

**State of the State**  
**Governor Raymond Gary**  
**January 11, 1955**

Mr. Lieutenant Governor  
Mr. President of the Senate  
Mr. Speaker of the House of Representatives, and  
Members of the Joint Session:

In appearing before you today, I am carrying out one of the requirements imposed upon the Governor by the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma. In delivering this message to you, I do so with a deep feeling of humility and a feeling, too, that the Office of Governor imposes great responsibilities upon an individual.

I come before you not as one who feels he knows all the answers to the problems involving Oklahoma today. The recommendations which I will make concerning changes in the laws of our state are made because they represent the program which I outlined to the people throughout this state during my campaign for Governor. I feel that the recommendations which I set forth to you are sound and actually reflect the wishes of the majority of the people of this state.

As a former member of the Oklahoma State Senate, I know it is the Legislature's policy to consider seriously the recommendations of the Governor. I know, too, that members of the Legislature do not appreciate a Governor presenting a message in the form of a mandate. I want you to feel that my message today is presented to you upon its own merits. If the proposals and recommendations which I shall outline are not good enough for you to enact into law. My job will be to sell you on this program. I feel that the majority of you are already sold on my program of government because it actually represents the thinking of the people of this state.

Many of the recommendations which have been approved by the Legislative Council have been incorporated into my message.

I feel that the twenty-fifth Oklahoma Legislature now in session will have to face head-on many major problems affecting the economic growth and development of our state down through the years to come. I, as Governor, not only want you to face these major questions head-on, but I will lead the way. I will be willing to take criticism and abuse from those who might attempt to stand in the way of progress. All of us, together, carrying the Flag of Progress, will march forward and write a progressive program of government which will mean better living for the people of Oklahoma.

**Tax Structure**

Generally, speaking, Oklahoma has a sound tax structure. *I will recommend that you not make any general increase in taxes.* I do, however, believe it would be wise for the Revenue and Taxation Committee to take a look at our tax structure with a view toward making adjustments where you feel it would strengthen our tax structure, or make it fairer to all the people and bring about a still more favorable industrial climate.

To make a general increase in taxes at this time, in my opinion, would be very damaging to Oklahoma's economic growth and development. During the past several years we have held the line against tax increases. We have made adjustments in some of our tax laws thus placing Oklahoma in a more favorable and competitive position with other states of the Union for industrial development.

It is true that our state taxes are high, but our local taxes are very low. When the two are averaged together, Oklahoma has one of the lowest tax rates on a per capita basis in the Union. We want to keep it that way. At the same time, we are faced with the responsibility of providing adequate funds to meet the needs of the essential functions of government. I believe that our present tax structure, plus improved assessment practices on the part of the counties, will enable us to produce the revenue which is needed to carry on our government, maintain our schools, our mental institutions, construct roads, carry on an up-to-date soil conservation program, and meet all other essential needs of our state government.

### **Welfare Program**

I know that each of you is vitally interested in our welfare program. It is a program close to your hearts and to the hearts of all the people of the State of Oklahoma. I am sure that the ordinary citizen of the State of Oklahoma desires that Oklahoma's needy be provided for in the best manner possible with funds dedicated for such purpose.

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The Welfare Program is the number one cost of government in Oklahoma. This is a program of government which every Christian citizen in Oklahoma endorses. Under this division of government we provide assistance for aged citizens who qualify for the assistance program. We provide aid for widows, for orphans, and for those who are physically disabled and unable to earn a living for themselves. Under this program we would include our State Hospitals, our Mental Health Program, our Orphans Homes, our School for the Blind, and our School for the Deaf.

Oklahoma provides a better public assistance program for its citizens than any of the surrounding states. For example, Federal statistics show that the average payment for an old-age assistance recipient in Arkansas was \$33.82; Colorado \$82.19; Kansas \$64.35; Louisiana \$51.22; Missouri \$50.11; New Mexico \$46.42; and Texas \$38.88. That was in September of 1954. The average payment for an old-age assistance recipient in Oklahoma then was \$57.77. You will note that there are only two of the states named whose average payments exceed that of Oklahoma. This can be explained when it is considered that Colorado had approximately 52,500 old-age assistance recipients and Kansas had approximately 34,500. At the same time, this state had approximately 95,000 recipients.

