

State of the State
Governor J. Howard Edmondson
January 13, 1959

INTRODUCTION

Since the general election, I have visited with nearly all of the members of this legislature. We have discussed Oklahoma and the problems that face our state. You have individually expressed to me your views and your plans and your hopes, and I have been anxious to share them with you. I have been impressed with the sincerity, the aggressiveness of your views on the Oklahoma of today and tomorrow.

Let me say with all sincerity, I consider it an honor and a privilege to come before you and to outline my thoughts on a program of reform for Oklahoma.

This legislative body is now confronted with some of the most serious and vexing problems of state that ever faced Oklahoma. We are both keenly aware of them. Perhaps intangible, but certainly one of the most essential is building the confidence in the men and agencies that make up our state government. I am firmly convinced that when you gentlemen have written the last page of your legislation into law, when the people of our state begin looking back across your weeks and months of work, they will remember it as the "Triumphant Twenty-Seventh" Legislature.

I believe they will remember it as one of the best in Oklahoma's history, and I sincerely believe that in the years to come, Oklahomans will continue to reap the benefits of the program you enact.

Although there will be many other mutual problems I will want to discuss with you from time to time, at the out set of this administration I would like to talk with you about the foremost problems of today – Taxes and Oklahoma's serious financial condition; the issue of prohibition repeal; roads and highways; a merit system for state employees and reapportionment of the Oklahoma legislature. In addition, I would like to make recommendations for your consideration in the field of education, mental health and welfare, industrial expansion; economy in state government, consolidation and implementation of central purchasing; a district attorney system and penal reform; the oil and gas industry; agriculture and upstream flood control.

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

When I say Oklahoma has serious problems facing the Twenty-Seventh Legislature, much of the trouble centers around state financing. The difference between this session and recent sessions is that you will have the smallest increase in the available funds for appropriations in many years.

Oklahoma's economy and thus its tax income, have been climbing at a rapid rate during the past war years, but the curve has practically leveled off now. For instance, the 1953 session had approximately one hundred fifty-seven million dollars to appropriate. The 1955 session had one hundred sixty-eight million dollars and the 1957 session had more than one hundred ninety-nine million dollars.

By contrast, the Budget Director informs me you will have one hundred ninety-nine million, nine hundred thousand dollars available for appropriation from the general revenue fund. In other words, the Twenty-fifth Legislature had an eleven million dollars

increase over its previous session. The Twenty-sixth Session had nearly thirty-one million dollars more than the Twenty-fifth. But the Twenty-Seventh Session will have less than a million dollar increase. In just one biennium, the rate of INCREASE has dropped from thirty-one million dollars to less than one million dollars.

The Budget Director also informs me that anticipated surplus for your Session of the Legislature will be less than half that of the 1957 Session.

Although the pressures for increased government services, combined with inflation, continue to persist as they have in the past, our present rate of income does not parallel them. So, unlike past legislative sessions, you will not have an increase in revenue comparable to what we have had in the past.

In spite of this, I feel confident our state's financial needs can be met with the recommendations we are making or will make.

As an example, tremendous savings can be effected for the state through a general practice of economy and through the consolidation of various departments and agencies. For instance, I recommend the establishing of a strong and effective State Central Purchasing Agency. This would result in putting approximately one hundred agencies of the State into one department and make for increased efficiency. I will discuss more about that later.

We do not need an increase in our State Income Tax, but there are many who, at the present time, are not paying this tax which they owe. This group would include transients who may be in the state for a short period of time.

With reference to this, I recommend that you either, one, provide additional funds to the Oklahoma State Tax Commission with which to check Federal and State returns more completely than they are now doing, or, two, enact legislation for withholding of state income tax on a pay-as-you-go basis. Neither alternative would be an increase in taxes, but would be a method for greater efficiency in collecting existing taxes.

I am making no recommendations for supplemental appropriations with one exception. The exception is for increases in salaries of certain elected officials as provided by the last session of the legislature where no appropriations were made for the same. This amount to \$32,650.

