

HOUSE JOURNAL

EIGHTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE, REGULAR SESSION

PROCEEDINGS

FOURTH DAY — TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023

The house met at 10:04 a.m. and was called to order by the speaker.

The roll of the house was called and a quorum was announced present (Record 19).

Present — Mr. Speaker(C); Allen; Allison; Anchía; Anderson; Ashby; Bailes; Bell, C.; Bell, K.; Bhojani; Bonnen; Bowers; Bryant; Buckley; Bucy; Bumgarner; Burns; Burrows; Button; Cain; Campos; Canales; Capriglione; Clardy; Cole; Collier; Cook; Cortez; Craddick; Cunningham; Darby; Davis; Dean; DeAyala; Dorazio; Dutton; Flores; Frank; Frazier; Gámez; García; Gates; Gerdes; Geren; Gervin-Hawkins; Goldman; González, J.; González, M.; Goodwin; Guerra; Guillen; Harless; Harris, C.E.; Harris, C.J.; Harrison; Hayes; Hefner; Hernandez; Herrero; Holland; Howard; Hull; Hunter; Isaac; Jetton; Johnson, J.D.; Johnson, J.E.; Jones, J.; Jones, V.; Kacal; King, K.; King, T.; Kitzman; Klick; Kuempel; Lalani; Lambert; Landgraf; Leach; Leo-Wilson; Longoria; Lopez, J.; Lopez, R.; Lozano; Lujan; Manuel; Martinez; Metcalf; Meyer; Meza; Moody; Morales, C.; Morales, E.; Morales Shaw; Morrison; Muñoz; Murr; Neave Criado; Noble; Oliverson; Ordaz; Orr; Ortega; Patterson; Paul; Perez; Plesa; Price; Ramos; Raney; Raymond; Reynolds; Rogers; Romero; Rose; Rosenthal; Schaefer; Schatzline; Schofield; Shaheen; Sherman; Shine; Slaton; Slawson; Smith; Smithee; Spiller; Stucky; Swanson; Talarico; Tepper; Thierry; Thimesch; Thompson, E.; Thompson, S.; Tinderholt; Toth; Troxclair; Turner; VanDeaver; Vasut; Vo; Walle; Wilson; Wu; Zwiener.

Absent, Excused — Bernal; Hinojosa.

Absent — Johnson, A.; Martinez Fischer.

The invocation was offered by the Reverend Jakob N. Hurlimann, chaplain, as follows:

Eternal Father, we give thanks for the gift of this day, the gift of our lives, the gift of our ability to praise you, which itself comes from you. Thank you for the blessings that you have bestowed on us already, those we have recognized, and those we may never know. You speak your word to us in every moment; may we be attentive in hearing. May we over the course of this day intend all our thoughts, words, and actions, to your glory, through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

The speaker led the house in the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE GRANTED

The following member was granted leave of absence for today and tomorrow because of illness:

Hinojosa on motion of Ortega.

The following member was granted leave of absence for today because of important business:

Bernal on motion of Ortega.

CAPITOL PHYSICIAN

The chair presented Dr. Rayford Mitchell of Karnes City as the "Doctor for the Day."

The house welcomed Dr. Mitchell and thanked him for his participation in the Physician of the Day Program sponsored by the Texas Academy of Family Physicians.

HCR 24 - ADOPTED (by Goldman)

The following resolution was laid before the house:

HCR 24, Granting the legislature permission to adjourn for more than three days during the period beginning on Wednesday, January 18, 2023, and ending on Tuesday, January 24, 2023.

HCR 24 was adopted by (Record 20): 141 Yeas, 3 Nays, 1 Present, not voting.

Yeas — Allen; Allison; Anchía; Anderson; Ashby; Bailes; Bell, C.; Bell, K.; Bhojani; Bonnen; Bowers; Bryant; Buckley; Bucy; Bumgarner; Burns; Burrows; Button; Campos; Canales; Capriglione; Clardy; Cole; Collier; Cook; Cortez; Craddick; Cunningham; Darby; Davis; Dean; DeAyala; Dorazio; Dutton; Flores; Frank; Frazier; Gámez; Garcia; Gates; Gerdes; Geren; Gervin-Hawkins; Goldman; González, J.; González, M.; Goodwin; Guerra; Guillen; Harless; Harris, C.E.; Harris, C.J.; Harrison; Hayes; Hefner; Hernandez; Herrero; Holland; Howard; Hull; Hunter; Isaac; Jetton; Johnson, J.D.; Johnson, J.E.; Jones, J.; Jones, V.; Kacal; King, K.; King, T.; Kitzman; Klick; Kuempel; Lalani; Lambert; Landgraf; Leach; Leo-Wilson; Longoria; Lopez, J.; Lopez, R.; Lozano; Lujan; Manuel; Martinez; Metcalf; Meyer; Meza; Moody; Morales, C.; Morales, E.; Morales Shaw; Morrison; Muñoz; Murr; Neave Criado; Noble; Oliverson; Ordaz; Orr; Ortega; Patterson; Paul; Perez; Plesa; Price; Ramos; Raney; Reynolds; Rogers; Romero; Rose; Rosenthal; Schaefer; Schatzline; Schofield; Shaheen; Sherman; Shine; Slaton; Slawson; Smith; Smithee; Spiller; Stucky; Swanson; Talarico; Tepper; Thierry; Thimesch; Thompson, E.; Thompson, S.; Tinderholt; Troxclair; Turner; VanDeaver; Vo; Walle; Wilson; Wu; Zwiener.

