SENATE JOURNAL

EIGHTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE — REGULAR SESSION

AUSTIN, TEXAS

PROCEEDINGS

FIRST DAY

(Tuesday, January 14, 2025)

In accordance with the Constitution and Laws of the State of Texas, the Senate of the Eighty-ninth Legislature met in the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol on Tuesday, the 14th day of January, 2025, at 12:00 noon.

The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor and President of the Senate, called the Senate to order.

Scot Wall, State Minister, Capitol Commission Texas, offered the invocation as follows:

> Heavenly Father, creator of heaven and Earth, the giver of life who loves our souls, we know that we do not walk consistently in a manner that pleases You by word or deed, especially when stretched and stressed within the walls of this magnificent Capitol building during session. For this we ask Your forgiveness. But my request today is that each person who enters this Capitol would sense Your presence through the people who work and serve in this building, from the custodians, the troopers, the parking attendants, the support staff, the legislative staffs, the sergeants, the Capitol tour guides, the pages, the parliamentarians, Secretary of the Senate, the lobbyists, the fire marshals, the nurse practitioner, the House members, the Senate members, Secretary of State Nelson, Lieutenant Governor Partick, whoever the Speaker of the House is going to be, and Governor Abbott. Please grant our request for the wisdom of Solomon as the legislators navigate the political journey and decisions needed to produce laws that impact all of us and the patience and perseverance of Job when faced with inevitable adversity and the courage of David to stand up for what is right in the face of giant obstacles and the faith of Abraham to trust You even when things seem impossible and, most importantly, the love of Jesus that we may extend it to everyone, even the seemingly unlovable ones and even our adversaries just as Jesus called us to do. I know that I am asking for the miraculous, but that is what You major in. Please do the miraculous in each of us this session. In Your son, Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

ROLL CALL OF SENATORS

The President directed the Secretary of the Senate to call the roll of the Members of the Senate.

The roll was called and the following Senators answered to their names: Birdwell, Creighton, Flores, Gutierrez, Hall, Hancock, Hughes, Kolkhorst, Menéndez, Middleton, Miles, Nichols, Perry, Schwertner, Sparks, Zaffirini.

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The following message from the Secretary of State was read and was filed with the Secretary of the Senate:

THE STATE OF TEXAS
Secretary of State

I, JANE NELSON, Secretary of State of the State of Texas, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that according to the records of this office the attached is a true and correct list, in district order, of the members of the Senate of the 89th Legislature, 2025, whose election on November 5, 2024, has been duly and legally certified to this office.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed my name officially and caused to be impressed hereon the Seal of State at my office in the City of Austin, Texas this 2nd day of January, 2025.

(Seal)

/s/Jane Nelson
Secretary of State

TEXAS SENATORS ELECTED NOVEMBER 5, 2024

State Senator, District 6	Carol Alvarado
State Senator, District 7	Paul Bettencourt
State Senator, District 8	Angela Paxton
State Senator, District 10	Phil King
State Senator, District 12	Tan Parker
State Senator, District 14	Sarah Eckhardt
State Senator, District 15	Molly Cook
State Senator, District 16	Nathan Johnson
State Senator, District 17	Joan Huffman
State Senator, District 20	Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa
State Senator, District 23	Royce West
State Senator, District 25	Donna Campbell
State Senator, District 27	Adam Hinojosa
State Senator, District 29	César Blanco
State Senator, District 30	Brent Hagenbuch

ROLL CALL OF SENATORS-ELECT

The President directed the Secretary of the Senate to call the roll of Senators-elect as certified by the Secretary of State.

The roll was called and the following Senators-elect answered to their names: Alvarado, Bettencourt, Blanco, Campbell, Cook, Eckhardt, Hagenbuch, A. Hinojosa, J. Hinojosa, Huffman, Johnson, King, Parker, Paxton, West.

OATH OF OFFICE ADMINISTERED TO SENATORS-ELECT

The President directed the Senators-elect to proceed to the Bar of the Senate.

Chief Justice Jimmy Blacklock administered the Constitutional Oath of Office to the Senators-elect as follows:

I, _____, do solemnly swear, that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of Senator of the State of Texas, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this state, so help me God.

The President announced that a quorum of the Senate was present.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The President acknowledged the presence of Cecilia Abbott, First Lady of Texas.

