Over the past decade, Texas has established a jobs-friendly environment that has powered our economic engine, and attracted major employers in various growing industries. That's led to a noticeable increase in demand for certified, high-skilled workers.

Beyond that, our culture of innovative freedom has inspired untold numbers of Texans to start up their own businesses, with many of those companies growing and increasing demand on our supply of skilled workers.

In sectors like manufacturing, for example, job demand has nearly doubled over the past three years alone, and that sector is projected to grow 10 percent by 2020.

With that in mind, we need to take steps now to ensure that those demands are met in the future, and met with the most qualified employees available.

To that end, today I am announcing a Skilled Workforce Initiative, a combined effort between state, industry and higher education, to cut the time necessary for students to earn certification in much-needed vocations, without sacrificing an iota of the quality Texas workers are known for.

The framework for technical training we're putting in place will enable workers to earn their technical certifications fast, at an affordable cost, and targeted to specific skills that are needed by industries so they can be assured they'll have jobs waiting for them.

Our first effort with this program will target jobs for the advanced manufacturing and industrial business sectors, but by design, this system can be replicated for the needs of any industry or sector, and can also be ramped down when industry's needs are met.

It will also target the needs of specific groups, such as veterans, displaced workers, and career-focused high school graduates, to maximize their job preparedness training.

The essence of this program is removing the roadblocks between candidates who are already largely qualified and jobs that need to be filled.

Many of these candidates already have specialized training and valuable real-world experience in these fields, but lack certification.

Competency-based learning awards credit for those skills and experiences, dramatically cutting the time needed to earn certification, and minimizing the cost by not forcing candidates to sit through lessons on subjects they've already mastered.

This is a practice that's already paying dividends in programs like College Credit 4 Heroes, which we launched earlier this year that specifically rewards veterans for the training they've received, and through institutions like Western Governors University Texas, and some of our community colleges.

While we're working to address the needs of those out of high school, we also need to work to expand the opportunities available to our high school students.

For example, just this week, Sen. Dan Patrick, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, sent a letter to the State Board of Education encouraging them to double the number of approved Career Tech courses available to students in Texas.
Career tech courses prepare students to graduate ready to work in numerous in-demand fields.

This is a worthy effort, and I expect the State Board to work toward making it happen.

Meanwhile, this Skilled Workforce Initiative provides our best opportunity to quickly fill these much-needed jobs with highly-skilled, quality workers in a minimal amount of time.
Gov. Perry Announces Skilled Workforce Initiative

Tuesday, November 27, 2012  •  Harlingen, Texas  •  Press Release

Gov. Rick Perry announced a collaboration between the Governor's Office, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) that will use competency-based learning to help Texans quickly receive certifications in high demand industries. The governor was joined by Texas Education Agency Commissioner Michael Williams, Texas State Technical College Chancellor Mike Reeser, and lawmakers in Harlingen to discuss this new effort to maintain a skilled workforce to meet our state's growing industry demands.

"Over the past decade, Texas has established a jobs-friendly environment that has powered our economic engine and attracted major employers in various growing industries, leading to increased demand for certified, high-skilled workers," Gov. Perry said. "The framework for technical training we're putting in place will enable workers to earn their technical certifications fast, at an affordable cost, and targeted to specific skills that are needed by industries."

Demand for skilled workers continues to grow as Texas' economy flourishes, particularly in sectors like manufacturing, where it has nearly doubled over the past three years and is projected to grow 10 percent by 2020. To address this need, the Texas State Technical College System is developing a framework for this skilled workforce initiative, which will quickly and affordably allow workers to translate existing skills into targeted certifications. This framework can be tailored to specific industry needs, and is easily exportable to all community and technical colleges statewide.

"A skilled workforce is essential to our economy. When our business and industry leaders work together with our education institutions, it creates a direct path to employment for Texans," State Rep. Eddie Lucio, III said. "The new educational delivery model that Texas State Technical College will develop will aid to solidify Texas' economic prosperity. I sincerely applaud the efforts of the Governor's office, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Workforce Commission."

"Gov. Perry's leadership on this initiative will help expedite the production of a skilled labor force to meet the needs of our growing state," State Rep. J.M. Lozano said.

Businesses are also encouraged to form partnerships with their local school districts to incorporate this workforce training into local career and technical education programs. The program will focus on ensuring job-preparedness for groups like veterans, current workers needing retraining, and career-focused high school graduates among others.

"Texas State Technical College System is excited to be working with its fellow state agencies and with Texas industrial employers to develop this new framework for training Texans for crucial high-skilled jobs in our state," Chancellor Mike Reeser said. "We are especially grateful for the Governor's leadership in this vital effort."

Texans already benefit from programs that utilize a competency-based approach to education, and Gov. Perry has called on higher education institutions to continue looking for ways to implement this approach as a way to make education more affordable and accessible. Texas' College Credit 4 Heroes program allows veterans to get college course credit for the experience, education and training they obtained during military service, and WGU Texas, a subsidiary of Western Governors University (WGU), provides online bachelor's and master's degrees, and recently graduated its first class since its creation last year.

Gov. Perry also praised Sen. Dan Patrick, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, for calling on the State Board of Education to double the number...
of approved Career Tech courses available to students in Texas. These courses prepare students to graduate ready to work in numerous in-demand fields and will further bolster the state's effort to meet the growing need for high-skilled workers in various industries.