

## Perry's address aimed at businesses and social conservatives

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AUSTIN – The agenda that Gov. Rick Perry presented for the state Tuesday was designed to cheer business and social conservatives, while rebuking the ways of Washington, and by extension, political rival Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison.

Gone were the lofty language and bold programs of his last State of the State address, two years ago – their wings clipped by an economic downturn and his own weakened stature in the Capitol. Gone are the billowing sails of budget surpluses and the strong wind of a GOP-dominated House.

Two years ago, he painted with broad strokes – envisioning a cure for cancer, educational opportunities and health care for thousands. This time he stayed within the lines, asking small dollars for cancer research bonds, incentive pay for teachers and a child obesity program.

Perry's 45-minute address focused mostly on jobs and the economy, suggesting an additional \$520 million to entice businesses and film production to Texas. He offered virtually nothing to cash-strapped school districts or to those without health insurance – a category in which Texas leads the nation.

'Buyer's market'

And he delivered a crystallized version of his governing philosophy: A business-friendly state prospers. Even in a crippled economy, he argued, Texas should see a "buyer's market for economic development."

"Texas is strong because we aggressively play offense," he said. "In tough times, others see threats; Texans see opportunity."

He also enthusiastically endorsed mandating that women who seek abortions view sonograms of the fetus; requiring photo IDs to vote; having different driver's licenses for those in the state on visas; and pushing local authorities to enforce immigration laws.

Many lawmakers recognized that Perry was playing to both business and his base, the main constituencies that he hopes will propel him past Hutchison as a primary opponent next year.

For Democrats, the sharp partisan issues were quickly rejected as dead on arrival.

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**'In tough times, others see threats; Texans see opportunity,'** Gov. Rick Perry told a joint session of the Legislature in the House chamber Tuesday.

"I hope the governor will come around to understanding that his role is a little different than it has been in the past," said House Democratic leader Jim Dunnam of Waco.

"He got 39 percent of the vote last time, and this chamber is 50 percent Democrat, and we got here because his priorities were wrong," he said.

Sen. Dan Patrick, R-Houston, heard it differently. "It was music to these conservative ears," he said. "This is the direction the state wants us to go."

In a political world where it never hurts to run against Congress – especially if that's where your popular 2010 primary opponent hails from – Perry also took aim at the federal government on numerous fronts.

He called the Federal Emergency Management Agency an inefficient agency that allows "our citizens to shiver in a tent or sweat in the sun as Washington drags its heels." He said Texans live with a dangerous and porous border fed by a "leadership void created by Washington, D.C."

And he warned of an Environmental Protection Agency, "whose potential to harm our state with punitive actions will only increase in the months and years to come."

#### Other requests

He called for more money on disaster relief and border security and a \$5,000 rebate for those who live in polluted cities and buy hybrid, plug-in cars. He also proposed reducing regulations on energy development that could include as many as six nuclear power plants.

Some of his ideas will be considered, but others have little chance, said Sen. Royce West, D-Dallas.

"He is the governor and he is up for election next year, and he has a right to do that, but we need to make certain that we understand what was political, intended to help his campaign, as opposed to the real priorities for the citizens of Texas," West said.

With the budget tight this year and economic forecasts grim, Perry could offer families limited help, but he did throw his support behind a college tuition freeze, sponsored by Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, that would hold costs for entering freshman. He also suggested adding \$110 million to state scholarships and \$28 million for financial aid for community college students.

"Once he got past the red meat that he wanted to throw out for his primary, he had some ideas that resonated with me," said Rep. Rafael Anchia, D-Dallas.

Rep. Warren Chisum, R-Pampa, who has served as chairman of the budget-writing Appropriations Committee, said the speech was filled with "low-ball projects" that the Legislature will quibble over, accept or defeat.

The State of the State address, as it always has, served the governor's purpose and sent an overall message to the Legislature, he said. "It moves us in the general direction that not to just rest on our laurels; it's get your butt up and get to work," Chisum said.

*Staff writer Terrence Stutz contributed to this report.*