Nays — Cain; Toth; Vasut.

Present, not voting — Mr. Speaker(C).

Absent, Excused — Bernal; Hinojosa.

Absent — Johnson, A.; Martinez Fischer; Raymond.

STATEMENT OF VOTE

When Record No. 20 was taken, I was shown voting yes. I intended to vote no.

Slaton

RECESS

Representative Goldman moved that the house recess until 11 a.m. today and at the conclusion of the joint session for the inauguration of the governor and lieutenant governor, the house adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The motion prevailed.

The house accordingly, at 10:10 a.m., recessed until 11 a.m. today.

**INAUGURATION OF THE GOVERNOR
AND LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR****(The House of Representatives and the Senate in Joint Session)**

At 11:16 a.m., the members of the house reconvened at the north entrance of the Capitol and were joined by the senate in a joint session for the purpose of inaugurating the governor-elect, the Honorable Greg Abbott, and the lieutenant governor-elect, the Honorable Dan Patrick.

With the Ross Volunteers of Texas A&M University forming a sabre arch, the governor-elect and Mrs. Abbott and lieutenant governor-elect and Mrs. Patrick and their party were escorted to seats on the platform.

The Marine Military Academy led the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag, and the national anthem was sung by Tanya Tucker.

Stacy Langhum of Houston led the pledge of allegiance to the Texas flag, and "Texas, Our Texas" was played by the Spirit of Houston Cougar Marching Band, University of Houston.

The Honorable Kelly Hancock, president pro tempore of the senate, called the senate to order and announced that a quorum of the senate was present.

The Honorable Dade Phelan, speaker of the house, called the house to order and announced that a quorum of the house of representatives was present.

Speaker Phelan stated that the house and senate were in joint session for the purpose of inaugurating the governor and lieutenant governor.

Speaker Phelan introduced Randy Weaver, pastor, Lone Star Cowboy Church, Montgomery, who offered the invocation as follows:

This is the day the Lord has made. We shall rejoice and be glad in it. Heavenly Father, in your word you have asked us to give honor to whom honor is due. Today, as we pause on this historic day to honor our governor, Greg Abbott, and our lieutenant governor, Dan Patrick, we're reminded that your word is as blessed as the nation whose God is the Lord. Today, we declare in Texas that you are our Lord. We are not only one nation under God, but we are also one state, Texas, under God. Today, we thank you for the unprecedented favors that you

have given to these two great leaders. You've intentionally placed powerful men in powerful positions in this, the most influential state in our nation. We also realize that with every blessing comes responsibility. Today, we celebrate that Texans have spoken and for this third term, placed their trust and their confidence in these two men to lead the great State of Texas. We realize the reason you have selected Governor Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Patrick is because discernment, prudence, and wisdom will always win out over personal agendas that are void of your blessings. We are totally aware that truth without grace will ultimately fail, but that it is not enough just to be right, but that your grace would always accompany your truth with every decision and in every relationship. We thank you, Jesus, that we have you as our ultimate example—that you never called evil good or good evil; that you taught us how to love the unlovable and care for those who cannot care for themselves. You said in your word that you came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. We pray for all leaders to continue to fight the battle for life so that a baby can rest well under the protection of its mama's womb. Today, as Texans, we choose to legislate life. And for our unborn Texas babies, thank you for a governor and a lieutenant governor that value life just as you do.

We also pray that you would protect us from those who attempt to bring the Trojan horse of immorality into the schools of Texas. Today, wisdom compels us to repent as a state and as a nation for compromising the moral truth. Only history will tell our children and our grandchildren the priorities that we choose to endorse in these coming days. Today, we celebrate that we want for Texas what you want for Texas, that we covet your presence in this Capitol building.

