

December 18, 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen:

One of the vital roles of the Comptroller is to predict how and where our economy will grow, to provide state leaders with critical information for future decisions. Though our state's diverse economy is serving us well in the difficult economic times we face, we must look beyond the horizon with the keenest and sharpest eyes to ensure Texas' prosperity continues.

Today, a serious imbalance is emerging between the demand for skilled workers and the state's ability to supply them. As the nation's current leader in job creation, Texas cannot afford to fall behind. *Texas Works* provides an in-depth study of this issue with recommended steps to ensure our state's young and growing population is one of the world's strongest and most highly skilled work forces.

*Texas Works* highlights many statistics and findings:

- the number of jobs requiring technical training, certifications or associate degrees is outpacing the number of people available to fill them despite the fact that many pay above-average salaries.
- a growing number of employers across the state is raising the alarm about the need for more skilled workers.
- multiple paths to high school graduation and postsecondary training and education will help reduce the skilled-worker gap and could help reduce dropout rates; current state policy focuses on a single path to a four-year degree.
- Texas population projections point to a less educated work force if the state continues on its current path, negating the economic advantage of a younger average working population.
- funding to public two-year institutions has not kept pace with the high demand for vocational, technical and associate degree training, even though these investments have high returns.

I know you share a strong commitment to our state's success and will be highly interested in exploring the issues and recommendations in *Texas Works*. On a state level, this is about our strength as an economic powerhouse. On a personal level for all of us, this is about making the future success of every Texan our top priority.

Sincerely,

Susan Combs