The Senate welcomed its guest.

ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR

The President presented to the Senate the Honorable Greg Abbott, who addressed the Senate as follows:

Thanks everybody here. Thank you to Lieutenant Governor Patrick. Thank you to Members of the Senate. A very big congratulations to all those who just won an election and especially to those who won election for the first time. Y'all know better than anybody the extraordinary work that goes into winning a campaign, being elected to office, having the support of constituents in your community say, We want you to go represent us in the Texas Senate. Whether it's the first time you've been elected or the 10th time you've been elected, it means a lot to you, to all these families here, but most importantly to those you represent and what you can and what you will do for them over the course of the next 140 days. I am proud to be here today with the fabulous First Lady of Texas, Cecilia Abbott. The cause that she most embraces right now is a cause I know so many of you care so much about, and that is helping the foster care kids in the State of Texas achieve a better and brighter future. Well, it's great to join you in what I hope will be the only session that we have this year. Bettencourt has a big amen to that one. Right? So, I look forward to two things that I see from y'all this session. One is I look forward to the innovative ways that you all will be able to navigate the different challenges between having a $24 billion surplus and a $35 billion budget requests from all the different constituencies that are seeking money. The other innovative thing that I look forward seeing come from you are the innovative ways that you will haze Senators Hagenbuch, Hinojosa, and Cook as the freshmen this coming session. You got to work your way into it. Let me just quickly share with you two thoughts. One is recently I was flying across the country and for seemingly an hour of the flight we were in clouds and we were making turns and I was thinking, I don't have any idea where we are, where we are going. But surely the pilots did, because the pilots were in the same clouds,

but the pilots had something that I did not have. They had controls to show them exactly where we were, how we were doing, the altitude, the speed, all that kind of stuff. I bring that up because I know this, and especially the seasoned Senators know it also, once we get past all of these celebrations and get down to business and when we get into the crux of the business, which will be confusing, there will be a hundred bills flying across the floor all at one time. It may seem like you are stuck in a haze of clouds. And I submit that you, too, have controls that you can look at during those times of seemingly obscurity. And I submit to you these two guideposts. One, is the oath that you just took to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitutions of the United States and of this state. Now, when a phrase like that is uttered, oftentimes people will think of somebody like the Attorney General who fights every single day to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and fight for that. Oftentimes some people will look at our judiciary and say, Well, that should be their lodestar. They don't connect it as much as they should to the role that you all as Senators play, because there are challenges that we face every single day where the reality is there is a failure across this state to follow the Constitution laws of the United States and of this state. And it's not just up to the judiciary and the Attorney General to do something about it. It is up to the Legislature to establish the guidelines, the laws of what must be done to ensure that we adhere to our Constitution and to the laws of the State of Texas. I can give you a lot of examples, I share just one. I don't see her right now, but I know, Senator Bettencourt, I am thinking Senator Huffman that hails from a city where there have been people who have been murdered by people who were let out on bail who had been arrested for a prior murder. We have a problem with judges not adhering to the laws, what should be the law, and that is that you don't let somebody arrested for murder back on the streets just to kill somebody else again. It is going to be up to us in the Senate and the House and me working with you to make sure we do something about that so we stop criminals from killing other innocent people in our state. The second guidepost is, well it's kind of a Texas slogan, we're the land of opportunity, and it's not by happenstance. Why is Texas more the land of opportunity than other states? Why is that other people are leaving other states to come to the land of opportunity, the State of Texas? Candidly has been something that's happen since the time of Moses Austin, but it's accelerated in recent years. And there are reasons for, they're embedded into the laws you have passed session after session after session that have made Texas a far more attractive place to be. My ask of you is that you look at that title of the land of opportunity and do everything you can to ensure that it is not eroded by rules and regulations and legislation that ties the hands of the people, the hardworking Texans who have made Texas the land of opportunity. There's more than just maintaining the land of opportunity, our goal should always be to expand that land of opportunity. I can testify for a fact to the urgent pleas of thousands of Texans to please use your voice and use your vote this session to expand the opportunity for every parent to choose the school

that's best for their child. There is a hunger for that in so many ways. And you all are at the control switch guiding this flight for the next 140 days. And I ask that God bless you and God guide you in your pathway to ensure that together we will keep Texas the best state in the greatest country in the history of the world. God bless you all and God bless the great State of Texas.

