Thank you Brooke Rollins for that introduction, and congratulations on your new Lone Star Issues Forum. Through sound research and reason, the TPPF has helped us keep Texas on the right path, even as much of the country seems to have lost its way.

Nationally, job numbers continue to lag, particularly in the private sector, even in the midst of so-called stimulus and recovery. Texas is dealing with joblessness like everyone else is, but our unemployment rate is more than a full point below the national average, thanks to the strength of our economy.

We’re proud of that statistical spread, but I never lose sight of the fact that those numbers represent Texas families
facing real challenges. However, the strength of our economy gives them a better chance of re-employment than just about anywhere else.

In fact, Texas employers have added more than 166,000 jobs in 2010, more than any other state in the country, including 14,000 in June. Throw in our national lead in exports and Fortune 1,000 companies, and you can see why CNBC recently declared Texas the nation's best state for business.

The efforts of groups like TPPF help ensure we keep government streamlined and focused on the right things, on fiscal conservatism, predictable regulations, a fair legal system and an education system that is effective and accountable, priorities that free up employers to focus on things like growing their businesses and creating jobs.

You all are a big part of the Texas success story, and you have my appreciation.

This morning, I had the chance to meet briefly with President Obama as he arrived in Texas.

For a while now, we've worked to arrange a meeting, hoping for a frank, face-to-face discussion of the serious threat growing along our southern border. Ideally, we'd get him to the border in person so he could get a firsthand view of the challenges facing the brave men and women patrolling that region.

So, earlier today, when the door opened on Air Force One, I was standing there on the tarmac, to welcome him to Texas, and hand him a letter outlining my concerns about border security and the evolving danger of transnational gangs.

Clearly, I would have preferred a more in-depth exchange of ideas, but at least I know that this latest letter actually made it to him, and didn't get stuck in those slow-moving gears of government.

I sincerely hope he will take the time to read it, because the growing crisis along our southern border, cannot be overlooked any longer. Bottom line, an unsecured US/Mexico border is a serious national security threat, menacing the safety and security of our citizens, and the federal government is obligated to secure it.

Unfortunately, Washington has been an abject failure in this area, leaving our border vulnerable to exploitation, and our citizens exposed to grave danger. Washington's lackadaisical efforts have left the door open to a cadre of criminal organizations, including transnational gangs, who readily engage in brazen violence, in pursuit of their sordid interests.

When these predators act without regard to the consequences, our citizens suffer and communities are left shaken.

Our citizens deserve the best possible effort to protect them from this advancing network of criminal gangs, including well-trained officers on patrol, with cutting edge technology that gives them an edge, and the national resolve to stop these murderous cartels from extending their reach into U.S. territory.

Without border security, the concept of national security is impossible to achieve.

Given the 20-20 vision afforded by hindsight, we can see the causal factors of previous calamities, and share the remorse over warnings ignored. Whether you reference 1930s Europe, the South Pacific in late 1941, or even the United States in early September, 2001, there were warning signs that went unheeded, and too many lives that were needlessly lost.

We ignore the current warning signs along the international border at our own peril.

Just a few weeks ago, Nuevo Laredo was the site of a massive gunfight between drug cartels and Mexican soldiers that drove citizens behind locked doors for hours. The recent governor's election in Tamaulipas was marred by the assassination of a leading candidate, casting fear into the hearts of voters hoping for a better tomorrow.
In March, a U.S. Consulate employee and his wife were shot to death in Ciudad Juarez after leaving a child’s birthday party, and last year in that same city, a 15-year-old El Paso girl was killed by stray gunfire. Just this year, 20 federal officers have been murdered in Ciudad Juarez in events linked to drug trafficking including one found viciously dismembered just this past weekend.

According to press reports, more than 28,000 people have died in suspected drug violence in Mexico since 2006. Symptoms of that violence are creeping into Texas.

Two Laredo teenagers are serving sentences for seven murders committed here in the United States on behalf of the Zetas, a particularly vicious cartel. The Zetas are actively recruiting young people on both sides of the border to carry out their dirty work, with youngsters no more than 13 years old being hired and trained to kill.

