cannot legislate personal responsibility, cannot replace the private sector in creating jobs, and cannot govern an individual's life better than his own conscience.

Texas still offers the promise of a better tomorrow, where a little boy or girl can grow up with nothing, work hard, and have the storybook ending they would never dare to imagine as a child. I know because that's my story. And it's the story of millions of Texans who have lived the American Dream in this state so abundant with opportunity—those who sacrifice, those who persevere, those who dust off their boots and get back up every time they get knocked down. They are the ones who know the meaning of the American Dream, the Texas Dream.

The promise of Texas is a light on the distant horizon piercing the darkness. It's a promise available to any and all who are willing to work hard, sacrifice, and never give up. This has never been more true than today with thousands of new pilgrims settling here each day in this modern promised land we call Texas. We who have inherited that promise must preserve and protect it. We must never allow its light to lose its luster. We must be united in our quest for a better Texas, a Texas rich in values, abundant in opportunity, wealthy in spirit. One people, one star, one destiny.

May God bless each and every one of you, and may he continue to bless the great State of Texas. Thank you.

At the conclusion of the lieutenant governor's address, Speaker Straus stated that the oath of office would be administered to the governor, the Honorable Rick Perry, by the Honorable Wallace Jefferson, chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas.

The Honorable Rick Perry took the constitutional oath of office as governor of the State of Texas.

Following a nineteen-gun salute, Speaker Straus introduced the governor of Texas, the Honorable Rick Perry, who addressed the joint session and assemblage, speaking as follows:

Thank you, Speaker Straus. You have been a strong, conservative partner, and I look forward to working with you again this session. Governor Dewhurst, It has been a distinct honor to serve with you over the last eight years, and I look forward to the next four. My fellow statewide elected officials, members of the judiciary, members of the house and senate, friends and Texans, it is an honor to once again take the oath of office as your governor. It took 154 years to get an Aggie into the governor's office, and some of you are probably wondering if he'll ever leave.

I know this, though. If I never served a day in this office, I'd still be the most blessed man on earth because of my wife, Anita Thigpen Perry. Anita, you have served as First Lady with grace and dignity, and simply put, I love you. And like you, I thank God every day for the gift of our wonderful children: Sydney, Griffin, and his wonderful new wife, Meredith.
I am also blessed with the best parents a guy could ever ask for, Ray and Amelia Perry, and wonderful in-laws Dr. Joe and Mrs. Thigpen. With fathers who fought in World War II, Anita and I don’t have to look beyond family to find true heroes.

There are many heroes here today, some the ordinary kind, who work hard, pay taxes, and teach their children values that will sustain them. There is also the extraordinary kind, those who know the enormous price of freedom because they’ve paid it with their own blood. I speak of the veterans of our nation's wars. Men and women who answered the call of our country, trained for the rigors of battle, then pushed their bodies, minds, and spirits to the limit. Their service required sacrifices that no man or woman should ever endure: the terror of battle, the death of friends, the lasting injuries, both seen and unseen. For these men and women, sacrifice is not a word, it’s a way of life. I’m talking about Texans like R. V. Burgin from Lancaster, who fought his way across the Pacific Islands of Pelelieu and Okinawa; John Keith Wells of Abilene, a Navy Cross recipient who led a platoon of Marines through the hell of Iwo Jima; Ben Berger, who hit the Normandy beaches on D-Day with Earl Rudder and the 5th Ranger Battalion; teenage Marine Jay Kimbrough of Dallas, who was badly wounded when his assault helicopter was shot southwest of Danang; and Marine Captain Dan Moran, who was hit by an IED in Iraq’s Al-Anbar province. If anyone here in the audience today defended freedom as a member of our armed forces, please stand or wave so we can recognize you. On behalf of those assembled, and more than 25 million Texans, I want to thank all of our men and women in uniform for your service and your sacrifice. Those of us fortunate enough to work in this building must always remember it is an honor and a privilege to serve. Words like "sacrifice" should be reserved for those who made that service possible. As we reflect together on all that has transpired since the icy cold of the last Texas inaugural, much has changed in our world. While conditions have improved for our troops in Iraq, they have worsened in Afghanistan.

Here at home, we've seen catastrophic events in the marketplace that have unleashed an economic recession unlike anything we've experienced in 70 years. The failure of major financial institutions led to tighter credit, massive foreclosures, and staggering layoffs. Risky practices in the private sector were compounded by poor spending decisions in the public sector. With bloated stimulus spending, record debt, and massive entitlement programs, Washington has America on a collision course with bankruptcy. While Texas has fared better than most states, we have not gone untouched by this global recession, and we cannot forget those Texans who are dealing with the fear and uncertainty of joblessness.