GOVERNOR NOTIFIED

The President notified the Governor that the Senate was organized and ready to transact business.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The President acknowledged Senate Parliamentarian Karina Davis.

The President also extended appreciation to Secretary of the Senate Patsy Spaw and congratulated her on her 56 years of service.

APPRECIATION EXTENDED

The President extended appreciation to Chief Justice Jimmy Blacklock for his assistance in the opening session of the 89th Legislature, Governor Greg Abbott, First Lady Cecilia Abbott, and Attorney General Ken Paxton.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The President acknowledged the presence of Railroad Commissioner Wayne Christian; Commissioner of Agriculture Sid Miller; Supreme Court Justices Debra Lehrmann, Jeff Boyd, John Phillip Devine, Brett Busby, Jane Bland, Rebeca Aizpuru Huddle, Evan A. Young, and James P. Sullivan; and Court of Criminal Appeals Judges David J. Schenk, Bert Richardson, Kevin Yeary, David Newell, Mary Lou Keel, Scott Walker, Jesse F. McClure III, Lee Finley, and Gina G. Parker.

The Senate welcomed its guests.

AT EASE

The President at 12:31 p.m. announced the Senate would stand At Ease subject to the call of the Chair.

IN LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The President at 12:51 p.m. called the Senate to order as In Legislative Session.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
EIGHTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE, REGULAR SESSION

The President announced that the time had arrived for the election of President Pro Tempore of the 89th Legislature, Regular Session.

Senator Parker placed in nomination the name of Senator Creighton for the office of President Pro Tempore of the 89th Legislature, Regular Session.

On motion of Senator Zaffirini on January 24, 2025, and without objection, the nominating speech by Senator Parker and the remarks made to second the nomination were ordered reduced to writing and printed in the *Senate Journal* as follows:

Senator Parker: Well, thank you, Mr. President, Members. I rise today with great honor to nominate Senator Brandon Creighton for the position of President Pro Tempore of the Texas Senate. As we deliberate on the choice of a leader for this very, very special role, it is imperative to select someone who embodies the values that define Texas, someone who understands this Chamber, its business, and the people that we are all so very blessed to serve. Senator Creighton's roots run deep in the Texas soil. As an eighth-generation Texan, descended from a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, his story is a testament to the enduring spirit of our great state. You just don't get more Texas than Brandon Creighton. His journey is one of faith, one of grit and determination. On the family farm Brandon learned early that hard work was not just a necessity but an absolute way of life. Whether baling hay, working cattle, or repairing fences, his father instilled in him and his brothers a mindset that no challenge was insurmountable and that all glory is always given to God. As a young man, his family faced the devastating loss of their business and home. Brandon's response as a young man was not that of despair but rather of resolve. The values instilled by his father are a reflection of his faith. He worked harder so they could rebuild. And they did so, even stronger, a testament to his grit and unwavering commitment to family, showing life's obstacles are not dead ends, but rather opportunities to succeed. This determination carried Brandon to The University of Texas where he paid his way through college working jobs, literally, as a Senate messenger, right here, to working in a Texaco chemical plant. It's no exaggeration to say that Brandon Creighton knows the value of sweat equity as well as perseverance, and his leadership was formed from the front lines. Brandon's journey took him briefly across the other border that would be the Red River to Oklahoma where he worked for the Attorney General's Office while attending law school at night. Even then his heart always remained in Texas and as soon as he could he returned home to Conroe to build a law practice, to start businesses, to create jobs, and to raise his family. Brandon's experience has taught him firsthand that the challenges faced by hardworking Texans, business owners, farmers, ranchers, families, and individuals alike are real. He brought this understanding to the Texas Legislature, first, as a member of the House where we entered together as freshmen—hard to believe that was 18 years ago—and here, 18 years later, across the rotunda, in the other Chamber where the carpet is definitely greener. As a Senator, Brandon has proven himself to be a steadfast friend, a wise counselor, and an unwavering advocate for his district and our entire state. His legislative record reflects his commitment to the principles that we all hold dear, that of faith, that of freedom, that of liberty, and an unwavering commitment to knowing and understanding the resilience of the people of Texas. As a father, lessons and values passed down to him have also guided him in raising his two children, Presleigh and Cannon, clearly, his greatest joys in life. Members, as we consider this nomination, I ask you to reflect on the qualities that define an authentic leader: hard work, enduring faith, integrity, and, yes, a heart for service. Brandon Creighton exemplifies all of those qualities. He is, without question, a living example of what a Texan can achieve when grounded in faith, driven by determination, and committed to putting others before oneself. It is an absolute honor to stand before you with unwavering conviction to nominate my colleague, my dear friend, my former

