

Governor-elect Abbott Announces Staff, Outlines Priorities For Session

AUSTIN- Texas Governor-elect Greg Abbott today announced personnel to fill key staff positions in his incoming administration, in addition to outlining his priorities for the upcoming legislative session, which include education, border security, economic expansion and tax reduction.

“On Election Night, I made a promise to the people of Texas to begin work immediately to keep Texas the beacon of opportunity and the best state in the nation. A promise is worth little without the right plan and the right people to turn that plan into action,” said Abbott. “I have outlined a Blueprint for an even better Texas of tomorrow, and I am proud to have an experienced leadership team with the proven skills and the deep commitment needed to make my promises a reality. We are ready to get to work on Day One to ensure greater opportunity for all Texans.”

Staff Positions Announced By Governor-elect Abbott:

Judge Carlos Cascos, Secretary of State*
Daniel Hodge, Chief of Staff
Julia Rathgeber, Deputy Chief of Staff
Robert Allen, Deputy Chief of Staff
Kara Belew, Budget Director
Jimmy Blacklock, General Counsel
Amelia Chassé, Press Secretary
Lauren Clay, Senior Advisor to the Governor for the Office of First Lady
Reed Clay, Senior Advisor
Drew DeBerry, Policy Director
Jay Dyer, Deputy Legislative Director
Randy Erben, Legislative Director
Matt Hirsch, Communications Director
Erin Hodges, Special Assistant to the Governor
Chelsea Holden, Senior Advisor to the First Lady
Tracye McDaniel, President of the Texas Economic Development Corp.
Stacey Napier, Director of Administration
Luis Saenz, Appointments Director
Kim Snyder, Director of Scheduling and Advance
Jerry Strickland, Executive Director of Office of State and Federal Relations*

Biographies:

Judge Carlos Cascos, Secretary of State – Carlos Cascos is the current Cameron County Judge, a position he was elected to in 2006. Judge Cascos is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Government Financial Manager, and a Diplomat of the American Board of Forensic Accounting. Prior to becoming Cameron County's top elected official,

Judge Cascos was a member of the Texas Public Safety Commission, which oversees the Texas Department of Public Safety, a Cameron County Commissioner for 12 years, and was actively involved in many civic organizations. Born in Matamoros, Mexico, Judge Cascos became a permanent resident of the United States and then a citizen when he was an adolescent. *(NOTE: This appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.)

Daniel Hodge, Chief of Staff – Daniel Hodge currently serves as Texas' First Assistant Attorney General and, more recently, as head of Governor-elect Abbott's transition team. A graduate of Davidson College and later the University of Texas Law School, Hodge first joined the Office of the Attorney General shortly after Attorney General Abbott took office in 2003. In his capacity as First Assistant Attorney General, Hodge was responsible for managing and leading the more than 4,000-employee agency. Hodge is a native Texan who grew up in Fort Worth and has lived in Austin since 2001.

Julia Rathgeber, Deputy Chief of Staff – Julia Rathgeber is the current Commissioner of the Texas Department of Insurance. Rathgeber formerly served as Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, director of research for the Texas General Land Office, and director of the strategic assessment division for the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, now the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Rathgeber is a member of the State Bar of Texas and received a bachelor's degree and law degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Rathgeber will resign her current position effective Jan. 20th to begin her service in the Office of the Governor.

Robert Allen, Deputy Chief of Staff – Robert Allen is Deputy Chief of Staff at the Office of the Attorney General, where he assists with the administration of the more than 4,000-employee agency. He has served Governor-elect Abbott since 2003. A native Texan, Allen earned a bachelors degree from The University of Texas at Austin.

Kara Belew, Budget Director – Kara Belew is Senior Counsel at the Office of the Attorney General and previously served as a Public Education Advisor in the Budget, Planning and Policy Office of the Governor under Gov. Rick Perry. Belew is a member of the State Bar of Texas and received a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin.

Jimmy Blacklock, General Counsel – Jimmy Blacklock is Texas' Deputy Attorney General for Legal Counsel, having previously served as Special Assistant and Senior Counsel to the Office of the Attorney General and as Assistant Solicitor General. Blacklock also served as Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights under former President George W. Bush and worked in private practice in Austin and Houston. He holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and Yale Law School.

Amelia Chassé, Press Secretary – Amelia Chassé served as Deputy Communications Director for Governor-elect Abbott's gubernatorial campaign. She was previously a Vice President at Hynes Communications, a new media communications consultancy, and has staffed presidential and statewide campaigns. Chassé holds a bachelors degree from

the George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Lauren Clay, Senior Advisor to the Governor for the Office of First Lady – Lauren Bean Clay currently serves as the Deputy Communications Director at the Office of the Attorney General, a position she assumed in 2010 after serving as Communications Director to U.S. Representative Michael Burgess, MD, and Deputy Press Secretary for U.S. Senator John Cornyn. A native Texan, Clay is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin.

