

It's great to be an American. It's great to be a Texan. It's great to be the first woman Comptroller.

But it doesn't get better than being here today with men and women who know that now is the time for historic and fundamental change in our great state.

You know that Texans cannot afford another four years of a governor who promises tax relief and delivers nothing --- who promises to fix our failing schools and fails himself.

You know that this Governor's administration has increased spending to its highest level ever --- while dollars going to our children and our teachers are at their lowest level ever.

And you know that Texas property belongs to Texans, not foreign companies.

We will not sit quietly by and let this Governor embark on the most historic land grab in history and cram toll roads down our throats.

This is not the Texas way, and it cannot continue.

Texas is great, but we can do better.

Now is time to replace this do-nothin' Drugstore Cowboy with One Tough Grandma.

I am Carole Keeton Strayhorn and I stand before you today as a Republican candidate for Governor in 2006.

**It is time for a change. It is time to send Governor Perry packin'.**

**I am a fiscal conservative.**

**I am a common sense conservative.**

**I am not a weak leadin', ethics ignorin', pointin' the finger at everyone blamin', special session callin', public school slashin', slush fund spendin', toll road buildin', special interest panderin', rainy day fund raidin', fee increasin', no property tax cuttin', promise breakin', do-nothin' Rick Perry phony conservative.**

**Texas is great but we can do better.**

This Governor is AWOL – absent without leadership.  
This is a Governor who is out of line and out of time.

**We can and we must do better.**

We can and we must lower our property taxes.

We can and we must bring special interest, slush fund spending to a screeching halt.

We can and we must be more efficient and more compassionate.

We can and we must be leaner --- not meaner.

We can and we must provide high paying, high skilled jobs for all Texans --- by educating our children and keeping them healthy.

We can and we must build freeways that are freeways, not toll roads.

We can and we must stop Perry's pay to play --- 184 billion dollar boondoggle --- his Trans Texas Corridor, more accurately known as his Trans Texas Catastrophe.

We can and we must trust Texans and give them Initiative and Referendum so the people, not professional politicians, can determine their own future. **Let the people vote.**

**We can and we must change the leadership at the top and make Texas better.**

Make no mistake. I am on a mission – a mission singular in its definition and definitive in its cause.

I am a common-sense conservative, and I am a common sense leader who understands that now is the time to make history.

Now is the time to reach out to one another.

Now is the time to say out loud that the challenges that face this great state are too important to ignore and too critical to let the differences of yesterday divide us today or tomorrow.

Twenty-five years ago, President Reagan challenged Americans to make a fundamental change in our national government. Today, I challenge Texans to make a fundamental change in our state government: Now is the time. If not now, when? If not us, who?

Youngest Woman Mayor

One Tough Grandma

My greatest accomplishment – my 4 grown sons

My greatest joy, 5 young granddaughters

My Mom and my Dad, Madge and Page Keeton were and are my true-life heroes. I've lost them both now.

But I was blessed with a family that believed in people, problem solving, and being where the action is.

Dad taught the law. Mom was the law.

We learned on the home front—it's not the dollars you make; it's the difference you make.

Dad also told me from a very early age—Carole, if you don't have somebody mad at you, you probably haven't done anything. I've thought about that a lot over the last two years, as my very open, honest, and passionate disagreements with Governor Perry have become the cornerstone of the debate over the future of our state.

The challenges this state faces are incredible, but not insurmountable. We must look for common ground, embrace one another—and agree that the divides of yesterday must not cloud our judgment and our resolve to make tomorrow better.

My vision for Texas –Paychecks and jobs for Texans.

Limited government/unlimited opportunity.

What we need from government is less – not more

Less mandates

Less regulations

Less government spending

Less taxation

As governor, I will do more with less. Rick Perry does less with more.

I believe in applying my **yellow pages** test across state government. Government should do no job if there is a business in the yellow pages that can do that job better and at a lower cost.