Father, we also pray for all the elected officials. We invite you to attend every legislative session, every private meeting that's conducted in this building, and teach, correct, and discipline each of us to lead with humility and understanding that Texas is a state of the people, by the people, and for the people. The people are your greatest treasure, not buildings, projects, or procedures. We will honor you as you honor us. Texas is the head and not the tail, and we will never allow any tail to wag the head of Texas. We understand that truth will always be the truth, no matter who believes it. You, as our creator, are not waiting for us to approve of you or your word, so we declare today that you are God and that we are not God. We choose today to honor Governor Greg Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick as they take this oath of office. We also choose to honor you as the foundation of our legislation. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. We pray that God will bless Texas, and all the Texans said, "Amen."

Speaker Phelan stated that the oath of office would be administered to the lieutenant governor-elect, the Honorable Dan Patrick, by the Honorable Ryan Patrick.

The Honorable Dan Patrick then took the constitutional oath of office as lieutenant governor of the State of Texas.

The Honorable Eddie Lucio Jr. and the Honorable Brandon Creighton introduced the lieutenant governor of Texas, the Honorable Dan Patrick, who addressed the joint session and assemblage, speaking as follows:

Thanks for the kind words from Senator Lucio, who's retiring after a lifetime of service. He's a friend and a statesman, and I wanted him to be here today. And to Brandon Creighton, who I've given a huge assignment to this session, to be chair of Education and Higher Education again, impacting six million students in K through 12 and millions of students in higher education. And everything he said has happened, but it happens with a team that includes the governor and the speaker of the house. Because without the house members and the senators to file the bills, to fight for the bills on the floor, to pass the bills, and then for the house to do the same and the governor to sign them, nothing happens. So I congratulate you, Governor, and the speaker, the house members, and the senators who are here today. Also, I want to welcome our state officials, our esteemed justices, all of our guests, our senators, our house members, and my family. Jan, this year we will celebrate our 48th wedding anniversary. Stand up. Does she look good or what? She is the strongest person I know. She is the kindest person I know. And I would not be able to serve unless she had said back in 2006, "It's okay." So thank you. And my daughter, Shane, and her husband, Jared: stand up. They are pregnant—in March, she is, he had something to do with it—with their fourth. And then my son, Ryan, and my oldest grandson Zachary—they have four, so we will have eight grandchildren in another few months. I have two special guests I want to introduce, one with a sad note. A few weeks ago, *Apollo 7* astronaut, Walter Cunningham, passed away. I was at his 90th birthday party a few months ago, and I will speak at his celebration of life this time next week in Houston. And his beautiful wife, Dot, who has been by his side for so long, is here today. We lost a true American hero, one of our few astronauts—Apollo astronauts—left. Dot Cunningham, please stand. We have been friends for 30 years. Also, I want to welcome someone you all know. If you remember Heath Barkley from *The Big Valley* or Colonel Steve Austin from *The Six Million Dollar Man* or Colt Seavers from *The Fall Guy* and in many movies and in many television shows, my good republican friend and a Texan for a long time, Lee Majors and his beautiful wife, Faith. They will celebrate 23 years of marriage this year. Thank you for being here.

So, Governor, we've done it again, three-peat. You know we had a bruising campaign again. I don't know what was more annoying when I would come home on those rare occasions from the campaign trail, turn on the TV, and every five minutes there was an attack ad on us. I don't know if that was more annoying or another Mike Lindell, My Pillow ad. Now, he has My Slippers. Mike's a friend. I said, "Mike, you say you can wear them indoors and outdoors. If you wear them outdoors, they're shoes." No wife's going to let her husband come inside after being out in the pasture or mowing the grass with slippers. He lives in Texas now, and I told him I'd take him to a rodeo. I said, "You can have George Strait jeans, you can have the finest Stetson, you can have a Tony Lama shirt, but if you have slippers on, you're not getting out of the truck." Mike has moved here like millions have moved here since 2000. We've added 11 million people since

the year 2000. Why are they coming here? Because America looks at Texas as the America that all America used to be. We still love God in this state. I see "Jesus is king" over there. Jesus is king. I went back and read the *Austin American-Statesman*, they did an article after I spoke in 2015, and they said most politicians talked about God, and he talked about Jesus and his Christianity. He actually put his faith over his party. Yeah, of course. I'm proud that Jesus Christ is my savior. I respect all faiths and all religions and those who don't believe, but for me: Christian first, conservative second, and republican third. They come to Texas because, not only do we love God, we love our country, we love our state, we salute our flag. When we kneel, it's not against the flag; it's to pray to God. We are a blessing. Texas is unique. When Texans travel around the world and someone says, "Where are you from?" We don't say America, we say Texas. They know where Texas is. No one from Delaware says Delaware, no one knows where Delaware is. Well, maybe they do now because of a Corvette in a garage, but that's another story.

