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Gov. Rick Perry Meets with the President of Mexico Vicente Fox
*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Wednesday, November 05, 2003

Good morning. We are honored to welcome to Texas the President of Mexico, and a friend of our state and nation, Vicente Fox.

We just finished a very good discussion about important issues facing Texas and Mexico in the 21st Century. Texas and Mexico have a special bond. We do not merely share a border, but in many respects a way of life. We are not only neighbors, but good friends. And we not only share a tremendous history, but a tremendous future together. With several signs now pointing to an economic recovery in America, and with Texas poised to help lead that recovery, we have a unique opportunity to expand our trade ties with Mexico, and create jobs north and south of the border through the free flow of goods and services.

A growing economy is the best answer we have to the immigration challenge. Economic growth will not only create opportunities for migrant workers here in Texas, but will allow more Mexican workers to make a good wage south of the border. Texas exported close to $42 billion in products and innovations to Mexico alone last year. Since the start of NAFTA, cross-border trade between the U.S. and Mexico has grown 250%. We are strong trading partners, and because of it Texas is now the largest exporting state in America, recently surpassing California. We had a very positive discussion about some of the challenges we must address, and some of the differences we must work through.

Water: I take the same position as the Mexican State of Tamaulipas, which is that our farmers not only deserve the annual allotment of water required under the 1944 Treaty, but a commitment to address the water deficit that occurred under the previous Mexican Administration. I simply ask, in addition to the releases made in recent months,
that our friends from Mexico also produce a schedule of future releases that will ensure full treaty compliance. This will benefit farmers on both sides of the border that are downstream from Chihuahua.

Energy: “One of the best ways to expand opportunity in Mexico and Texas, and to meet President Fox’s goal of increasing foreign investment, is for Texas energy companies to be able to participate in the development of Mexico’s vast oil, gas, and electric resources and markets. Through my proposal to build the Trans-Texas Corridor, I envision an extensive network of roads, rail lines, oil and gas pipelines and electric transmission lines that will further connect Texas and Mexico to valuable resources and opportunities.” Mexico has made strong investments near the border in their transmission capabilities. Ten major electricity interconnections exist between Mexico and the United States. And of the 11 active natural gas cross-border pipelines, seven are along the Texas border. But much more can be done in terms of building a better energy infrastructure that we can both utilize. By unleashing the ingenuity of the private sector to tap Mexico’s energy potential, we can create thousands of jobs for people on both sides of the border, create new wealth, and meet the electricity demand that is predicted to double by 2020 in Mexico.

Border Crossing and Immigration Reform: We have to strike a balance between the free movement of people who cross our international border, and the effort to keep our people and institutions secure from attack. Our security checkpoints and immigration controls are intended to allow for the orderly migration of people who seek residency and citizenship in our nation. Every nation has a sovereign right to control its borders. As a nation of immigrants, we welcome men and women who enter our nation to better their lives and enrich our society. At the same time, while welcoming those who come in good faith, we must also stop the entry of those who intend us harm. I support the laser visa program, and new proposals to use biometric data, to help verify the identity of people who enter and exit our nation. The use of advanced technology at border checkpoints must be fully funded by our federal government so that we can successfully identify individuals who enter the United States, and more easily prevent identity fraud. Migrant workers are valuable to our economy, and we value their many contributions. We must ensure Mexican citizens can continue to contribute to our economy while also protecting Americans and our visitors from the horrors of a terrorist attack.

Drivers Licenses for Undocumented workers or Mexican citizens: “Possession of a Texas driver’s licenses is a privilege, not a right. We need to keep in mind that driver’s licenses are used not only to gain access to our roadways, but to board airplanes, make financial transactions, and rent cars and trucks. As Sept. 11 underscored, Texas MUST be able to confirm the identities of those to whom we award a driver’s license. The FBI and the Office of Homeland Security have expressed concerns that the matricula consular is subject to fraud, and acceptance of it poses a risk to our security.

Amnesty for Undocumented Workers: “I am open to ideas about how we can improve our guest worker program. I have concerns about a blanket amnesty for people who are here illegally because it usurps the rule of law, and the legal process, by which millions of people have applied for citizenship in this country. Death Penalty for Foreign Nationals: “If people do not want to be executed in the state of Texas, they should avoid committing murder within the confines of our borders.”