Our basic statutes on public assistance appear to be satisfactory. They are liberal, more liberal than in the majority of states when all points of eligibility are considered. It is difficult to administer the program because our sales tax and number of recipients fluctuate. This causes some criticism in the administration of the public assistance program. It is necessary to keep the expenditures of assistance within the income. Each

time a change in budget is necessary, because of a decrease or increase in revenue, it causes some people to think there has been an inequity in administration. This cannot be helped. The Oklahoma Public Welfare Commission and I, as Governor, will try to keep the program as stable as possible. Changes in the budgets of the recipients and the payments they receive will be kept to a minimum. I assure you that I shall always have a close personal interest in the public assistance program. I am confident, too, that the Commission will cooperate with me fully in eliminating as many problems as possible in administering this program. It is my desire and, of course, the desire of the Commission that all assistance provided by the Legislature be administered in a respectful and sympathetic manner. I believe through wise administration and increased revenues that this administration, with the full approval and cooperation of the Oklahoma Public Welfare Commission, will be able to increase the budgets of our aged, blind, and disabled recipients to a very substantial degree. I am hopeful that it will be increased from the present \$88 a month budget to at least \$100 a month before I leave office. I believe this can be done, for I am sure that I shall receive the full cooperation of all our state employees.

I also believe the amount we are now able to pay our aid to dependent children families, although liberal in comparison with other states, can be increased. I am sure that all the law enforcement officials, administrative agencies, courts, and the citizens of Oklahoma, too, will cooperate with me fully in this effort. I shall expect them to continue requiring fathers to support their children, even though they have abandoned and neglected them. It will continue to be the policy of the Welfare Department, with my full approval and cooperation, to eliminate insofar as possible aid to those parents who expect the state to bear the burden of their children's support because they themselves do not wish to assume this responsibility. Furthermore, wherever possible, I shall do all in my power to see that the homes in which aid to dependent children funds go are suitable homes in which children may be reared properly.

The present policy of the Oklahoma Public Welfare Commission allows a recipient living in town to own a home with a value up to \$8,000. In addition to this, a single person may retain \$350 in any form, whether it be cash, stock, bonds, insurance, excess land, automobiles or any other form he wishes. This amount is \$500 for a couple receiving assistance for the aged, blind, or disabled, with a maximum of \$600 allowed as aid to dependent children family of four or more persons. The recipient may also own a reasonable amount of household equipment, including a television set, and have a home of a value not to exceed \$8,000, with an area not to exceed forty acres. This permits many people to own land up to one hundred sixty acres and still be eligible for assistance, since they place their reserve in the excess land over forty acres. This last regulation concerning people who live in the country may, at first, seem unfair since many of their homes do not have a value of \$8,000. But actually it is not unfair. A recipient living in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and many of the larger cities often cannot obtain a home reasonably livable and modern for less than \$8,000. Forty acres in the country permits an aged person to retain land on which to live, have a garden, chickens, cow and so forth and in many instances this will permit him to live better on the assistance grant of the Department than the man without these facilities in town. Also, it is mandatory for the Department to consider the applicant's financial situation at the time of application and the aged couple living in town, having no income whatever, should be entitled to

assistance in order for them to remain in the home to which they have been accustomed, and for which they have a strong attachment, and not be forced to dispose of this home and move to another section of town less desirable.

*It is my recommendation that no liberalization be made at this time on eligibility requirements for assistance.* It is not the purpose of the assistance program to assist in the building up or retention of an estate to pass on to children. It is the purpose of the assistance program to provide the essential needs of those people whose income and resources are not sufficient to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Permitting a person in the country to own more than forty acres of land, with the state furnishing assistance, would be bad for the economy of the state. Many would refuse to sell the land and would draw assistance. The land owned by the recipient would remain untilled and would not produce anything to add to the revenue or wealth of the state.

Any broadening of the regulations would, in my opinion, defeat the very purpose of the assistance program. A slight relaxation of the eligibility requirements would add great numbers to the assistance rolls. This, because of limitation of funds, would take from those who need it most and give it to those who need assistance least.

There are several proposals being presented before the next Congress to establish a medical care program for recipients of assistance and it is probable that they will pass some kind of legislation to provide care for medical indigents. It is my desire that Oklahoma participate in any medical care program adopted by the Federal Government on a matching-fund basis with the States. However, if Oklahoma takes advantage of this proposed Federal legislation, it will be necessary that more revenues be placed in the assistance funds of Oklahoma for those on categorical assistance and some provision made for medical insurance for those who are medically indigent. *If this needed additional revenue can be raised by broadening of the tax base of the sales tax law, without manifest injustice to any revenue be raised in this manner.* If this cannot be done, I would suggest that the Legislature find some new source of revenue to the extent necessary to meet this requirement, in order that those citizens of Oklahoma needing medical care can be furnished it in cooperation with any Federal legislation enacted.

