A nineteen-gun salute was fired.

Speaker Craddick introduced the Governor of Texas, the Honorable Rick Perry, to the joint session and assemblage.

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

I am honored to be introduced by a devoted public servant of 34 years and the new speaker of the Texas House, Tom Craddick. Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst, I join all Texans in congratulating you as you take office. I look forward to working with these two strong leaders to do what's best for Texas.

Chief Justice Phillips, members of the legislature, my fellow Texans, we gather today to pledge our faith to an idea that endures but never grows old: the truth that governments exist to serve the governed, and the state to serve the sovereign will of the people. Observing this time-honored ceremony with us today are several special guests, including three friends who govern Mexican states that share a border with Texas: Governor Tomas Yarrington from Tamaulipas, Governor Enrique Martinez from Coahuila, and Governor Patricio Martinez from Chihuahua. Will you please help me welcome these good friends?

I am both honored and deeply humbled to take the oath of office as your governor for the next four years. As I take this oath today, I am blessed to be joined by the people who gave me life and give my life meaning.

Here today are two Texans who are the strongest example I know of love without bounds and, at times, patience beyond measure—my parents, Ray and Amelia Perry.

By my side, as always, is someone who blesses me each day with her wit, her wisdom, and her loving spirit. She is a dedicated mother, a wonderful wife, and a devoted Texan who has given many years to the care of those in need as a nursing professional. She is the love of my life, the First Lady of Texas, Anita Perry. And with us today, the greatest blessing of our lives, our two children, Griffin and Sydney.

In each person's life there are special people who shape us and send us forward. In the long story of our lives, their moment may be brief, but their impact lasting. One of those special individuals in my life is with us today. Please join me in welcoming one of my teachers from the Paint Creek Rural School, Ms. Olga Taylor.

Ms. Taylor, thank you for taking one more field trip today. You taught me more than how to read and write—you taught me what it means to believe in the future and to believe in myself. I just wanted to take this opportunity, in front of all of Texas, to thank you for teaching me some of life’s great lessons.

Among the lessons life teaches us is this: to each generation comes not only great opportunities, but also great challenges. And though we live in a world past generations could not conceive of, we, too, bear the timeless duties and responsibilities of a free people.

This Texas we love—born in conflict, emboldened by the pioneer spirit, advanced on the back of ingenuity—must remain true to an enduring vow: that the promise of a better tomorrow is a promise intended for all.
For centuries, a lone star has illuminated a path that has drawn people of all origins, cultures, and creeds to this special place. The glimmer of our cities, the warmth of our small towns, and the breadth of our open spaces have represented many things to many people—a refuge from a hard past, the promise of a new freedom, the possibility of a better future. Today we remain a people living under the light of that "one star," venturing down a single path toward "one future, one Texas." We are Texans, and proud of it, regardless of how we got here.

Go to a federal courthouse on the day that new Americans take their oath of citizenship. At one point, the judge will ask the assembled crowd to state out loud the name of the country where they were born. Then you hear the answers: Canada, India, Mexico, El Salvador, Turkey, Nigeria, Thailand, and on and on. These are the people who came to America and joined those of us who were born here to make their home in Texas. They came to the right place.

This is a state that brings people together. That's because we recognize common bonds. We all live under the same sky and share the same land. We all dream of a better future for ourselves and for our children. And we all, each and every one of us, are made in the image of God. In Texas, it's not where you come from, it's where you're going. Our task is to do what Texans have always done: to dream boldly, to act boldly, and to live boldly.

Our high-tech world of mp3 files and microchips, of digital downloads, and DNA mapping can never make obsolete human connections, human compassion, and human character. Our children need what children have always needed: parents to give them the love they long for and the values they will live by; role models that inspire their imagination; and schools and communities that cultivate their potential. My fellow Texans, together we have built a modern, prosperous society that is the envy of many. But there is more to our lives. We have a purpose greater than prosperity.

The cause of our time is to empower the Texans of our future. We cannot rest until the opportunities enjoyed by some are opportunities open to all. We must combat poverty with empowerment, apathy with determination, ignorance with education. This cause that compels us is larger than any one individual, interest, or institution. It must be the commitment of an entire people. From the crowded street corners of our urban centers to the open fields of our farming communities, we cannot accept a shortage of hope so long as we have a surplus of spirit.

The Texas spirit knows no boundaries. I want to channel that spirit for a cause greater than self—a bold, new effort that calls upon tried and true values. The spirit of active volunteerism that can transform our communities, our families, and our citizens.

