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It All Started With a Bus Ride... and Then Another

HOUSTON, TX – Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick released the following statement:

“In 2003, years before running for office, now Sen. Paul Bettencourt, R-Houston, and I took two busloads of my radio listeners to go to the Capitol to testify against rising property taxes.

“We were not treated very well by the committee chair. He told us to arrive by 7:30 am, but by 3:00 pm, none of us had been called to testify. He told me later he would show me who had the power: he said it was him, not the people.

“I had never testified before a committee. At that point, I had no plans to run for office. But I knew he was wrong. The power is always with the people.

“A few years later, a Houston senator retired, and I ran. They said I could not win, but I did without a runoff. Eight years later, I ran for Lt. Governor. They said I could not win, but I did.

“My bus captain, Paul Bettencourt, a guru of property tax policy, took my place in the Senate. Back in 2003, the odds of both of us being in a position to pass the biggest property tax cut in Texas history would have been one in a million.

Almost 20 years later, another bus ride...

“Last August, I toured about 130 cities across rural Texas for my re-election campaign. It was a great trip. Property tax relief was still a hot button issue.

“In 2015, my first year as Lt. Governor, the Texas Senate increased the homestead exemption from \$15,000 to \$25,000. In 2021, we increased it to \$40,000 and cut the school tax rate (called compression).

“On my bus tour last year, I said I wanted to make the homestead exemption \$100,000 before I left office. I wasn't sure we had enough money to go all the way there this year, but by the time our budget surplus numbers were finalized, I knew we had the money to do it. We just needed to get it passed.

“There were competing ideas on how to spend our budget surplus dollars as the months went by. The ideas weren’t all bad, but my goal was always the \$100,000 homestead exemption to ensure homeowners got the biggest tax cut. In a bipartisan vote of 31-0, the Senate passed the \$100,000 homestead exemption four times.

Proposition 4 on the Ballot...

“On Tuesday, you voted to put the \$100,000 homestead exemption in the Texas Constitution forever.

“Why did it take so long?

“When I was a senator, it was hard building support to increase the homestead exemption. I had allies as a senator, but not enough to move the needle. When I became Lt. Governor in 2015 and Sen. Bettencourt took my spot, our army quickly grew in the Senate. We have made good progress since then, but never before did we have the budget surplus funds that we did this year.

“To get homeowners the \$100,000 homestead exemption, along with compression, cost about \$12 billion. The biggest budget surplus in history was only a few billion dollars or so, once, or twice. In 2017 for example, we had zero surplus.

“Finally, the stars were aligned. The legislature started this session knowing we would commit a large portion of the budget surplus to property tax relief. All we needed was to work to pass legislation. It took a while, but we got there. It was worth the battle.

“What's next? Each year as funds allow, we need to continue cutting property taxes. I'm never getting off the bus for lower property taxes.”

More information about Dan Patrick is available at www.DanPatrick.org.

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