roommate, who always brought home the best leftovers and is a master of the microwave, Senator Brandon Creighton, for President Pro Tempore of the Texas Senate.

Senator Bettencourt: Thank you, Mr. President. It's quite an honor for an Aggie, Catholic Senator to be able to introduce a Texas Ex, Baptist for the third highest post in Texas. After our two governors, the Senate Pro Tempore is the third in line and so, it's not a position for the faint of hearted. But, of course, Brandon Creighton has been somebody that has really defined, if you look up in the Texas dictionary and try to define what the meaning of the word "Texas" is, just like my esteemed colleague, Senator Parker, it's friendly. And that's the definition that applies to Senator Brandon Creighton. I first found that out when about, oh, 11 years ago, I was summoned by Montgomery County, by conservative groups to come to a very closely fought Senate primary, and I, they wanted Uncle Paul to come be the moderator. So, I got in my urban car, drove up to the great county of Montgomery County, thinking that it was going to be an interesting evening. I didn't know what to expect. And I found somebody there who through the course of the debate had been the first person to trumpet and then pass Governor Perry's "loser pays" laws. He was a young 30-some-odd-year-old caucus chair for the Republicans that passed a lot of legislation dealing with the federal government and many other boundary-breaking issues in the Senate at the time, in that legislature at the time. And, more importantly, he set a standard of leadership that he brought to the House, from the House to the Senate, because we just didn't get his arrival in 2015, the class of '15 is all on this side of the Chamber. I see Senator Kolkhorst, I see Senator Perry, I see Senator Hall, I see our Democratic cousins, José Menéndez. We all came in at 2015. We all came in with the idea that we were going to serve. And what did Brandon first do when he got here in the Senate? Well, back then, Mr. President, you know that the Senate was not the bastion of tax cutting in 10 years ago that it is today. In fact, it was quite a slugfest to pass a bill when we first arrived. My friends from the Kingwood TEA Party are shaking their heads, yes, okay. And it was quite a fight on the floor, Senator Flores, because we were looking for the one bill that could make a difference and set Texas onto the right path. And it happened to be Senate Bill 1760, who Senator Creighton had. And in that contentious first debate about property taxes, I will always remember Senator Creighton spreading his arm like Abraham Lincoln in the great debates of old. And he was challenged by a Senator that was not a fan of tax relief that he really didn't want my amendment on his bill. And he said not only do I want it, I embrace it, and I move adoption. And that amendment set up a very important thing for the rest of us to, that's still a part of public policy now, that is a supermajority vote for taxes. If you're going to raise taxes, you have to do it with a supermajority vote. And that is the beginning, and yes, give him a hand for that, please do. Now, like our good friend of the other Republican lawyer, not counting our good judge, Joan Huffman, okay, they despise all three letter federal acronyms, okay. DEI, ESG, CRT, UBI, you know, in fact, at 3 a.m. in the morning, I'm not sure whether I'm listening to Senator Hughes or Senator Creighton, but at the desk that Senator Mayes is sitting at, okay, we repeatedly not only passed the school choice bill five times, but we repeatedly passed what was a landmark DEI bill that basically instructed our institutions of higher learning to take those resources and return them back to productivity. Get that crew