REPEAL

On the first day of this Legislative Session, resolutions were introduced in both Houses calling for a special election on the question of repeal of prohibition. This important question was introduced at that time because of the importance of time. Although it is a part of our program, it certainly is of no more importance than other vital questions that are part of that program. I do consider it important that this matter be given immediate attention and acted upon as quickly as legislative processes will allow.

The joint resolution embodied a proposed amendment to the constitution and provided for the elections and generally the regulations to establish repeal in Oklahoma.

It calls for the sale of intoxicating beverages in package stores only, forever prohibiting the open saloon.

The proposal limits the retail sale of liquor to cities of two thousand population or over and to county seat towns even if their population is less than two thousand.

One-third of the revenue is earmarked for the cities and towns of Oklahoma, with the other two-thirds of the tax money apportioned to the general revenue fund.

The recommended amendment has rigid rules against the sale of liquor to minors and others, and it sets out the hours store may be open.

The administrative body, as set out in the proposal, would be an alcohol control board with its full time director.

Needless to say, and as restrictive as this proposed amendment is, it still behooves us to study very carefully other restrictive measures to properly control the liquor business if it is authorized by the people of Oklahoma.

Many days and weeks of conscientious effort by a great number of people were expended in determining what should be placed in our constitution on this question. The amendment proposed is a composite of that effort and study.

I urge that in you committees you carefully study this resolution, and that you counsel with yourselves and with other authorities in order to write the best measure for the people of Oklahoma.

I certainly feel that it is of vital importance that the loopholes in our present enforcement laws relative to prohibition should be closed.

I assure you all of the resources of the Governor's office will be used to see that this, as well as other laws, will be enforced without fear or favor. I trust that you, in the spirit of true democratic principle, will afford the people of Oklahoma an opportunity to vote on this question at a special election where the majority will rule.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

I am sure that you feel, as I do, that roads and highways are one of the most important phases of our state government. As I brought out consistently in the campaign just past, in spite of the fact that our road building program has been stepped-up in recent years, the general condition of the roads and highways in Oklahoma still leaves much to be desired.

The time for drastic reforms in our highway program is long past due. We have seen by the examination of road building programs in many of our neighboring states and other states of the union, that there is a more constructive and better way to approach this important problem.

In view of the foregoing circumstances, I wish to make some broad and sweeping recommendations for changes in the State Highway Department. It is my thought that we, in the past summer campaign, and in the fall election, received a mandate from the people of Oklahoma to take our road building program out from under the shackles of political patronage.

In this connection, I recommend that you, by a Joint Resolution, give the voters of Oklahoma an opportunity to vote upon a constitution highway commission. This commission should be composed of eight members, as is now provided, and they should serve staggered terms, two new members being appointed every two years. It is my thought that this will take the Governor out of the road building business once and for all and would enable us to build roads where they are most needed. I would further recommend to you that a revolving or floating fund be set up for the purpose of acquiring right-of-ways for a long term road building program. It has been proven in other states

that by purchasing right-of-ways far in advance of the actual construction, many thousands of dollars can be saved.

It seems quite apparent to me that within the next few years Oklahoma will be required to spend many more highway dollars in order to meet increased needs for highway construction. The problem then arises, from what source that money will be obtained. As I see these problems now facing this administration, we have three basic alternatives.

One: Increased taxes.

Two: An anti-diversion amendment to the Constitution which will guarantee that the so-called road users taxes be spent for roads and highways rather than diverted to many other phases of state government.

Three: A bond issue which would be geared to a long range road building program.

No doubt there would be some objection to any one of these plans. But the time has come in Oklahoma for us to take a long and constructive step toward putting the state on a sound, long range highway building program. Under the present rate of income from taxes coming into the Highway Department, it is apparently impossible for us to meet the growing needs of a highway program comparable to the other states in our general area. This applies to both new construction and maintenance.

I cannot, at this time, state with certainty what road financing courses we should take, but I urgently recommend that you, as I myself shall do, give due consideration in the days and weeks ahead to an adequate solution to this most important problem.

With your permission, I would like to go further into my reasoning behind this recommendation. It is my opinion that the actual building of roads is the greatest sign of progress in the minds of our citizens and visitors to this state that we could possibly bring about. I recall that during one of the prior administrations a sign was used at the entrance to each road project under construction which read as follows: "Sign of Progress." As you entered, you found the state building a short strip of new paving, or they were resurfacing an old strip of asphalt.

