Thank you, Scott [Sanders, member, Cancer Prevention and Research Institute Oversight Committee] for that kind introduction and thank you for your willingness to serve with the Oversight Committee. You have agreed to become part of what I believe will not only establish Texas as a leader in biotechnology research, but, ultimately, play a pivotal role in the discovery of a cure for that indiscriminate killer: cancer.

There are so many luminaries from across Texas here tonight, that I would run out of breath and time before I could name you all. So, I simply thank you for being here and applaud your commitment to taking the fight to our shared enemy: cancer. There are probably enough advanced academic degrees in this room to use up the alphabet several times and enough brainpower to solve nearly any problem. And that, my friends, is the premise behind the creation of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas.

The simple, primary goal for this effort is to cure cancer. We will make that happen by creating a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Because, in Texas, we have some great parts. To start with, you have the $300 million per year that will be funded by the Proposition 15 bonds. Over the course of ten years, that buys a lot of research. It won’t buy a lot of buildings, because the legislation limits infrastructure improvements to ten percent. But that wise limitation points to the results-oriented approach we’re taking. Because we’re targeting a cure, we want to be nimble, able to adjust to research breakthroughs, and adopt advances in treatment, moving ever forward in the quickest, most effective way possible.

Because our state is blessed with such a great pool of intelligence, experience and vision, we made sure that the bond dollars can only be used if they are accompanied by a 50% match from another entity. This not only provides a means of validating an approach—if smart people won’t put their own money in it, is it really a great idea?, but it also knits together our medical research community with our state funding sources and commercial enterprises, forming a much more powerful impact than anything any of us could create alone. And I look forward to that team effort.

I am encouraged by the presence of so many leaders in biotechnology and medical research here tonight. You are the people who will be doing the work. However, you will not labor alone, because word is spreading about our state’s investment in this vital area of study. Recently, Fierce BioTech identified Texas as one of the top five regions in the world for biotechnology development, specifically because of our Prop 15 investment. As awareness of this effort continues to grow, it will draw even more minds like yours into a collaborative environment of exploration, discovery, and innovation. When you combine those resources with the fact that tort reform has made our state one of the best...
places to practice medicine, you have a magnetic pull that will attract more experts, more investment and, ultimately, more life-saving ideas. This critical mass will contribute to an essential secondary benefit of this initiative: accelerated economic development.

We are already seeing the power of the emerging biotechnology sector. For example, two months ago, I was present at a groundbreaking for the Texas Institute for Pre-Clinical Studies near my alma mater. This facility was financed in part by investment from our Emerging Technology Fund, which is encouraging the migration of great ideas from university laboratories to the marketplace, transforming lives in the process. Research indicates that this unique facility has the potential to draw other ventures that could create more than 10,000 jobs in the Bryan-College Station area, and more than 100,000 across our state.

The growing presence of legitimate biotechnology efforts in our state are creating a critical mass that will only grow faster. Our new Competitiveness Council exists for that very reason, to accelerate that growth. The Council is focusing on improving the mesh between what is taught in our schools and what is needed in the workplace, improving our energy strategy to ensure resources are available and affordable, and grooming our regulatory climate for the best mix of safety and economic stimulus. With facilities like TIPS at Texas A&M, the Texas Institute for Genomic Medicine which is also in College Station, and the National Trauma Institute in San Antonio, we’re seeing the creation of critical mass in this essential field. Mix in companies like Introgen Therapeutics here in Austin, BioNumerik Pharmaceuticals in San Antonio, and many others like them and you see the pieces falling into place. Overlay that with the centers of excellence in cancer research in places like Dallas, Houston and San Antonio, and we’re building some serious momentum.

That momentum is leading us to the point where brilliant ideas will go from insight to design to testing to production, all within the borders of our state. With that will come more investment, more jobs, and, ultimately, more innovations that improve human life. And, as we said before, the ultimate improvement we’re seeking is a cure for cancer. It is the number one cause of death for Americans under age 85 and kills more than 37,000 Texans every year. We’ve all been touched by this dreadful disease in one way or another. And it’s time to bring its devastating run to an end.

Together, we will make a difference. Thank you for joining the fight. I welcome your investment in this noble calling, your innovation in its execution, and your involvement in its successful conclusion. I look forward to seeing you at the party when we can say that, once and for all, this killer is just a thing of dark memory, a remnant of a painful past, a scourge whose eradication is a tribute to the power of a shared vision.

Thank you, may God bless you and, through you, may He continue to bless the great state of Texas.