

But on a more serious note ... there is another bill in the Senate that has been getting a lot of attention, from the press and from the public. And I want to say from the outset that I believe that those who are supporting legislation related to bathrooms are sincere.

But here's the way I look at it: The competition for jobs among states and among countries is intense. And usually, Texas competes pretty well. Entrepreneurs appreciate our pro-growth business climate. And the people they employ appreciate our quality of life: from the low cost of living, to the lack of a state income tax, to a thriving arts and music tradition.

The Texas private sector has built an economy that people want to be a part of it: Our economy is modern, diverse and dynamic. We attract the types of highly skilled jobs and workers that every state desires, from engineers to computer programmers to internationally recognized scientists and scholars. There's been a lot of work put into our economic success. Contrary to popular myth, it's never been a miracle.

We want to continue that success, and we want Texas to keep attracting the best and brightest. One way to maintain our economic edge is to send the right signals about who we are.

Some of you know that I'm from San Antonio, a city that is often cited for having one of the best business climates in the country. People in San Antonio, especially in the business community, pay attention to what happens up here. And my concerns reflect the concerns of my community.

San Antonio is proud of the fact that we will host the 2018 Men's Final Four, which will bring a reported 234 million dollars in economic activity. In fact, San Antonio has spent hundreds of millions of dollars renovating the Alamodome and the Convention Center in order to attract these types of events.

And it's not just about basketball tournaments or conventions.

Many people where I come from get concerned about anything that could slow down our overall job-creating machine. They're also watching what's happened in North Carolina, and they're not enthusiastic about getting that type of attention. So I think we should be very careful about doing something that could make Texas less competitive for investments, jobs and the highly skilled workforce needed to compete.

That's my personal view on this and the sentiment back home. We will see how the rest of the House feels, and the Governor's opinion on this can make a difference as well.

If you are concerned too, now is the time to speak up. And that goes for every bill.

As I've told this group before, the business community needs to be heard from. You know how to make our economy successful.

The fact that we face some budget challenges makes your role all the more important, and your feedback all the more needed. As important as it is for you to be here, I hope you won't go home from this conference and think you've done your part. Please stay engaged, and talk to your legislators.

I appreciate the invitation to be with you today and I'm grateful for TAB's role in the process. And most of all, I appreciate the many contributions that all of you make to our state every day.

Thank you very much.