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A Nonfuzzy Take on Texas's Budget

The June 15 letter from the Texas legislature's Jim Pitts and Tommy Williams takes exception to your June 8 editorial "[Texas Goes Sacramento](#)," which notes that the Texas Public Policy Foundation calculated a 26% increase in general revenue spending by the Texas Legislature in 2013. However, our numbers are simple to follow: The legislature spent \$95 billion of general revenue in the general appropriations bill for the 2014-15 budget, \$7 billion more in two supplemental appropriations bills for the current budget and another \$4 billion from the state's reserve fund in both budgets. This \$106 billion in spending is difficult to discern in official documents, with some of it being spent in 2013, some in 2014 and some in 2015, some of it appropriated in 2013 but spent in 2014 and 2015, and \$2 billion of it being potentially taken "off budget" by Texas voters in the coming November constitutional amendment election. After all these maneuvers the appropriators are able to claim the new budget rose only by 8%. The truth, though, is that the legislature spent \$22 billion more this legislative session than the \$84 billion it spent 2011, using almost every penny of new revenue generated by the strong Texas economy.

As your editorial correctly points out, "This may be the first time in history that a state experienced a rush of new tax collections and lowered its reserve fund."

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