As we come into this session, we have more of your money to spend on you wisely. And, of course, we will save much of that money because there's always another day ahead. But because of you—the hardworking Texans, the business leaders, the entrepreneurs of Texas who have come here, who were born here, built a business from nothing—we have the strongest economy on the planet. We've had 25 percent growth just in the last two years. And there's a sense of excitement with these people up front, the house members and the senators, because, Governor, we have \$32 billion-plus, and we're going to do a lot of great things for the people of Texas because it's your money. And by the way, that does not count the \$18 to \$20 billion in the rainy day fund. When God was about to rest on that seventh day, he said, "What do I do with this oil and gas? Where do I put it? Who can I trust it with?" We know the answer to that. But we're a diverse economy. We are strong. The world is in chaos, and they need a strong America. And America is not strong without a strong Texas. And I believe that Texas is not strong without strong conservative policies that say the government will give you what you need but stay out of the way. We will let business prosper, and we will create jobs, and that's why people are coming here from the other 49 states.

We have a robust agenda. Some of you may know that I took a bus tour around a lot of rural Texas—130 cities in 17 days. The best people, the best food, the best time I've ever had. It's a highlight of my life and will always be, not for politics, just for the people I met. And, of course, we campaign in the urban and the suburban areas as well. But after the campaign season, you come back with the people's agenda. So what do they want us to do? Just a few things you want us to do: You want us to continue lowering your property taxes, and we are committed to doing that with billions of dollars. When I came into the lieutenant governor's office in 2015, your homestead exemption was \$15,000, it had been that way forever. We increased it to \$25,000. And then last session with Greg Bonnen, the Appropriations chair in the house, who works with us—thank you, Mr. Chairman—we raised it to \$40,000. And in the budget that we will release this week, the Texas Senate will raise your homestead exemption to \$70,000, which will save you thousands of dollars over the lifetime of your home, enough

to make a difference. And the governor, the speaker, and the members will come together, and we'll find a way that's long-term property tax relief with billions of dollars from this surplus, because you come first. It's your money.

Secondly, for our business community, we lowered the business franchise tax by 25 percent in our first session. It's time this year to increase the business property exemption from a lowly \$2,500 to \$100,000. That's the tax that small and midsize businesses pay on their chairs, their desks, and their computers. It's a nuisance tax, and we need to get rid of it. It will help grow even more jobs and grow more businesses.

You have asked us to secure the border, and the governor, he's had a lot of great ideas. He called the speaker and myself one day, and he said, "I need some more money." We said, "For what?" "I want to send buses." "Where?" "To all those blue states." Dade and I said, "We're in." And the mayor of New York City's complaining because he has a few thousand people in a city of eight million when our cities on the border, because of the federal government's lack of securing our border, are overrun. But without our National Guard, without our DPS troopers, without local law enforcement, it would be far worse. There would be even more drugs, more terrorists, and more criminals crossing this border. Our budget had been \$400 million a year. In the last two years, we spent about \$4 billion. That's tax dollars out of your pocket that we shouldn't spend, and we're going to need a change in the White House in 2024 to get that border secured because this president is not doing his job. And even the democrat governors and mayors say he's not doing the job.

School choice: the governor and I are all in on school choice. Now, I know for some they say, "Well, it could hurt rural Texas." Well, let me give you a number. We have 1,207 school districts in the state. Four hundred and eighty-six of them have less than 500 students. There aren't going to be any private schools coming to there. The economics don't make sense. Seventy-six percent of our districts have less than 3,000 students. The economics don't make sense. Forty-nine districts have more than half of the students in Texas. Two hundred thousand in Harris County, well over 100,000 in Dallas, I could go on. Most of our schools are good schools. Many of our schools are great schools. My wife was a longtime teacher. I'm proud that we gave teachers the biggest raise in history, and we're going to do that again because it should be a profession and not a job. But I can tell you, that to the naysayers that say school choice hurts rural Texas, the governor and I will have a plan to protect those schools financially and to make sure those parents have choice also when they are in a failing school. Because no parent should have to send their child to a school that's a failure, to a school that they feel is unsafe. Or, if you have a child with a disability, which is about one out of every four students—if that school can't help you, and many of our schools do a great job with the disabled—so we are going to pass school choice. And I hope finally this is the session that we join over 30 other states in giving parental rights to parents to choose the school of their choice. Governor, thank you for making this a campaign issue. And by the way, we got 77 percent of the vote in rural Texas. We both campaigned on that. I think the people of rural Texas are fine with school choice. Just fine.