working again, get it working for all the students and 20 months later no better of authority, Mr. President, no better of authority in the nation than Mark Zuckerberg agreed, because he just shut down his DEI offices at Facebook. But that tells you how far the Texas Senate is ahead of leading, and when you find them leading, you'll find Senator Brandon Creighton there. Now, we almost lost Senator Creighton. He was rear-ended in a horrible accident. I'd just gotten to ride in his father's sports coupe, and I thought it was really cool, and somebody else probably thought it was too cool because they blasted in through at an intersection in Ennis, and he was heavily, heavily affected by a concussion. In fact, that morning, about a, about a week later, you can't tell an eighth-generation Montgomery County resident what to do. I don't know, maybe the kids have better luck than Uncle Paul does, but this guy was going to come out and vote. The Senator was going to come out and vote on the floor of the Senate. I mean, showing the resolve of Senator Birdwell, he had a junior Member sneak him onto the floor—and don't any of the new Senators do that, okay—snuck him on the floor, bad idea, sit him down in his desk. I told him to stay put, and within 30 seconds, I was having to dive as a third baseman used to do, as my, I'm not as fast as I once was, but I did grab his head before it hit the ground, and I did ask for help immediately of our doc in residence, and Senator Creighton was okay, but it showed all of us how fleeting all of this is. A fleeting story to a great day because Brandon is still with us, and, more importantly, he's got blockbuster bills to go. He passed in 2019 one of the most historic disaster recovery acts with Senate Bill 7. It's a model legislation in the country, model legislation by the American Legislative Exchange Council. And that was a multi-billion dollar, a bill that basically took Texas and Southeast Texas out of what was a disaster, forward into what I would call the undiscovered country of the future. And we did it because of Senator Creighton's bill. He'll be there again this year with more blockbuster legislation. He'll be, certainly, on point with a tremendous change in Texas, which, long overdue, which is school choice. But what he always does with that is temper his bills with listening to those that testify in his committee, the other Senators on the floor, and the public at large. In fact, when I say that Senator Creighton reminds me of the, of what Texas is all about, the definition, friendly. He is, because I have watched him on the floor present these bills and repeatedly pass them, sometimes taking six, eight, 10 hours to do it, and never once losing his temper, never once not being a gentleman to even people that are questioning him severely that may have a different political philosophy. But at his heart, he's that eighth-generation Texan. At his heart he's got that great-grandfather that he'll swear in today on the Bible that was a Texas Senator. At his heart he has Texas common sense, Texas leadership, and Texas values. And when I go to my reward, I will know that this man has done his best on this Earth to do what he thinks is right for his state, his nation, his family, the public, for the Senate, for all of us, because that's the type of man Brandon Creighton is. When you get to meet someone like this, I did 11 years ago, I immediately picked up the phone, and I won't tell you who I called, but it might be somebody on the dais, and I said we've got a new Senator and his name is Brandon Creighton. And so, with that I think I can speak for all the Senators when I second the nomination of Senator Brandon Creighton, an

eighth-generation Texan, rancher, businessman, and friend, to the high office of Senate Pro Tem of the greatest State of Texas and the greatest Senate in the country of the United States.

On motion of Senator Parker, Senator Creighton was elected President Pro Tempore by acclamation.

The President declared that the Honorable Brandon Creighton had been duly elected President Pro Tempore of the 89th Legislature, Regular Session, by acclamation.

The President appointed the following committee to escort Senator Creighton and his family, Presleigh and Cannon Creighton, and Tamarah, Koty, and Trinity Curtis, to the President's Rostrum: Senators Kolkhorst, Campbell, Hall, Middleton, and Perry.

Senator Creighton and his party were then escorted to the President's Rostrum by the committee.

OATH OF OFFICE ADMINISTERED

The President administered the Constitutional Oath of Office to the Honorable Brandon Creighton as follows:

> I, Brandon Creighton, do solemnly swear, that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of President Pro Tempore of the Senate of the State of Texas, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this state, so help me God.

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

President Pro Tempore Creighton addressed the Senate as follows:

> Lieutenant Governor Patrick mentioned that he wanted me to explain the history behind the Bible that I've used. My grandmother's grandfather served in my seat over 120 years ago, out of Montgomery County. He's in this composite up here in the corner, and that Bible was the Bible that he was sworn in to the Senate in this Chamber at that time. So, it's in not the best shape, but it's holding its own through the test of time as we would expect. Lieutenant Governor Patrick, my distinguished colleagues, friends, and family, I stand here today with profound gratitude and incredible appreciation. To serve as President Pro Tempore of the Texas Senate is an honor that would have seemed probably anything but possible to me as a young college student in the '90s, working the halls of this Capitol, trying to survive my way through the university down the street, and now from that time as a Senate messenger, it's just an incredible reflection upon what has happened from then to now and being able to work with all of you, just an amazing blessing in my life. I'd like to first acknowledge my family that's here on the dais with me, Cannon and Presleigh, I love you very much. I'll never accomplish anything, I'll never accomplish anything more important than being your dad. Koty and Trinity and Tamarah, I love each of you very much, and I'm so happy that all of you are here with me for this extremely, incredibly special day ceremony. Cannon, because I love you and I want

