

Texas Workforce Commission Chairman Tom Pauken

Governor Perry, Commissioners Congleton and Lehman, the elected officials here present, and my friends and family. Thanks so much for your presence. I am particularly pleased that my wife Ida and five of our seven children are here this afternoon. My remaining two daughters are in the D.C. area and could not join us this afternoon. Logan Alexander Pauken—son of Daniel and Monica Pauken—is here representing our nine grandchildren. (I am not sure we would have gotten through the event this afternoon had all nine of them—who are six years and under—been present.)

Governor Perry, I want to thank you personally for allowing me to serve the citizens of our state as Chairman of the Texas Workforce Commission. I will do my best to exercise the responsibility entrusted to me in an honorable fashion.

We, as public servants, not only have an obligation to those we work with and those we are asked to help. We also need to understand that we should treat the taxpayers' money as we would our own family's finances. That means the exercise of fiscal responsibility. Governor Perry and our Texas Legislature have done just that in recent years as they have kept spending in line with inflation plus population growth while avoiding the high taxes of so many other states and taxing jurisdictions which often have a tendency to treat taxpayers' money as though it were "other peoples' money".

Moreover, Governor Perry's emphasis on public-private partnerships to attract jobs to Texas and encourage economic development has paid off with major success stories. The best way out of poverty is the creation of opportunity for businesses to thrive and for the development of jobs in the private sector. Under Governor Perry's leadership, Texas has developed a good reputation for financial prudence and a sound economic climate. This puts our state in good

stead, even as other regions of our nation experience a significant loss of jobs in these uncertain economic times.

But, we have to face reality. If the credit crisis worsens, Texas will not be immune to the consequences of the fallout from the effects of a bubble economy. The Texas Workforce Commission has a very professional staff committed to helping Texans looking for work and making sure that available benefits go to those truly deserving. Those responsibilities will become even greater as we enter into these uncharted economic waters.

My role as the public commissioner is to be fair and balanced in addressing employment issues that come before the Commission. I take that obligation seriously. At the same time, while business and labor are going to have their differences on individual issues, it is important to remember that we are all in the same boat when it comes to attracting and keeping good jobs in our state and nation, along with rebuilding our manufacturing base. We need to work together to develop common sense tax and fiscal policies to encourage job creation here in the U.S.

Governor Perry and I feel very strongly about the need to help our returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Those soldiers answered our country's call under very difficult circumstances, and now it is our responsibility to welcome them back to Texas the right way as they return to civilian life. Governor Perry wants Texas to be the model state in terms of addressing the concerns of our returning veterans—whether it be employment, medical, or other needs. To that end, the Governor has dedicated significant resources from his discretionary funding for the establishment of our Returning Veterans Leadership Program. Modeled on the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program in the Reagan Administration, we intend to enlist our Texas veterans who served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan to lead this initiative to help their fellow veterans throughout our state. We will work closely with other state and federal agencies, our

veterans organizations, our business and labor communities, and other Texans who want to support this Returning Veterans Leadership Program.

We had a slogan that signified our mission in our Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program: What does America do with experience like this? Put it to work. That is a message which needs to be reiterated as we welcome our returning veterans back from Iraq and Afghanistan. What does Texas do with experience like this? Put it to work.

Texas is a patriotic state. The least we can do for our returning veterans is to put in place a road map for their successful re-integration into civilian life—that is the best means of thanking them for the sacrifices they have made for our state and our nation.

Finally, we should remember that our ultimate strength as a nation depends on our conduct being guided by the principles of the Judeo-Christian ethic. When we stray from those principles, we lose a part of us that makes America such a special place.

If we aspire to leave this nation as a better place for our children and grandchildren, a good way to begin is by returning to those basic principles which made America such a good society—and a great nation—in the first place. Guided by that ethical compass, I am confident that we will be up to the challenge of addressing the serious problems our nation faces.

In the meantime, let each of us—in whatever position we find ourselves in—resolve to do our part to preserve the freedoms we enjoy in this great land.

Governor Perry, thank you again for allowing me to serve the people of Texas as a member of the Texas Workforce Commission. And, thank all of you who are here today on this very special occasion for me and my family. It is good to be back in a position to help influence the direction of public policy on important issues affecting our state and nation.