HR 39

HR 39, recognizing the participants in the TALL VI class of the Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership program, having been previously adopted, was read.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED

The speaker announced the appointment of the following committee to escort Governor Bush to the speaker's rostrum:

Representatives Solomons, chair, Coleman, Keel, E. Reyna, and Sadler.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the senate was received at this time (see the addendum to the daily journal, Messages from the Senate, Message No. 2).

(Wolens now present)

ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR GEORGE W. BUSH
(The House of Representatives and the Senate in Joint Session)

In accordance with the provisions of HCR 1, providing for a joint session of the senate and the house of representatives at 11 a.m. today, for the purpose of hearing an address by the Honorable George W. Bush, governor of the State of Texas, the Honorable Rick Perry, lieutenant governor of the State of Texas and the honorable senators were announced at the door of the house and were admitted.

The senators occupied seats arranged for them.

Lieutenant Governor Perry was escorted to a seat on the speaker's rostrum.

At 11 a.m., Governor Bush and his party, escorted by Senators Brown, chair, Armbrister, Bivins, Nelson, and Truan, committee on the part of the senate; and Representatives Solomons, chair, Coleman, Keel, E. Reyna, and Sadler, committee on the part of the house; were announced at the door of the house and, being admitted, were escorted to the speaker's rostrum.

Lieutenant Governor Perry called the senate to order.

A quorum of the senate was announced present.

The Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney, speaker of the house, called the house of representatives to order.

A quorum of the house was announced present.

Speaker Laney stated that the two houses were in joint session pursuant to HCR 1 for the purpose of hearing an address by the Honorable George W. Bush.

Speaker Laney introduced Laura Bush, first lady of Texas; Margaret LaMontagne, the governor's senior advisor on education; Terral Smith, director of the governor's legislative office; and Albert Hawkins, director of the governor's office of budget and planning.
Speaker Laney recognized Lieutenant Governor Perry, who introduced the Honorable George W. Bush, governor of the State of Texas, to the joint session.

Governor Bush addressed the joint session, speaking as follows:

We begin this session with a national spotlight on us. I have been asked about it. You have been asked about it. You didn't ask for it—but it is here anyway. And we can either view it as a distraction, or seize it as an opportunity to show the world what limited and constructive government looks like.

Here in the nation's second largest state—the world's 11th largest economy—we meet for only 140 days only once every two years. And we get the job done, because limited government works. Limited government brings focus. It requires us to put aside posturing and politics and find common ground.

We sometimes disagree, but we do so agreeably. We know we serve Texans best when we work together in a spirit of cooperation and respect; when we seek common ground based on Texas values of limited government, local control, strong families, and personal responsibility.

Take my friend, Senator Ellis. When it comes to elections, he and I don't agree on many things. But when I take time to listen to the senator, I find he has a good idea now and then. And if you give him some truth serum, he might say the same about me.

The national spotlight gives us a chance to show how well limited government works. And together, we can show Washington how to handle a budget surplus. We have a surplus because we have been good stewards of tax dollars. You know that taxes come from the sweat and toil of men and women with bills to pay and mortgages to meet.

I agree with Speaker Laney's wise words to start this session when he cautioned, "Budget surpluses are not a license for wasteful spending."

During times of plenty, we must not commit our state to programs we cannot afford in the future. We must meet basic needs, dedicate the lion's share of new money to public schools, then send money back to the hands who earned it—the taxpayers of Texas.

Tomorrow, I will submit a budget that is balanced and limits government's growth. It reflects my two major priorities: school children and taxpayers.

I will propose consumer sales tax cuts to eliminate taxes on diapers, over-the-counter medicines, and access to the Internet.

I propose a small-business tax cut to provide relief to the small entrepreneurs who are the backbone of our state's economy.

I propose a research-and-development tax credit to foster innovation and keep Texas on the leading edge of new technology.

Finally, I will propose a two billion dollar property tax cut. This will cut rates an average of 13 cents for every 100 dollars of your home or property's value. This tax cut has a dual purpose: it will encourage home and property ownership that is the heart of the Texas dream; and it will maintain the state's share of funding for our schools.
If we do not prioritize public education, if we fail to cut property taxes, the state's share of spending on schools will decline dramatically. More and more districts will become Robin Hood districts and our school finance system will be unbalanced, unfair, and ultimately unconstitutional. My plan makes our public schools our number one priority.