The chief role of government in the economy is to create incentives for work, savings and investment – and any program, regulatory, spending or tax which interferes with that mission ought to be blasted off the bureaucratic books.

I am a “tell it like it is” person.

**I believe in government in the sunshine, no hidden agendas – I tell the people of Texas the truth.**

I was telling the truth two sessions ago when I said the budget did not balance.

I was telling the truth when I said this Governor who bragged about a no-tax-increase budget singlely signed into law over 2.7 billion dollars in new fees, charges, and out-of-pocket expenses – and balanced the budget right on the backs of our school teachers and our most vulnerable Texans.

Because I told the people of Texas the truth, Governor Perry yanked two cost saving programs out of the independent Comptroller’s Office.

These two programs won national and international acclaim and recommended over 16 billions dollars in savings for hard-working Texans.

Because of Perry’s petty politics, this last legislature was left with no sensible and no serious cost savings ideas and Rick Perry left the Legislature with the debacle of debating the largest tax increase in Texas history.

I tell it like it is.

This state is abdicating its responsibilities in education and health care -- and ignoring state challenges is creating local crises.

Nothing is more important than education, and the mountain that **still** looms is public school reform and finance.

**We have got to give relief to local skyrocketing property taxes. The state has got to pick up more of the tab and we've got to have equity.**

Only 50 cents of every education dollar is going into classroom instruction. That's unacceptable. I want to drive more of every education dollar directly into the classroom with the students and the teachers where it belongs.

Texas teachers are under paid and under appreciated.

Turnover and dropouts are highest where teacher pay is lowest – that's costing us 13.3 billion dollars, year after year after year in this state.

I have called for and will continue to fight for a 3 K dollar pay raise across the board now for Texas teachers, with a competitive automatic pay increase every two years just to get us to the mid-way point in these United States, and we ought to be Number One.

Let's be honest we have got to say out loud that we need more dollars for education.

One billion to 2 billion dollars a year are being sucked out of Texas classrooms by racetracks in Louisiana, New Mexico and now Oklahoma. That is why I support video lottery terminals that will repatriate those dollars, those ponies, and those jobs back to our Texas classrooms --- that would more than pay for the teacher pay increase we should deliver **now**.

For three regular sessions of the Legislature and four special sessions, the one and only education plan Governor Perry has put before the people of Texas would have ---

- Increased taxes by 12.1 billion dollars, create a deficit of more than 10 billion dollars.
- It replaced “Robin Hood” with “Robbin’ Everybody.”
- It destroyed local control: Both education and taxation.

- And he even recommended partnering with sexually oriented businesses to finance public education.

As a mama and a grandmama, I don't want to tax these businesses. I want to put them out of business.

**I say this is not a sin tax, but a sleaze tax.**

**There is no shortfall when it comes to the budget, there is a shortfall when it comes to the governor's leadership.**

**A leader does not allow three regular sessions and four special sessions go by without fixing our public schools.**

**And a leader does not call a fifth special session – costing taxpayers another 1.5 million dollars – when he does not have a plan.**

**A leader does not hold our children's education hostage – and certainly would never allow even a discussion about schools not opening on time – because he can't fix what is broken.**

A leader does not intimidate or threaten. Rick Perry is no leader.

TexasNextStep

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says that by the year 2030, 60% of Texans will only have a high school diploma or less.

I say, “hogwash” to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. I have a plan. And I ran on that plan last time for re-elect. And I don't believe I was the top vote getter based on my good looks

The people of Texas support this plan. The Governor opposes this plan.

I call it **TexasNextStep** -- I want every Texas high school graduate once they get that diploma in their hands to have the opportunity to go on to two-years of a public community college or technical college – I want K through 14 to be the norm in Texas.

My goal is crystal clear—I want Texas to have the most educated workforce in the nation.

**My bottom line—I am a fiscal conservative. I am a common sense conservative.**

**I'd rather spend \$2,500 a year educating a young Texan, than \$16,000 a year incarcerating that young Texan.**

Texas is great, but we can do better.