### **Soil and Water Conservation**

Oklahoma is one of the states which pioneered soil conservation by encouraging the terracing of land and other conservation practices. *I will recommend to the Legislature that it seriously consider legislation introduced pertaining to the conservation of our soils. It is my desire that the state encourage the Federal Government to make available additional appropriations for upstream flood control by building additional detention dams to retard the excessive flow of water down our streams.* If the Federal Government and the State of Oklahoma will develop this upstream flood control program to the fullest extent, it will help to insure an adequate supply of water for irrigation, municipal, and industrial uses in the years to come. In addition, it will cause our rivers and our streams to flow with clear water again practically the year around.

In addition to our Soil and Water Flood Control Program, *this Legislature should give consideration to creating a Water Authority* with sufficient powers to borrow money on self-liquidating bond issues, to construct reservoir, build canals, storage basins and

such other facilities as may be necessary to meet the water supply needs for industrial, municipal, and agricultural uses within the state.

In order for us to develop a strong industrial state, we must first provide an adequate supply of water. Our rainfall is sufficient to provide the water supply needed if we will construct the necessary dams and carry out proper soil and water conservation practices. I know this is a far-reaching program but in order to accomplish the things which we have in mind, it is necessary for us to look ahead and plan ahead. I believe that we have the necessary vision, intelligence and courage within the halls of this Legislature to devise the program needed today in order to insure better living conditions tomorrow.

Present and future municipal water supply requirements for Oklahoma, according to a report of the Oklahoma Water Supply Work Group on fifty Oklahoma municipal water supplies, representing a population in 1950 of 972,227, show pumpage of 121,386 acre-feet in 1950. This information, extended to the State, indicated the following yearly municipal use:

Year	Population	Gal. Per Capita	Water Pumped Acre-Feet	Water Use* Total Acre-Feet	M.G.D.	Per Capita
1950	2,233,351	83	201,303	301,303	268	123
1975	2,451,000 est	140	375,000	525,000	469	197
2000	2,799,700 est	180	350,000	950,000	848	310

\*Includes evaporation and process losses from surface storage. One acre-foot equals approximately 326,000 gallons.

Seventy per cent of the U.S. population today are users of city water supply. Assuming this rate of urban population increases, municipal water works must provide city water for 500,000 new consumers each year. Oklahoma is expected to need more than 50% more municipal water by 1975.

There is little evidence that a water shortage is necessary. Water may be obtained by at an every-increasing cost. The longer a project is delayed, the higher these costs will be. Most of our so-called water shortage exists, as a rule, due to lack of advance planning and construction, and the intelligent distribution and use of water. If history teaches us anything, we should learn to make long-range plans – finance and construct – before shortages occur.

Other western states have been building water resource projects for many years. In Utah and Montana, a state agency has the responsibility for planning, building and operating certain projects which conserve and store water for beneficial use. Operations are financed from a revolving fund which is being built up with appropriations from the Legislature. As income is received from operations, the money goes into the revolving fund and is available for new projects. It is understood that these annual appropriations are on the order of two or three million dollars, depending on need.

There are many instances where western states have operated with the Federal Government in the development of projects, and have shared in the construction costs. Apparently they have all learned that water is one of their important resources, and that the developments must be paid for by the people who receive the benefits.

Thirty-seven million acre feet of water flows out of Oklahoma each year. Much of this water is run-off that is not absorbed by the soil during periods of torrential rainfall. If only a small part of this runoff water could be stored and utilized on land suitable for irrigation during periods when soil moisture is a limiting factor in plant development, the average annual farm income in Oklahoma could be increased by more than fifty million dollars.

A study of irrigation possibilities in Oklahoma indicates that suitable land for irrigation farming can be found in every stream valley in which sediments from run-off water have been deposited. However, irrigation water is not available for use from natural stream flow in many of these valleys during periods when drought is a limiting factor in plant development.

There are approximately one million acres of good land on stream terraces and in bottomlands in Oklahoma that could be irrigated if an adequate supply of water were available. A lack of available water combined with high cost of storage and distribution are important factors which will affect the development and success of many irrigation projects in this region.

Oklahoma and the other States of the Southwest must recognize that as far as water supplies are concerned, planning must be adjusted to periods of famine and plenty by supplying adequate storage to collect the great volume of flood water which crosses the State, even during dry years.

Growth in population and industry makes the present drought acute and clearly demonstrates a roadblock to our future development unless we take steps to rectify our apparent water supply deficiency.