This was not a sign of progress. On the other hand, if we can build modern and adequate roads, roads to serve the people of this entire state, from Little Dixie to the Panhandle, and from Northeastern Oklahoma to the great plains of the Southwest, we then would be showing the people in fact the visible evidence of progress, and we would not need a sign to advertise that fact. With your help, we can and will accomplish these ends.

MERIT SYSTEM

The efficiency of the individual employee depends largely upon the level of morale of the people with whom he works. The morale of our state employees is bound to ebb and flow with the tides of the political fortunes of their sponsors.

While there are many areas in which the lot of an employee of Oklahoma could and should be improved, it seems to me his morale and thereby his efficiency for the state would be bolstered through a type of merit system that would provide job security, protection and advancement as a reward for able and faithful service.

There should be a classification of jobs in order that certain qualification requirements for each job may be prescribed and each employee be required to demonstrate his ability to properly perform the duties prescribed for the particular job for which he is an applicant.

Those now employed who have for a period of time already demonstrated their ability in their assigned duties should automatically be qualified for classification.

Those presently employed for a short period of time should be required to demonstrate their qualifications by examination. However, they should be give credit, on a system of preference, based upon the length of prior service.

All future employees should be required to qualify by examination. Such a system of merit would release you, as legislators, from one of your most difficult burdens – that of acting as an employment agent. The merit system for state employees would result in tremendous savings of tax dollars through the elimination of duplication, inefficiency and waste. It would also create peace of mind for individual qualified state employees who would then know they could not be removed from employment for political reasons alone.

Of course the details of such a merit system must be developed carefully and thoroughly in order that the state as well as the individual employee can be protected. The ultimate goal of the merit system should envisage a plan of retirement and a system of uniform vacations and benefits.

REAPPORTIONMENT

I strongly urge that we abide by the Constitution of the State and reapportion the legislature.

It is my recommendation that the present constitutional formula be amended to guarantee to each county at least one member in the House of Representatives.

I further recommend that a proper means of enforcement of reapportionment be included in the constitution to assure that reapportionment be carried out according to the mandate of the constitution following each decennial census.

This is a project I consider a priority measure, it is the basic question of whether the people of our state are given the equal voice in state government to which they are undeniable entitled, under both our constitution and sound principles of democratic government.

I have prepared a resolution for immediate introduction, based on the plan I have briefly outlined to you. I recommend that it be sent to committees where a complete and exhaustive study can be made on the measure.

I strongly urge that it then be passed by this legislature and submitted to the people.

EDUCATION

It is extremely important to Oklahoma and our future that we provide the best education possible for our young people. It is because of my dedicated belief in this

promise that my budget message includes an increase, larger by far, in recommended appropriations for education, than any other obligation of government.

In all our deliberations about our education problems, I think the interest of our young people must be our first consideration.

With our schools and colleges facing increased enrolments as well as increased demands for improved and strengthened programs of education, I know the requests for funds to meet these needs will receive your careful and favorable study.

Salaries of teachers in our schools even though they have been increased in recent years, need to be raised to the extent that teachers of Oklahoma may receive salaries that will attract and hold our best trained teachers for the children and youth of our state.

Although present anticipated revenue, as recommended in the budget, provides for an increase of slightly more than twelve millions dollars for state aid to common schools, more is needed. This amount will satisfy the needs only for financing the existing school code. This guarantees minimum teachers' salaries at three thousand dollars.

It is my recommendation that additional appropriations be made to raise the minimum teachers' salaries to three thousand four hundred dollars this biennium and to three thousand six hundred dollars next biennium. Our primary problems in teachers' salaries is in the field of beginning teachers. Our present low minimum is preventing us from attracting as many of our new young teachers as we need.

The minimum salary figure can be increased from three thousand dollars a year to three thousand four hundred dollars at a total cost of \$1.2 million dollars per biennium. This is based on the present teaching experience average prevailing in the state.

As we think of the needs of education we must keep in mind also the increasing cost of those things schools must have in order to operate. Maintenance and instructional supplies, equipment and salaries of non-professional employees as well as funds with which to match federal programs must be taken into consideration.

