Today, at the dawn of the 21st century, Texas is full of hope, optimism, and resolve.

I thank you again for this incredible honor and pledge to represent you with honesty and integrity. To put partisanship aside, working with Governor Bush, Speaker Laney, 31 outstanding senators and 150 house members, to do what's best for Texas.

One hundred years from now, I want the members of the 126th Legislature to look back on our work and recall that we made life better for our citizens, particularly our children, senior citizens, and the less fortunate among us.

I want Griffin and Sydney Perry and their generation to inherit a Texas with safe streets, the best schools in America, and economic opportunity for all.

I know that together we can build a future full of hope, opportunity and achievement. Juntos podemos because Texas matters most.

Thank you.

At the conclusion of the lieutenant governor's address, Speaker Laney stated that the oath of office would be administered to the Honorable George W. Bush, Governor of the State of Texas, by Chief Justice Phillips.

The Honorable George W. Bush took the constitutional oath of office as Governor of the State of Texas.

Speaker Laney introduced the Governor of Texas, the Honorable George W. Bush, to the joint session and the assemblage.

Governor Bush addressed the joint session and assemblage, speaking as follows:

My fellow Texans, once again I have taken a solemn vow to uphold the Constitution and the laws of this great state. I am honored to continue serving as your governor.

I am humbled because elections are far more than just votes that are tallied.

Every vote cast is a hope. A hope that a child will get a good education. A hope that a neighborhood will be free from drugs and crime. A hope that the years ahead will bring a better life for each generation.

I have high hopes for the future of Texas. The 21st century will be one of great opportunity. Our economy will be strong, so long as we pursue free markets, free trade, low taxes, and limited government.

So I am optimistic our children's lives will continue to improve in material terms. The risk is that their moral and spiritual lives will not improve. You see, the strength of a society should not be measured only in the wealth it accumulates or the technology it develops. The strength of a society should be measured in the values its people share.

Generations of Texans have rallied around the values of independence, hard work, strong families, duty to country, and faith in God.

I think of my friend, Al Gonzales, recently sworn in as a supreme court justice. His parents reared eight children in a two-bedroom house in Houston. They worked hard every day. They sacrificed so that their children would have a chance to succeed. Al Gonzales has realized their dream.
As we begin a new century, our dream for all Texans should be based not just on prosperity but on the values that make prosperity worthwhile. To achieve prosperity with a moral and spiritual center, I believe the Texas of tomorrow must be open, educated and, while diverse, united by common Texas values.

The first challenge is this: Texas must be an open society. We must not become two societies—one that believes in the American dream and one without such hope.

Last year, I visited a juvenile justice facility in Marlin, Texas. I talked with a group of tough young criminals. They were kids you would be frightened to meet on the street late at night. Yet when you looked in their eyes, you realized they were still little boys. As you might imagine, they had sad stories. They came from broken families and from gangs who seemed to care for them. But when they got to prison, these young people realized the gangs didn’t care anymore. So they were searching for something or anything that mattered.

Toward the end, a young man—probably 15—asked a haunting question. He raised his hand timidly and quietly asked a question that was so honest and so vulnerable that it stunned everyone present. He said, “What do you think of me?”

I told him that he had made a mistake, but I was confident he could learn from his mistakes. He could go out and be the person he wanted to be. But his question reveals something crucial to the future of Texas, as well as this country. Because his question sprang from the deep doubt of someone who wondered whether there was any hope for him—and any room for him—in society. He was basically asking, “Am I worth anything?”

All of us have worth. We’re all made in the image of God. We’re all equal in God’s eyes. And all of our citizens must know they have an equal chance to succeed. It does not happen by telling them they are victims at the mercy of outside forces; it happens when they realize they have a worth, a dignity, and a free will given by God, not by government.

My answer to that young man, my answer to every boy and every girl in every neighborhood in Texas, is yes, you can succeed. Yes, here in this great state, you can realize your dreams.

Government can’t solve all our problems. Economic growth can’t solve all our problems. In fact, we’re now putting too much hope in economics, just as we once put too much hope in government. Reducing problems to economics is simply materialism.

The real answer is found in the hearts of decent, caring people who have heard the call to love their neighbors as they would like to be loved themselves.

We must rally the armies of compassion that are in every community of this state. We must encourage them to love, to nurture, to mentor, to help, and thus, to offer hope to those who have none. Because here is the danger to Texas: if the dream is not available to all, it diminishes the dreams of the entire society. As we do to the least of us, we do to ourselves.