Oklahoma now has a population of about 2,400,000 and is using approximately 475,000,000 gallons of water daily. If water can be made available, it is estimated that by 1975 we can profitably use 750,000,000 gallons daily. This demand will necessitate the expansion of facilities to provide twice our present requirements, or approximately an additional million acre-feet of reservoir storage capacity. An average of 37,000,000 acre-feet of water flows through and out of Oklahoma annually. In even the driest years, with adequate storage facilities, our every future need can be supplied.

Oklahoma, along with some of her neighbors, has been careless of man-made pollution and has thus spoiled both ground and surface water supplies which otherwise would be useable. This situation must be corrected.

Oklahoma can be proud of the progress that has been made in conserving her soil resources and providing many thousands of stock ponds. However, the program of land treatment combined with bank stabilization must be accelerated if the major structures to provide suitable water supplies are to be protected against undue siltation.

Irrigation in Oklahoma is no longer an experiment. Where water is available and not required by a use of higher priority, it should be put to work on over one-half million acres of suitable land for producing crops needed for an expanding balanced economy.

Recreation for the people of Oklahoma and the conservation of our fish and wild life are of growing importance, and these needs will be materially benefited by the structures built to satisfy the other water uses.

Oklahoma, with an average annual flow of about 37,000,000 acre-feet in her streams leaving the state, has, if she will but properly conserve it, enough water to meet every future need, even in periods of drought. Vast natural resources, combined with other

favorable factors, make possible a tremendous industrial development in this state if we can but keep the development of agricultural, municipal, industrial, and recreational water supplies in pace. Of the two million acres of land in this state that are suitable for irrigation, half of it lies in stream terraces and bottoms. If only a small part of our run-off water were available for these lands, the annual farm income of Oklahoma could be increased by over one hundred million dollars.

To keep our economy in balance we must have more industry to provide jobs for our people. Large industries need quantities of water. Most of the communities of Oklahoma are not able to supply industrial water needs from their present supplies. They are even short of domestic water.

*I feel it is imperative that appropriate legislative action be taken as soon as possible to create an instrumentality of the state that is adequately financed, which will have authority to cooperate and make contracts with Federal, State, and local levels of government as well as corporations and individuals, and can develop supplies and distribute and sell the water for the benefit of the people of Oklahoma.*

Interstate compacts between Oklahoma and her neighboring states, allocating the waters of the Red and Arkansas River Basins and regulating pollution are essential to any long range plan for the development of water resources. The enabling legislation is now before Congress. Those charged with such negotiations must be familiar with our water requirements.

## **Agriculture**

Agriculture is Oklahoma's most basic and most important industry. We all depend on it, for as agriculture prospers, so will other businesses of our state. Soil is the source of all wealth, and agricultural cash income, which has averaged approximately 600 million dollars per year for the last five years, is new wealth. This wealth which is multiplied six or eight times as it moves through our economic system is truly important to all of us, whether or not we are engaged in agriculture or closely related industries.

Agriculture must be in position to furnish food and fiber for a rapidly expanding population and the food must be of the kind and quality to insure improved diets for all of us. This can be done only if we strengthen agriculture through research and education. Through education we must take to the people, and make application of, the newer and better things in agriculture developed through research. In so doing, we will discover our greatest needs – the things on which research needs to be done – in order to best serve the agricultural needs of our state.

We must strive continuously and increasingly through research and education to meet these needs and to strengthen all segments of agriculture and related industries.

During the past 25 years the farmer's cash expenses have gone from 25% of his gross income to 75% or 80%. Business and management in farming is as necessary as management in business or industry.

Good management means successful farming; a strong agricultural economy instead of a weak one. Good management results in proper use of resources, and a balanced farming program. It means wise production, not necessarily more bushels per acre, but production at a cost which will leave a reasonable margin of profit. Good management can result only from an understanding of our capacities on each farm or

ranch and in the state as a whole. This can be achieved only by a stepped-up program of research and education in this field.

Water is one of the major determining factors in both agriculture and industrial development of our state. Wise use of water for irrigation and other farm and ranch uses is a must. We need to continue studies and research on water use to determine how greatest returns can be expected from use of available water.

If agriculture is to prosper, we must have an increasing number of trained personnel to operate our farms and ranches, to work in fields related to agriculture and to man our expended research and education program.

This suggests the need for continued and expanded support for activities in 4-H Club work, vocational agriculture, and college level training programs.

