Remarks on Behalf of Gov. Rick Perry at the Border Governors Conference

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

Friday, September 28, 2007

Good Afternoon. On behalf of Gov. Rick Perry, I want to extend our sincere thanks to Governor Bours, and the people of Sonora, for your gracious hospitality and for introducing us to this beautiful community. And to all the members of the Border Governors Conference, Gov. Perry extends his best wishes and regrets that he could not join you this year.

Each year, this conference offers governors of the border states the opportunity to not only renew their friendships, but also work together to address common challenges and explore shared opportunity. Governor Perry is looking forward to signing this declaration of the 25th Border Governors Conference and watching it lead to a shared border that is healthier, better educated and more secure. Gov. Perry firmly believes that Mexico is the front door to Texas, not the back door. And he celebrates the declaration as an agreement between neighbors, ready to provide mutual aid in the event a disaster; be it a hurricane, a flu pandemic or terrorist attack.

The joint declaration casts a clear vision for a harmonious and prosperous border region. It commits us to more effective checkpoints that do not hinder our economic relationship but instead encourage the free flow of commerce. Governor Perry believes we can reduce long waits at the border by urging governments to appropriately staff points of entry, while adopting a pilot program of tandem booths to ease congestion.

This declaration starts us toward shared infrastructure improvements, improved healthcare in the border region, and an energy policy that uses resources wisely while protecting our environment. Based on this declaration we will together leverage evolving technology that generates high-paying jobs, yields a better quality of life, and creates a rising tide of new wealth for the citizens of our respective nations. New jobs will also come from bi-national forums which we are confident will create high-tech economic clusters, help small and mid-sized businesses expand into new markets and grow, and train economic development specialists in our universities, graduating experts who can improve our commercial and trade ties.

In addition to increasing prosperity, we must also provide for the security and safety of our border. Governor Perry has made clear his opposition to Washington's planned border fence. This miles-long eyesore would waste millions of dollars, destroy long-term friendships, and stifle economic prosperity. Instead, he believes that technology, combined with the coordinated efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement, will make this region safer for citizens on both sides of the border. The early successes of Operation Border Star, which began this month, validate this approach. To us, the most appropriate focus of border security is on terrorists attempting to enter our country. We also know...
that terrorism can take many forms, including attacks on our food supply. We will work with our border partners to ensure high standards for food safety while strengthening our agriculture industries.

This declaration is comprehensive and thorough, detailing our growing relationships in education, renewable energy and tourism. It also speaks of our shared commitment to sustaining our wildlife and water resources, which are the lifeblood of our border communities. This declaration is testament to a lasting friendship, a shared culture, and common customs. By signing it, we acknowledge that our past, present and future are inextricably woven together. The border must be not an impenetrable barrier, but a place of mutual respect, gracious cooperation and shared opportunity.

Again, on behalf of Governor Perry, I thank you for your warm hospitality, your faithful friendship, and your willingness to work hard on the challenges we share. You have made this Border Governors Conference most memorable and, for that, you have our lasting appreciation. And now, I would like to close with a simple request. We have all enjoyed the natural beauty of this place with our eyes over these past three days. Can we now go enjoy it close-up with our toes in the sand of the beach, the sunshine on our faces, and the sound of laughter as we celebrate our time together?