you to always succeed, I'm going to ask you now to exit. Everyone's wondering what am I talking about on that. Cannon has a very important basketball game this afternoon against the district rival, and he's gotten special permission from his coaches to be here today, to be a part of the ceremony up to now, but as the starting guard, the rules are if you're not there on time, you don't play. Cannon supports me as Presleigh does, and Koty and Trinity and Tamarah and my entire family in everything that I do in public service and beyond, and I'm determined to support him. So, Cannon, at this time I'm going to ask you to exit, come give me a hug. Cannon, play with intensity, drive on your opponent early so he respects you, and never give up. Deal? Deal. Dad duties first. Right? I want to also recognize my mother, who's watching from home. My mother made many of these opening days, but at this point in life she's doing very well, but traveling is more difficult. Mom, I want to thank you for always believing in me and instilling a belief in me that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. It's a powerful thing to instill in a child confidence. That is probably the most important superpower that we can do for a child that is inevitably going to go through rough times. No one does that better, Senator Kolkhorst, than a mom, and I'm so thankful for my mother. She's watching right now. Mom, I love you very much. My speech is about nine minutes, so we're cutting it short this time around. We might be watching some other fireworks in the building soon, but I'm going to veer from my speech and maybe add 30 seconds to that. If you're one of the guys that traveled here today that attended high school with me or college, would you stand up? If any of you are favorable towards my positions that I take, they get the credit. If you are not, they may get the blame. But these are my brothers and I think the world of each and every one of them and I love them and we've had long friendships and some have traveled from across the country to be here. And I just want you guys to know that I love you and I love you. Wow. I especially want to thank my Chief of Staff, Tara Clements, who's been with me for, I had to check this, 17 years. That's hard to believe. That's time spent in the House and in the Senate, and I'm so thankful for Tara. On nearly each and every step of my legislative journey, Tara, you've been more than extraordinary, and I'm thankful for you and our entire team that you've assembled. They are the best team in the Capitol, thankful for you. To Lieutenant Governor Patrick and my Senate colleagues, thank you for your trust and your friendship. To our new Dean, Senator Zaffirini, I'm so honored to work with you, and having served with you since I came into the Senate has been a blessing and I appreciate you. To Senators Parker and Bettencourt, thank you for your remarks. I know the Members are thankful that we had two nomination speeches today. You were very efficient, I'm so thankful for your kind words and for your friendship and for your nominations. Standing here, I can't help but reflect back in time, watching Bill Hobby serve as Lieutenant Governor, and then Bullock, while I worked as a Senate messenger. I remember the time I spent, many times that I spent, admiring the graceful leadership of then-Secretary of Senate Betty King,

