Thank you, Don [Stokes, TXMPA President] for that introduction and thanks all of you for being here this morning. You know, we never do this kind of event at this time of day, but most of you are used to early call times, so this works great for everyone.

I am pleased and proud to welcome our state’s creative brain trust to your capitol today. I am glad you’re here and I encourage you to be bold in your time here today...because you have a strong story to tell.

Texas has long been a player in the industry, from the earliest days of the industry, to filming Wings, the first film to ever win the Oscar for best picture, to recently hosting productions like No Country for Old Men and NBC’s Friday Night Lights.

The entertainment industry is not only an important part of Texas culture, it is an essential part of our economy. Your industry has brought more than $1.2 billion to our economy over the past ten years, but those numbers are declining.

We Texans are a competitive bunch by nature, but we haven't been very competitive in this arena for a while now. We may have accelerated the film incentive trend when we got in the game, but other states have pretty much opened the floodgates. As a result, we've seen roughly 7,000 crew positions leave the state, following jobs and money the way animals follow water.

Let’s see a quick show of hands: how many of you have worked on a production in New Mexico, Louisiana or Michigan in the past
year? Now, how many folks here have worked on a production in Texas over the past year?

Even an animal science major like me knows that the numbers for Texas don’t add up to a position of strength. That’s unfortunate, because I’d put Texas storytellers, moviemakers, actors and crew up against those from any other state.

I can tell you up front that our program here in Texas is probably the most pragmatic incentive program in the country. First and foremost, we do it to create jobs and cultivate a positive economic impact, so we don’t just give it away like some other states do.

Second, we want to create a program that is strong from top to bottom, so we’re not only attracting individual productions, but developing the skills, infrastructure and culture that give us a competitive edge.

We need to make sure our schools are turning out the animators, writers, actors and directors we need, our production facilities are second to none, and our economic climate continues to maximize the value of every dollar that folks invest in their projects.

Texas already leads the nation in job creation, exports and Fortune 500 companies, and it’s time to gain the lead in production jobs, dollars and sales.

Sure, we think Texas has the prettiest locations, but we want producers to leave money on the table in other states, and come here because the best crews, resources and opportunities are in Texas.

As you prepare to fan out across this building and meet with legislators, I encourage you to apply the talents that have brought you this far.

If you’re a writer, be sure to share the story of the entertainment industry and its contribution to Texas.

If you’re a set designer, paint your legislators a picture of a Texas without a motion picture industry.

If you’re a director, remind them of their motivation: we need a strong film industry in Texas.

If you’re a grip or a gaffer, don’t let go of your legislator’s hand until you have his or her commitment to funding the Texas Moving Image Incentive Program.

The jobs, art and entertainment you create will enrich our state in every way.

May God bless you all and, through your efforts, may He continue to bless the great state of Texas.