### **Fish and Game Commission**

*I would recommend to the Legislature that it refer to the people a Constitutional Amendment creating a constitutional Fish and Game Commission.* I make this recommendation because I would like to see the Fish and Game Commission, which is financed totally by the sportsmen of Oklahoma, removed as far from political domination as is possible. This would lend more stability to the operation of the department and a long rang program could be evolved which would improve fishing, hunting, and wildlife conditions in Oklahoma and preserve for our future generations some of the privileges which we, ourselves, have been able to enjoy.

### **Education**

There is no need for me to dwell at length in discussing the needs for a strong educational program for the youth of Oklahoma because I know that you Members of the Legislature are just as vitally interested in a well-balanced educational program as I am.

We are faced during this Session of the Legislature with making some very important decisions which will have far-reaching effect upon Oklahoma's educational system. It will be my policy as Governor to always emphasize the importance of education upon the future growth and development of our state. With this in mind, I will always be very positive in my statements concerning the needs for finances to help make this program possible.

We may just as well be realistic and face the issues squarely. There is no way that we can provide for a progressive educational system without increasing the funds with which to finance it. I feel that the increased funds for the support of common schools in Oklahoma will have to come principally from local levels. I am not going to ask the Legislature to make any further increase in taxes upon the people of this state. *I am, however, going to recommend to you that we take a new look at the assessment laws* of Oklahoma with a view of improving our local assessments so that we can place on the rolls that property which is not now on those rolls and assess the property on a fairer basis. At the rate the wealth of Oklahoma has been increasing for the past several years, taxable evaluations should have been increasing at the rate of at least \$100 million per year. In my opinion, there are millions and millions of dollars in taxable property within the borders of Oklahoma not on the tax rolls. The people who own this property also owe an obligation to Oklahoma. They should be made to carry their share of the tax load, along with the people who have properly rendered their taxes.



Our school population this year is up about 13,000 over last year. To provide the necessary teachers, supplies and transportation for this increase in our enrollment of common schools, an additional expenditure will be required of approximately \$2 million per year. You can see that the cost of education is going up, principally because our school enrollments are increasing. This should not be a discouraging sign for Oklahoma. It should be a very encouraging sign. It shows that we are growing. I would much rather be challenged with the problem of finding adequate finances for instruction and new buildings to provide for increased school enrollment than to live in a state with a decreasing school enrollment and money in the State Treasury. I would recommend that we meet this demand for increased funds for the operation of our common schools in the following ways:

1. *Refer to the people a Constitutional Amendment* making the constitutional levy of 4 mills on a county-wide basis to go to the Common School Fund. This 4 mills will replace the 4 mills which will be lost when the Supreme Court's mandate goes into effect doing away with segregation.

2. *I would recommend taking a new look at the assessment laws with a view of strengthening our assessment practices* in this state in an effort to get the property assessed more in accordance with the law, and get all the property on the tax rolls.

3. *Take a new look at the present school code* to see if there is any way that expenses can be cut in the operation of our schools without crippling the efficient operation of our schools.

In some areas of Oklahoma we are faced with a very acute school building shortage because of rapidly increasing school population. In order to help relieve that acute situation, *I am recommending to the Legislature that you refer to the people a Constitutional Amendment* which would provide for school districts to vote up to ten per cent of the valuation for school building purposes. I would recommend that this Amendment have a formula perfected in such a way that only those school districts which can show they have exerted all of their present means of building additional schools, and still are under financed, can qualify for the privilege of voting up to 10% of the valuation. If they cannot meet these requirements, then they will continue to operate on 5% of the valuation. I know that you and I will be criticized by some for making these recommendations for the benefit of the youth of our state, but I am willing not only to share the criticism with you, but I am willing to share most of it. I am willing to assume the obligation of providing a more up-to-date and modern educational program for our youth as a vital part of the Administration's program.

There are other important educational measures which I will support. These are not listed here. I consider these which I have listed as absolutely essential in order to meet this challenge for a more stable school program for Oklahoma.

*I will further recommend that you exert every effort possible to improve, along with our common school educational program, a program for the physically and mentally handicapped children, a program for vocational rehabilitation to benefit the handicapped*

people, a teachers' retirement program, and take a new look at our present textbook system with a view of improving administration and adoption policies relating thereto.

