

The Legislative Report

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The 82nd Texas Legislature convened Tuesday, one day after Texas Comptroller Susan Combs released her estimate of how much money Texas will collect during the 2012-2013 budget years. These estimates would dictate how much lawmaker will have in the general operating budget to spend on state agencies and functions.

The most optimistic estimates to a budget shortfall stand at \$13 billion, which means lawmakers will have to scramble to make cuts. Gov. Perry had already asked all agencies to trim their budgets by 10 percent and it appears that some non-essential programs may need to be cut. A combination of lower than expected revenues have led to the anticipated shortfall along with the effects of the recession plus increases in population that Texas has experienced recently as people flee higher tax states.

Some taxpayer organizations are not wringing their hands. They think this is good opportunity to cut unnecessary spending and the force the state government to down-size.

The comptroller's estimates come out as this paper goes to press, but we will be following up on the budget process as it moves forward.

The election for the post of House Speaker also happens as we go to press. Speaker Straus faces substantial opposition from two other Republican representatives.

In Washington, Rep. Jeb Hensarling begins his work as part of the Republican House leadership, taking up his post as chair of the Republican House Conference.