

## Texas House of Representatives

November 5, 2010

Dear Colleague,

As House chairs appointed in 2009, we write to you today to express our support for Speaker Straus and advancing the conservative agenda on several critical public policy fronts.

As you know, last session Democrats were successful in shutting down the business of the House for five critical days because of their opposition to a new law requiring a photo ID in order to vote. We are committed to bringing this issue back to the floor, and passing a photo ID requirement as a protection against voter fraud.

As constitutionally mandated, we will pass a balanced budget in the upcoming session and we are committed to ensuring the state's funding priorities reflect fiscally conservative policies. Last session, under Speaker Straus' leadership, we cut general revenue spending by \$1.7 billion, cut taxes for 40,000 small businesses, and refrained from tapping the "Rainy Day Fund." Because of this budgetary discipline, we are in much better shape than most states, but our upcoming challenge is great nonetheless. The Speaker has already committed to having an introduced budget that comes within available revenue, does not raise taxes, and does not assume use of the Rainy Day Fund. We strongly support him in this approach.

With the once-a-decade requirement to redraw legislative and congressional lines, our goal is to ensure the voices and views of Texas voters are reflected in the makeup of new districts. Texas is a conservative state, the people have elected a conservative legislature, and we will draw districts that reflect the will of the people.

With so many Texans concerned about job losses, we will also be very focused on boosting our economy, and ensuring businesses are not stifled by over-taxation, excess regulation or unfair litigation. Our goal is for all willing and able Texans to be productive members of our economy going into the next decade.

Lastly, we recognize the need for stricter border enforcement and enforcement of immigration laws. We will continue to fund law enforcement operations along the border, end the practice of sanctuary cities, and support the ability of law enforcement to uphold all of our laws. The federal government has failed to act and we must do what we can.

We have an ally on all these issues in Speaker Straus. We have found him to be a staunch fiscal conservative in the model of President Reagan, whom he once served in Washington. He supports limited government, states' rights, and the common sense, conservative agenda we

have outlined in this letter, and will ensure the conservative views articulated at the ballot box on November 2<sup>nd</sup> are not only heard on the floor of the House, but voted on.

We look forward to working with you on these and other conservative issues during the 82<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session of the Legislature.

Sincerely,

Dennis Bonnen -- Chairman of Land & Resource Management

Dan Branch -- Chairman of Higher Education

Byron Cook -- Chairman of Environmental Regulation

Rob Eissler -- Chairman of Public Education

Charlie Geren -- Chairman of House Administration

Harvey Hilderbran -- Chairman of Select Committee on Special Purpose Districts

Chuck Hopson -- Chairman of General Investigating & Ethics

Todd Hunter -- Chairman of Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence

Jim Keffer -- Chairman of Energy Resources

Lois Kolkhorst -- Chairwoman of Public Health

John Otto -- Chairman of Select Committee on Fiscal Stability

Larry Phillips -- Chairman of Select Committee on Transportation Funding

Jim Pitts -- Chairman of Appropriations

Todd Smith -- Chairman of Elections

John Smithee -- Chairman of Insurance

Burt Solomons -- Chairman of State Affairs

Vicki Truitt -- Chairwoman of Pensions, Investments & Financial Services

John Zerwas -- Chairman of Select Committee on Federal Legislation



*FRED BROWN*  
*STATE REPRESENTATIVE*  
*DISTRICT 14*

STATE CAPITOL  
 P.O. BOX 2910  
 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78768-2910  
 512/463-0698  
 FAX: 512/463-5109  
 CELL: 979/492-6073  
 CAPITOL OFFICE ROOM  
 GS.06

DISTRICT  
 1920 WEST VILLA MARIA ROAD  
 SUITE 303  
 BRYAN, TEXAS 77807  
 979/822-9797  
 FAX: 979/822-7979

November 9, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

We are all witness to one of the greatest changes in America's election history. On the heels of this magnificent victory of our party, I believe it's critical to our continued majority that we carefully examine just what happened; and why.

Throughout this entire campaign season, the resounding theme we all repeatedly heard-Republican and Democrat - was a demand for fiscal responsibility. Overwhelmingly, our Democrat friends paid the price for not listening to voters. Now, our Republican majority has been entrusted to carry out the overwhelming mandate that we make government more efficient and budgets balanced. Even the immigration debate in our country centered more on economic issues than social concerns. In short, our mandate is to restore fiscally conservative policies. There was comparatively much, much less discussion on the campaign trail about socially conservative issues.

I have carefully followed the call by many of our respected conservative leaders that we elect a new Speaker when we convene in January. However, in the interest of remaining focused on overcoming Texas' \$23 billion dollar revenue shortfall, and the total rejection of fiscally liberal policies like socialized health care and stimulus spending, I urge that we all consider the peril of pursuing an overreaching agenda in the face of a clear voter mandate that we focus on restoring fiscal prosperity.

