

## The State of the Union and the State of Texas

By Sherri Greenberg

What does the State of the Union mean to the State of Texas? After President Obama's recent State of the Union speech, this is an obvious question worth asking, but the answers are not so evident.

Texas, as a state, is distinct in a number of areas: some good and some not so good. The second largest state in population, Texas has a growing workforce, a diversified economy with technology and energy still playing large roles, a notorious traffic problem in urban areas, and a large number of children living in poverty without adequate healthcare and education. This provides economic opportunities and challenges. We will have the workforce of tomorrow if the young are healthy and educated. However, without healthcare and education, we will have the unemployed of tomorrow. Texas also has the opportunity to be a leader in the new clean energy technology and manufacturing field. Although our economy in Texas has fared better than many states, our unemployment is up, our sales tax receipts are down and our working families are feeling the pinch.

President Obama spoke of federal initiatives in public education, healthcare, energy and the economy. What will these federal initiatives mean for the State of Texas? Texas has been a leader in educational standards, but will Texas ultimately lose money and ground by not participating in the new national standards development and the Race to the Top? The healthcare legislation is up in the air; but clearly many Texans, employed and unemployed, young and old, do not currently have access to quality, affordable, healthcare.

The President discussed new federal initiatives and funding in all types of energy development, which could greatly benefit Texas. Stimulus dollars have been flowing into Texas, particularly in the transportation, energy, technology and construction sectors. Many working families in Texas struggle to pay for childcare and college, and the President's initiatives to increase funding in these areas clearly would benefit Texas families.

Lastly, President Obama is proposing a three year freeze on discretionary spending in the budget, commencing in 2011. Although entitlement programs and defense spending will be exempted, there could be cuts to specific programs, or grants that benefit Texas.

What does the State of the Union mean to the State of Texas? Let's continue to follow and discuss this as the details emerge.