

Historic Gubernatorial Address to The Joint Session of the Texas House of Representatives & the Senate

By D. A. Sharpe



This past Thursday afternoon, January 15, 2015, was the historic occasion of the final address by Governor Rick Perry to the Joint Session of the Texas Legislature. Both the House and the Senate. Why is it called historic?

Governor Perry is the 47th Governor of Texas, in a string of Governors stretching back over 169 years, beginning February 20, 1846 with Governor James Henderson. Owing to short-lived office occupancies, the average Texas Governor has served slightly less than four years, whereas the terms are for four years each election. In much of the 20th century, enough Texas Governors ran for and were elected in two subsequent four-year elections that a lot of citizens had assumed some sort of two-term limitation existed. However, we have no term limits in Texas!

In stark contrast, Governor Perry has served just over 14 years (5,143 days), the longest service elected to and given to anyone! Not only did he serve the last half term of Governor George W. Bush when Bush ascended to the U.S. Presidency, Perry was elected in an unprecedented three elections, each for four years! No other Texas Governor has been victor in three subsequent elections! That is why his administration's conclusion is historic in its length of service.

Promptly at 2:30 PM, as scheduled, Gov. Perry and his lovely wife, Anita, appeared on the House Speaker's Podium to greet an applauding audience, which filled the balcony as well as the floor. Gov. Perry first of all expressed his deep and abiding appreciation that the people of Texas had enabled him to have a 30-year tenure of elective public service that begin in that very room of Thursday's meeting. Truly a path of accomplishment for a man who was born March 4, 1959 in Texas!

Gov. Perry cited that public service is an honorable and worthy calling, especially for officials who can communicate effectively to citizens the political solution they represent. The goals should be to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people. A legacy claimed for his Gubernatorial record is a spirit of unity to a creative extent, even among party members of competing political views. Just because someone agrees with you only 70% of the time, that person still can be considered a friend in getting some things done. The striving for 100% purity in solutions of political issues often proves to be destructive.

Texas, in recent decades, has proven to be a land of opportunity, thus attracting impressive population increases! Texas economic engines have been more diverse over the recent

decades. In the past few years, Texas' population has grown by an average of about 1,000 new people per day moving to Texas! That is a net result of those coming in, less those moving away. Wind turbine production in Texas is exceeded only by five other nations in the world! Environmental measurements have brought numbers nicely into better standards, and the economy of Texas has produced 1/3rd of the new job increases over the entire United States. Compromise is not a dirty word, if it moves Texas forward.

In Texas, the approach in dealing with drug and alcoholic addiction has been much more positive than in some other places. Texas' approach has been to recognize those conditions as a sickness, needing treatment. The competing concept is to consider such victims as immoral, and who need to be led to repentance or punishment.

Gov. Perry dropped a hint about the future. He said, "I know this will surprise you, but I have been thinking a lot about 2016." This does feed the idea that he was considering another run for the U.S. Presidency!

Paint Creek, a small farming & ranching community, about 50 miles north of Abilene, Texas, was where James Richard "Rick" Perry was born March 4, 1950. Also raised with him is his elder sister, Milla Perry Jones, a fellow Admiral in the Texas Navy and friend of mine. She helped me with some of the details of their home. They had a school and two churches in their community, which, by the way, does not appear on contemporary maps of Texas.

He graduated from Texas A&M University, and he is the first A&M graduate to win the office of Texas Governor!

Actually, the beginning of his public service was as an Air Force pilot, 1972-1979, for the lumbering C-130 carriers. He completed military service with the rank of Captain. His unit was the 772nd Tactical Airlift Squadron.

His elected public service began first, on January 8, 1985. His office was as a Texas House of Representatives member from District 64. Later, he was elected as the 9th Commissioner of Agriculture in Texas, a statewide elective office, the term beginning January 15, 1991 until January 19, 1999. Next, he was elected as Lt. Governor of Texas, serving January 19, 1999 – December 21, 2000. The Constitution of Texas calls for the Lt. Governor to become Governor when a vacancy created, as Gov. George W. Bush was elected President of the United States. His governorship began December 22, 2000.

His earliest election success was as a candidate of the Democratic Party of Texas. In 1989, he switched alliances to the Republican Party of Texas. He said of that occasion, "In one day, I had made many people happy in both political parties!"

Elected officials, both of the House (150) and the Senate (31), convened on the floor of the House Thursday. The balcony, in which several hundred spectators are seated, was open to the general public. The Governor's Office invited all of the various members of the 140 Texas State Boards, citizens whom are nominated by State Legislators and appointed by the Governor.

The occasion for my invitation for this cherished seating was due to membership on the Texas State Board of Examiners of Dietitians, having been nominated by Representative

Phil King several years ago. It's a professional state licensing activity. It was an honor to receive the invitation, and I resolved to contribute this article for publication. My friends sometime inquire of me about what do I know about dietitians! My fun reply is to say that a number of rules exist for licensed dietitians. If a dietitian breaks a rule, it's up to we Board members to become "fed-up" with the dietitian!

Gov. Perry's parting farewell statement was "Be true to Texas, always, and she will be with you in all things." He stepped down from the podium minutes before 3:00 PM.

Newly elected Gov. Gregory Abbott's Inaugural Swearing in is this Tuesday, January 20, 2015. Gov. Perry praised the choice of the people of Texas in selecting successor, his friend and a man Gov. Perry admires.



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