



## Texas Economy: Opportunity and Optimism

By U.S. Sen. John Cornyn

Texas was settled by men and women seeking a new life and a chance to own property and be successful. It is reassuring, in a time of rapid change everywhere, that at least one factor remains constant—Texas is still the land of economic opportunity.

Across the U.S., we're enjoying economic expansion. But even by national standards, the Texas economy is really humming. More than 200,000 new jobs have been created here in the last year alone. Unemployment is now at 4.1 percent—its lowest level in more than thirty years.

And we're growing. In 2000, there were 20.9 million Texans. Now there are nearly 24 million, and we've passed California as the population growth leader. Of the 10 fastest-growing big U.S. cities, five (San Antonio, Fort Worth, Houston, Austin and Dallas) are in Texas. The border region is also expanding rapidly.

Most important, a net half-million new Texans have moved here from other states in the last seven years. At a time when the entire country is prosperous, Texas is increasingly viewed as the best place to live, raise a family, work and retire.

This rapid growth raises new issues, especially strain on schools, highways and environmental quality. But working together, Texans are up to the challenge of maintaining and improving our lives.

Our continuing success is due to the hard work of millions of people—both native Texans and others who have chosen to make our great state home. Government in Texas has traditionally been limited, staying out of the way and allowing Texans maximum freedom to innovate and create jobs.

When taxes are also kept low, the result is a favorable climate for business investment and job creation. Texas is prominent among states heeding that lesson. Our booming national and state economies have gained momentum by low-tax policies in effect during recent years.

Lower taxes also mean that individuals decide how to spend their wages and salaries—not government. Individuals make better decisions that help create productive jobs and economic growth.

For 30 years, the Texas state government has maintained a bipartisan Texas Sunset Advisory commission to keep an eye on public programs. The commission periodically sifts through state programs, commissions, boards, and agencies to make certain each is working efficiently. In some cases, it recommends termination of a program deemed to be no longer necessary.

I've introduced legislation to bring that same concept to our federal government. I believe Washington could learn valuable lessons from our Texas success in keeping government efficient, while making it more open and transparent at the same time.

Our state is also reaping major benefits from a landmark tort reform bill approved by the state legislature in 2003. With common sense limits on awards, doctors are returning to underserved areas and entrepreneurs are investing with renewed confidence.

Obviously, Texas doesn't have all the answers, or a monopoly on good ideas. But our continuing positive growth and prosperity is not an accident. Learning from our success would help bring continued economic expansion, and hope, across the country.

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