

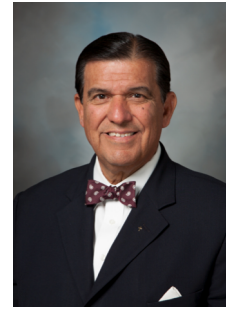


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**Senator Lucio Statement on Open Day
of the 83rd Texas Legislature**

AUSTIN - Today, Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) issued the following statement on the occasion of the opening day of the 83rd Texas Legislative Session:

"This 83rd Legislative Session, I look forward to continuing my commitment to promoting economic development, education, health care, affordable housing, and reliable infrastructure in the Rio Grande Valley.

"Following last Session's unprecedented \$27 billion budget shortfall, I am heartened to see that the Comptroller's Biennial Revenue Estimate affords Texas \$101.4 billion in general revenue and an inflated Rainy Day Fund. It's important to remember, however, that an increase in general revenue does not necessarily mean we are operating under a surplus -- not when lawmakers last biennium left so many vital state services unfunded. This session, I intend to work with my fellow lawmakers to restore these cuts, including the roughly \$5 billion in cuts made to both public education and the state's Medicaid program. I believe in my fellow Senators, and I am confident that we can draft a budget that is both balanced and compassionate to vulnerable populations.

"This Session, I also remain committed to expanding crucial healthcare services in the Valley. First among my priorities is the continued expansion of the Regional Academic Health Center (RAHC), the Valley campus of the University of Texas Health Center at San Antonio, into a four-year medical school. Late last year, the University of Texas System announced plans to incorporate the new medical school into a new Valley-spanning university, which will have a presence in Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen, and McAllen. Completing a new medical school represents the culmination of more than a decade of work on quality medical education. Investing in these facilities will ensure that the Valley becomes a global center for medicine, biomedical sciences, and related commerce for generations to come.

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"Additionally, this Session I will continue to seek state investment in housing and drainage improvements in the Valley. This summer my office hosted the first ever "Valley Colonia Summit," at which I listened to concerns from the region's estimated 1,000 colonias. We want to make sure all Valley residents have the basic services they needed to raise a family and pull themselves out of poverty. We have already made much progress over the years, but we still have a long way to go.

"Finally, my legislative agenda this Session includes bills tackling issues such as protecting insurance consumers, children's nutrition, public education accountability, economic development, protecting Texas' historic buildings, vital transportation projects, and protecting those with special needs."

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