Gov. Rick Perry’s Remarks to the American Chamber of Commerce - Mexico

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Tuesday, August 28, 2007

Thank you Ambassador Garza. It’s a real honor to be here today. I want to thank our hosts today for rolling out the welcome mat to me, Larry Rubin [AMCHAM CEO], Juan Thierry and all the men and women associated with this important organization. Your investments in Mexico provide work and wages as well as a brighter future for families on both sides of our shared border. I would also like to introduce to you Phil Wilson, our Texas Secretary of State and Victor Carrillo, our Railroad Commissioner. These two men are wholeheartedly committed to even stronger economic relations between Texas and Mexico.

I bring with me today both the greetings and best wishes of 23 million Texans, including millions who share a common heritage with the Mexican people. Texas and Mexico are bound together by a shared history, a blended culture and a singular future. Our border is not so much a barrier as a 1,200 mile seam that joins together the similar fabric of our two nations. The desire to prosper, live in safe and vibrant communities, and see our children succeed is not a uniquely American desire, but the wish of both our peoples. And so I applaud you for leaving behind the familiar surroundings of the U.S. to come here in search of a better future. You may not all be Texans, but you are certainly demonstrating Texas-style grit by moving down here. As you live out the American entrepreneurial spirit, you are creating prosperity that benefits communities on both sides of the border.

As you well know, Mexico is Texas’ largest trading partner, and Texas exports more goods and services than any other state, to the tune of $54 billion. That’s everything from televisions to tractors. We also import $124 billion from Mexico each year. This back and forth flow of commerce is good for all involved. For every dollar in goods shipped south through the Port of Laredo, for instance, a dollar fifty in goods and products heads north. Since NAFTA took hold, our trade with Mexico has grown over 300 percent. Nearly 90 percent of Mexican exports reach the American marketplace. North of the border, NAFTA has created nearly one million jobs, jobs that pay a higher wage than the average job in America. The success of NAFTA reminds us that the best government jobs program is one where government clears the way and the private sector does the work.

By reducing trade barriers, we have expanded opportunities. The free flow of trade and commerce is also the best solution to immigration concerns. Instead of building structural barriers intended to keep people out, we must remove economic barriers so people want to stay here and work. In this era of renewed economic optimism, we must plan for prosperity, not simply hope it shows up at our door. That means we must expand our energy ties. I applaud President Felipe Calderón for starting the conversation about opening the door to private investment and operations in the
energy sector. And I am impressed by his new Energy Secretary, Georgina Kessel, whom I met yesterday.

President Calderón and I will visit this afternoon and I look forward to discussing the vast potential that exists if Mexico moves toward a policy of liberalization. I applaud his openness to foreign companies, preferably from Texas, doing more to help Mexico develop its energy resources. I know this subject is politically sensitive, but economically necessary. It is remarkable to note that Mexico, with a population half the size of America’s, has only 5% of our electrical generating capacity. As demand grows and the supply of used to generate it dwindles, there is great opportunity to help. I hope Texas companies can partner with PEMEX if they spend a predicted $45 billion on exploration and production over the next five years. We also wouldn’t mind partnering with them on the $16 billion worth of refinery improvements they need to meet domestic and international demand.

These are just a few examples of the remarkable opportunities that exist here in Mexico. But no one knows better than you the unique challenges of doing business here. By representing our country, you are strengthening our economy and ultimately improving our world. Let me close by saying how honored I am by the hospitality of our Mexican friends, and how grateful I am to U.S. employers creating opportunities here in Mexico that create jobs in America. The United States and Mexico can build a brighter future if our relationship is based on two things, amistad y confianza, friendship and trust. Thank you for your time.