A subject has come up of tenure. And let me just say this: I don't start any fights, but I do my best to finish a few on your behalf. Out of nowhere, some professor said, "We're going to teach critical race theory at our college, at our university." And I tweeted out, "Wait a minute. We banned critical race theory in K through 12. Next session, if you are heck bent on teaching it to our college students, we will ban it in college." They came back and said, "Well, we don't listen to the legislature, we don't listen to the Board of Regents." They're not accountable to anyone. Well, let me tell you what, our public professors are accountable to the taxpayers because you pay their salary, and they are accountable to the Board of Regents, and they are accountable to the legislature. Tenure is fine for our research professors and our doctors, but for those professors in the classroom every day, I don't want them teaching—just like the parents don't want in K through 12—that if you're white, you're a racist and if you're of color, you're a victim. I don't want teachers at our colleges saying America is evil and capitalism is bad and socialism is better. And if that means some of those professors who want to teach that don't come to Texas, I'm okay with that. I want professors who love this country, who love this state, and raise up the next generation. Be proud of being in business.

Also, in traveling around the state, I listened to sheriffs and county judges. We're going to do something unprecedented. We're going to spend hundreds of millions of dollars, for the first time in history, it's in our budget, to our rural counties for law enforcement because we've got sheriffs making \$35,000 a year and deputies making \$28,000, and people in rural Texas deserve the same law enforcement protection as we do anywhere else. So we're going to help those counties for the first time ever. We have a robust plan to build more mental health care hospitals because we need more health care for everyone in this state. We only have 2,500 beds for 29 million people, and 1,000 of those are offline because we don't have enough nurses. So we're going to put forth a plan in the senate to give a scholarship, like we do for doctors, for anyone that wants to become a registered nurse. We will pay for your education because we need to incentivize young people to go into that great profession.

And lastly, the most important thing we can do is strengthen the grid. Windmills are fine, solar's fine, and renewables are fine. You know, we're fifth in the world. There's the United States, China, India, Germany, and Texas. But we need more thermal power, natural gas, hydroelectric. We need dispatchable energy we can count on. We will add more megawatts of thermal power this session and strengthen the grid as we began last session.

I want to close with this. I don't know how many of you were in church this morning. Pastor Hagee gave a great sermon. We had a great service last night at St. Mary's Catholic Church. We are not in a battle between republicans and democrats anymore. I'm proud of the Texas Senate, and many of you don't know this, we normally pass 98 to 99 percent of all bills with republicans and democrats signing off on the bill. We're not Washington, D.C. We're a family in this legislature. We go to each other's weddings, each other's funerals. We pray together, as we did last session. Yes, there are differences between the parties, and those are fought out in strong debates. But we must be together because the

battle in this country is between powers and principalities, between good and evil, between darkness and light. And America looks to us. America's looking for a leader. Texas is that leader. I give you my promise, I give you my oath of office, that I will be relentless in protecting the freedom and liberty of Texas. I'll be relentless in our fight for good over evil. I'll be relentless in working together with the senators, the house members, the governor, and the speaker so that this continues to be the greatest place to live on planet Earth. Jesus Christ is my savior. Thank you, Lord. I'm so blessed to be here today. Every time I walk in that building, I remember this. All of us are there on the wings of your vote, and when people go in and vote for you, they don't look back anymore to see what you're doing every day. They trust you. And when we get that vote, Governor, as you did and I did, it's because they trust us to do what we said we were going to do. At the end of the day, when you run for office, say what you're going to do, do what you said you were going to do, because that's what you're supposed to do. God bless you, God bless the great State of Texas, and thank you. I'm honored to be your lieutenant governor.

At the conclusion of the lieutenant governor's address, Speaker Phelan stated that the oath of office would be administered to the governor-elect, the Honorable Greg Abbott, by the Honorable Nathan L. Hecht, chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas.

The Honorable Greg Abbott took the constitutional oath of office as governor of the State of Texas followed by a 19-gun salute.

Speaker Phelan introduced the governor of Texas, the Honorable Greg Abbott, who addressed the joint session and assemblage, speaking as follows:

To my fellow Texans, thank you for your support and thank you for the trust that you have placed in me to lead our great state for four more years. I want to thank Chief Justice Hecht for administering the oath of office. I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Patrick and Speaker Phelan for their leadership. I want to say thanks to all of the statewide officials and members of the legislature. Let me tell you something, we are going to work together this session to keep Texas the land of opportunity in the United States of America.