While much has changed in the last four years, one thing will never change: the character, resilience, and resourcefulness of our citizens. Texans just don’t like the word "impossible." If something has never been done, it’s because we simply haven’t tried. We tamed the frontier, formed our own republic, discovered oil, pioneered space, and transformed the marketplace. The first word spoken on the moon was, "Houston," a city whose namesake was not Texan by birth but Texan by choice, like millions more who would follow.
While our budget challenges are substantial, for the good of the 25 million pioneers we call Texans, for a people who work hard to get ahead, we must balance our budget without raising their taxes. Since the last legislative session ended, I have traversed this great state, meeting with Texans from every walk of life and I have listened. I heard their belief that tough economic times require strong leadership and tough choices for everyone. I have heard their calls for government that is smarter, leaner, and more accountable. They reminded me that there is no such thing as government money; it's the people's money in government's hands. Texas families have endured this long season of economic trouble by tightening their own budgets, and making tough choices. Texas employers have streamlined operations, becoming more innovative and efficient. Making their lives harder just to make our jobs easier would be a failure of leadership.

As Texans, we always take care of the least among us: the frail, the young, the elderly on fixed incomes, those in situations of abuse and neglect, people whose needs are greater than the resources at their disposal. They can count on the people of Texas to be there for them. We will protect them, support them, and empower them, but cannot risk the future of millions of taxpayers in the process. We must cut spending to keep our economic engine on track. As legislators do the hard work of trimming agency budgets, the headlines will be dominated by impacted constituencies, but these tough times dictate government doing more with less. That's what we campaigned on, and that's what we'll deliver. We need to prioritize and justify every penny and validate every investment made. During this session, Texas will prove again that fiscal responsibility, sound policy making, and a passion for individual liberty are essential to the success of employers, institutions, and families. If we cannot exercise fiscal discipline in governing Texas, I doubt it can be achieved anywhere, least of all in Washington.

With our nation mired in more than $14 trillion of debt, accountability and fiscal responsibility will not come from Washington, it will come from places like Texas. Texas is still the engine of America's economy, and we're proud to lead the nation in Fortune 1000 companies, international exports, and job creation. Those jobs are more than statistics. They provide wealth and opportunity for our citizens and families. The jobs aren't just going to our big cities, but also to towns like Cuero and Seguin, where employers have relocated or expanded their operations thanks to the job friendly climate we've worked so hard to create.

Texans are also creating new technologies that will save lives at companies like Falcon International in Odessa, whose new body armor technology will protect troops who go into harm's way to protect the American way. Texans are also on the leading edge of discovery in the race to find cures for various forms of cancer, a disease that has extinguished the hopes of too many, too young. Through initiatives like the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas in conjunction with our universities, medical centers, and high-tech firms, we are doing groundbreaking medical research that will save lives that would otherwise be lost.
As Texans continue to invent and innovate, and change the face of medicine, science, and business, we must apply the same creativity and commitment to creating a safe and secure border. With us today is a delegation of governors and businessmen from our neighboring states in Mexico. I am grateful for the honor of their presence today and appreciate our excellent working relationship. We not only share a common border with these leaders, but a common past, present, and future. We are not only joined together by geography and economics, but by cultural ties and family roots as well. We share great opportunity and great challenges.

On this day of celebration, the drug-related violence along our border may seem a million miles away but, in reality, it has arrived on our doorstep. While it should be addressed by our respective federal governments, we cannot stand idly by when our citizens are threatened. Our state's efforts to secure the border have made our citizens safer and must be continued to prevent the flow of cross-border violence. For all of us, a secure border means a more stable economy, safer families, and a brighter future.

Throughout history, in good times and bad, Texans have endured identifying opportunities, counting the cost, and then just outworking everyone else in the race for success. As their elected leaders, we have an obligation to govern as we promised. As elected leaders, we have sworn to uphold the constitution of this great state, in whose Bill of Rights this key phrase resides, "All political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their benefit." As we do so, our vision must extend beyond the next 140 days, across this new decade, and the rest of this century. We must continue investing in our people, developing young minds, grooming and attracting the best and brightest in the fields of science and medicine, giving individuals the tools and the freedom to prosper. Given our state's economic success compared to that of other states and Washington's ongoing irresponsibility, I believe Texas will lead the way out of this turmoil. You might say historians will look back on this as the "Texas Century."

Americans once looked to the East Coast for opportunity and inspiration, then to the West Coast. Today they are looking to the Gulf Coast, they are looking to Texas. Our state is the new, best hope for entrepreneurs and small businesses, the place where Americans can redeem their promise and fulfill their potential. We have the resources to meet our challenges, and the vision to apply them for a more prosperous future. This is our time; this is our place in history. We must seize the moment. We must plant the seeds of opportunity that bloom beyond our years. We must show the world the endless possibilities of freedom and free enterprise. If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times, and will say it a thousand more: there is still a place where opportunity looms large in this country, and that place is called Texas. Let's do all we can to keep her moving forward. May God bless you all and, through you, may he continue to bless the great State of Texas.

At the conclusion of the governor's address, Speaker Straus presented Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, who offered the inaugural blessing.