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Perry touts Texas economy in SA speech

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Gov. Rick Perry gesticulates to make his points during the Keeping Texas Competitive summit. Jerry Lara/Express-News

Gov. Rick Perry was among friends Monday, and he wasted few chances to tout the state's economic successes during his decade in office.

Perry delivered a 30-minute speech in San Antonio to more than 60 attendees of the Keeping Texas Competitive summit, an event co-sponsored by the Texas Public Policy Foundation. TPPF is a conservative think tank co-founded by San Antonio businessman Dr. James Leininger, a major Republican donor and school-voucher proponent.

The cornerstone of the summit was the Monday release of a TPPF study — co-authored by supply-side guru Arthur Laffer — comparing the economies of Texas and California. The study concluded that Texas maintains a strong competitive advantage over California largely because it has avoided a state income tax and limited regulations on businesses.

Perry, whose conservative mantra is nearly identical to that of Laffer, wholeheartedly embraced the findings. Recalling the state's struggle to overcome a budget shortfall in 2003, Perry said, “Not passing a personal income tax in Texas is the best thing we've never done.”

Perry did not mention two of his favorite targets, Democratic gubernatorial nominee Bill White and President Barack Obama, but took veiled swipes at Obama by lamenting what he called the “disconnect between Texas and Washington.”

Perry said when Democrats took over the White House in 2009, “they thought we were going into a period of nirvana, almost like a fairy tale,” but called the ensuing period of persistently high unemployment a “nightmare” scenario.

While the theme of the luncheon's speeches was a reiteration of President Ronald Reagan's famous assertion that government is the problem, not the solution, Perry continually made the case that the infusion of taxpayer money on programs such as the Texas Enterprise Fund and the Emerging Technology Fund has enabled the state to create jobs.

Perry recently came under fire from the White camp after a Dallas Morning News story revealed that large Perry donors were either investors or officers in companies that received more than \$16 million in grants from the Emerging Technology Fund.

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