The second challenge is to become an educated society. Education is freedom.
Now by educated, I mean two things. I mean the obvious—our children must be knowledgeable. They must be literate in the language of the 21st century. They must be ready to compete. They must be challenged to be the very best students they can be. And we must never leave any child behind by pushing him forward. I refuse to give up on any child, and that is why I argue so passionately against social promotion.

First things first. Every child must learn to read. We must start early; we must diagnose; we must get children the help they need. As my friend, Phyllis Hunter of the Houston Independent School District says, “Reading is the new civil right.”

Our children must also be educated in the values of our civil society.

We must teach them that there are right choices in life and wrong choices in life. Some people think it’s inappropriate to make moral judgments anymore. Not me. Because for our children to have the kind of life we want for them, they must learn to say yes to responsibility, yes to family, yes to honesty and work...and no to drugs, no to violence, no to promiscuity or having babies out-of-wedlock. Wrong choices cause harm, heartache and poverty. We must be willing to draw a clear line between right and wrong.

Those clear lines are drawn by families, by neighbors, by churches and synagogues, by charities, all of which teach character and principle along with discipline and devotion. Those clear lines must be supported by political leaders, public schools, and our public institutions.

A healthy democracy depends upon the character of its citizens. Educating our children about their moral and civil responsibilities will serve them—and the nation—every bit as well as the academic learning they require.

The third challenge we face is in unifying our diverse state through common values. We are a diverse state, and we will be even more diverse in the 21st century. In the near future, there will be no majority racial group in Texas. Children enrolled in Houston’s schools speak 63 different languages, 57 different languages in Dallas.

Our diversity gives Texas new life, new energy, new blood, and we should not fear it but welcome it. Nuestra diversidad le da a Texas nueva vitalidad, nueva energia y nueva sangre y no debemos temerla sino recibirla con los brazos abiertos.

People seeking to improve their lives and move up lift our entire economy. Societies are renewed from the bottom up, not the top down.

This renewal will continue if government respects individuals, does not tax them too much, and does not try to do for them what they ought to do for themselves. And this progress will continue as long as we do not allow race to divide us.

We should be proud of our various heritages; we should celebrate them in festivals; we should enjoy their traditions in our homes; we should share them with friends. This genuine appreciation of heritage stands in stark contrast to those who would divide people into groups for political purposes.

There’s a trend in this country to put people into boxes. Texans don’t belong in little ethnic and racial boxes. There are such boxes all over the world, in places with names like Kosovo, Bosnia, Rwanda; and they are human tragedies. As we head into the 21st century, we should have one big box: American.
Texans can show America how to unite around issues that are larger than race or party. Texas has always been a diverse state, but we have never fractured thanks to our commonly held values. Those values, upheld by boot-tough old cowboys and brand new immigrants, are this state's enduring strength.

I am optimistic about our state. I'm optimistic not just because of electronics or agriculture or energy, but because of Texans themselves. I met a fireman and his wife who have opened their home and their hearts to more than 300 foster children. I've seen a powerful ministry to the homeless that started under a bridge in central Texas. I've met hundreds of teachers who work to inspire, and everyday citizens who help their neighbors in need. Because of our Texas spirit, I deeply believe we can be an open, educated, and diverse society united by shared values.

Our Texas night sky is most brilliant when each lone star shines at its brightest. My vision is a Texas with each lone star educated, respected as a unique, individual light and open to the universe of possibilities surrounding it.

My hopes for Texas are best captured in a favorite quote of mine written by my friend, El Pasoan Tom Lee: "Sarah and I live on the east side of the mountain. It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming; not the side to see the day that is gone."

My fellow Texans, as we head into a new century, Texas lives on the sunrise side of the mountain. And I see a very good day coming. God Bless you all.

At the conclusion of the governor's address, Speaker Laney presented Senior Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, who pronounced the benediction.

Speaker Laney presented Shawn Bailey who sang "God Bless America."

Speaker Laney presented The University of Texas Longhorn Band, which played "Texas Our Texas."

Speaker Laney extended an invitation, on behalf of Governor Bush and Lieutenant Governor Perry, to all guests to view the parade this afternoon.

SENATE ADJOURNMENT

President Pro Tempore Bivins stated that the purpose for which this joint session was convened having been completed, the senate would, in accordance with a previous motion, stand adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT

Speaker Laney stated that the purpose for which the joint session was convened had been completed. In accordance with a previous motion, the house, at 12:53 p.m., adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.