Consolidation should continue in such cases where it will improve the educational training for our young people in order to give all our children fair and equal opportunities. Financing of school districts on the local level should not cause a penalty which would result in their not receiving their share of state aid.

Continuing in the field of education, let me say that no more important or urgent public interest will challenge the attention of our administration and that of the Twenty-Seventh legislature than that vested in our institutions of higher learning.

The new demand for space and science training dramatizes this. Even as we deliberate together, man's first satellite may well be in orbit around the sun. America must keep pace and we in Oklahoma must do our part to see that it does.

The field of technology is not the only importance aspect of higher education. It is also the most direct means of creating new wealth for our state. It is a principal means of making life richer and more rewarding in every realm.

I am recommending a seven million dollar increase in appropriations for higher education.

Some of the budget pressures can be relieved in higher education during this biennium. When the Board of Regents for Higher Education was created, it was the intent of the Legislature and the people that they accept the responsibility for a long range program for higher education in Oklahoma. This was intended to include necessary

consolidations of schools and the elimination of unnecessary duplications. With the help of this Legislature we will insist that the Regents of Higher Education fulfill this responsibility.

MENTAL HEALTH

Oklahoma has made great progress in the past decade in the field of mental health, but we still have far to go. For that reason, the recommended budget which I am submitting separately calls for an increase of more than eight per cent in appropriations for mental health.

It is extremely important that we pay particular attention to increasing facilities for the care and training of mentally retarded children. I recommend that you appropriate seventy-five thousand dollars for the completion of a dormitory to provide eighty-four additional beds at the Pauls Valley State School. I hope that even more training space can be made available through possible consolidations and transfers.

WELFARE

I recommend and strongly urge that all state agencies organized primarily to provide welfare services to the citizens of Oklahoma be placed under the Oklahoma Public Welfare Commission.

The People of Oklahoma, in adopting Article 25 of the Constitution on July 7, 1936, provided that the commission administer the grant-in-aid programs dealing with welfare. This authorized the commission and Department of Public Welfare to cooperate with any grant-in-aid program for the purpose of obtaining federal funds.

In effect, the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance program was the basic program and the assistance programs for money payments were set up as a stop-gap measure to take care of the needs of those needy citizens not covered under the old-age insurance plan, until all employees could obtain sufficient coverage either by requirements of law or on a voluntary basis.

I am happy to report that a detailed study of the welfare department's affairs shows we have reached that milestone in the programs where an increase of at least three dollars a month can be added to the payments for:

1. Old Age Assistance.
2. Aid to the blind.
3. Aid to dependent children, and
4. Aid to the permanently and totally disabled.

My detailed study has shown that sufficient surplus will be left in the state assistance funds to continue that precedent set by the Twenty-Fifth Legislature, when a surplus of one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars was made available for the rehabilitation of parents in aid to dependent children families.

Again, in the wisdom of the Twenty-sixth Legislature, three hundred thousand dollars was made available from the surplus to continue aid to these families.

I therefore recommend that this Twenty-Seventh Legislature give serious consideration to continuing the policy of making available that part of the sales tax

revenue not need to maintain a budget providing for the standards of decency and health and the adequately financed medical care program for other welfare purposes.

I recommend that the legislature transfer to the Public Welfare Commission the responsibility of administering all of the medical care program for physically handicapped children.

I further recommend that the administration and supervision of the Whitaker State Orphan's Home at Pryor, and the Deaf, Blind and Orphan's Home for Negroes at Taft, be transferred to the Public Welfare Commission.

The Twenty-sixth Legislature transferred the duties and responsibilities of the general assistance program and the commodity distribution program to the welfare commission. It was necessary to finance these activities the past biennium from the general revenue fund. I find that there is now a sufficient surplus in the state assistance fund to finance these activities from the sales tax revenue.

The transferring of these agencies and the financing of their activities as well as the financing of the commodity distribution program and of the general assistance program can be accomplished in the next biennium from surplus state assistance funds.

