



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

RICK PERRY
GOVERNOR

November 22, 2013

Dear

Texas is the most successful state in the nation and a model of limited, citizen-led government because people like you are willing to serve and devote your time on appointed boards and commissions.

You have taken a solemn oath to faithfully execute the duties of your appointed office and preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and laws of Texas and the United States.

Executive branch appointees play critical oversight and governance roles to protect public funds, ensure quality management, recommend sound policies and enhance transparency and the public trust. Appointees are duty-bound to ask the hard questions.

Some of you have expressed concerns that you should limit your oversight roles given the potential implications of the House Select Committee on Transparency, which is monitoring "the conduct of individuals appointed to the offices of the executive branch of state government, including university regents, to ensure that such officers are acting in the best interest of the agencies and institutions they govern."

Let me assure you that your oversight role is critical to the proper functioning of our state government, and our system of citizen-government depends on appointed board members acting in the best interest of Texas taxpayers, citizens and students, even when it makes state agencies or institutions uncomfortable.

One need only to recall a few high profile incidents to underscore the need for proper oversight of agencies and institutions by its citizen boards:

- In 2006, a former Texas Southern University President and two associates were indicted for misappropriating more than half a million dollars from TSU, including \$40,000 spent on china, and more than \$200,000 on furniture and landscaping for the

president's home. The president was ultimately fired by the board of regents. This ultimately resulted in the resignations of all nine regents for their failure to provide appropriate oversight. The state also put several million dollars in funding for the school on hold until proper fiscal controls were put in place.

- In 2007, rape accusations against some guards at the Texas Youth Commission ultimately forced the agency into conservatorship, thus relieving the governing board of its duties and leading in 2011 to legislative action to merge TYC with the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission creating the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. That agency still suffers consequences from the transparency issues of 2007.
- In 2009, charges were filed against employees at the Texas State School in Corpus Christi for organizing "fight club" brawls between residents with mental disabilities. Some employees eventually pled guilty to causing injury to the residents. Four years later the state continues to work under a federal court settlement agreement to improve the system.
- In 2011, the Penn State child sex abuse scandal broke, resulting in assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky's ultimate conviction on 45 counts of sexual abuse. The scandal enveloped several Penn State top officials and has cost the school more than \$50 million in fines, legal bills and other costs linked to the scandal.

While these incidents are not the norm, they underscore the importance of oversight boards asking tough questions of agency officials and holding them responsible for fixing problems.

When state employees and agencies resist, stonewall or seek to prevent questions from being asked or answered, Texans should be deeply troubled. Our elected representatives should be outraged when a state agency resists answering tough questions.

Most gubernatorial appointees serve on a voluntary basis with great fiduciary and governing responsibility to the taxpayers and citizens of our state. Unfortunately, the message from some in the Legislature to the citizens who oversee state agencies seems to be: exercise your legal and fiduciary responsibility at your own risk.

I am deeply appreciative of your service to Texas and ask you to continue to do your job in a responsible manner, acting within the law, protecting tax dollars and asking hard questions of our state agencies, even when that makes some uncomfortable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Perry". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rick Perry
Governor