*I further recommend that you make a study of the needs for capital improvements on the campuses of our institutions of higher learning. We have acute needs for several millions of dollars for capital improvements immediately. The enrollment in the institutions of higher learning is up 10% this year over last year. Indications are that these enrollments will gradually increase. Since we do not have sufficient funds in our budget to provide for the operational needs and the capital improvement needs, I would recommend that we devise some kind of program based on sound business principles and perform practices to meet the needs of the institutions of higher learning for capital improvements.*

### **Health and Medical Assistance**

A large part of the budget for health and medical assistance is expended through the two tuberculosis sanitariums and the Oklahoma General Hospital. I have recommended a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$40,000 for the Oklahoma General Hospital and I am further recommending that the annual budget for this institution be made in an amount sufficient to have an accredited hospital and a formal nurses' training program.

The budget for the State Health Department is being reduced by a reduction in the amount of Federal funds available. I would like to recommend a general increase in the state appropriations for this most important activity. However, on the funds available, I have not been able to do so. I believe that some of this decrease may be offset by an increase in the amount of local funds available for local health services.

*I would also like serious consideration on the proposition of increasing the fees charged by the Health Department for certain of their services. I believe that these services, such as the issuance of birth certificates, should be on a self-supporting basis.*

For the past two years we have had a Committee made up of some of the finest members of the Oklahoma Legislature – Senators John Russell, Fred Chapman, D. L. Jones, Basil Wilson, Lawrence Irwin, and Representatives Shockley Shoemaker, Leland Wolfe, Charlie Long, Clarence Krieger, and Porter Lee. This Committee has been making a study of how other states operated their mental institutions, hospitals, orphans homes, schools for the blind, schools for the deaf, and penal institutions. This was one of the hardest working committees that I have ever seen function. They have traveled many miles and devoted this time free. They received no more salary for doing this than they would have drawn otherwise. This committee has made definite recommendations to the Legislature. The Legislative Council has endorsed the recommendations of this committee. I know that there will be many who will oppose any change in the policies which we have been following in the operation of these institutions and I know that many will do so because they feel that our present plan of operation is better. I recommend that you make a sincere study of this proposed legislation and not bow to pressure groups on either side. Make your decision based upon the merits of the proposal, taking into consideration, of course, that the goal ahead is to enact laws which will enable the State of Oklahoma to take better care of those housed within our mental institutions, our state hospitals, our orphans homes, the deaf and blind schools, and a program to rehabilitate those housed within our penal institutions who can be rehabilitated.

## **General Government**

We have more than twenty thousand full time employees working for the State of Oklahoma. Yet, we do not have a state personnel division. In order for us to operate the state government on a more efficient business-like basis, it is necessary for us to have a personnel division for general government.

I know that it is impossible to operate a government on the same basis a business is operated. I do believe, however, that a better job could be done of operating our government if we had a good Personnel Division functioning in the same business-like manner as that of a giant business concern. After all, Oklahoma's government is a big business organization. We should run it as much like a business organization as possible. *I will recommend that you enact into law a workable personnel and job classification act.*

*I recommend that you vitalize the Constitutional Amendment voted by the last general election regarding the statute pertaining to limitations of ad valorem taxes.*

In connection with Oklahoma's industrial development I recommend that the Legislature amend our employment security act to reduce the qualifying period for experience rating by employers of eight or more persons from three years to one year. This reduction in qualifying period has only been possible since Congress took action last August, and it will be strongly to Oklahoma's advantage to be the first state in the Southwest to take such action.

## **Indians**

The Indian problem in Oklahoma has actually been considered the problem of the National Government because it has been the National Government which assumed the obligation of providing schools and training for the Indian people of Oklahoma. But in recent months, there have been indications coming from Washington that the Federal Government might relinquish its aid in the way of providing schools for the Indians. This obligation would be assumed by the states wherein the Indians reside. In this case, it would mean that Oklahoma would be required to assume an obligation which would run into large sums of money. *I would recommend to you that you make a study of the Indian tribal problems in Oklahoma with a view toward preparing the State of Oklahoma to take this new obligation should it become necessary.*

## **Negroes**

The negro citizens in Oklahoma have a vital interest in the development of Oklahoma's economy. Individually they are also interested in their own welfare as citizens of this state. To the negro citizens of Oklahoma I make this pledge, that they will at all times be extended fair treatment and consideration at the hands of the Chief Executive.

The negro institutions will be given proper consideration in the allocation of state funds for the operation and maintenance of such institutions. We will select competent personnel from the negro race to operate their own institutions as we are now doing as a state government.

