

## Coalition offers alternative to stimulus

Conservatives promote job creation, educational reform during recession

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Updated: Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Laura Haase/The Daily Texan

In light of Texas' recent economic downturn, the Texas Conservative Coalition revealed a plan Monday at the state Capitol to create and maintain state jobs.

Though Texas' unemployment rate is almost 2 percent lower than the national average, the state lost 46,100 jobs in February, according to The Associated Press.

To combat further job losses, the coalition announced a three-step plan that would reduce the tax burden on businesses, increase incentives to work in Texas and invest in workforce development.

"The conservative, limited government approach to job creation is a proven alternative to the federal stimulus spending," said state Rep. Linda Harper-Brown. "We know how to put people to work."

One of the coalition's top priorities is to train younger members of the workforce.

"We have a very good education program for those that want to go to college," said state Rep. David Swinford, referring to the Texas government. "But we have left those that don't want to go to four-year colleges to their own demise."

The coalition's program would make the transition from high school to community college or vocational school easier for students.

"Our intent is not to lessen the rigorous high school courses for students going to college," Swinford said. "The intent is to erase any and all barriers that would prevent students from finding a career."

Harper-Brown said that other components of the coalition's plan would help businesses recruit more college graduates.

"Recent college graduates are those who are suffering the most," Harper-Brown said. "If we allow businesses to keep their tax dollars, they can hire new people coming out of college."

According to a report issued by the Texas Comptroller, 80 percent of jobs in Texas do not require university degrees. In 2007, there were 40,000 more college graduates than jobs that required a college education.

The plan also included incentives that would entice new businesses from other states to launch in Texas. The coalition intends to expand funding for the Texas Certified Capital Company Program, which provides new, Texas-based businesses with tax credits to ease start-up costs.



State Rep. Dan Flynn discusses the Texas Conservative Coalition's plan to create jobs with David Montgomery of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram after a press conference at the Capitol on Monday.

"This has been a very successful program and one that's brought a lot of opportunity for new businesses to come into Texas," said state Rep. Dan Flynn. "It's been going on since 2001, and if we pass this, it will continue."

New businesses that start with funding from the program would hire more college graduates, Harper-Brown said.

The coalition also called for a reduction in the state margins tax and deductions for companies that employ contract workers.

"We want to make sure people know we are working hard for them," Harper-Brown said. "We are trying to retain jobs and create jobs for people who have lost theirs."

Though Harper-Brown called the federal stimulus plan questionable and speculative, some Democrats say they believe it may be necessary to keep small businesses afloat.

"The recovery plan would allow investments in infrastructure that would create or save an estimated 269,000 jobs right here in Texas," said Kirsten Gray, a spokeswoman for the Texas Democratic Party.

Gray said the conservative policies have failed the economy for the past eight years.

"[President Barack] Obama realizes we have to invest in our country to get things moving again, and when we do, Democrats will again cut the deficit, as we have before," Gray said.