative for my constituents. Tom, to say I'm honored doesn't even get there, to have you here with us today. Thank you for all you have done for me, for my family, and thank you for your friendship. You truly are a great American.

To be very honest, this is a little bit of a weird experience for me. I never dreamed or planned to be in this position. Truthfully, at this point in the ceremony, I'm usually thinking, "Man, I hope he doesn't talk too long. Kim was right; I should've eaten before coming to the floor." Every opening day brings with it feelings of excitement to be back with some of my closest friends, fired up at the chance to do something meaningful. Nobody really knows what that feels like except for those of us who were chosen by our communities to serve and sit here today. So right now, I am plenty excited to get rolling. I'm almost as excited as Linda Winder, my high school journalism teacher, neighbor, and former district director. She was the first person to RSVP for today's ceremony, probably because she had to see it to believe it. During her 36 years of teaching, she taught thousands of students. Yet there was just one who got her so wound up that she hit him. I don't know why you assume it was Greg. I think that's a little unfair to Greg. Truthfully, yes, it was me. No laws were broken. It was really just a tap on the arm, but still she was worried she might get in trouble with the school, so she called my mother to explain. My mother's response? Without hesitation, "Hit him again." My mother was probably just glad she had someone to help keep me in line. Just as Kim, these women figured out early on that I can be somewhat challenging. As my friends expressed earlier, I do have a bit of a reputation. However, I come by it very honestly. I'm Greek. When people call me "challenging," believe me, my dad is nodding his head in agreement from above. My dad always told us, say what you mean and do what you say. So I've never seen the point in sugarcoating things, especially when that might confuse the issue or slow down progress toward a meaningful result. Those of you who know me know that I operate with an efficiency and honesty that can leave a mark. I am direct, and I am a problem solver. These are both traits that I inherited from my father.

Right now, Texas has a number of problems to resolve, and it's our duty to produce meaningful solutions for all Texans. As we all know, a Texas legislative session is way too short to get caught up in things that don't lead to real results. In a state as big and diverse as Texas, there are plenty of ideas about how we should do any one of these issues, and these ideas often point in a different direction. It's our job to reconcile the differences. This chamber is the perfect place for those ideas to be heard. We must do that with mutual respect and understanding for one another. And in doing so, we will justify the trust that our constituents have placed in us to represent them in this great chamber. I remember a time when we celebrated legislators who were willing to come to the table and find agreement that led to workable solutions. I can admit that I'm a very, very competitive person—just ask Jackson or Gregory how much mercy I show them on a family game night. But the work in this chamber cannot be a zero-sum game. Instead, it's a proven system for finding solutions to the challenges that face our state and our constituents daily but only when we work together.

When it became clear that I would have the privilege of standing here today, I made fostering the spirit of collaboration my number one goal. I tried to visit as many of you in your districts as possible—from West Texas to East Texas and from the Panhandle to the Rio Grande Valley—to get up close and look at the issues that matter most to you. In many conversations along the way, I would be asked, what is your agenda for the house? I would laugh, then I would explain that's the beauty of being speaker. The agenda is up to you—you as a body, you as the voices of your constituents. My job is simple—bring passionate people to the table, then keep you in the room until we find a solution. That process is going to require a lot of tough conversations with a little give and take. I can tell you from experience that tough conversations are even tougher when they're between strangers or, even worse, adversaries. That's why I have a charge for all of us. I want us to get to know one another even better. While we know one another, we must go beyond that. It's time that we know each other and every member on this floor. Make new friends. Look beyond differences. Learn what life events shaped one another's perspectives. That'll show us that we are all truly connected.

For instance, you may understand me better when you learn that I grew up in a town of 18,000 people in the district I've represented now for 22 years, well outside of the Houston suburbs, surrounded by rice farms and cattle, among the hardworking people of the Gulf Coast. You will discover that my passion for education centers on the fact that I grew up a dyslexic kid in a small town at a time when there were almost no options available to students like me. My siblings excelled academically; I tried to understand how I fit into the Bonnen gene pool. And you will know that I learned toughness from a mother who fought for me and saw me through my entire education, never taking no for an answer, and finding solutions where people said none existed. That is the root of my tenacity.

Your background and life experiences are a big part of why you are here today. I encourage each of us to be intentional about getting to know one another better; to bridge partisan, geographical, and social divides; and to learn about the passions that inspired each of us to pursue public service in the first place. I encourage our more senior members to invest in the new members of this body, to mentor them so that they can be more effective and efficient, like Tom Uher has done for me and still does today. When we invest in our relationships and mentor one another, we better prepare ourselves to face the challenges before us. Because we have big issues to tackle like school finance and property taxes. These are complicated issues that can no longer wait, pressing issues that deserve a very meaningful result. You might even call them intimidating, but we can advance on them together if we change our perspective and our language. Let's try doing that by applying the words of a sermon I once heard with my sister in college: Replace the words "problem" or "challenge" with "opportunity."

In our conversations over the past few months, we shared your passion for a range of opportunities. We have an opportunity to tackle our number one priority, to fix the state's broken school finance system and of course to strive to make Texas schools the best in the country. That also gives us the opportunity to show

teachers and retired teachers from Amarillo to Anahuac that we appreciate their years of service and investment in the lives of our children. We have the opportunity to improve the lives of Texas children, from prioritizing early education and improving the CPS system to addressing school safety and mental health issues that underlie the tragic episodes that have shattered Texas communities and families. We have an opportunity to intensify our fight against the despicable crime of human trafficking. When it comes to property taxes, we have an opportunity to reform a broken system that is taxing Texans out of their homes. Opportunities abound in health care, whether we're finding a better way to support trauma care in rapid growth areas like the Rio Grande Valley or educating future medical professionals to fill shortages in our rural communities. The road ahead presents endless opportunities to improve the lives of our constituents, from our state's continued recovery from Hurricane Harvey to the frustrations people feel when they visit one of our state's driver's license offices. I'm convinced we can move the needle on these opportunities if we treat one another with mutual respect and understanding and stay focused on the lives we affect with every vote we take on this floor.

Growing up, whenever Greg, Mark, Eleni or I set out on a new endeavor, my father always told us, leave it better than you found it. That was my dad's advice to me the day I was sworn into this house, and it would be his advice today. So let's be sure that when we adjourn sine die, we leave this house and our state better than we found them. There's a saying we have here in Texas: "As Texas goes, so goes the nation." That statement has never rung more true than it does today. Our federal government is steeped in gridlock and partisanship. For Washington, politics has become more important than people. But unlike Washington, Texas stands apart. We lead the nation by doing things our way, and we do it with strength, unity, and resolve. And we will once again rise to the occasion and serve as the nation's model for effective governance. That's what this body has done for over 130 years. We represent the will of the people come hell or high water.

John Steinbeck nailed it when he described what sets Texas apart. He wrote: "For all its enormous range of space, climate, and physical appearance, and for all the internal squabbles, contentions, and strivings, Texas has a tight cohesiveness perhaps stronger than any other section of America. Rich, poor, Panhandle, Gulf, city, country, Texas is the obsession . . . and the passionate possession of all Texans." This house is the possession of all Texans, and it is our privilege to serve all of them with passion, pride, and a willingness to put the common good above all else. Thank you all, and God bless Texas.

MOTION IN WRITING AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES

The Honorable Diego Bernal of Bexar County moved to authorize the Speaker to appoint two committees of five members each, one to notify the Senate, and one to notify the Governor that the House is organized and prepared to transact business.

The motion prevailed.