## **Judiciary**

At statehood our Supreme Court took over some 600 cases from the Oklahoma and Indian Territories Supreme Courts. Since then our trial courts have doubled and the appeal work from boards and commissions has increased many times. Cases now pending still number about 600. The laws regulating appeals and their priority force some citizens to wait two years for a final decision on appeals. The organized bar of Oklahoma, the judicial council, and the legislative council committees which studied this problem recommend the appointment of commissioners to assist in reducing the appeal time from two years to a few weeks. *I recommend that you create such commissioners and make Oklahoma a state with speedy administration of justice.*

The most basic need in state government is the enforcement of law and order. Throughout the state, citizens are faced with a serious situation in criminal prosecution. In many counties it is difficult to get a prosecuting attorney. Most of our law enforcement problems can be solved by an experienced, hard-working prosecuting officer. Much of our crime will be prevented if its breeding places are cleaned out. *I join with our leading crime studies and church groups in recommending to you the creation of criminal prosecution districts* in which a District Attorney can coordinate, supervise and prosecute our criminals. I have prepared the legislation, and urge you to pass it early enough in the session so organization can be completed well before your adjournment.

## **Labor**

Since Oklahoma is rapidly developing into an industrial state, our industrial payrolls have been increasing. Because of this, the State Labor Department of Oklahoma needs to have an increased staff so this department can function in accordance with the Constitution and in a manner that will reflect direct benefits to the laboring men and women of our state. They are entitled to guarantees, through the Labor Department's Inspection Division, that the factories and mines and other industries in which they work in Oklahoma will adhere to safety laws and regulations provided for the benefit of Oklahoma's laboring people.

*I recommend to you that you increase the appropriations to the Labor Department of government in an amount that is necessary to meet the need of this governmental service.*

## **Veterans Affairs**

I would recommend that the Constitutional Amendment voted by the people to provide loans for veterans to purchase farms be vitalized so that the deserving veterans who wish to own and operate a farm of their own will be able to purchase a farm and pay for it over a long period of years at a low interest rate.

## **Petroleum Industry**

Another matter which I desire to call to your attention is the chaotic condition existing in the oil industry in Oklahoma.

The oil industry has given to Oklahoma much of its wealth and employment. It, more than any other factor, influences the economy of Oklahoma.

Approximately 62,500 persons are employed directly by the petroleum industry in Oklahoma. They receive, in salaries and wages, roughly \$242 million each year. Considering those who are indirectly employed and those dependent upon the wage earners, approximately one quarter of the people in Oklahoma are dependent upon the oil industry for their welfare.

Figures received from the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission of December, 1954, show an overall increase of 156.25% of unemployment of oil field workers for 1954 over 1953. In certain counties of this state, unemployment of oil field workers has increased over 400% in the past year.

In 1953 the oil industry produced a gross income of \$580,971,000 and paid to the State of Oklahoma a gross production tax during the fiscal year 1953-1954 of \$30,732,657. During the first four months of the fiscal year 1953-1954, the gross production tax amounted to \$10,314,322. During the first four months of the fiscal year 1954-1955, gross production taxes had declined to \$8,834,834, showing a net decline in the four month period of \$1,509,939, which, if continued for the remainder of the fiscal year, will be a decline of \$4,529,817 for the fiscal year 1954-1955. The result of this loss in income to the Government of Oklahoma, through the reduction in the collections from the gross production tax, will seriously curtail the vital functions of the government if allowed to continue.

Recently certain of your leaders and I appeared at the market demand hearing of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, requesting that the allowable production from the oil fields in Oklahoma be increased for the month of January, 1955, by 50,000 barrels. We felt this request was justified by reason of the fact that a market does exist for Oklahoma-produced crude. Figures of the U. S. Bureau of Mines for the month of September, 1954, show that over 27% of the crude oil refined in Oklahoma refineries originate outside Oklahoma. Since 1935, the daily average crude production in Oklahoma has increased approximately 10%; Texas has tripled; Louisiana has shown a five-fold increase; New Mexico has almost quadrupled; Kansas has doubled; and the Rocky Mountains have increased seven-fold. They daily average crude production per producing well in Oklahoma is only 8 barrels, as against 18 barrels in Texas, 26 in New Mexico, 38 in the Rocky Mountains, and 59 in Louisiana. However, Oklahoma is second in the number of producing wells, and second in the number of wells completed. I specifically call your attention to the chart which you see before you. At the bottom is shown the Oklahoma marketable production, which is approximately the same as it was in 1935, as compared against an increase of approximately 2 \_ marketable production in the Mid-Continent Area, which includes the states of Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arizona and part of Nebraska. Compare these figures also with the national marketable production of crude oil, which shows an increase of approximately three times the figure in 1935. The result of this loss of market is that independent producers and small companies of Oklahoma, who employ the greatest number of those engaged in the oil industry in our state are on the verge of financial catastrophe. And the loss in revenue to the Government of Oklahoma will be reflected in a drop in income taxes and other tax sources, in addition to the loss in gross production taxes.

