Gov. Perry Gives Remarks at Texas Public Policy Foundation’s Policy Orientation

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.
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The work done by TPPF is extremely important to our state's ongoing and future success, and you have my appreciation for that.

Two years ago, I spoke to you all under wildly different circumstances, with a revenue estimate in hand that was causing total panic in certain circles.

The job we had to do two years ago was to calm everyone down, assure them the sky was not, in fact, falling, and that the best thing we could do for everybody was figure out how to live within our means and go from there.

That's exactly what we did, we sat down and budgeted, just like any family or business owner, prioritized our wants and needs, and tightened our belts a notch or two.

As a result, we enter this biennium with a thriving economy, a healthy revenue estimate, and an opportunity to set our fiscal house in order and rededicate our state to the same conservative fiscal policies that have served us so well over the past decade.

In fact, the job we have now may be even more difficult than two years ago.

Our job now is to remind people that this good news does not mean we'll be free to spend any amount on anything we want.

We have to make sure everyone understands that if we stray from the path we've crafted for ourselves, other states like Florida and Louisiana are eager to step up and take their shot at the nation's job-creation crown.

When I spoke to the legislature on Tuesday, I made it clear that we have to continue keeping our spending under control.

I also told them that the best thing we can do for our economy, for employers, employees, and our state, is to provide some tax relief.

The last two years tell us that people do the most good when they keep more of their own money, so they can start new businesses, invest in new equipment, hire new employees, and blaze new trails.

Time and again, we've seen that the best use of the people's money is to give it back to them in some form or fashion.

I think that's an important discussion to have.

In fact, I'd like to advance the discussion beyond the Dome, and I invite everyone to go to my website, gov.Texas.gov, and share with us your own thoughts on what's the best way to provide tax relief to Texas.

Now, this being the Internet, some of the ideas will be better than others, but
this represents a chance to hear some fresh ideas, and jumpstart a very important conversation on taxes.

Of course, tax relief isn't the only thing we need to address this session.

We need to discuss and find ways to improve our state's infrastructure, in water, energy and transportation.

Texans are an innovative bunch, and I'm sure we can figure out ways to ensure our needs in these critical areas are met, for now and stretching into the future.

We'll also need to figure out the best ways to educate our workforce, to reassure employers that they will continue to be able to find the best people for the job right here in the Lone Star State.

Whether that means passing some higher education reforms to place a greater emphasis on affordability and graduation rate, or streamlining and accelerating the process for people to earn technical certifications.

Combined with infrastructure improvements, these steps are vital if Texas is going to continue to be the nation's epicenter for job creation in the years to come.

And, again, we can have the best workforce, the best infrastructure, but if the economic climate is restrictive to the point that businesses feel they can't succeed here, it just won't matter.

You all here know just how successful we've been at fostering the kind of climate that attracts businesses seeking to expand or relocate.

For the last several months, I've been promoting a series of ideas I call the Texas Budget Compact, a collection of common-sense steps our legislature should take to ensure we continue adhering to the bedrock principles that have gotten us where we are today.

If you haven't heard them yet, they are, practice truth-in-budgeting, support a stricter constitutional limit on spending, make the small business tax exemption permanent, preserve our strong Rainy Day Fund, and cut wasteful and redundant government programs and agencies.

The compact has been designed to keep government honest, as small as possible, and as efficient as it can be in providing essential services like educating our children and caring for those who truly need the help.

By sticking to that formula, we can build an even stronger economy, and help create more, and better, jobs.

I've also called for the legislature to reform our laws to make it harder for people to abuse our public assistance and unemployment insurance systems, by authorizing drug screenings for those programs.

And, of course, we also need to better protect our most vulnerable citizens, the unborn, by expanding the ban on abortion to any baby that can feel the pain of the procedure, and putting in place common-sense oversights on clinics and physicians involved.

With your support and continued input, our conservative principles will continue to guide us over the course of the next 138 days, and set our state's
direction for years to come.

Given what we've accomplished so far, I'm very encouraged at our prospects for success.

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