Thank you Commissioner Lehman. You are doing a great job at the Texas Workforce Commission, as is Judge Moseley in running the economic development division in my office. Thank you Gilbert (Leal) for what you do to prepare the workforce of the future here at TSTC.

When Texans look at the news headlines, they tend to only hear one side of the story about state government. The press plays up stories about political disagreements, runaway legislators and budgetary challenges. That’s no surprise. As a wise observer once pointed out, the press covers plane crashes, not plane landings. But to borrow a phrase from Paul Harvey, I’m here today to tell "the rest of the story." And the rest of the story is that Texas is better off because we addressed a $10 billion budget challenge without raising taxes, we funded billion dollar increases for public education and health care, we put a stop to skyrocketing homeowners insurance rates, we addressed the lawsuit abuse that kills jobs and drives doctors out of medicine, and, we invested in jobs to grow the economy rather than the size of state government.

The proponents of higher taxes and higher spending are entitled to their point of view. But measuring success based on higher taxes, more dependence on government and more bureaucratic regulation only guarantees one thing – California-sized budget problems. In Texas we have taken a different approach. While funding a $1.3 billion increase for public education and a $1 billion increase for health care programs, we still spent $2.6 billion less in state general revenue than the previous legislature. We set clear, but limited, priorities, education, health care and jobs, and we restructured government to create cost-efficiencies and savings to fund those priorities. There is a proper role for government to help the least among us, those who can’t help themselves. And we have funded those priorities. But we should not define success in this state by how much money we spend, or how many Texans we help sign up for public assistance, but on how we empower Texans to get a good education and good jobs.

By balancing the budget without job-killing new taxes, reducing bureaucracy, and increasing funding for public schools and college scholarships, the 78th Legislature paved the way for more jobs and economic opportunity in Texas. We passed lawsuit reforms that will protect Texans’ access to health care by lowering malpractice insurance rates and removing the threat of frivolous lawsuits. We heard the cries of homeowners whose insurance rates had gone through the roof and passed comprehensive homeowners insurance reforms that will rid the system of fraud and abuse, stabilize rates, and, in the near future, return half a billion dollars in rate relief to Texas homeowners. We increased trauma funding by hundreds of millions of dollars with increased fines and fees on drunk and reckless drivers so more Texans will receive timely, life-saving care when they need it. We took historic steps to clean our air and build new
We created a $295 million Texas Enterprise Fund to attract employers and new jobs to Texas. We are seeing good signs across diverse economic sectors that Texas is poised to lead a national economic recovery. A $2.4 billion investment by Toyota, coupled with a $3 billion investment by Texas Instruments and a $500 million investment by Samsung will create thousands of jobs in San Antonio, Dallas and Austin. More than 4,000 jobs have been created in the last nine months in South Texas in the customer-service industry. From August of 2002 to August of 2003, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania and California lost a net total of more than 300,000 jobs. But over the last year, Texas added 44,000 new net jobs. Because of fiscally conservative policies and leadership, Texas is on the right track. And I’m committed to ensuring that Texas continues to add jobs as the national economy improves.

That’s why today I’m traveling the state opening regional economic development offices in cities across Texas. This summer I signed legislation to move economic development functions directly into my office. Today marks the next step in job recruitment as we announce the opening of a regional economic development office here Houston. We will soon have a full-time economic development employee who will be my eyes and ears in this area, and, who will have a seat at the table with regional economic development officials working to attract jobs and employers. These regional offices will soon be staffed all across Texas: in addition to the Rio Grande Valley, Houston, San Antonio, the Metroplex, East Texas, West Texas, and El Paso will have offices. And my promise to every taxpayer in this state is that I will be a governor who continues to focus on jobs, opportunity and prosperity.

So when Texans see negative headlines and an emphasis on bad news, they should remember the rest of the story. Texas is a state with strong schools and low taxes, a state adding jobs and poised for even more growth and opportunity. Thank you.