Certainly I am mindful that it is the first responsibility of the fund to provide adequate payments to our elder citizens and other needy, eligible people, in addition to providing comprehensive and adequately financed medical care.

This we can do – by providing a substantial increase in the money payment by February, 1959, and we can also finance the activities as I have suggested from the surpluses.

At the present rate of increase of sales tax collections and the increasing number of recipients who draw an old age payment, which enable the commission to reduce the amount of state funds needed to maintain the money payment, further increases of so-called "pension" payment can and will be made during my administration, consistent with any cost-of-living increase.

CENTRAL PURCHASING SYSTEM

In order to provide for needed economies in the business operation of many state agencies, it is mandatory that certain changes be made. I sincerely believe that the current antiquated purchasing system should be replaced with a central purchasing system.

At the present time, the function of purchase and supply is not centralized in one agency, but is conducted independently and with very little coordination, by numerous agencies. Directives and enabling statutes pertaining to purchase and supply are ambiguous as to intent, and contradictory as to interpretation, thus increasing the difficulty of proper administration.

There is no standardization between agencies as to description of requisitioned items. This lack of standardization eliminates any possibility of intelligent pool buying for state-wide requirements.

It is apparent that new legislation is needed to provide clear and concise directives predicated upon legislative intent. The law-making body should decide whether provision in present statutes relating to purchasing should be repealed and re-enacted into a single comprehensive purchasing law, or if the improvement can be better obtained by

piece-meal amendments. It is desirable that any changes made provide for the following conditions:

1. The responsibility for purchasing should not only be definitely placed within the state organizational structure, but the authority should be granted to require compliance by all affected agencies.

2. Citation of exempted agencies should be explicit rather than implied, specifying whether such exemption covers the acquisition of all purchases, or is limited to certain items. At this time I see the need for only two such exemptions: One: The Highway Department and its purchases of materials, machinery, and equipment pertaining to the construction of highways. Two: The Budget and Accounting Department because of its distinction as the paying and auditing branch.

3. Clarification should be had as to whether the responsibility of purchasing includes the authority to determine what particular item shall be selected. Without this authority, the entire concept of General Purchasing is weakened.

4. The several laws covering the taking and maintaining of inventory should be reconciled to allow uniform accounting for capital investment, and afford statewide comparison.

5. The question should be decided, whether the administrative head of an agency, or group of agencies vested with authority to requisition should have the power to delegate the function to sub-divisional heads.

6. A vital point which should be clarified is whether an agency, simply because it receives its supporting funds, in whole or in part, from a source outside the state's general funds, is, therefore, exempt from accounting for its expenditures through normal state channels; and be the same token, whether they acquire the authority to expend these funds without accountability to the state administration. For example, the Wildlife Conservation Department.

In the consolidation of responsibility for procurement, there need be no loss of identity or authority by any of the many agencies affected. The function of procurement involves two elements:

1. Authority to requisition.
2. Duty of buying or ordering.

This requisitioning authority is an administrative function implying discretionary decision as to need by the line organization. **Under the Proposed Central Purchasing System this authority to requisition will remain with present organization.** The act of buying is a **service function** only. It completes the procurement of an object which may be requested by any properly constituted administrative authority. As a corollary, therefore, **the power to requisition entails the power to expend state funds.** This merely provides for a more economical means of accomplishment. The proposed Central

Purchasing System implies a single point of purchasing performances for several requisitioning authorities under separate chains of command.

Such a Centralized Purchasing System may be expected to develop certain advantages. Among these will be:

- a. Concentration of buying power, allowing purchases in larger quantities.
- b. Better prices under widely competitive bidding.
- c. Standardization of specification, eliminating unduly expensive or poorly adopted grades.
- d. Long-range buying program to take advantage of seasonal validations.
- e. Curtailment of hand to mouth buying and “emergency” selection caused by poorly anticipated needs.
- f. Development of expert buyers familiar with markets, manufacturing and trade practices, packaging and shipping conditions.
- g. Utilization of testing and inspection facilities with competent personnel on a full time basis.
- h. Concentration of requisitions from multiple agencies permitting objective order solicitation on part of vendors with lower selling cost to them.

