Gov. Rick Perry’s Remarks to the Texas Life Science Conference

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

Thursday, November 01, 2007

Thank you, John (Mendelsohn, MD Anderson). It is an honor to be introduced by a man who has led such a renowned research and treatment facility to new heights of excellence. John and I shared a stage just a few weeks ago when I visited MD Anderson to express my support for the creation of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas. As you well know, cancer is the number one cause of death for Americans under the age of 85, and kills more than 37,000 Texans every year. That’s 37,000 too many.

Nearly 1 in 2 men and 1 in 3 women in Texas will develop cancer during their lifetime. In my family, it hit my dad, my mom and my sister, so we’re above average in the wrong direction. Beyond the personal costs, the financial impact of this disease is massive. The latest numbers indicate that cancer burdens our economy to the tune of $30 billion a year in direct and indirect costs. Those are real lives and real dollars, and we are in a real fight. And it’s not a new fight. Texas is already home to some world-class cancer-fighting organizations like UT Southwestern in Dallas, M.D. Anderson here in Houston, and the Cancer Therapy and Research Center in San Antonio. And I am proud that so many of you in this room are pursuing innovations that may move us closer to a cure.

Because cancer doesn’t care what you earn, when you were born, or how you pronounce your last name. Cancer simply invades, weakens and destroys. And Texans have a chance to fight back when they go to the polls this Tuesday and vote their conscience on Proposition 15. Because I truly believe in the good hearts of Texans, I say when, not “if,” but when this proposition passes, we will get moving and soon. This proposition will create the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas which will be dedicated to funding the research that will find a cure. The leadership of this group will be drawn from the fields of research and treatment, people like you who have an up-close understanding of the challenges and can grasp the most current research. Under their leadership, the Institute will be able to issue $3 billion in bonds over the span of ten years, directing up to $300 million per year toward a cure. The Institute will carefully invest these dollars in cancer research, clinical trials, and the construction of lab facilities throughout the state. With additional funding, we can enhance existing research efforts, lure the brightest research minds from around the world, and provide grants to promising projects.

This effort is about finding a cure, but it is also an investment in our economy. In fact, this fund will be structured a lot like our Emerging Technology Fund which has had a strong impact on our economy. Since its creation in 2005, we have invested Emerging Technology Fund dollars into innovations, and to the commercialization of academic...
research. We have also dedicated millions to matching existing research grants.

The directors of our Emerging Technology Fund understand that we live and work in a globally competitive environment, and we want Texas to succeed at that level. Our selection criteria have long been centered on three key questions. “Will this create new jobs in Texas?” “Will it bring new revenues to our state?” and “will it lead to a medical or scientific breakthrough?” When I talk about this cancer initiative, I add one more question, “will it save lives?” One cannot put a price tag on a human life, but Texans can invest in a full decade of cancer research by simply voting “yes” on Tuesday.

As you sit here in this room today, united by your interest in Life Science, some of you have the ideas and others have the dollars. I hope that you will keep them both in Texas and help us maintain our efforts to change the world for the better. I hope that your investment and your efforts, along with our new cancer initiative will lead to more answers, provide more cures and, ultimately, save more lives.

Thank you for your time and may God continue to bless us all as we continue the good fight.