Reed Clay, Senior Advisor – Reed Clay currently serves as Senior Counsel to the Attorney General, having previously served as Texas' Assistant Solicitor General. Prior to his service to the State of Texas, Clay was a litigator for the U.S. Department of Justice. A native Texan, Clay is a graduate of Wake Forest University and the Duke University School of Law.

Drew DeBerry, Policy Director – Drew DeBerry currently serves as Deputy Commissioner of the Texas Department of Agriculture, a position he has held since 2007. DeBerry was the national agriculture coalition director of President George W. Bush's 2000 campaign and subsequently served as White House Liaison and then Deputy Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He was a legislative fellow in former State Senator Robert Duncan's office during the 76th Legislative Session. DeBerry is a native of Olton, TX and holds a degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics from Texas Tech University.

Jay Dyer, Deputy Legislative Director – Jay Dyer currently serves as Deputy Attorney General for Intergovernmental Relations at the Office of the Attorney General, having previously served Governor-elect Abbott as Special Assistant and Senior Counsel to the Attorney General. Prior to joining the Office of the Attorney General in 2008, Dyer was General Counsel at the Office of the Secretary of State. A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in government, Dyer also received his law degree from the University of Texas Law School.

Randy Erben, Legislative Director – Randy Erben served as Assistant Secretary of State and then Director of the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations under former Gov. Bill Clements before founding Erben & Yarbrough, a private law practice based in Austin. He holds a bachelors' degree from Princeton University and a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin.

Matt Hirsch, Communications Director – Matt Hirsch served as Communications Director for Governor-elect Abbott's gubernatorial campaign. He is a former Press Secretary for Lt. Governor David Dewhurst and has served in various communications roles on Presidential, U.S. Senate and gubernatorial campaigns. Hirsch is a graduate of the George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Erin Hodges, Special Assistant to the Governor – Erin Hodges is the Policy Director and

Senior Advisor at the Office of the Attorney General. After attending Southwest Texas State University, Erin began her career in former State Representative Ron Clark's Capitol office and served as Chief of Staff for Texas State Representative Linda Harper-Brown for multiple legislative sessions. She joined the Office of the Attorney General as a Special Assistant for Policy and Research in 2007.

Chelsea Holden, Senior Advisor to the First Lady – Chelsea Holden served as First Lady-elect Cecilia Abbott's personal aide throughout the gubernatorial campaign. Prior to joining the campaign, Holden was the director of marketing at Harden Healthcare. Holden formerly worked as a staff assistant at the White House and the Department of Defense during President George W. Bush's administration. Holden is a graduate of Southern Methodist University.

Tracye McDaniel, President of the Texas Economic Development Corporation – Tracye McDaniel is returning to Texas from New Jersey, where she was recruited by Gov. Chris Christie and top business leaders to head the state's private business recruitment and investment efforts due to her extensive experience and track record of success in economic development. McDaniel previously served as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP), as Executive Director of the Office of the Governor's Economic Development and Tourism Division, where she spearheaded award-winning economic development and tourism operations for the State of Texas, and as CEO for the Texas Economic Development Corporation's "Texas One" Program. A native of Waco, TX, McDaniel holds leadership positions in numerous professional and industry organizations and is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin.

Stacey Napier, Director of Administration – Stacey Napier is Texas' Deputy Attorney General for Administration, where she oversees the eight administrative divisions within the Office of the Attorney General. She has served in the Attorney General's office since 2003, previously occupying the positions of Deputy Attorney General for Government and External Affairs and Senior Counsel to the Attorney General. She also formerly served as a chief of staff and legislative director in the Texas Senate. A graduate of Louisiana State University, Stacey earned her law degree from Southern Methodist University.

Luis Saenz, Appointments Director – Luis Saenz is a former Assistant Secretary of State for the State of Texas and senior advisor to Gov. Rick Perry. Following his service in the administration, he founded and served as managing partner of Saenz Public Affairs before joining McGuireWoods Consulting as senior vice president for State Government Relations. Saenz began his career at the Heritage Foundation. A native of South Texas, Saenz is a graduate of St. Mary's University in San Antonio.

Kim Snyder, Director of Scheduling and Advance – Kim Snyder served as Deputy Campaign Manager on Governor-elect Abbott's gubernatorial campaign, a position she

assumed following more than five years as Director of Scheduling and Advance for Gov. Rick Perry. Previously, she served in the administration of President George W. Bush as Director of Scheduling and Advance for U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development under Secretary Alphonso Jackson.

Jerry Strickland, Executive Director of the Office of State and Federal Relations – Jerry Strickland currently serves as Director of Communications for the Office of the Attorney General, and has served as spokesman and advisor for Governor-elect Abbott since 2003. Previously, Strickland was a reporter and anchor for CBS and ABC news affiliates in Texas and other states. Strickland is a graduate of the University of Mississippi. *(NOTE: This appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.)