We need only examine recent history to guide us in this regard. Consider where our party was just two years ago, and how far we've come just two years later. Consider also, where the Democrats were just two years ago, and where they are today. I ask you to consider the cause and effect of these realities. If we overreach in the name of a mandate that may not exist, I fear for where our House Majority may be two years from now.

As a Member of the Texas House, I am committed to protecting life, defending the Second Amendment, restoring parental rights, and preserving the tradition of family. And, I believe we can better achieve success for such an agenda as a totally unified party behind our leadership.



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*DISTRICT 14*

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P.O. BOX 2910  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78768-2910  
512/463-0698  
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Speaker Straus presided over the House during a time when our majority has grown from 1 seat to at least 24 when we convene in January. Today, we are on the edge of enjoying the greatest House Majority Texas has seen in a century; and I strongly caution against creating a fracture in our party that our opponents will undoubtedly exploit at every opportunity.

To this end, I trust each of you will recall the reasons for which Speaker Straus was elected by the acclamation at the outset of the 81st Legislature. With such powerful momentum behind our party, let's commit ourselves now to resolving the difficult fiscal issues we face in the 82nd Legislature by supporting the continued, consistent leadership of Speaker Straus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred Brown".

Fred Brown  
District 14

STATE REPRESENTATIVE LEO BERMAN  
2109 Dover Lane  
Tyler, Texas 75703

November 8, 2010

AN OPEN LETTER TO TEXAS HOUSE SPEAKER JOE STRAUS  
FROM CONSERVATIVE STATE REPRESENTATIVE LEO BERMAN

Dear Joe:

Abe Lincoln said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time; some of the people all of the time; but you can't fool all of the people all of the time".

As a 22 year combat veteran, this is an appropriate week for me to prove the veracity of Abe Lincoln's wisdom in your particular case and those who compromised their integrity along with you.

At the beginning of last session you and 10 of your cohort Republicans, RINOS would be the proper term, decided you did not want my good friend Tom Craddick, a solid conservative Speaker, to preside over the session. You met and voted among yourselves as to who would be your Speaker candidate. It fell upon you since you were the least controversial although you were the one with the least service in the House. You had 11 votes but needed 65 more to make the 76 it takes to elect a Speaker. You decided to go to the Democrats who eventually gave you the 65 votes to win. What did you give them? You gave them a promise not to bring legislation dealing with ILLEGAL ALIENS, PRO-LIFE ISSUES, or VOTER-ID to the House floor and that is exactly what happened during the session. The Democrats loved that deal because they opposed all three issues vehemently.

When I saw that no bills on illegal aliens were coming out of the State Affairs Committee Chaired by Rep. Burt Solomons, I did notice that Democrats were bringing bills to the floor that would have funneled millions of dollars directly to illegal aliens. I started to amend those bills immediately, with simple words which said, "These benefits are for U.S. citizens only". Excuse the term, but the Democrats went "nuts" over my amendments and Joe, you tried to come to their rescue. You came to my desk on the House floor and asked what you can do for me (like hearing one of my bills in Solomon's committee) to get me to stop amending the Democrats bills. I could not believe what I heard from you. I asked you if you took the same oath of office that I did and then requested that you leave my desk quickly before I really got angry.

Finally, you single-handedly killed the Voter -ID Bill, a bill that 96% of Republicans in the 2008 Primary election voted to have considered in the next session. Your Elections Committee Chair Todd Smith, another RINO, finally brought out a Voter-ID Bill with two weeks remaining in the session. You allowed the Democrat Speaker Pro-Tem, Rep. Craig Eiland, to delay the session by 5 full days, which automatically killed the Voter-ID Bill. You could have stopped that from day 1 through day 5 but you sat on your hands somewhere behind the House Chamber. Your tenure as Speaker was a disaster as far as the fact that you called yourself a Republican.

On the first day of any session, it is a custom in the House that everyone votes for the Speaker candidate with 76 votes. There was not a Red Light on the board. You received every vote according to custom. However, you and your cohorts, who were now positioned on every major committee, punished conservative leaders like me. Most did not get any major bills out of committee even though all followed

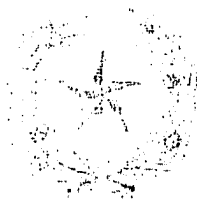
the House custom and voted Yes for your Speakership. Now, you have changed that custom! If you survive and there is a vote on you for Speaker, my vote will light up Red meaning NO. I believe there will be many NO's on the board since you and your remaining 6 RINOS will keep conservative legislation from the floor. By the way, the remaining 6 RINOS are Reps. Byron Cook, Charley Geren, Burt Solomons, Rob Eissler, Jim Keffer and you. Closely affiliated with this group are Reps. Dan Branch, Todd Smith, Vickie Truitt, Lois Kolkhorst and others who have written glowing statements about your service as Speaker. They are all looking for something for themselves and will compromise their integrity for personal gain. I will NEVER compromise my integrity by giving you a green light if it comes to that. My vote will be a strong NO.