God has blessed me with a wonderful family, including my extraordinary wife, the famous first lady of Texas, Cecilia Abbott. During her service as the first lady, she has championed Texans who were most in need, such as children in foster care, and working to end the scourge of human trafficking in Texas. She and I share a constant ray of sunshine in our lives, our remarkable daughter, Audrey Abbott. I also want to thank and recognize her family members on stage with us here today: Dr. Leticia Phalen, her brother, Joseph Phalen, and Joseph's wife, Yvette. Thank you all for being here. One thing we cannot emphasize enough, and that is all Americans are heirs to the freedom that is secured by the men and women who have worn the uniform of the mightiest military in the history of the entire world. My brother, Gary, is among them—having served in the U.S. Navy for 20 years, including flying combat missions in the first Gulf War. He is here with his wife, Denise. Also with us here today are our State and National Guard, who are leading the charge to secure our border. They are led by

Major General Suelzer who is here today. Thank you, Major General, for being here, and thank you for your service. The reason why we have the freedom to celebrate inaugurations in the first place is because we have had courageous men and women who have put on that uniform and fought for freedom across the entire world, and they deserve our gratitude. If there is anybody here who has ever worn the uniform of the United States military, would you please stand or wave your hand so we can thank you for your service to the United States of America.

As most everybody here knows, we have a state song. Our state song "Texas, Our Texas," was played earlier today by the mighty Houston Cougar Marching Band. Thank y'all very much for doing that. Our state song is a hymn. It's a hymn that glorifies the exceptionalism of our state. We work every day to live up to that exceptionalism. The song begins like this—and don't fear at all because there's no chance I'm going to sing it to you, but let me just recite the first few words because the words are so important to who we are as a people. It begins, "Texas, our Texas, all hail the mighty state. Texas, our Texas, so wonderful, so great. Boldest and grandest, withstanding every test. Oh empire wide and glorious, you stand supremely blessed. God bless you, Texas, and keep you brave and strong. That you may grow in power and worth, throughout the ages long." By the grace of God, we have fulfilled that aspiration to be that mighty state that is declared in our state song.

Texas is America's undisputed economic leader, providing pathways to prosperity for all Texans. Our \$2 trillion economy is now the ninth-largest economy in the entire world. Texas is number one in America in producing the food, the fiber, and the fuel that we use every day. The gas that you put into your truck, the jeans that you wear, the steak you eat for dinner—all of it is made in Texas. "Made in Texas" is the mightiest brand in America, and we use it every day to build the number one economy in the United States. The second line of our state song declares: "Texas, our Texas, so wonderful, so great." Texas is great in so many ways. Texas is now home to more Fortune 500 company headquarters than any other state in America. Texas is now the headquarters of headquarters. We consistently rank number one in economic development, and we lead the nation in job growth. We're number one in semiconductor manufacturing. We have the world's largest medical center, and we export more products than any other state. Texas is providing opportunity that people cannot get anywhere else in the United States. Now, much of our success is driven by our small local businesses. More than 95 percent of Texas businesses are small, and they employ nearly half of all working Texans. In Texas, we have more black business owners, more Hispanic women business owners, and more veteran business owners than anywhere else in the United States of America. It just shows that everyone can succeed in Texas. In fact, more Texans have a job today than ever before in the history of our state. What that does is it puts more Texans on the pathway to prosperity through higher wages and through unparalleled opportunities.

Now, our great economy has produced another record. We now have the largest budget surplus that we've ever had in the history of our great state. But make no mistake, that surplus does not belong to government; it belongs to the taxpayers. We will use that budget surplus to provide the largest property tax cut in the history of the State of Texas.

Our state song goes on to proclaim that we are the boldest and the grandest. Just as early pioneers explored our vast frontier, our modern pioneers are boldly exploring our vast universe. The first word spoken by Neil Armstrong after landing on the moon was "Houston." Now we have teams in Texas that are building the pathway to Mars. Texas is the epicenter of innovation. We attract the brightest minds and the hardest-working entrepreneurs. To ensure that our booming state can meet the needs of our future, we must work this session to bolster our infrastructure, including the roads that we drive on, the water that we use at home and in our fields, and the ports that we use to ship products around the entire globe. Our state is so grand we now have more than 30 million people who call Texas home. By 2050, there will be more than 50 million. People from across America are fleeing the oppression of high taxes, red tape, burdensome regulations in other states, and coming to Texas, where freedom and fortune are found around every corner. Americans are showing that what Davy Crockett said still rings true today, and you all know the line, "You may all go to hell. I am going to Texas."

