



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Collin Z. Allred
U.S. Representative, District 32

The Honorable Joaquin Castro
U.S. Representative, District 20

The Honorable Henry Cuellar
U.S. Representative, District 28

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
U.S. Representative, District 35

The Honorable Veronica Escobar
U.S. Representative, District 16

The Honorable Lizzie Fletcher
U.S. Representative, District 7

The Honorable Sylvia R. Garcia
U.S. Representative, District 29

The Honorable Vicente Gonzalez
U.S. Representative, District 15

The Honorable Al Green
U.S. Representative, District 9

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee
U.S. Representative, District 18

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
U.S. Representative, District 30

The Honorable Marc Veasey
U.S. Representative, District 33

The Honorable Filemon Vela
U.S. Representative, District 34

Dear Congressional Members:

I am in receipt of your May 13, 2020, letter, and we are in agreement on several points. As public servants, we “must look for ways to ensure Texans can save some money in order to use it for other much-needed purposes at this critical time.” “There is no greater need than taking care of the hard working people of Texas and assuring (sic.) our business community survives and continues to thrive after this pandemic is over.” It is “essential that we lessen the burden on those we serve to the extent we can.” Increasing the tax “burden on our people is the wrong path forward.”

However, I strongly disagree with you on one key point. While you “believe in raising property taxes when times are good,” I do not. We have a fundamental disagreement on this point. Just because times are good does not mean the government needs to take more hard-earned money from Texans.

To that end, I strongly encourage local governments to adopt property tax rates that will not result in an increase in the tax burden. This power is wholly within their control. As you know,

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local governments—not the State of Texas—set the property tax rates, and they are the ones responsible for an increase (or, ideally, decrease) in property taxes. The state, for example, took the unprecedented step last year in reducing school property tax rates, and requiring those rates to continue to decline as property values increase.

Property taxes aside, I do hope that you will help pass legislation to protect business owners, health care facilities and employees, and first responders from being held liable for COVID-19 exposure claims when they adhere to relevant public health guidelines and make good faith efforts to limit the risk of exposure and infection. Such legislation is supported by many Texans, including myself, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, and Speaker Bonnen, and would ensure our business community survives and continues to thrive after this pandemic is over.

Getting people back to work in a safe manner is incredibly important, and vital to our continued success as a state. Providing this liability protection will help encourage businesses to open and follow the best practice protocols to keep our communities safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Abbott".

Greg Abbott
Governor

GA:whk