Our state faces many challenges, but is blessed with even more opportunities. None of us here would want to trade places with legislators in any other state. Texas continues to be the place where businesses want to locate and expand, where people want to raise their families and realize their dreams. Great challenges require great leaders. Together, we will work for a Texas that continues to be America’s frontier of innovation and opportunity. My favorite Texas historian happens to also be my constituent, T. R. Fehrenbach, and he wrote in his epic book Lone Star, "Men who exist get overrun by men who act." Men and women of the Texas House, we were sent here to act and to act on behalf of the people. We may not all share the same ideology, but we share a common identity: we are all Texans. We have inherited a birthright of independence, a spirit of boldness, a vision of what is possible. The great promise of this state is inclusive. It belongs to all who work hard, respect the rules, and persevere. The men and women who are remembered beyond their years are not those who sow the seeds of discord, but those who plant for a future they may never see. May the laws we write reflect an understanding of the best that Texas can be, not only today, but tomorrow and for decades to come. I am grateful to start this new session with each of you. May God bless the great State of Texas, and always keep her brave and strong.

ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR

Speaker Straus recognized Representative Kolkhorst who introduced the Honorable Rick Perry, governor of the State of Texas, who addressed the house, speaking as follows:

Howdy. It's mighty good to be back in this chamber again. Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you and your beautiful family, well done. Lois, you look fabulous in that purple. Another good reason they need to get rid of the BCS, right?

It's an honor to be in this chamber, to stand in front of some of the most capable jurists in America and some of the finest men and women who serve our state in their elected capacity statewide. To be on the floor of this house with not only its great memories for me, but also, Senfronia, great legislation that you and your colleagues have crafted throughout the years.

We're commencing a historic legislative session. As we begin, I think it's fitting for us to take a moment and to reflect for a moment on the shootings Saturday in Arizona and to keep those people in our prayers and our thoughts for those forever affected by this senseless tragedy. It's incidents like that one that provide a stark reminder of the fragility of life and the importance of making one's positive mark on life every day.

As elected officials, we're called to make an even bigger mark. The decisions we make shape economies, affect employers, and they touch the lives of all Texans.

I'm really happy to get to see all these new faces. We have quite a new bunch of faces in here, Aaron. The actions we take can make the difference between success and failure for all walks of life in this place we call home. I have a bit of advice from, shall we say, a "seasoned" individual—my 24 years of being...
able to serve the people of the State of Texas. And that is to simply take a deep
breath, relax. It's all going to be all right. I know it's uncharted territory for a lot
of you and the learning curve in this session is going to be pretty steep, but I
assure you that we're going to get the job done.

Texas sent us a real loud and a real clear message on Election Day. They
expect us to balance this budget without taking more money from employers and
working families. They want state government to be leaner and more efficient.
I'm confident we will heed that message. Many of your colleagues can attest that
we've handled similar challenges before in the not too distant past. In 2003, we
heard the same doom and gloom stories and pronouncements about the budget
from many of the same sources—and generally it's from the same sources that
we're hearing them from today—2003 was no cakewalk. But we balanced the
budget and we set the stage for our state's job creation and economic success
throughout the rest of the decade. That growth helped us weather the recent
economic storms in better condition than almost anywhere else in the country. As
we did in '03, we'll balance the budget this time, too, by setting priorities and
making tough choices—not by raising taxes. Together, we can make government
work leaner and smarter and set the stage for Texas to emerge even stronger in
job creation and educational opportunities, in public safety, and in quality of life.

While the budget is our top priority, there are other pressing issues that have
waited too long. That's why I'm declaring emergency items for the upcoming
session, starting with the pressing need for tougher eminent domain laws in this
state. Property ownership remains an essential freedom for Texans, and we must
continue our efforts to properly protect it. I've been working with Senator Estes,
Representative Geren, and other stakeholders on this issue for a number of years,
and we're in agreement that their current bill will resolve the key issues of
eminent domain in Texas for now and the future.

Next, we must abolish sanctuary city rules in this state and free up our peace
officers to do their job of keeping our families and neighborhoods safe. Although
immigration laws and their enforcement are the responsibility of the federal
government, we cannot compound their failure by preventing Texas peace
officers from doing their jobs. We must empower officers to apply their training,
experience, and judgment in enforcing the laws and to keep municipalities from
tying their hands.

These are just a few of the issues we'll address in the next 140 days, but they
merit our closest attention as they relate to the safety and security of our citizens
and, most of all, their liberty. I look forward to working with Speaker Straus and
each of you in doing the people's business over the next 140 joyous days. Now, is
the work going to be easy? Probably not. Will there be disagreements within this
building? That's probably the best bet in this Capitol today. At the end of the day,
though, I'm certain you'll work together in the best interest of our state and merit
the faith placed in you by the millions of Texans who love and call this wonderful
place home. God bless you, and, through you, may God continue to bless the
great state of Texas.