Yesterday, I announced the formation of a non-profit volunteer organization, The OneStar Foundation. This new effort will match the Samaritan spirit with travelers on the road to Jericho. When a Texan spends time assisting a victim of violence, mentoring a child, or helping a welfare recipient gain independence, a life is often changed. But something else happens. The life of a volunteer is made richer through the very act of giving. It is a powerful truth upon which the spirit
of volunteerism thrives. Our blessings are never made full until shared with others. This effort will not supercede existing charities, but lead citizens to them. It will not replace the role of government, but augment it.

The lesson I've learned is that a government that attempts to do all things for all people does few things well. The larger government grows, the smaller the circle of our freedoms. We limit government so that opportunity is unlimited. Where government should play a role, it must do so with clarity and purpose. When economies soften, the burden should not be on taxpayers to pay more, but on government to spend less. Texas government should follow the example of millions of Texas families. When times are tight, Texas families do not spend more. So why should government? When the economy is uncertain, it is precisely the wrong time to raise taxes.

Much has been made of our so-called "revenue shortfall," but that is a term that resonates only in Austin where even $100 billion budgets are called insufficient. I disagree. We have the revenue we need to meet the priorities of our people. It will not be easy, but it will be done.

We all know the special interests speak with a loud voice, but it is the quiet voice of the common interests that we must listen to. They are the men and women who run the dry cleaner up the street, who drive the trucks that put food on our tables, who care for the sick and infirm in our hospitals. The men and women who pay their bills and pay their taxes and represent everything that is best about America—accepting responsibility for themselves, and expecting it from their government.

And those men and women are wise enough to know it is not the size of government that defines the compassion of our people, but the priorities we set. Limited government—focused rather than unwieldy, clear in priorities rather than long on promises—that's the government Texans have voted for and expect from their leaders. My priorities are clear. We will pursue fiscal discipline to keep government spending in check.

We will focus on creating jobs by keeping taxes low and building a 21st century transportation system. We will improve access to health care by allowing doctors to spend more time examining patients and less time being cross-examined in the courtroom. We will protect our natural resources because the work of God should be preserved for future generations to enjoy. We will increase economic security by reforming insurance laws and lowering rates. And we will continue to invest in the greatest economic development tool in the history of this state: the education of our children—all of our children. Those are my priorities and the priorities of the people of Texas.

There are other challenges before us that did not arise yesterday and that will not be solved tomorrow. Both our tax system and our school finance system must be reformed. All the answers may not be found this session, but we will work until they are found, and these issues will be addressed under this administration. What we do together will help chart the course to the future.

What do we know about that future? The heroes of current and past generations provide a road map, with lessons in selflessness and sacrifice. Certainly that is true of the members of the 95th Bomb Group with whom my
father served. More than half a century ago, when the cause of freedom called, they answered. In the skies over war-torn Europe, they faced down danger and death. They suffered the loss of friends and the loss of innocence. They confronted evil, and defeated it. They put service above self and country above all.

They are the heroes who stood in harm’s way to protect the American way. And I would like to ask every veteran, and every man and woman serving in our military today, to please stand so we can recognize you. On behalf of all Texans, all Americans, thank you. Your actions echo words spoken centuries ago by the prophet Isaiah, when he said, "Here am I, send me."

We have heard those words before. When a band of soldiers formed behind the walls of the Alamo, and their fellow patriots charged to victory at San Jacinto, they said, "Here am I, send me."

On the cliffs of Normandy, on the rock of Corregidor, on the DMZ in Korea, in the jungles of Vietnam, over the sands of Kuwait, in the caves of Tora Bora, Texans have answered, "Here am I, send me."

We hear those words today as the sons and daughters of Texas defend our way of life against terrorists and tyrants who hate the very idea that built this great nation. And we hear it each day in the commitment of doctors, teachers and volunteers, ministers of every faith, peace officers who patrol our streets, and all who live those words of service, "Here am I, send me." Their actions are a challenge to all of us—to the present generation of Texans who will write the next chapter of an unfolding story.

The earliest chapters inspire us. On Sam Houston’s command, a republic would be won. With Lincoln’s proclamation, a people would be declared free. On the shoulders of the courageous and the faithful, a vast land would be tamed. Its people would explore space, and thousands of dreamers would discover a home worthy of their unlimited vision—this one, Texas.

Will you help write the next chapter of a Texas rich in compassion, long in devotion, abundant in spirit? Will you volunteer your time to mend broken lives and build vibrant communities? Will you teach our children not only the lessons on a printed page, but the values that will keep them to the right path? Will you stand with me and say, "Here am I, send me?"

God bless you, and God bless Texas.

At the conclusion of the governor’s address, Speaker Craddick presented Reverend Manson B. Johnson, Holman Street Baptist Church, Houston, who pronounced the benediction.

Speaker Craddick presented Frederick D. McClure who sang "God Bless America."

Speaker Craddick presented Larry Gatlin who sang "Texas Our Texas."

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