Recently, in the days prior to the General election you supported with your presence and funds Democrats who were opposed by substantial Republican candidates Remember you promised the Democrats that you would not personally oppose one of their incumbents. When I announced for Speaker and you realized that you had opposition, you shelved out over \$700,000 to Republicans some of whom were actually conservatives, but I believe you did so in violation of State law and I filed an Ethics Commission violation against you with both the Ethics Commission and the District Attorney of Travis County. One of your spokesman said my complaint has no merit. We shall see!

To my colleagues in the House, I say you all know what Straus and his 10 cohorts did last session. They compromised their integrity. Don't compromise yours by voting with Straus and writing fictitious statements about the service he provided. It was a farce! My military career forced me to detest those who would compromise their integrity for personal gain. You all know what I mean!

Sincerely,

/s/Leo Berman  
Leo Berman



CAPITOL OFFICE  
1400 CONGRESS AVENUE  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701  
512/463-0271  
FAX: 512/463-1515

STATE OF TEXAS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**BRYAN HUGHES**

DISTRICT OFFICE  
102 WEST HOUSTON  
MARSHALL, TEXAS 75670  
903/935-1141  
FAX: 903/935-1142

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 10, 2010

Contact: Bryan Hughes  
903-569-8880

**REP. BRYAN HUGHES WITHDRAWS SUPPORT FOR SPEAKER STRAUS**

Today after much prayer and counsel, I formally withdraw my support for Speaker Joe Straus. I do this with no malice toward the Speaker or any other member.

Over the past several days I have heard from an increasing number of my constituents and supporters. Their unanimous voice has called for me to withdraw my support of Speaker Straus.

My decision, though not a light one, was made clearer after a phone call I received over the weekend from a member of Speaker Straus's leadership team. This member brought up the subject of redistricting and explained to me how that process would be used to punish those members not on Speaker Straus's list of supporters.

More specifically, this member told me that maps were already being drawn to get rid of Representative-Elect Erwin Cain (R-Sulphur Springs) and Representative Dan Flynn (R-Van), because they were not on the Speaker's list of supporters.

I was then told that I had nothing to worry about in redistricting, so long as I stayed on the Speaker's list.

This conversation first saddened and then disgusted me.

Using the redistricting process for retribution reminds us of all that is wrong with politics. The Speaker's race should be decided not based on threats of punishment and not on promises of power, but on principle.

The people of Texas have chosen us to speak for them. As we prepare to cast our first vote on their behalf, we should lay aside our ambition for powerful committees, stand against the threats, and support the Speaker candidate who best represents our conservative principles.

FIFTH DISTRICT: CAMP, HARRISON, UPSHUR & WOOD COUNTIES  
COMMITTEES: VICE CHAIRMAN, JUDICIARY; HUMAN SERVICES

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## Push to oust Straus reaches further into grass roots

By [Jason Embry](#) | Wednesday, November 10, 2010, 07:13 AM

Rank-and-file voters start to sign on to call for House change, Brown encourages colleagues to stick with their speaker and we've got a Burka preview.

Last week, we reported on a letter to lawmakers from more than 100 conservative activists and tea-party leaders calling for a new speaker of the House. Now, the folks who are calling for the ouster of Speaker Joe Straus are inviting members of the public to join them.

More than 1,700 Texas voters, listed by name and the House district they live in, have signed on to the letter, according to the website of [Empower Texans](#), the group run by Michael Quinn Sullivan. And I suspect there will be thousands more before all of this is over. Will it change the minds of any lawmakers that Straus now counts among his supporters?

Meanwhile, Rep. Fred Brown, R-College Station, circulated a letter to colleagues Tuesday voicing his support for Straus. [You can read Brown's letter here.](#)

Brown writes, "We are on the edge of enjoying the greatest House majority Texas has seen in a century; and I strongly caution against creating a fracture in our party that our opponents will undoubtedly exploit at every opportunity."

(You have to assume he means the largest Republican majority in a century, since it wasn't that long ago that Democrats had some pretty massive majorities themselves.)

• [Here's an early look at Paul Burka's look at last week's elections from the upcoming issue of Texas Monthly](#): "After obliterating the Democrats in November, Republicans will swagger into the state house next month with what could be the most conservative legislature, well, ever. Now comes the hard part."