President-elect Bush; Chief Justice Phillips; President Pro-Tem Ellis; Speaker Pro-tem Uher; Governors Briscoe, Smith and White; Mrs. Clements; Senator Gramm; members of the Legislature; distinguished guests; fellow Texans:

I am honored to be sworn in as your 47th governor.

I have long considered myself to be a fortunate man. I have two wonderful children- Griffin and Sydney- and an extraordinary wife, Anita, who will be a marvelous First Lady.

As a family, we are extremely grateful for the blessing bestowed upon us today. Not only do I feel honored and blessed, I am deeply humbled.

During my 16 years of public service, I have had the pleasure of working with four different governors. It is an office that commands the deepest respect and the highest expectations of our people.

It has been graced by legendary figures- Texans whose names evoke fond memories and larger-than-life stories.

I am particularly humbled today because my predecessor has set the bar extremely high. His shadow will loom large over this granite building, for it is the shadow of a great man. He is an inspiring leader, a trusted friend and our nation's president-elect- George W. Bush.

President-elect Bush, you have governed with civility and compassion. You have led by uniting and including. And you leave us with an enduring legacy that reminds me of the famous words of another Texas legend, Sam Houston, who once said, "do right, and risk consequences."

The Bush tradition, established over the last six years, is to do right regardless of party, regardless of politics. It is a philosophy of governing that will serve this nation well as the diverse and dynamic people of America yearn for a leader who will unite, include and inspire, a leader whose commitment to a better tomorrow extends to every willing
heart, every aspiring mind. That leader is George W. Bush.

With the help of Speaker Pete Laney and legislators of both parties, President-elect Bush leaves us today with a strong foundation for our future.

Through educational reforms based on greater accountability, higher standards, and local control, we have done more than just raise test scores, we have raised the sights of every Texas child who would dare to dream of a better tomorrow.

We have improved our system of civil justice, we have reduced the plague of violent crime, and we have created incentives for hundreds of thousands of Texans to abandon the dependency of welfare for a life of self-sufficiency.

These important accomplishments and our economic prosperity have transformed Texas into a haven of opportunity, a place where vivid dreams and bold ideas await their realization.

My vision is not to merely celebrate that progress, but to advance it, to extend opportunity to more of our citizens, and to do so with the help of every willing Texan without regard to party politics or political ideology.

In the end, what matters most is not partisan majorities or political affiliation. What matters most is that we do the business the people of Texas have sent us here to do. Texas matters most.

And what a great opportunity we have. Technology represents a new frontier of limitless opportunity.

Internet access can now bring the classroom into the privacy of the home, allowing a single mom to pursue a degree by night while providing for her children by day. Interactive CD-Roms can now teach our children their ABCs while equipping them with the computer knowledge needed to succeed later in life.

Technology provides great promise in the effort to clean our air and water, to reduce needless tragedies on our roads and highways, and to transform the way we do business in the global economy. And it can help us to do one other thing...it can bring the old frontier – our rural towns and communities – to the forefront of the new frontier.

But technology is merely a means to an end, that of advancing the cause of greater freedom and opportunity for more of our citizens.

We must never forget that the single most significant way to expand freedom and opportunity for future generations of Texans is to educate them.

An investment in an educated mind is an investment in an unlimited future. That is our highest calling as a state, and will continue to be our most important mission.

First Lady Laura Bush led the way with her important appeal for childhood literacy. Our youngest children are now exposed to the best reading instruction in the history of our state.

It is time to focus the same attention on the critical fields of math and science so our children are better prepared for college, and the job opportunities of the future.

In this new technology economy, learning must not end with a high school degree. It is our investment in higher education that will pay dividends long into the future.
We have a good higher education system. But it is not in the Texas nature to be satisfied with "the good" when the goal is something greater.

I want our system of higher learning to be a model of excellence and the envy of the nation. It is a difficult goal, a task that won't be completed overnight, but with the help of leaders like Irma Rangel and Royce West, it is a goal that is reachable.

And as long as I am in office, higher education will be my passion.

Today only one in five Texans has an undergraduate or graduate degree. We can do more- we can do more, and we must do more to make sure that no child is confined to the outskirts of opportunity.

I stand before you today first and foremost by the grace of God. But I also stand before you this afternoon the son of tenant farmers, and part of the first generation of my family to attend college.

Higher learning has been the doorway to all the opportunities of my adult life, including the high honor bestowed upon me today.

I want every Texas child to taste that same freedom. I want every young Texan with a fertile mind and a strong resolve to be afforded that opportunity regardless of the color of their skin, the sound of their last name, or the depth of their financial resources.

From the border, to the fifth ward of Houston, from the suburbs of Dallas, to the farms and fields on the outskirts of a dusty West Texas town, there are no second-rate dreams, no second class citizens.

¡Estamos unidos hacia un destino comun!

The Texas of the 21st Century must be a place that invites all and includes all, a land that is enriched by the tremendous asset of diversity...a haven of opportunity for a people with big hearts and unlimited promise.

That promise- the promise of tomorrow, begins today.