Texas has also lived up to the next line of our song that we "withstand every test." Let me highlight just one. Last session, I signed 14 bipartisan laws that fixed the flaws in our power grid. Last summer, we set 11 all-time power generation records and last month, we weathered brutally freezing temperatures across the state, all without any disruptions to the grid. Since our bipartisan reforms, no Texan has lost power because of our grid. But we all know that increased demand is going to be placed on the grid as Texas continues to grow. So this session, we will build a grid that powers our state, not for the next four years, but for the next 40 years.

The next line of our great state song states the obvious: "Oh empire wide and glorious, you stand supremely blessed." Texas is blessed in so many ways. One of our greatest blessings is our children. One thing they deserve is a quality education. Per-student funding for public schools is at an all-time high. We have one of the best high school graduation rates in America. We're number one for National Blue Ribbon Schools, and we are number one for Tier 1 research universities. Texas is now the knowledge capital of America. But we must remember this: our schools are for education, not indoctrination. Schools should not be pushing social agendas. Our schools must get back to teaching our students the fundamentals. We must reform curriculum to get kids back to learning the basics and empower parents with the tools to challenge that curriculum when it falls short of expectations. No one knows what is better for their child's education than their parents. Those parents deserve the freedom to choose the education that's best for their child. One essential part of our schools is safety. We must prioritize protecting students and staff. We must provide

mental health services to students who need it. Parents must know that their children are going to be safe when they drop them off at school every single morning. We will not end this session without making our schools safer.

Public safety is a core priority for Texas. It flows from the chorus of our state song: "God bless you Texas, and keep you brave and strong." In Texas, we believe in law and order, and in Texas, we support our law enforcement officers—period. When our law enforcement officers put on that badge and go into the line of duty every single day, they put their lives on the line every single day for the rest of us, and they rarely get the appreciation they deserve. So I just want to say if there's anybody at this event here today who now or has ever worn the badge of law enforcement, would you please stand so we can appreciate you for your service. Thank you.

Last session, we passed a law that did more than show our appreciation. We passed a law to put it in place. Last session, we passed a law that will defund any city that defunds their police. This session, we must end the easy bail policies that let dangerous criminals back out onto our streets. We must impose mandatory sentences on criminals caught with guns and mandatory sentences on anyone caught smuggling illegal immigrants in Texas. Make no mistake, the border is a crisis for one simple reason. The Biden Administration is not enforcing the laws that are already on the books. As a result, more illegal immigrants crossed our border last year than any year in the history of the United States of America. In fact, over the past two years, more illegal immigrants crossed the border than the populations of Austin, El Paso, and Houston combined. With the Biden Administration missing in action, Texas is using every tool to protect our state. Texas is the only state to build our own border wall. We are deploying Texas National Guard soldiers and Department of Public Safety troopers to enforce the law at the border. And we are targeting the Mexican drug cartels who traffic people, weapons, and drugs into our state. One of the worst consequences of Biden's open border policies is the deadly fentanyl pouring across the border. DPS has seized enough fentanyl to kill every man, woman, and child in the United States of America. In Harris County alone, one person dies a day because of fentanyl. There are parents with us here today who've lost a child to fentanyl. They know that we are incapable of bringing back their child, but their hearts cling to the hope that their loss is not going to be in vain. They deserve action—action that will save other innocent families from the devastation they have suffered. And they will get that action this session. The hopes of those parents rest upon the leaders in this Capitol. Our job is to deliver solutions for our fellow Texans, and by God, that is exactly what we are going to do this session.

Our state song closes with this aspiration: "That you may grow in power and worth, throughout the ages long." From our economy to our people to our public safety, Texas has never wielded more power or enjoyed such economic might as we do today. Ever since the early pioneers settled our frontier, Texas has been the land of opportunity. We have built that brand for generations. We live in a state of infinite possibilities, a state that encourages Texans to reach for the heavens and beyond. We provide a ladder for anyone to climb from humble beginnings to the heights of success. A Texas where children can access the knowledge and the

tools they need to be the future entrepreneurs, scientists, and artists that will shape Texas for the legends to come in the next generation. A Texas where we value freedom, security, and the rule of law so that everyone can feel safe in their home, workplace, and school. A Texas where anyone can design their own future and then be able to achieve it. Today, we gather on the threshold of a legislative session that's going to transform the lives of Texans for generations. Together, we are going to build the Texas of tomorrow, not for just the next four years but for the next century. Together, we are going to ensure that Texas remains the greatest state in the greatest country the world has ever known. Thank you all, God bless you all, and may God forever bless the great State of Texas.

