

★ GOVERNOR'S BUSINESS COUNCIL ★

TESTIMONY OF VANCE MACMAHAN IN FAVOR OF HCR 159 (BY MORRISON)
(SENATE COMPANION SCR 47 [SHAPLEIGH] WAS VOTED FAVORABLY BY SENATE
HIGHER EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE ON APRIL 23 AND BY THE FULL SENATE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON APRIL 25)
BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE – MAY 8, 2007

► Improving Texas higher education and developing a quality workforce with the skills to compete in the 21st century is one of the highest priorities of the Governor's Business Council. The Governor's Business Council recently issued a report on Texas higher education entitled: "*Leading the Way: An Action Plan for Making Texas Higher Education Globally Competitive.*"

► As citizens and employers of the state's current and future workforce, the GBC has become increasingly concerned with declining levels of educational attainment among the State's younger population and a leaking educational pipeline that leaves far too many students without the skills they need to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy.

► Our State's 25-to 34-year-olds are the least educated group of Texans in three decades and only 13% of Texas 9th graders graduate with a degree nine years later. In addition, too many qualified low-income students never make it to college due to financial barriers.

► If these trends are not arrested and reversed, Texas will soon find itself at a serious competitive disadvantage in the global competition to develop, attract, and retain talented workers who can think smarter, work faster and generate the energy and ideas needed to improve the state's economy and overall quality of life. We need an education system that does a far better job of preparing many more Texans for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

► We support the development of a clear vision and set of goals for Texas higher education that takes advantage of our diversity and regional strengths and puts the state on a path toward true global competitiveness. This vision should be incorporated into a long term public agenda for higher education augmented by a board or council that performs high-quality research and analysis, monitors progress and sustains the vision over time.

► The "Closing the Gaps" report in 2000 took an important step in higher education reform by outlining a series of challenges and goals around increasing participation, completion, research and excellence, benchmarking against national averages. Now Texas needs to take the next step by developing a "Texas Compact" designed to not only reach the goals established in "Closing the Gaps," but to make the tough policy choices necessary to prepare Texas for the challenges of a more competitive knowledge-based economy.