



# Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

## Texas Press Release

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### For Immediate Release

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## "SECEDING FROM REALITY"

*"Like the last governor of the last Southern state, Rick Perry is seceding from reality. During the Civil War, governors took up the shield of "states rights" to protect a society based on slavery. In Perry's war with President Obama, he does it to shield America from the reality here in Texas."*

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Like the last governor of the last Southern state, Rick Perry is seceding from reality. During the Civil War, governors took up the shield of "states rights" to protect a society based on slavery. In Perry's war with President Obama, he does it to shield America from the reality here in Texas.

What is Rick Perry's reality?

After a decade under Perry, Texas is last in the number of people who have a high school degree and near last in average SAT scores. Texas is second in population only to California; yet Texas doesn't have a single public university in the top forty while California has five. Perry's own Select Commission on Higher Education and Global Competitiveness declared that:

*"Texas is not globally competitive. The state faces a downward spiral in both quality of life and economic competitiveness if it fails to educate more of its growing population (both young and adults) to higher levels of attainment, knowledge and skills."*

Texans breathe air with more carcinogens than citizens of any other state. Perry's highway department is broke; within two years, by admission of Perry's former chief of staff, now chair of the highway department, the department will have no money to build new roads.

On the streets of Texas, predatory lenders now charge Texas families interest rates of 1100% per year.

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Over the last few days, in the sharp glare of national headlines on health reform, Perry's health record has become a national scandal. By percentage and number, Texas has more uninsured than any state in America, with one out of four Texans lacking health insurance. In some Texas counties, up to 40% have no health insurance. Contrary to the claims of some, even if non-citizens (who include legal residents as well as undocumented immigrants) were removed from the statewide estimate, Texas would still have the highest uninsured rate in the country with 4.1 million uninsured citizens.

One in six uninsured American children resides in Rick Perry's Texas. In 2003, Perry cut over 200,000 kids from the state's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Over the course of his tenure, rather than insure more kids with the \$958 million that the federal government specifically set aside for Texas to expand CHIP, Perry sent those taxpayer dollars back to Washington, D.C. so that other states like Illinois could use those dollars to provide coverage to all of their children. In 2009, when 29 of 31 Texas Senators voted to expand CHIP, Perry said he'd veto the bill.

Our state ranks in the bottom ten in the U.S. when it comes to the number of physicians, dentists and nurses per capita. Here in El Paso, with thousands of new troops on the way to Ft. Bliss, we struggle to provide care with fewer doctors and nurses per capita than any large city in the country.

Due to the lowest reimbursement rates in the U.S., nursing homes are leaving Texas just as baby boomers seek care. After years of opposition to basic public health education, Texas is second in the U.S. in teen pregnancies.

When it comes to care for our most vulnerable Texans, all 13 of Texas' state schools for the mentally retarded have been under a Department of Justice investigation for systemic abuse and neglect. "Fight clubs" at the Corpus Christi State School, where staff pitted residents against one another, recently made headlines on CNN.

That is the reality of Rick Perry's Texas today. When change is on the way, Perry talks of suing the U.S. government to stop it. Here's what he said in recent radio interview:

*"I think you'll hear states and governors standing up and saying 'no' to this type of encroachment on the states with their healthcare. So my hope is that we never have to have that stand-up. But I'm certainly willing and ready for the fight if this administration continues to try to force their very expansive government philosophy down our collective throats."*

What philosophy was Perry talking about? President Obama's plan to provide health care coverage to every American, even Texans.

Who benefits from Rick Perry's reality? In Texas today, three of the most expensive hospitals in the U.S. rake in profits, with charges that are almost three times the national average. Brownsville Medical Center was #8. From El Paso, Sierra Medical Center was #37 and Providence Memorial Hospital was #46. All three are owned by Tenet Healthcare Corporation.

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Is Tenet's priority patient care or maximizing profits? Let's look at some numbers. The average cost of cardiac care at Providence Memorial Hospital is more than \$15,000 per day, and at Sierra Medical Center, it's more than \$18,000 per day. At University Medical Center of El Paso—the "public option"—it's less than \$4,000 per day. In other words, these Tenet-owned hospitals charge about four times what the public hospital charges. And that's why Tenet spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to kill our new Children's Hospital, another "public option."

Rick Perry's Texas is also home to health insurance companies for whom record profit, not better patient care, is the prime value. Health insurance premiums have risen substantially over the last decade. From 1996 to 2006, the cost of family coverage in Texas increased 85.7%. Over the same time period, our incomes increased just 8.6%. With premiums growing 10 times faster than incomes, coverage becomes less affordable for more and more Texans every year.

Why do Texans let this happen? After nine years of Perry, most have given up hope. Texas now ranks 45th in voter participation. People just quit believing that their votes can make a difference.

Now, it's up to us—if you want better health care, now is the time to act. Write a letter. Go door to door. Call your Congressman. Let America know that Rick Perry does not speak for you.

Texans deserve better than Rick Perry's reality.

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