In other incidents, bullets from a drug-related shootout hit a building and a vehicle at UT Brownsville, and a WalMart in McAllen was the scene of a suspected cartel kidnapping and murder. Grenades from Mexico are finding their way to connected street gangs in Texas, with such a weapon used in at least one failed attack on off-duty officers at a club in Pharr, Texas.

In maybe the most symbolic incident so far just a few weeks ago, bullets fired during a conflict in Juarez struck El Paso City Hall. By the Grace of God, no one was injured.

I offer those episodes as compelling evidence to those naysayers who scoff at the concept of spillover violence, saying such talk is just heated rhetoric.

Bombings, beheadings, shootings, torture and kidnappings are becoming a way of life for Mexican drug cartels, and we can only expect they will be increasingly applied on our soil against our citizens. With paramilitary gangs like MS-13 and the Mexican Mafia growing in power and boldness, it is only a matter of time, before things get markedly worse and more deadly.

Washington simply cannot say that the border is secured, when tons of drugs and countless of illegal aliens and special interest aliens cross into our country undetected every day.

The good news is this: hope is not lost. We’re still in a position to do something about it. That’s why, in the absence of assistance from Washington, Texas has stepped up over the past several years.

With the help of the Legislature, Texas has invested more than $230 million in border security efforts over the past two legislative sessions, filling gaps left by insufficient federal action. That money has funded additional personnel, helped pay overtime, and purchased state-of-the-art technology, to improve our communications and rapid response.

Through these efforts, we've expanded patrol capacity on the ground, in the air and on the water.

When the gangs and other smugglers responded by changing their tactics and finding new routes in more remote areas, we again adapted, and created our Ranger Recon teams. These teams, which include members from the Texas Ranger, Texas Military Forces, DPS troopers and local law enforcement, ensure we have the ability to quickly put boots on the ground in hot spots no matter where they may spring up.

A lot of those boots are filled by our border sheriffs, who toil on the front lines of this conflict, doing a stellar job in a very tough situation.

The overriding goal of our border security efforts is to support, not compete with, the U.S. Border Patrol and local law enforcement, and the results of our coordinated efforts have been striking. By presenting a visible and ongoing commitment to combat illegal activities along the border, we have successfully deterred and disrupted organized smuggling activities.
We have cut crime in key areas, and worked to limit smuggling into as well as out of Mexico.

Everyone involved in this effort works long hours, and faces danger that is growing rapidly but they need more help. That's why, more than a year ago, I requested 1,000 National Guard troops to help defend the Texas border.

As I said in the letter I delivered to President Obama this morning, his recent decision to deploy 1,200 National Guard troops to the border is a welcome step, but it's clearly not enough. When Texas accounts for 64% of the border, and gets just over 20% of the troops, the math just doesn't add up.

As a follow-on to today's brief meeting, I hope the president will accept my invitation to visit the border with me, to see for himself the nature of the challenge we face, and the impact of Washington's inadequate efforts. Hopefully, talking to the people working all those overtime hours, and hearing what they endure to keep their fellow Texans safe, will motivate Washington to do what it takes before it's too late.

This issue transcends party, and it transcends politics. I don't care where you're from, or what your political affiliation is, everybody wants a secure border.

We have heard far too many stories about families, fathers, sons, mothers and daughters, smuggled across the desert in brutally hot conditions, on a journey that all too often proves fatal.

We see entirely too many cases of young women and girls, who are smuggled into the United States, and held captive by criminals who exploit their innocence for selfish gain.

We do not want to see communities in the United States spiral into the sort of chaos we're seeing in Northern Mexico right now. However, without more help from Washington, episodes of spillover violence will continue to mount, with increasingly deadly results.

The drug cartels are playing for keeps and it's far past time for Washington to do the same.

So I will continue to press the issue with anyone who will listen, because too much is at stake if our border security fails. I do not want to see the fulfillment of Ronald Reagan's famous quote, that "a nation without borders is not a nation."

We have come too far as a state and a nation, to permit a slide into lawlessness, so we will continue to do whatever is necessary to defend our citizens. God willing, Washington will join us in that effort.

Thank you all for listening and for sharing my concerns about the future of our state.

May God bless you, and, through you, may He continue to bless the Great State of Texas.