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Lt. Governor David Dewhurst Issues Senate Interim Charges to the 81st Legislature

AUSTIN— Lt. Governor David Dewhurst today issued Interim Charges for committees of the Texas Senate. The study of these issues and resulting recommendations will lay the foundation for important legislation in the 82nd Legislative Session, which convenes in January 2011. Lt. Gov. Dewhurst's Interim Charges direct Senate committees to begin studying a broad array of issues that focus on job creation, economic growth, cutting taxes and limiting state spending, as well as enhancing public safety, improving public and higher education, health care, transportation and other essential services.

"This list of Interim Charges addresses issues I believe are critical to the future of our state, now and long term. I had strong input from members of the Senate, as well as citizens and many local and statewide elected officials. Most important to our state's future is continuing to create jobs for our rapidly growing population and tightening the state's fiscal belt, as well as improving the quality of life for all Texans through improvements to education, transportation and all essential services."

Lt. Governor Dewhurst's priority issues for the interim include:

Job Creation

- Review the effectiveness of state programs aimed at assisting small business growth and development.
- Review the state's efforts aimed at helping distressed areas, coastal regions and rural communities to compete in the international marketplace.
- Study and make recommendations on new and innovative ways to increase investment, employment and production in Texas agriculture.
- Study and make recommendations regarding career-focused education and workforce training programs in Texas to insure that such programs meet business and worker needs.
- Study veteran employment and veteran-owned small business issues, including the usefulness of creating a veteran-specific employment database to target job openings tailored to the skill sets of Texas' returning veterans.

(more)

Fiscal Responsibility

- Review and make recommendations regarding existing and future public debt at all levels of government in Texas, including independent school districts, cities, other local governments.
- Review the effect that Texas Business Tax credits have on economic development in Texas. Determine whether the costs of various tax credits would be adequately offset by the net increase in state sales tax and other revenues and jobs produced by each credit.
- Identify and evaluate potential improvements to the property tax system.
- Study the impact of changing the constitutional and statutory spending limit based on the sum of the rate of population growth and the rate of inflation.

Health Care

- Study the impact of the federal health care legislation on Texas.
- Study policies that promote the use of best practices by health care providers including the best way to report and distribute information on quality of care and the use of best practices to the public and to promote health care provider and payment incentives that will encourage the use of best practices. Assess the best way to bring provider groups together to increase quality of care, the use of best practices, and reduce unnecessary services.
- Study the state's current and long-range need for physicians, nurses, dentists and other allied health and long-term care professionals.
- Study and make recommendations on the state's role for facilitating the exchange of health care information in the future.
- Review the timeliness and efficiency of the Health and Human Service Commission's eligibility system.
- Study the state's ability to appropriately respond to the H1N1 influenza pandemic by examining issues related to vaccine distribution and capacity.

A complete list of Lt. Governor Dewhurst's Interim Charges for the Senate are available for public viewing online at <http://www.ltgov.state.tx.us> or <http://www.senate.state.tx.us>.

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