who hired me. Now, to accept this honor with Lieutenant Governor Patrick, the most accomplished Lieutenant Governor in Texas' history, and our incredible Secretary of Senate Patsy Spaw, is truly a blessing. You and your teams are just remarkable and so appreciated. Let's give them a round of applause. This Chamber is rich with a history of thoughtful deliberation, fiery rhetoric, and ultimately, decisions reflecting the dreams of every Texan that have guided our state forward. Throughout my time working as a Senate messenger in the 72nd and 73rd Regular Sessions, and four special called sessions on school finance, that I hope we will avoid, in my heart I'm still just a kid in awe of this building and all that it represents. As public servants, we make up a body that plays a vital role in shaping the future of Texas, and our new Senators will soon feel that, and it is just an incredible opportunity for an eternity second that we're allowed to serve in public service, to make a difference in so many lives of people that you will never meet, but the fulfillment and the purpose behind it is just, again, one of God's amazing blessings. As the 89th session begins, we have an immense responsibility, and our mandate is clear, to protect the Texas dream and to set the pace for America and the world. That's bold talk for a Texan. Right? But think about it. Think about all the things that we do from an economic and job creation standpoint and the decisions that we make that half the country, the states across this country, wait to see what Texas will advance next. With President Trump soon to be serving again in Washington, we have an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate how state-led solutions can change the country. Now is our chance to offer Texas solutions that address many issues, the danger and chaos on our southern border, to offer education reforms that prioritize our young students and our workforce, and to offer policies that preserve Texas energy independence to reflect the understanding of how it ties directly to unlimited job creation. These are all talked about as national issues, but they are unmistakably Texas issues, and the nation depends on us to lead the way. We've seen that through economic downturns and recoveries. We've seen that time and time again on national trends where Texas is critical mass for the direction of the nation. When I was growing up on our family farm in Cut and Shoot, Texas—yes, it's a suburb of Conroe of about a population of 410—and then soon after working at a chemical plant nearby after my dad lost everything financially, I learned firsthand that education is more than just a path forward. I know what it's like to struggle in pursuit of an education. I know what it feels like to not know if I'll have what I need tomorrow. Like so many students today and adult learners, I maxed out guaranteed federal aid. And I worked two jobs just to survive and still did my best in college to keep up with these guys. That was tough. Even with that I still had to borrow $50,000 from a blind brickmason that my dad graduated Conroe High School with in 1954. Mr. Howard Worthen whose family's here today was willing to take all that he had to his name and loan it to me so that I could keep going. Preparing and supporting our current students in workforce for tomorrow's economy will take all of us. Just as Mr. Worthen was there for me we will all have to

come together with bold solutions and new ideas that today's students will need to exceed tomorrow's expectations. Bold conservative leadership and bipartisan cooperation are more than possible on this floor. We see it every session. And our new Members will notice there is not a center aisle that divides us by party, very different than Washington D.C. Even in this last session, less than 50 bills of 11,000 total bills filed were supported by only one party. Together we've made Texas stronger, the envy of other states, especially our little brother state, Florida. They like to compete with us, don't they? A strong Texas is good for America. That belief has driven my constant focus on the importance of Texas sovereignty. Starting with a press conference in 2009 when then-Governor Perry joined myself and many legislators in support, it was national news for over a week and at the time Governor Perry mentioned that it was the largest social media return in 25 years of political time in office for him. Most of those who've covered my position on the issue after I filed that original HCR 50 have missed the most important part of the argument. Protecting Texas sovereignty and independent authority under the, under the Constitution. That makes our state and our nation stronger. The strength of our state has so many people moving families and businesses here, leaving behind everything they hold dear to pursue a dream that other states long ago killed off with bad policies. CEOs are moving their companies here because of our Texas electric grid. Yes, that was testimony in B and C by some of the most affluent and competent CEOs in the world that have already moved to Texas, and that was their testimony. They move here because of our state border policies, because of our education initiatives, because of our attitude and our never-quit perseverance, our resolve to bring solutions. That's not found in many states across the country. We push back on federal overreach and limits on our personal freedoms because we're Texans, it's in our DNA. We're going to continue to work together to make sure that our state leads the nation in hope and opportunity and prosperity. And isn't that what everyone in our districts are aligned on? We must replace, we must remain a place where you can launch a business in your kitchen or your garage and still have a fighting chance for success. That is long lost on many states across this nation. That's what we have here now in Texas, and we can make it even better. As James Michener understood, Texas is more than a place, it's a state of mind. It's the conviction that faith matters most and that hard work is more than just a top priority. It's the belief that innovation drives success, that freedom unleashes the best of human potential. It's the belief that our best days lie ahead. So, in closing, I simply say thank you for this profound honor and may God bless you all, may his wisdom always guide this Chamber, and forever and ever may God bless the great State of Texas. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF GAVEL

The President presented an honorary gavel to President Pro Tempore Creighton.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The President acknowledged Senator Zaffirini as Dean of the Senate.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 7

The President laid before the Senate the following resolution:

SCR 7, Granting the legislature permission to adjourn for more than three days during the period beginning on Wednesday, January 15, 2025, and ending on Wednesday, January 22, 2025.

ZAFFIRINI

The resolution was read.

On motion of Senator Zaffirini and by unanimous consent, the resolution was considered immediately and was adopted by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

RECESS

On motion of Senator Zaffirini, the Senate at 1:37 p.m. recessed until 11:00 a.m. tomorrow.