

When James E. "Pete" Laney was elected the 72nd Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives in 1993, he ushered in a new era of reform and bipartisan cooperation in the house. Throughout his tenure as presiding officer of that chamber, Laney conducted the legislature's business in a way that encouraged public participation and earned the trust and respect of all Texans.

In his first session as speaker, he made the reform and streamlining of house rules one of his highest priorities. The workings of the Committee on Calendars became more accessible, and the house adopted a new system of deadlines for legislation, a schedule that eliminated the last-minute backlog of bills that had forced lawmakers to consider hundreds of measures in the closing days of the session. As a result of these procedural changes, the Regular Session of the 73rd Legislature was one of the most productive in recent state history. During Laney's second term in 1995 he established a cordial, close working relationship with Governor George W. Bush and Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock, a partnership that produced landmark reforms in education, welfare, juvenile justice, and civil litigation. In his third term, the legislature approved a \$1 billion property tax cut, enacted the most comprehensive water plan in Texas history, and reduced the size of state government. Under Laney's leadership in his fourth term in 1999, lawmakers invested the state's record budget surplus in public education, health care, and tax cuts. Laney's fifth term, in 2001, was marked by the passage of legislation providing healthcare coverage for Texas public school teachers and creating the Office of Rural and Community Affairs to advocate for the growing needs of rural Texas.

These achievements were made possible by Laney's dedication to fostering a bipartisan atmosphere in which house members worked together with mutual respect and placed public needs ahead of personal interests and partisan politics.

First elected to the house in 1972, Laney served as chairman of the Committee on Administration for eight years and as chairman of the Committee on State Affairs for 10 years before being elected speaker by an overwhelming majority.

Laney was born in Plainview, Texas, on March 20, 1943, to W. G. and Frances Laney. He graduated from Hale Center High School in 1961 and earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics at Texas Tech University before following three generations of his family into cotton farming, a vocation he has continued to pursue throughout his life.

Widely acclaimed for his public service, Laney has been honored by the Texas Legislative Conference, John Ben Shepperd Public Leadership Institute, Texas Classroom Teachers Association, Texas Game Warden Association, and Child Welfare League of America, as well as by the Headliners Club and the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. *Progressive Farmer* magazine has recognized him as Man of the Year in Service to Texas Agriculture, Texas Tech University has named him a Distinguished Alumnus, and Wayland Baptist University has conferred on him an honorary doctorate.

Laney has served as chairman of the Southern Legislative Conference, as president of the National Speakers Conference, and as a member of the executive committee of the National Conference of State Legislatures, and currently is a member on the board of trustees for the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.

Laney and his wife, the former Nelda McQuien, live in Hale Center in the Texas South Plains. The couple have three children, KaLyn Laney, Jamey Laney Phillips, and J Pete Laney, as well as three grandsons, Austin James Phillips, Grant Alexander Phillips, and Gavin Anderson Phillips.