I would like to see greater scholarship opportunities made available to Texans. We can start by expanding the program that senators Ellis and Wentworth, and my new secretary of state, Henry Cuellar, worked so hard to establish – the TEXAS Grant Program.

And I believe we should increasingly look to our two-year colleges to prepare Texans for jobs in fields like web design, wafer production and computer programming. That's why we need a technology scholarship program at two-year colleges for Texans who lack the financial means to enter those schools and obtain those important skills.

We should also work to double the number of engineering degrees conferred at Texas universities over the next five years.

And is it not time, in a state where football is legendary, that we put the same effort into recruiting nobel laureates as we do top tier football coaches?

We can do more- we can do more and we must do more to relieve our cities and towns of the traffic congestion that
encroaches upon our wonderful quality of life.

We have the finest highway system in the nation, and yet we are outgrowing the best plans and intentions of those who have built it.

I would like to see us complement our pay-as-you-go system with a new highway bonding program. I would like us to build more toll roads, streamline the design and engineering process, and require the same level of quality you expect from your refrigerator or pickup truck by requiring warranties on new highway construction.

And we should not limit ourselves to building more roads to get traffic moving. High-speed rail makes sense along existing rail lines linking some of our urban centers. And more modernized ports of entry will offer alternatives to four hour waits at the international bridge in Laredo.

At the dawn of a new day for our friends and neighbors to the south, it is my strongly held belief that we have never had a greater opportunity to improve the quality of life along the border of Texas.

If the border of Texas succeeds, then Texas succeeds.

We can do more- we can do more and we must do more to address ailments like tuberculosis and diabetes that are chronic among citizens of the border. We can do more and we must do more to promote jobs and economic growth, to build stronger infrastructure, and to ensure border Texans greater educational opportunities.

And while President-elect Bush and our border senators and representatives have done much to improve life for residents of colonias, we must be resolved to achieve even greater progress, hooking up more homes to basic services, and fixing problems like bad roads that are too muddy for school buses to enter after a downpour.

The border of Texas is not the back yard, but the front door to our state and our nation. It is a dynamic place enriched by a wonderful people. Its progress, its prosperity, will benefit the whole of Texas.

In his first speech as our governor in 1963, John Connally spoke of Texas as "a land still awaiting fulfillment, a promise still awaiting realization."

Future generations, he said, would remember our contributions only if they possessed "the rare quality of vision." And he urged Texans to invest their talents, their capabilities and their efforts "in those things which will long live rather than soon pass."

As a young boy growing up in a place called Paint Creek, I learned the hard way that the rains weren't dependable and a bumper crop was never guaranteed.

The land could be hard, and the sun relentless.

But hope and faith endured.

Few of us were rich in material, but we were rich in spirit.

We were seldom prone to envy because we were taught to be content. Resourcefulness, hard work, neighborliness and service were not mere words, but a way of life, my sister Milla and I saw it every day in our parents, Ray and Amelia.
I learned a couple of other values from men like my father. He, and my father-in-law Dr. Joe Thigpen, were part of that great generation of Americans, those millions of heroes who knew freedom was as precious as their willingness to sacrifice for it.

This past June, my father made his first return to Europe since 1945. We visited his old air base in England, we walked through the American cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach, and we peered over the hundred-foot cliffs of Point-du-Hoc that Earl Rudder and his relentless rangers overcame in the face of enemy fire.

On those hallowed grounds the enduring love and painful sacrifices of that incredible generation are enshrined. Their memories whisper in the wind, telling a solemn story never to be forgotten.

The men and women of World War II were the humble heroes who liberated the world from the encroachment of tyranny.

Upon return, they sought not recognition, but to live in peace and to prosper.

Some of them remain, including my dad and my father-in-law. They are with us today, along with my mother Amelia, and my mother-in-law Buenis, and I would like to ask them, and every veteran of World War II with us today, to stand so we can recognize and honor you.

May we never forget, or take for granted, the freedom we love. And may we always remember that democracy and our very institutions of government live today because of the virtue of those who fought and died for it.

Government cannot dispense enduring virtue, but it should reflect it.

I pledge to Texans a government built on the virtues of our people. A government that is open and honest. That realizes its limits, but performs important priorities effectively.

A government that is fair as it exercises its great authority, and compassionate in helping our less fortunate neighbors. A government that reflects the talents of our diverse people, and that seeks the high road over the expedient course.

John Connally’s words still ring true today. While we have advanced a long way since 1963, we remain a people intent on realizing our greater promise.

We advance on that promise every time a young mother returns to school and gets a degree that will lead to a good wage…every time a young child starts a new family tradition of attending college, every time one of our institutions of higher learning attracts or trains a nobel laureate.

Since those incredible days when people the worldwide descended upon this land we call Texas, its inhabitants have never backed away from a challenge, no matter how daunting or difficult.

We are a people of tremendous resources, and steele resolve. And we are never content with the accomplishments of yesterday, because tomorrow represents our greatest hope.

The promise of tomorrow begins today. May it be a song written in the hearts and minds of every citizen, every public servant. And may we all, each and every one of us, pledge to make the most of this tremendous opportunity para avanzar en nuestro progresso...advance on our progress, and build a better Texas.
God bless you, and God bless this place we call Texas.