

**Friend of the Year Award  
Remarks by Charles Butt  
August 24, 2005**

Thank you Colleen.

As we begin tonight, let's give a big hand to Leslie and Scott Milder, who had the initiative to kick-off this fine program and move it ahead so rapidly.

To Larry Payne I send my special thanks for two important phrases: one that captures the essence of what Texas public education must overcome – the public's view that "**These are not our children,**" and the other underscores the urgency of better serving an "**unempowered majority.**"

Those words sum it up very well and we are in your debt for joining us in Dallas today and for the leadership you give this group as a board member.

Let's hear it for Larry.

Colleen, thank you. Being with you in Dallas at your headquarters is a special opportunity, particularly since I've been an ardent fan of yours for so many years. I'm honored to be with you today and compliment you on your involvement with this outstanding group.

Sometimes things happen with exquisite timing and your group couldn't be coming forward at a more **crucial time** for Texas! If the schools ever needed a friend they need one now! It's been a rocky year!

I respect greatly your accepting the challenge of showing Texas that education is an investment, not a cost, that our schools represent a resource, a strength, an opportunity – not a burden.

We are plagued with the myth that Texas public schools are some sort of **disaster**. Ill-informed, irresponsible comments like this upset us all and it's exciting to see you speak out on the schools' behalf.

**Another myth** is that more dollars **are not** needed. They **are vitally important** for additional teacher pay, for maintenance, compensation of principals and superintendents, training, supplies, computers, and all the things that make up a modern education – including, in Texas, the challenge of students with limited English.

**A persistent myth** is that teaching is **easy** – after all, they get to go home mid-afternoon and just forget about it until the next morning. Right? Not right!

All the ills of our society – too much television, disturbed and overburdened families, rampant consumerism, are daily brought to the classroom for the teacher to deal with.

The reality is that the challenge of educating the 4.5 million school-age students in Texas is the **biggest challenge** this society faces. Until we come to grips with this as a state, yes, as a legislature, as a people, we will **struggle** with **half-way measures** that miss the mark.

Obviously, sending people to Austin who are open to learning what's **really going on** in Texas schools – the **great successes** and the **endless opportunities** – is more important than ever.

Texas' greatest resource in the **19<sup>th</sup> century** was **land** – vast amounts available for grazing and cotton.

In the **20<sup>th</sup> century** it was **oil and gas** – still important today – although I'd like to see more help from that industry in school finance.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century our greatest resource – as it really has been all along – is our **people** and, notably, **our students**.

As everyone here today knows, **optimizing** this resource – giving every student an opportunity to do **her** or **his** best and realize their **full** potential – is the key to the state's future as we enter the most competitive century in America's history – and of course – **there are no cheap shortcuts!**

That's why your group is so vital to the future of Texas and why I compliment you so heartily on what you are doing and why **I encourage you not to become discouraged and not to take no for an answer to the state's future.**

There are many in the education and parent/teacher communities more deserving of today's recognition than I, but I am **truly honored** and **deeply appreciative** of your letting me join you here today.

Thank you so much.