All agency heads must realize that once an appropriation is voted by the legislature, the money is not completely theirs to spend as they see fit. We must all realize that funds that we handling belong to the people of Oklahoma and that we have a great obligation to see that we have a great obligation to see that these funds are expended in keeping with strict economy practices.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Of prime concern to every citizen of this state is the useless waste of life and property upon our streets and highways. Each year we kill hundreds of men, women and children. Thousands more are injured and the property damage runs into millions of dollars.

More than ever before our citizens are keenly aware of safety upon our highways. The death rate is on the lips of citizens everywhere.

I recommend that a constitutional, non-political Public Safety Commission be established with authority to set up rules and regulations governing the Department of Public Safety. That said department be given the authority to employ a Director who is trained and dedicated to make our highways safer for our citizens. It is my belief that such a commission will attract career men, educated in the needs of public safety.

We have prepared the necessary legislation for your consideration and urge that you submit the question to the people of Oklahoma.

We also recommend that the Department of Public Safety be increased in manpower and that the money to adequately operate the department be appropriated to meet the challenge of cutting down our loss of life and property on our highways.

I recommend that you enact more binding laws on the revocation of Driver's Licenses. This will serve as a deterrent to habitual offenders and have a healthy effect in general on attention to traffic laws by all of our drivers.

In a recent survey conducted by the Traffic Division of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, they recommended that our Highway Patrol have more than two hundred additional men and over one hundred fifty more cars. I know we cannot meet this need this year, but I recommend that we do all possible in this direction toward making our Department of Public Safety the finest in the United States.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The uniform enforcement of our criminal laws looms as one of the most basic needs of state government – a problem that grows with the crime rate that is increasing over all of the United States.

In many counties of our state, the citizens are faced with inadequate law enforcement. In a number of counties, attorneys will not accept the position of county attorney.

Without these experienced prosecutors, the work of the investigating officers is wasted. Vigorous prosecution of law violators is the most successful and permanent weapon against crime.

The establishment of a district attorney system in our state will be a step toward assuring that Oklahoma will never find itself in the limelight of such notorious publicity as those communities which lead the FBI's list of haunts of the bandit, the burglar and their kind.

A district attorney system will give every county an experienced and qualified prosecuting officer, a man selected from a single county or a group of counties which comprise an area large enough to assure capable and vigorous attorneys for the positions.

It will assure every community the qualified legal knowledge that is now too often found only in counties of very large population. We have prepared the legislation creating such a district attorney system and I urge you to pass it; to strike a blow against crime, and place an arm of legal protection around the children and the homes of the citizens of this great state, that might otherwise fall prey to an element of crime.

PENAL INSTITUTIONS

One of the real problems which we face and which we must take active steps to correct lies in the penal system of Oklahoma. I have some recommendations which I want you to consider in the weeks ahead.

Recent investigation shows that special court services for delinquent children are virtually non-existent except in two or three of our larger counties. Children committed to training schools are offered scarcely more than custodial care. When released from the schools these children return home with little, if any, help.

There is little difference in the picture as it concerns adult offenders. There are but two adult probation officers and only eight parole officers in our state. Our prisons are largely without rehabilitation tools.

Our parole system releases few men and those who are released are give little supervision and guidance.

I urge that we establish an Oklahoma Department of Correction, designed to be responsible for the administration of our entire correctional system.

This department would be built around a strong and able citizen board of not more than nine members to be appointed for staggered terms by the Governor. In turn, this board should select a director who would represent the best in his field.

As you go about this job, bear in mind that these modern programs are economically sound. For example, a good probation system pays for itself many times over. So does a good parole system. In Oklahoma, we could keep five men on probation or parole for the cost of keeping one in prison.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

At the present time, we are not doing enough to promote industrial development. In that connection, we are one of the thirteen states without the semblance of a statewide financing program for new industry or the fostering of present industry. I am in hopes that the legislature and the people will consider this approach in the near future.

In this field lies our great hope for increased tax revenue through more industries and employment. In that connection, I am strongly opposed to any tax increase that would hinder present industries from expanding our new industries showing an interest in locating in our state.

