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Governor Rick Perry Announces Formation of Governor's Council On Science and Biotechnology Development

Council to Place Texas at Forefront of Biotechnology, Economic Opportunities

AUSTIN - Governor Rick Perry today announced the formation of the Governor's Council on Science and Biotechnology Development. The Council will work to create a seamless system of innovation from the laboratory to the marketplace in the rapidly developing areas of biotechnology - such as biopharmaceutical development, bioinformatics, genomics and nanotechnology.

During an announcement at Ambion, Inc, a successful biotechnology firm in Austin, Perry described the Council's mission as one that will ultimately bring more research dollars to Texas higher education institutions, encourage university researchers to get products that advance the quality of life to the market and create biotechnology jobs - and growing companies - across Texas.

"I want the work of the Science and Biotechnology Development Council to lead to a more vibrant Texas economy that brings greater opportunity to more of our citizens," Perry said. "Biotechnology is the wave of the future when it comes to health care, and it means limitless opportunity for Texas."

"The Council on Science and Biotechnology Development will explore ways to improve health care, agriculture and technology in Texas while creating jobs and ensuring that new discoveries, companies and industries come out of Texas schools, Texas laboratories and Texas minds."

Among its responsibilities, Perry has asked the Council to identify ways institutions of higher learning can coordinate efforts to attract federal research funds. Currently, Texas ranks sixth in research funds received from the National Institute of Health, and third overall in research expenditures.

The Council also will develop a strategy to increase research and development expenditures in this state, including both private and public funds. Perry also urged the council to identify ways to commercialize intellectual property that helps turn an idea into a marketable medicine or product.

"It is about finding a gene therapy that will prevent a parent or child from dying too young from cancer. It is about making improvements to nutrition or the food supply that can enhance our health," Perry said. "It is about a better Texas."

The Council will consist of individuals from across Texas, representing the state's best in science and technology, research, higher education, and business.

Perry named Ashley Smith as chairman of the Council. Smith, who is a senior advisor on the governor's staff, is a former member of the Texas House and serves as chairman of the Southeast Texas BioTechnology Park in Houston. He is also president and CEO of the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation and Research in Houston.

As Lieutenant Governor, Perry established the Advisory Council for the Digital Economy to help further develop Texas' technology-based economy and understand its implications for future growth. Perry has compared the opportunities of biotechnology development in Texas to the digital technology opportunities in Texas several decades ago, which led to an economic boom in the 1990s.