Rick Perry says the reason he is running for re-elect is that he wants his legacy to be that he **sat** in the governor's chair for more years than anyone else. I don't sit. I do. I want my legacy to be that with every breath of air in Carole Keeton Strayhorn's lungs, she fought passionately for education, paychecks and jobs, and protecting our most precious resource our children.

We can be leaner, not meaner. Under this governor's administration, we are leaner and meaner.

Our Texas economy is number two in the world on a per capita basis, and Texas is number two in these United States with children living in poverty – 1.5 M children – we ought to be ashamed.

Texas has the highest number of at risk children with diabetes in these United States.

We are 46th in the nation in childhood immunizations.

**And Texas is dead last in children** who have health insurance in these United States. And just since September 2003, 180,450 more children have been dropped from the Children's Health Insurance Program – that's a 35.6 percent drop -- these are not welfare recipients, these are working Texans.

**That's unconscionable.**

You know and I know that these children don't simply disappear. They turn up in local emergency rooms. We effectively have taken a challenge for the state and created a crisis for the cities.

I am a fiscal conservative. I am a common sense conservative.

My bottom line– I'd rather spend \$98 a month insuring a child, than \$6,700 dollars for one hospital stay for that child.

Texas is great, but we can do better.

I am a common sense conservative who understands that now is the time to make history.

I am not advocating big government solutions to intractable problems. I believe in my Yellow Pages test.

Government cannot be all things to all people. The failures of the past have demonstrated that conclusively.

But, where we have made the decision that it is our state's responsibility to help our frail, elderly and our Texans with disabilities, to help working Texans, to help our forgotten children in foster care – and to help all 4.3 million children who are taking the first step attending our public schools and to help them take the NEXT STEP to get a college education --- we must do the best job our tax dollars and common sense will allow.

No state can be great if it casts aside any of its members.

For Texas government the message of the 21st Century is Crystal clear.

We must be leaner. We must not be meaner.

Governor Perry has said:

No to public schools desperate for leadership

No to public school teachers

No to children without health insurance

**No** to working Texans

No to property owners desperate for tax relief.

And no to voters to who want to determine their own destiny.

Sometimes it is tough to be One Tough Grandma, but One Tough Grandma is what this state needs, because even a Tough Grandma knows when it is time to say yes.

Rick Perry has promised any challenger – in his own words -- - quote -- a bloody, brutal campaign. If that is the campaign he promises to wage, bring it on. But – in my own words – I promise Texans something more: A sincere discussion, a deliberate debate about where we are and where we can and should be.

I have never been the darling of the insiders – I run with the people. I will take this debate to the people of Texas, any time, any place, anywhere.

If the promise of the future is built on the success of our children, we must do everything in our power to ensure their success.

The future Eddie Joe Strayhorn and I want for our granddaughters, Kathryn, Michelle, Ellie, Alex and 1-year-old Anna, is the future we want for all Texas children and grandchildren.

Texas belongs to no special interest group, no special political credo, no special individual – it belongs to all Texans.

I believe Texans want government that is  
free from backrooms,  
free from special interest groups,  
and free from good ol' boy go along to get along school of politics.

Our government must reflect the people of Texas—strong, proud, courageous, and caring. We must be leaner, we must not be meaner.

To guarantee prosperity for Texas, we must lift all Texans. That's the Texas I want my granddaughters to inherit. That's the Texas I believe all of us are committed to creating.

This is the burning platform. This is the moment to seize this century and make it ours. This requires vision, commitment, and the help of good people like you.

Right before the battle of San Jacinto, Sam Houston said and I quote, “We are nerved for the contest, and we must conquer or we will perish.”

I, too, am nerved for the contest. And together, we will conquer, we will not perish.

And I can assure you that as your next Governor I will continue to be “One Tough Grandma”—watching out for paychecks and jobs, watching out for education, watching out for health care,

watching out for taxpayers, watching out for our most precious resource our children and watching out for Texas!

Thank you and Godspeed.