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**Patrick: Property Tax Relief is My #1 Finance Priority
in the Third Called Special Session**

AUSTIN - Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick issued the following statement regarding his priorities for the Third Called Special Session of the 87th Legislative Session:

“With a state budget surplus expected to be in the billions, taxpayers must come before any new spending.

“There is much to do over the next 30-day special session. New maps must be drawn for Congress, the Senate, the House, and the State Board of Education per the Constitution. Important legislation passed by the Senate multiple times like the Fair Sports bill, that keeps boys from playing girls’ sports, must finally get to Gov. Abbott’s desk.

“However, the question I’m asked most by Senators and the public is how we will spend the surplus in our state revenues, due to our robust economy and the estimated nearly \$16 billion in federal funds coming our way, which will have strings attached on how we spend it.

“There are some interesting ideas like establishing a new fund for higher education similar to the Permanent University Fund (PUF) which would be in addition to the Higher Education Fund (HEF). But, before there is any decision on new spending programs, we must send back much of the surplus to homeowners for property tax relief and save some for the future. We must also help our small businesses avoid huge increases to their unemployment insurance tax due to record unemployment benefits paid out in 2020.

“Therefore, Senate Bill 1, by Sen. Paul Bettencourt, R-Houston, identical to Senate Bill 91, which the Texas Senate passed in the Second Special Session by a vote of 29-2, sends a large amount of our surplus money back to taxpayers before spending on any new programs. This represents a quantum shift in the way we think about spending surplus dollars. Tax relief must come first - before new spending.

“Senate Bill 2, by Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound, will address funding for our unemployment insurance fund that was drained during 2020 due to COVID-19. Normally any shortfall in the unemployment fund is passed on to businesses through unemployment insurance taxes. We should help fund a major part of the

multi-billion-dollar shortfall since our unemployment payouts went up dramatically in 2020.

“Senate Bill 3, the Fair Sports Bill, by Sen. Charles Perry, R-Lubbock, will once again address the unfairness of boys playing girls’ sports.

“Senate Bill 4, by Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston, will be the new Senate district map.

“Senate Bill 5, by Sen. Eddie Lucio, D-Brownsville, will take care of man’s best friend – dogs – and keep them safe

“I also want the Senate to explore the creation of a fund to incentivize more investment in dispatchable energy to add generation to our grid over the next several years. This is similar to what we have done in the past for water projects, the internet, and other needed infrastructure, I will ask Sen. Charles Schwertner, R-Georgetown, who passed SB 2 and SB 3 on power grid reforms in the regular legislative session, to hold hearings on the issue.

“Depending on the spending rules attached to the federal dollars, we may have an opportunity to take on several important projects during this special session. We must remember these federal dollars are our dollars. Texas taxpayers sent them to Washington, D.C. Though we face a deadline to spend the money, we must be smart about how we spend it.

“My message is simple: when state coffers have a surplus in any given year, our first priority must be to return much of it to homeowners for their property taxes and to save some for the future. Any additional spending should come only after those two priorities are addressed. Once the legislature passes the maps, we can focus on the financial issues and opportunities before us.

“As we have through the first two Special Sessions, the Texas Senate stands ready to get to work, fulfilling our obligations to the taxpayers and all the people of Texas.”

More information about Dan Patrick is available at www.DanPatrick.org.

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