Thank you. I am joined today by Michael Sullivan with an advocacy group called Texans for Fiscal Responsibility. I would like to ask Michael to share some comments- Michael.

Thank you Michael. These petitions represent the voices of hardworking Texans. Most can't afford to hire their own lobbyist, and few have time to come here and testify on bills. Because of that, the voice of the taxpayer too often gets drowned out by the voice of special interests.

With 26 days left in the legislative session, I have some good news and some bad news to share with the people of Texas. Let me start with the bad news: if the session were to end today, we could point to precious few accomplishments on behalf of the taxpayer. Outside of continuing the property tax cuts of the last session and the passage of budgets in the two chambers that don't spend every dime available, the taxpayers have been shut out. Here's the good news: we have 26 days to change that and pass real taxpayer protections so that they don't go home this summer having spent billions more without providing additional tax relief or passing a tighter spending cap.

To date, stronger tax and spending constraints have languished in committee. A stronger state spending cap, which I advocated in my own budget, resides in a subcommittee. A tax revenue limit to give property taxpayers protection from skyrocketing appraisals hasn't even made it out of committee. And despite a record budget surplus, a modest property tax cut of $2.5 billion hasn't even been heard on either house’s floor. I commend legislators for supporting the elimination of the TIF tax and the end of large payment delays. But there are still billions of dollars of spending gimmicks that, if not addressed when we have a record surplus, never will be.

Many of us stood before the people of this state and got elected on spending restraint, tax relief and honest budgeting. I support increased investments in education, healthcare, transportation and border security. I support a budget that spends more responsibly because we are a growing state with diverse needs. But let's not forget the taxpayers. Both the Senate and House budgets leave roughly $8 billion sitting on the table. I think it is reasonable to take about a third of that money and give it back to the people so it doesn’t get spent just because we have it in our pocketbook. That’s why I supported an additional tax cut of $2.5 billion in my budget, and support Representative Paxton’s bill to provide additional school property tax relief.

Behind every government program there is not only a recipient in need, but a taxpayer who funds it. They deserve greater budget transparency, such as line items that are more explicit, and greater disclosure of public funds on agency websites. They deserve a state spending limit that is actually a limit. I support tying spending increases to inflation and population growth. They deserve truth-in-budgeting where fees collected for a purpose are spent on that
purpose. They deserve lasting school property tax relief, but unless legislators act to protect Texans from skyrocketing appraisals, the rate relief will be overwhelmed by appraisal creep. Let’s make sure the taxpayers have a good session and not just big spending special interest groups. Thank you.