Toyota and Texas
*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Monday, May 12, 2008

Good evening and thank you Diana [Newton, Chair of awards dinner] for that warm introduction. This is an impressive crowd here this evening. If I tried to recognize every notable leader or captain of industry in our midst, I fear I’d run out of breath and time before I was done. So I will simply thank all of you for being here tonight, and recognize the most important “who’s who” in my life, the First Lady of Texas, my wife, Anita.

Anita and I are pleased to serve as the honorary hosts for tonight’s celebration. It has been close to three years since the First Lady led a large Texas trade delegation to Japan for the Aichi World Expo. Dr. and Mrs. [Hiroko] Toyoda were so kind and hospitable to that band of Texans that it is our honor tonight to return the favor.

International trade missions and organizations like the Japan-America Society of Dallas/Fort Worth play an essential role in strengthening the important relationships between our nations. As we celebrate one another’s differences, we often realize that we have more in common than we once thought. I learned this lesson first-hand when in 2003 when we heard a rumor that a Japanese company was considering a U.S. manufacturing plant.

Imagine our surprise and delight when we discovered it was the legendary Toyota. As I learned more about Dr. Toyoda and other company leaders, it was clear from the beginning that we had much in common, such as: The value of community. Texans know that good neighbors are essential for a fulfilling our lives and that our connections with others bring meaning to our existence. Toyota has lived out that value by not only creating thousands of jobs for Texans at their San Antonio plant, but by dedicating 800 acres of its site for in-kind suppliers and manufactures to open up shop next door.

We also share a strong belief in team play. Toyota is known for becoming a partner-for-life with the regions in which it operates. That fits right into our motto here in the LoneStar State: “Once a Texan, always a Texan.” And lastly, we share the desire for continuous improvement, or Kaizan. We agree that dividends come from hard work and progressive thinking. Because they worked to continuously improve, Toyota is acknowledged as one of the world’s most innovative automakers. That same approach has been taken to the overall success of its San Antonio facility. We may not call it the “Kaizan” approach, but the State of Texas is also working to constantly improve our business climate.

Our desire is to encourage Texas businesses to exceed their goals in productivity, sales and job creation so that we
can all enjoy mutual success. It is our pleasure to join you tonight to honor a man who has not only added to our state’s economic prosperity, but also selflessly contributed to the exchange of ideas and strengthening of friendship between our two beloved homes, Texas and Japan.

Dr. and Mrs. Toyoda: Anita and I feel blessed to call you friends, and Texas is blessed to have to have you as part of what makes our state great.

With that, I’ll give the podium back to Adam [Zehner, FUNnation/Master of Ceremonies] so we can continue along with the ceremony.