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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
December 7, 2009

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## **Lt. Governor Dewhurst Announces Select Interim Charges for Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee**

SAN ANTONIO—Lt. Governor David Dewhurst today announced five Interim Charges for the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs and Military Installations. During a news conference at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 76 in San Antonio, Dewhurst charged the committee with studying and improving state programs designed to help veterans and returning military personnel find employment, educational opportunities and health care.

"Today, as we pay tribute to the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice at Pearl Harbor, I also want to thank our current men and women in uniform, including the thousands of Texans who are serving America this moment in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the world," Dewhurst said.

Dewhurst said veterans and military personnel are struggling along with many other Texas families to cope with the current economic recession. "Our veterans face the same challenges and, in fact, because of their sacrifice, many of them face even greater challenges as they return to civilian life."

As the committee prepares for the 2011 Legislative Session, Lt. Governor Dewhurst directed its members to work on the following issues:

- Study veteran employment and veteran-owned small business issues, including the usefulness of creating a veteran-specific employment database to provide job openings tailored to the skills sets of Texas' returning veterans;
- Examine the utilization of the new GI Bill and what the state can do to ensure Texas is serving veterans and their families. Include recommendations on how the programs can be utilized and improved to better serve veterans;
- Study the advantages of a centralized call center for the referral of veterans to benefit providers, including potential cost savings and customer service improvements associated with consolidation;

(more)

- Assess what veteran workforce programs are being offered by various state agencies, and recommend ways to streamline and coordinate these programs;
- Study and make recommendations on how Texas can better address the mental health needs of veterans. Monitor the appropriation of an additional \$6.2 million for veterans mental health programs to provide support for returning veterans and their families.

Senator Leticia Van de Putte, chair of the Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee, joined Dewhurst at the news conference "Our Armed Services members and their families have sacrificed so many things to serve our country, and these Interim Charges demonstrate our commitment to them and that Texas will be ready to serve them regardless of the need.

"I am grateful to Lt. Governor Dewhurst for his support and my appointment as chair of the Veteran Affairs and Military Installations Committee. Our committee and the entire Senate will solidly support the needs of our veterans, soldiers and their families with strong policies."

Lt. Governor Dewhurst will announce a complete list of Interim Charges for the Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee, as well as other Senate Committees and Subcommittees, later this month.

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