Speaker Phelan introduced the Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, bishop, Diocese of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, who offered the inaugural blessing as follows:

Blessed are you, gracious God, source of all that is true and good and beautiful, you who delight in all people. Gratefully, we stand in awe before you, believing that the spark of life within each person on earth is the spark of your divine presence. Through your goodness to us, we live in this great State of Texas—some of us born and nurtured here by your grace and love, some of us called from afar and delivered here through your mercy and compassion, and all of us one sustained here together in fellowship and solidarity by your loving and generous providence. Bless us, in our diversity, as one people, with the fortitude to seek the common good for all members of our towns and cities, of our counties and of our state, of our nation, and of our world. Deliver us, as one people, from hostility, selfishness, and cynicism that would foment fear and incite violence within our homes and in our communities. Instill in us, as one people, your spirit of peace that we might each do our own part in exercising our own personal responsibility for the betterment of our state and society.

Bendito sea Señor Dios todopoderoso, nos enseñan a saber que nuestros corazones no descansan hasta descansar en ti. Permítanos trabajar por el bien común de nuestros hermanos y hermanas. Protégenos de la miedo y de la ira. Dignate colmar de tu bendición a estos sierbos tuyos electos por el pueblo de Texas. Nuestro Gobernador Abbott y nuestro Vicegobernador Patrick, que siempre se dediquen generosamente a la aduya el prójimo. Haz que en las necesidades urgentes que sirvan fielmente con una entrega total en la persona de nuestro prójimo sin excepción.

Bless our governor, our lieutenant governor, and all of our elected officials with wisdom and right judgment. That they might, through their decisions, strengthen our state in the present moment, with an eye towards the future development and peace for generations yet to come, mindful of the weakest among us. Deliver all of our elected officials and public servants, and protect their families from all that would do them harm. Spare them the impatience with the complexities of government and instill in them your virtues of humility and prudence that they might see, judge, and act within the proper balance set forth in your truth and the fullness of your revelation. We ask all of this in your holy name. Amen.

Speaker Phelan presented the Texas A&M Singing Cadets who sang "Deep in the Heart of Texas."

Speaker Phelan introduced Mendel Dubrawsky, rabbi, Chabad of Dallas, Dallas, who pronounced the benediction as follows:

It says here, "Good morning," but good afternoon. As we come to the conclusion of this wonderful gathering—celebrating the inauguration of the Honorable Governor Greg Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, legislators, and officers of both houses—we also celebrate the valiant nature of all who serve as leaders of our great State of Texas, for they chose to do so voluntarily. They undertook this responsibility and selfless dedication and sacrifice to protect all of our God-given freedom to make our state even better, thereby making the world a better place.

When I was a young boy, I once asked my father, "Why is it that in the Bible, the leaders of the community are called the eyes of the nation?" And he immediately quoted a verse and a teaching of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He said of all five senses that every human being has, the only one you cannot use for yourself is your eyes. You can touch, feel yourself, taste, and so on and so forth, but my eyes can only see you unless they are obstructed by a mirror, and then I see me. Leaders are those who see others and care for others before them. Therefore, we always include them in our service and bless them—that God shower them with health, with true joy and happiness, and success in all their endeavors—so they can continue with strength and wisdom and justice serving our great State of Texas.

Well, they say that in Texas, we do everything bigger and better. So I learned this morning that the inauguration is always on a Tuesday, not a day of the month but a day of the week. I asked why, and I didn't get a clear answer. Maybe someone can teach me. But I find it in the Bible. We always look for God's fingerprints on all of our events. We believe in divine providence. So imagine this, I'm going to start from Genesis—I won't go through the whole Bible. In Genesis, God creates the world. He finishes it Sunday, observes the day, and he says, "Good," and so on and so forth. There are two days that are different. Wednesday he says is good, Thursday he says is good, Friday he says is good, and same with the Sabbath, Saturday. Monday, God says nothing. Guess what God does on Tuesday? God says it's good two times. It's good for heaven, it's good for the creator, it's good for the citizens and the people of Texas, and for God's creations. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to bid you shalom, farewell, and have a wonderful day. And to your governors, I want to personally thank you for all that you do selflessly for all of us and for the land of Israel. Shalom to all.

Speaker Phelan extended an invitation, on behalf of Governor Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Patrick, to all guests to the remaining inaugural festivities on the Capitol grounds.

SENATE ADJOURNMENT

At 12:31 p.m., President Pro Tempore Hancock stated that the purpose for which the joint session was convened had been completed and the senate would, in accordance with a previous motion, stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT

Speaker Phelan stated that the purpose for which the joint session was convened had been completed. In accordance with a previous motion, the house, at 12:31 p.m., adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