And I look forward to working with you to pass truth in taxation legislation so that when we cut taxes, we make sure they stay low.

The spotlight is on us, let us show Texas knows how to fund our priorities, balance our budget, and cut taxes.

We are already leading the nation in improving our schools by insisting on local control, high standards, and strong accountability. During the past four years:

TAAS test scores have increased across the board, for every ethnic group, in every subject, at every grade level tested.

Recent national report cards show: Texas' African American fourth graders ranked first in the nation compared to their peers; Texas leads the nation when it comes to improving our schools, and our curriculum is one of the most rigorous in America.

These results are a tribute to your bold leadership and the hard work of educators, teachers, parents, and students across Texas. We are proving that when you raise the bar, people rise to the challenge.

I look forward to working with you to take our reforms a critical step further—to provide early intervention and end the failed practice of social promotion. Social promotion is the result of low hopes, low standards, and low expectations. You and I have high expectations for every child—and we must have high standards to match those high hopes.

Our children are counting on us—children like the Houston fifth grader who wrote, "I think social promotion is kind of like...saying that you don't care. I don't want to be left behind later in life."

This week, Chairman Bivens and Chairman Sadler and I laid out a plan that provides intervention early before it's too late. The state will pay for that extra help, so no child is left behind and every child learns to read. Reading is freedom.

Adam Gonzales has learned that lesson. He was pushed through the system until last year, when his school district, Lubbock Cooper, had the courage to end social promotion. When Adam failed the eighth grade reading and math TAAS, he went to summer school and got one-on-one help. He's a high school freshman now, his grades are up across the board. He now has reason to believe he can pass the test to achieve his goal of becoming a United States Marine.

Adam is here today with his mom and his teacher. Adam, I appreciate your hard work. Thanks for aiming high. Please help me welcome Adam Gonzales.

I want every child to soar, so I propose expanding the Advanced Placement program with the goal of 100,000 Texas children passing the exam by 2002. We must challenge all our students to be the best they can possibly be.

That goal requires good places to learn and good people to teach. Our
teachers are the lifeblood of our schools, so I ask you to send one billion additional dollars to local districts to raise salaries, or hire more teachers to reduce class size. I urge you to fund teacher training so our teachers learn to teach reading with the most up-to-date science: phonics. And I hope you’ll join me in supporting the lieutenant governor’s reading master teacher proposal.

Last session, we funded a bond program that allowed 230 school districts to build more than three billion dollars of new schools—I ask you to double that successful program.

Finally, let’s show Texas is not afraid to change and innovate. During the last four years, we have provided new outlets for educational entrepreneurs—charter schools, open-enrollment campuses, public school choice.

These bold experiments have shown that parents from all walks of life are hungry for a better education for their children. I know there’s a huge debate raging, but we must not trap students in low-performing schools. It is time to see if it works: let’s try a pilot voucher program.

Excellence is our goal—not only for our schools, but also for our quality of life. Texas must be a place with healthy children, safe neighborhoods, quality jobs, and a place where neighbors are encouraged to help neighbors in need.

Our youngest Texans need our help. Last year, 176 children were killed by abusive parents or caretakers. For every one who dies, countless others suffer in anonymity. This breaks my heart. I urge you to increase funding so our child protection agency can hire 380 new caseworkers to rescue children before they become a tragic statistic.

The early years are critical ones, so I ask you to support the first lady’s early childhood initiative and to give our attorney general more tools to enforce child support. I thank Representative Henry Cuellar for sponsoring my proposal for after-school enrichment programs for middle school children in high-risk neighborhoods. We must help our children to learn to make good choices in life.

No matter where you stand on this next issue, I believe we all want to reduce the number of abortions in Texas. I look forward to working with Senators Shapiro and Nelson and Representative Delisi to pass a bill to involve parents in this major medical decision for their minor daughters.

An excellent quality of life means safe neighborhoods. So I propose giving law enforcement the tools to fight the menace of gangs: a spotlight program to focus on violent juveniles, a statewide database to track gang activity across Texas and automatic jail time for juveniles who commit crimes with guns.

For safe streets, I urge you to crack down on drunk driving by lowering the blood alcohol legal limit to point zero eight.

For quality neighborhoods, I urge you to crack down on the illegal gambling machines that are proliferating and polluting our communities.