The industrial development of the State of Oklahoma is of prime importance to all of us. Many problems facing us as we commence this legislative session could be solved by industry moving into Oklahoma and developing our vast supply of natural resources. I recommend that we take strong and positive steps in the direction of advertising and promoting industrial development in Oklahoma.

OIL AND GAS AND OTHER MINERALS

I note with interest the introduction of legislation to increase the oil depletion allowance of our State Tax Laws. This matter is certainly worthy of consideration by Oklahoma's Legislature, in view of the fact that the federal depletion rate is higher than our Oklahoma rate. Every effort should be made determine the effect of this proposed change on our state income and equitable adjustment provided if economically feasible.

Adjustments should also be made wherever justified, with reference to other minerals which are a part of our natural resources.

AGRICULTURE

One of the major needs in Oklahoma's agriculture is a stepped up program for upstream flood control. It was in 1957 and 1958, when floods washed away one hundred thirty-six million dollars in lands and farm and ranch holdings, that we really learned what these projects could mean to our state.

It has been a part of my pledged program – and still is – to ask for four additional planning parties for the upstream flood control programs, but at this time I am told by the State Soil Conservation Board that it is not economically feasible. I have learned,

however, that two additional parties would be most valuable in this effort and I recommend that you allocate funds for them.

I would also like to suggest that a committee investigate the feasibility of moving the Forestry Department from the Planning and Resources Board to the Department of Agriculture. I believe they will find this change of great benefit to the program of protecting the state's forests by making this change and would be in a better position to work more closely with the United States Forestry Service which is a part of the United States Department of Agriculture.

You have always understood the needs of the one hundred sixteen thousand farmers and ranchers of Oklahoma and I know that you will continue during the Twenty-seventh Legislative Session to handle their problems with that same understanding.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me repeat that as I have come to know each of you individually, I am even more firmly convinced that the Twenty-Seventh Legislature will go down on record as one of the finest sessions in history.

I seek your cooperation and help in every respect. I hope we can consider ourselves as a part of a team. I think the executive and legislative branches can work together on a mutual and cooperative basis to build a program of progress for Oklahoma.

I want you to know my door is always open to discuss your problems and the problems of your district. Any time you have a problem, I have a problem. I want to be a governor who is always available to help the legislature as a whole and its individual members. There is no other group in Oklahoma as close to the people and as sensitive to their needs as all of you in this room.

While I want to do everything I can to help you by the same token I hope I can always count on you to be helpful to me. I want you to counsel me and advise me on executive matters as well as to acquaint with legislative problems.

There is no problem in Oklahoma so great that it cannot be worked out by the vast experience, leadership and talent that are present in the Twenty-Seventh Legislature.

I believe the people of the state are behind you more strongly than they have ever been before in your efforts to write a program in which the entire state can take pride.

About Digitizing the Governors' State of the State Addresses

Section 9, Article 6 of the Constitution of Oklahoma provides as follows:

“At every session of the Legislature, and immediately upon its organization, the Governor shall communicate by message, delivered to joint session of the two houses, upon the condition of the State; and shall recommend such matters to the Legislature as he shall judge expedient.”

From statehood in 1907 to present, the state of the state addresses of Oklahoma's Governors have been recorded in pamphlets, booklets, and Senate Journals. One could not foresee the toll that time would take on the earliest of these documents. When these items first arrived at the Oklahoma State Archives, the leather bindings had dried considerably, cracking the spines significantly. Due to the acidity in the paper, many pages have darkened with age. Some of the more brittle pamphlets crumble at the slightest touch.

Thus when we decided to digitize these materials, we faced two challenges: the safety of the original documents and ease of viewing/reading for patrons. Our primary objective was that the unique and historic qualities of the documents should be reflected in the website. However, older fonts would not digitize clearly when scanned and even using a flatbed scanner could cause the bindings to worsen. An image of each page would increase download time considerably and any hand-written remarks or crooked pages could be lost. We decided to retype each document with every period, comma, and misspelled word to maintain the integrity of the document while placing some unique images of the documents online. Patrons can download the addresses quicker and view them clearer as well as save, print, and zoom with the Adobe Acrobat Reader. We have learned much from our efforts and we hope that our patrons are better served in their research on the state of the state addresses of Oklahoma's Governors.