

January 12, 2005

VIA REGULAR MAIL

Dear Citizens:

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.

We in Texas, especially we in El Paso, must demand a government that invests in "21st Century Texas Educational Excellence". In addition, we must insist on great universities where students are educated, and a healthcare system where there is basic access to healthcare. In El Paso, almost half the children have no health insurance. As a result, we must insist on a bold agenda of investment in our people and our future.

Our El Paso Five Star Agenda sets forth a clear investment strategy for our people and our region. Here are the essential elements of our plan:

- Fund \$61 million for Texas Tech University (TTU) faculty at El Paso's four-year Medical School
- Fund \$7 million TTU Tuition Revenue Bonds (TRB) Debt Service to pay for Medical and Research buildings for El Paso's four-year Medical School
- Restore CHIP and Medicaid programs to the levels immediately preceding the 78th Regular Legislative Session when funding of these programs was cut
- Increase health insurance coverage and evaluate existing program resources to ensure that they are maximized and coordinated
- Address the problems plaguing the Children's Protective Services and Adult Protective Services systems by providing the Department of Family and Protective Services with

adequate resources and legislation to protect vulnerable children and adults in our state

- Secure El Paso's Inner Loop to enhance Fort Bliss' projection platform and Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) rating
- Eliminate predatory lending practices
- Promote financial literacy by developing financial education programs through legislation
- Protect El Paso's water interests on rule of capture and interbasin transfers

Our delegation will work together to pass legislation and riders that are essential to this plan. Over the last five sessions, we made significant progress on the very elements of this plan, especially our great, new four year medical school. By working together, setting forth a clear vision for the future, and insisting on investment in our people, we can truly shine as the beacon of hope, freedom, and opportunity for every El Pasoan.

Very truly yours,

Eliot Shapleigh