El Paso Medical School

Monday, October 20, 2003

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I am honored to be with the great people of El Paso today to celebrate a landmark accomplishment: …the establishment of a four-year medical school for El Paso and the border region.

And today I am happy to announce I am here for more than ceremonial purposes.

In addition to the $45 million in tuition revenue bonds authorized by the passage of House Bill 28…

…I am proud to tell you that I have reached an agreement with the leadership of the House and Senate to provide $2 million in funding to finance start-up costs and faculty salaries for this medical school.

In the coming days I will send a formal request to the Legislative Budget Board to utilize $2 million in contingency funds made available because of the spending I line-item vetoed from the state budget.

This $2 million investment will ensure that once the new medical school is built, top-notch faculty will fill its classrooms.

There are many people who deserve recognition for this landmark achievement.

I want to thank both Dr (Roy) Wilson and Dr. (Manuel) de la Rosa for their advocacy of a four-year medical school in El Paso.

I want to thank the El Paso delegation in the Texas Legislature for working with me to get the funding needed.

I want to thank the regents and university officials with Texas Tech who helped carry this vision forward, as well as their counterparts at the University of Texas-El Paso who shared in that vision.

And I want to say a special thanks to my friend, J.O. Stewart, who has donated $1.5 million in land for the building of new facilities.

(pause)

This day is the culmination of many years of hard work.
In fact, with Representatives Picket and Chavez calling me every day on this issue, I’m glad this day has arrived.

Because of the establishment of a full-fledged medical school, many pre-med students studying at UTEP will stay right here in El Paso for their advanced medical training.

And with more students training to become doctors in El Paso, I am confident that this area…
…with such a great need for additional medical providers…
…will attract and keep more doctors.

In addition, this 4-year medical school will attract more research dollars…
…and the kind of vital research projects needed to combat illness unique to the border…
…and as well as those common throughout the world.

By jump-starting construction on new classroom facilities with $45 million in tuition revenue bonds, we are making the vision of a healthier border one step closer to a reality.

That’s also why I was an adamant supporter of Proposition 12.

With the help of thousands of El Paso voters, we protected doctors, nurses and hospitals from further skyrocketing insurance rates and frivolous lawsuits…
…and in the process protected Texans’ access to quality health care.

The passage of Proposition 12 means doctors trained at the El Paso Medical School will be less likely to cross the state line to practice in New Mexico.

Instead, they will be able to treat, heal and improve the lives of Texans right here in El Paso.

They will be a part of the medical effort to turn the tide on ailments like diabetes, tuberculosis and cancer.

And they will make a profound difference in the quality of life for our 21 million citizens…
…and even our friends who live on the other side of our international border.

We have addressed these critical challenges despite tough economic and budgetary circumstances.

Even though we spent $2.6 billion less in general state revenue this past legislative session, we spent an additional $1 billion on health care programs.

Today we are taking the next important step toward a healthier border…a healthier Texas.

Thank you, God bless you, and may the border of Texas prosper.

(move to sign House Bill 28...)