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Texans Want to Move Forward, Not Backward

Budget coalition's plan unworthy of boldest and grandest state

(AUSTIN, Texas)—F. Scott McCown, executive director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities, released the following statement today regarding Texans for a Conservative Budget Coalition's "Real Texas Budget Solutions: 2013 and Beyond."

"Slashing budgets even deeper than we just did in 2011 is not the path to prosperity for our state. Instead, increasing our investment in education is the way forward. Between 2000 and 2010, the child population of the United States grew by about two million children, and *over half of them were Texans*. Our economy benefits from having so many young people—if we teach them the skills they need. Reducing high school dropouts and increasing college graduates, though, requires expanding opportunity in our public schools, community colleges, and state universities, not retrenching.

"Dodging responsibility is not what Texans do. When a neighbor needs help, Texans step up. We ensure a helping hand to children, people with disabilities, the elderly, and the temporarily down and out. Texans do not want to see our child protection system, our mental health system, our nursing homes and community care systems, our health care system, and other social services starved for adequate funding.

"Of course, Texans are tight with a dollar. Texas continually ranks near the bottom of the states in spending. To put in perspective how conservative Texas budgets really are, our state would have to increase state spending by 27 percent just to reach *average* state spending per resident. Any claim that Texas is spending too much or spending is growing too fast is simply false.

"Twenty-five years ago Texas faced a revenue problem as serious as our current dilemma. The state responded responsibly by increasing revenue, setting the stage for major reforms through the following years to our prison system, our education system, and our state's social safety net. The coalition's selection of 1990 as the benchmark year from which to measure budget growth ignores these achievements—essentially comparing today to the Wild West.

"Our state's real problem is an antiquated tax system and an unaffordable 2006 school property tax cut, which left the state with a \$10 billion biennium structural deficit. Fortunately, with a trillion dollar economy, we have reasonable choices for increasing state revenue to meet the needs of our growing state. For example, we can repeal certain outmoded tax breaks, increase taxes on alcohol and tobacco, and modernize our sales tax base by including certain services. Even after taking these steps, Texas will remain a low-tax state, but with additional revenue to meet our needs."

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