And there is more to do to improve our business climate so Texans can support their families with high quality jobs.
I look forward to working with Senator Sibley and Representative Wolens on an electric deregulation proposal that will cut costs for consumers while making sure electricity is available and reliable.

Our tort reforms are working to lower insurance costs but there is more to do. For example, businesses and agencies that make a good faith effort to make their systems Y2K compliant must not become targets for frivolous lawsuits. Our focus should be on fixing the problem, not profiting from it.

I will continue to be a strong advocate for free and fair trade with Mexico. NAFTA is good for Texas and good for Mexico. I will work with the federal government and the Texas Department of Transportation to improve infrastructure along our border.

I believe business and a healthy environment can coexist. I look forward to working with Senator Buster Brown and Representative Ray Allen on legislation to make our Texas air cleaner by significantly reducing emissions from older grandfathered plants. And I propose that we continue to encourage private landowners to conserve land, plant trees, protect wildlife, and improve water quality.

Our Texas heritage is not only our land, but also buildings. And so I urge you to restore our historic courthouses. They are beautiful works of architecture that have been the heart of our Texas communities for generations.

And finally, we must unleash the hearts of Texas by encouraging people to help their neighbors in need.

We have made great progress in the last four years in helping people declare their independence from government. Thanks to the reforms you enacted, we have cut our welfare rolls nearly in half—by more than 340,000 people—to the lowest point in more than a decade.

But those who remain on welfare are some of the toughest cases—who need clear signals and extra help. We must send this clear message: if you are able to work or train, you must work or train. And if you refuse to do either—if you refuse to help yourself—then Texas cannot help you.

For those who are working to win their independence, the state can do more to help. I propose increased child care funding for low-income mothers; transition benefits to help those moving from welfare to work and second chance homes to help unwed teenage moms nurture their children in a safe and structured environment.

But government programs cannot solve all our problems. People of good will must help—what I call the little armies of compassion, which are transforming our state one heart, one soul, and one conscience at a time.

One drill sergeant in the army of compassion is Tillie Burgin, or, as she’s better known, the Mother Teresa of Arlington, Texas. Tillie is a former missionary who came home and saw a need. She didn’t call on government to see what someone else could do. She called on God to ask what she should do. The answer was, “Just go do it.”

Tillie’s mission has helped thousands of Texans with clothing, shelter, food, and free medical care. But Tillie needs your help to do even more. I urge you to expand on our faith-based reforms by passing a Good Samaritan bill to allow medical professionals to volunteer their service free from fear of frivolous lawsuits.
Tillie Burgin is here today. Tillie, thanks for all you do. We are honored you would join us. Tillie is living proof of the importance of freeing people to put their faith in action. Recent court decisions have chipped away at the rock of religious freedom. I urge you to join Senators Sibley and Shapiro and Representatives Hochberg and Christian and support the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to say loud and clear: Texas will not stand for government interference with the free exercise of religion.

The next few months are the last time this great body will meet during this century. We have an opportunity to rise to the challenge and continue to make this state second to none—a place that is open, educated, and united in our diversity.

Open, so every citizen knows with certainty that the Texas dream is available to him or her.

Educated, so every child is given the key to realize that dream.

And united in our diversity, so every Texan can find the common ground of Texas values that are larger than race or party.

I am optimistic we will succeed. History has shown that the things that set us apart individually have never been a match for the one thing that unites us collectively: we are all, first and foremost, Texans. We share history, we share tradition, we share values, and we share a bright future.

We have 125 more days to go. The spotlight is on us. Let's show them the best of Texas!

**INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF**

The interpretation of the proceedings of the house was provided today by Sandra Rouse and Ella Anderson.

**SENATE ADJOURNMENT**

At 11:36 a.m., Lieutenant Governor Perry stated that the business of the joint session had been accomplished and that the senate would, in accordance with a previous motion, stand adjourned until 10:30 a.m. tomorrow.

**HOUSE AT EASE**

At 11:36 a.m., Speaker Laney announced that the business of the joint session had been completed and the house would stand at ease pending the departure of guests.

The speaker called the house to order at 11:47 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Representatives Gray, Danburg, and Eiland moved that the house adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow in memory of Wayne Johnson, former Galveston County Commissioner.

The motion prevailed without objection.

The house accordingly, at 11:48 a.m. adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.