



COURAGEOUS CONSERVATISM: A PLEDGE WITH TEXANS

OUR REFORM AGENDA FOR THE 81ST LEGISLATURE

Conservative legislators have worked hard to deliver on a few basic things that matter: meeting the needs of a growing population by lowering taxes, improving our schools, strengthening the economy, protecting families and children, and reforming our health care system. However, the work of conservatives in the Legislature is far from complete. Property taxes are too high, border security remains a challenge, families need more affordable health insurance, and elections must be free of fraud. Expanded government is not the answer for a people as smart and industrious as Texans, and we need to continue to promote the values of faith, family, and hard work. We have a lot of work ahead of us and our "PLEDGE WITH TEXANS" serves as a foundation for our long-term goals for Texas.

WE PLEDGE TO:

CUT PROPERTY TAXES UNTIL THEY ARE ELIMINATED

High property taxes are a fiscal burden for homeowners and businesses, impede home ownership and capital investment, abridge property rights, and threaten school funding. Therefore, elimination of school district property taxes must be the long-term goal. We can fully fund our schools by adopting a fairer system. In the near-term, substantive relief measures are imperative. These measures include continued devotion of surplus state tax revenues to property tax relief, bringing accountability to the appraisal system, ensuring that all relief and reform measures are applied to both homeowners and businesses; and, freezing property taxes for military families.

PROTECT THE RIGHT TO VOTE BY REQUIRING PHOTO ID AND VERIFYING CITIZENSHIP

As required by the Texas Constitution, the state's chief elections officer should verify the citizenship status of every person who registers to vote, and require all voters to present photo ID at the polling place as authorized by the U.S. Supreme Court.

SECURE THE TEXAS BORDER

Combat illegal immigration and stop the Mexican drug cartels by training local law enforcement in federal immigration law and increase funding for border and homeland security, including more resources for local law enforcement to stop the traffic of drugs, weapons, and cash across the border. We must also penalize sanctuary cities; prohibit state and local government agencies from accepting the Matrícula Consular as a form of ID; and, make tax credits available to employers who verify that their employees are legal.

STOP THE TRANS-TEXAS CORRIDOR AND OTHER EMINENT DOMAIN ABUSES

A booming population and economy require a modern and versatile transportation infrastructure to move people and goods, but private property rights must be protected from abuses like the Trans-Texas Corridor. Eminent domain must be employed only when it is absolutely necessary to take property for a clearly defined traditional and essential public use. When land is taken by eminent domain, property owners must be compensated with full current market value.

CUT, SIMPLIFY, AND REFORM BUSINESS TAXES

The gross margins tax is adversely impacting small businesses, is unnecessarily complex, and has high compliance costs. To keep Texas the nation's leader in job growth, we must cut the rates of the margins tax; protect businesses from future increases by requiring a two-thirds majority of the Legislature to raise the tax rate; and, exempt more small businesses from paying the margins tax.

LOWER ELECTRIC RATES AND CLEAN THE ENVIRONMENT

Texans can have more affordable and cleaner electric power by expanding nuclear, clean coal, wind, and biomass capacity. Texas must improve and expand its transmission infrastructure, fast-track permitting of new power facilities; and, invest in technology that utilizes Texas' natural resources to clean the environment. To improve energy efficiency and reduce electric bills, we must ensure that System Benefit Fund revenues are dedicated to help families with their electric bills and used to make energy efficiency technologies such as smart meters more affordable.

MAKE TEXAS A LEADER IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

There are few issues more imperative than revitalizing the movement to deliver the best education possible for K-12 students. Texas must respect local control by exempting high-performing schools from burdensome state mandates; strengthen the public school accountability system to focus on achievement rather than "teaching to the test"; support professional pay for teachers including locally-designed incentives to keep effective teachers in the classroom; and, give administrators greater authority over resources & personnel.

MAKE TEXAS A NATIONAL LEADER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

World-class colleges and universities and a better educated population are critical for the future prosperity of our state. Texas should double the number of its nationally-recognized research universities; strengthen academic programs at community colleges so that more community college credits are transferable to universities; and, encourage adult education and promote other postsecondary educational opportunities at career colleges and schools for those who want to seek gainful employment.

MAKE HEALTHCARE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR FAMILIES

Help Texas families access affordable health insurance by reducing costs through investment in electronic health records; requiring health plans, physicians, and hospitals to make cost and quality information available to the public; increasing the availability of low-cost, mandate-free insurance; and, offering optional health savings accounts to all public employees and high-deductible low-cost health plans to college students.

LIMIT THE GROWTH OF GOVERNMENT

Impose strict constitutional spending restraints to further slow the growth of state government; ensure that dedicated funds are spent for their intended purpose or return the money to taxpayers; return to a true zero-based budgeting process to force agencies to justify all spending requests each legislative session; close loopholes in welfare programs; increase resources for child support collection to reduce reliance on government programs; and, end double taxation on phone bills by eliminating the sales tax on telecommunications fees and surcharges.

I pledge to make every effort to support and advance all elements of the Pledge in the 81st Texas Legislature. I understand that my voting record on these items will be reviewed and compiled in a scorecard. At the end of the 81st Session, I agree to have my voting record scorecard made available to the public.

I Agree to the Terms of the Pledge

Signed on this Day

Witnessed By



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