

El Paso's
Five Star Agenda
2005
Overview

Our 'Border' is home to a proud and resilient people who live in fast growing communities, work hard to educate their children and are full of hope for a prosperous future, which is the heart of the American Dream. Today, that dream is distant. The Texas Borderlands has long been one of America's poorest regions. If the 43 counties of the Texas Border Region made up a "51st U.S. state," it would rank first in the nation for its poverty rate and last in educational attainment.

Texas' "low-tax, low-service ideology," denies opportunity, lowers standards for quality education, and destroys access to health care for millions of low and middle-income Texans, especially Hispanics, who will comprise the majority of the Texas population by 2025. This systematic and institutional denial of opportunity and services in basic programs like public education that have created the foundation of prosperity and success for generations of working families throughout America's history represents an era of "*The Two Texas*es." In this new era, an elite few grow and prosper by virtue of diversion of tax dollars from critical services and the other where the vast majority of Texans meet challenges placed in their path because radical leaders value tax cuts over kids, budget cuts over the elderly, and government for the few at the expense of the many.

Texas' record is reflected in the chart *Texas on the Brink*, on the following page, which shows Texas' ranking among the 50 states. Our state ranked 49th in general per capita expenditures, preceding Florida, and near the bottom among states in the U.S. on a number of key indicators reflecting education, health care and quality of life.

Texas on the Brink

(1st = Highest, 50th = Lowest)

Percentage of Population without Health Insurance	1st
Amount of Toxic and Cancerous Manufacturing Emissions	1st
Percentage of Home Refinance Loans that are Subprime Mortgage Loans	1st
Income Gap Between Rich and Poor	8th
High School Completion Rate	50th
State Aid Per Pupil	41st
Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Scores	48th
Percentage of Homeowners	45th
Public Health Expenditures Per Capita	45th
State Expenditures Per Capita	49th

These are the scenarios that are created when the level of government services is determined by revenues derived from one of the nation's most regressive tax schemes. Texas is one of seven states that does not have a state income tax. As a result, Texas ranks 49th in the nation on tax revenue raised.

Today, our state is at a crossroads. Texans must demand a government that invests in a "21st century educational excellence." It is time for a government that invests in great schools and opens the doors to great universities, not colleges where the middle class can no longer attend because of tuition hikes. We must keep the promise of the American Dream that every generation can be more prosperous than the last. Each of us must affirm basic principles of opportunities and justice and fight a future where only a wealthy few succeed and the vast majority are left behind by a government led by those for whom tax cuts are more important than Texans. Only then will our state truly shine as the beacon of hope, freedom and opportunity for every Texan.