



March 16, 2009

The Honorable David Dewhurst
Lieutenant Governor of Texas
Texas Capitol, 2E.13
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Governor Dewhurst:

Over the course of this young session, the Texas Senate has spent more time debating a partisan, acrimonious measure in SB 362, the voter suppression bill, than it has dealing with the most important issue to Texas families: improving Texas' economy and helping Texans weather this financial storm. That must change.

We request that the Senate convene a Committee of the Whole next week to debate SCR 15, to ensure Texas takes advantage of all federal economic stimulus money available. SCR 15 would bypass Governor Perry's misplaced priorities and instead put the Legislature back in the driver's seat with regard to ensuring in a bipartisan way that we start putting Texas families first. This debate should be governed by the same rules used for discussion of SB 362. After all, if such a fast-track process is deemed necessary for legislation of high priority only to partisans, then an issue of critical importance to all Texans should be as well.

Despite certain scenarios and overconfident talk, the reality is this: Texas is in recession. The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas is now predicting that 300,000 jobs will be lost in 2009 and unemployment will soon reach eight percent. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) recently announced that unemployment claims are up 120 percent over this time last year, and the unemployment fund could be \$750 million below the floor by September. Recognizing this, TWC Chair Tom Pauken has publically supported accepting federal stimulus funds, stating that "it's our money." Without the federal funds, Texas businesses will face increased unemployment insurance taxes during these hard times.

Regardless, Governor Perry announced yesterday that he will not accept \$555 million in federal economic stimulus money to improve and update the state's unemployment insurance program. It would be profoundly irresponsible for the state to send Texans' taxpayer dollars to other states, especially given the well-documented needs faced by our constituents.

It is time for the Texas Senate to get to work on the issues that really matter to Texas families. We urge you to order SCR 15 be debated before a Committee of the Whole so that we can begin the important work that Texans expect of us.

Very truly yours,

Leticia Naranjo

J. J. H. H. H.

Rodney E. E.

Wendy A. Davis

Chris O'Rourke

John Whitman

Mark H.

Elis Shepleigh

Mario Gallegos

Ray W.

Judith Zaffirini

Jamie Lucio