



## Governor Abbott Delivers State of the State Addresses before the Partnership, Outlines Session Priorities

Greater Houston Partnership hosted Governor Greg Abbott for the State of the State address on Thursday, Feb. 26 at the Westin Galleria Hotel. This was Greg Abbott's first visit to Houston since being sworn in as the 48<sup>th</sup> Governor of Texas in January. He shared his vision and plans for the state of Texas and outlined his priorities for the current state legislative session, including five emergency items.

Governor Abbott, a Houstonian, began his speech by noting "it's good to be back in Houston." He continued, "and as your governor, I'm proud to report, the state of Texas is strong and we're about to make it even stronger."



"As we focus on the current legislative session, Governor Abbott and the Partnership are closely aligned on several key issues," noted Bob Harvey, Partnership President and CEO, during his introduction of the Governor. Early education is both Governor Abbott's first emergency item and the top legislative priority for the Partnership. "Our goal should be to ensure all Texas students are performing at grade level in reading and math by the time they finish the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade," said Abbott. During her welcome remarks, Gina Luna, Partnership Chair said, "With respect to Pre-K, we appreciate Governor Abbott's leadership and focus on this issue and applaud his decision to designate Pre-k funding an emergency item for the legislature."

The governor also listed higher education research incentives as his second emergency item — noting the need to attract top minds to increase the prestige of the state's public research universities, including the University of Houston, as well as to support community colleges in producing highly paid skilled workers, the focus of the Partnership's *UpSkill Houston* initiative.

Transportation funding, another one of the governor's emergency items, is also top of mind for Houstonians. "My budget adds more than \$4 billion a year to build more roads in Texas without raising taxes, fees, tolls or debt." According to the Governor's budget, this funding comes from three places. One is the funding received from Prop 1. Two, it ends diversions of state highway funds. And third, the plan constitutionally dedicates half of the existing motor vehicle sales tax to fund roads.

Supporting Texas' dynamic economy with economic and skills development incentives during the current oil-related downturn is also a key focus of both the Governor and the Greater Houston Partnership.