A study of the problems thus presented I the oil industry indicates no easy solution.

In an effort to solve this most important problem, certain bills will be presented for your consideration. I invite your earnest study of these bills, and I feel certain that a solution can be found by this body which will again restore to Oklahoma its rightful share of the market for oil in the United States, thus keeping the oil industry in Oklahoma on a sound financial basis.

### **Roads and Highways**

In recent years we have made great strides in improving our rural roads and state highway system but we have a long way to go before we bring our system up to the standards required by modern day travel. It is my hope and my goal that we shall modernize and build 2,500 miles of new highways during my administration as Governor. I expect our economy to be sound enough during the next four years so we will be able to spend \$200 million on state highways, plus the millions of dollars which will be available to spend on toll road construction. This program will enable us to carry on the greatest highway modernization and new construction program the state has ever known.

In addition to this program for the state highway system, I want to see the county rural road program continued, with the money spent in such a way during the next four years that the County Commissioners will dust-proof, by oil-matting or some other suitable method, at least 2,500 miles of rural roads. I know these are strong challenges but they are not impossible. It will be my plan to constantly work to make these changes a reality. The funds going to County Commissioners for road building purposes will gradually increase as our economy grows stronger. This increase in funds for rural roads must reflect more miles of dust-proof roads than we have been receiving or a new program will be recommended to the Legislature governing the rural road program for the rural people of this state.

I know that in many counties of Oklahoma much progress has been made in improving the rural road system but in some counties the progress has not been as good as it should have been.

We are going to watch expenditures of state funds, not only by the Highway Commission but by the County Commissioners of this state. We must have more miles of roads for the money spent than we have been receiving.

*It is my further recommendation that one cent per gallon gasoline tax already imposed be made a permanent tax for the benefit of rural roads.*

In order to safeguard our road users taxes for roads, *I am recommending that you refer to the people a proposed Constitutional Amendment which will earmark, on a permanent basis, those road-users taxes which may be levied in the future.* If this Amendment is adopted, it will enable the Highway Department to plan a long-range highway modernization program for Oklahoma – a program which will be financed by those people who travel the highways of this state.

Building roads is a continuing process. Roads are continuing to wear out and needs arise for additional highways and highway improvement. In order for us to grow and prosper and develop the strong, well-balanced and sound economy which we are seeking, it will be necessary for us to build a system of good highways throughout the state.

## **Public Safety and Defense**

When the Department of Public Safety was created, a driver's license fee of fifty cents per year was assessed against the driving public to finance this department. As the cost of operation went up and troopers were added, it was found that the fifty cents was not sufficient to maintain this division of government. Under the Turner Administration it was increased to \$1.50. That was adequate at the time but we find ourselves in this position today: The Department of Public Safety is spending approximately \$700,000 per year more than the driver's license income will provide. This \$700,000 per year is coming out of the General Revenue Fund, which means, in short, that the mental hospitals, common schools, institutions of higher learning, roads, soil conservation, and other governmental programs in general are financing, through reduced appropriations for their own use, this deficit for the Department of Public Safety. *My recommendation to the Legislature is that we meet this need for the Department of Public Safety by increasing the Driver's and Chauffeur's license fees in such an amount as is required for them to have a balance budget.*

The Department of Public Safety has been doing a good job, generally speaking. There is no way for us to estimate the value of the work that is being done by the troopers who constantly patrol our highways. There is no doubt in my mind but that the death rate on our highways would increase several hundred percent if the efficiency of this department were curtailed by forcing it to operate on its present revenue. With that reality in mind, I do not hesitate at all to recommend to you an increase because human lives are at stake.

*I have recommended a reduction in the appropriation for Civil Defense.* I believe that we can operate the Department on an adequate basis on much less money than we are now spending. I recognize the importance of this division of government and if need arises for additional help, I will pay the additional help out of the appropriation that you normally give to the Governor for the extraordinary protection of the State.

*I have recommended an increase in the appropriation for the Adjutant General Department in order to provide for the proper maintenance of new armory buildings.*

I believe that if the recommendations I have made concerning public safety and defense are enacted into law, we will be able to provide a very sound program for these two functions of government.

## **Economic Development**

We have made great strides in developing a better balanced economy for Oklahoma in recent years. Our industrial payrolls have increased considerably. Our per capita income has gradually increased. Even though we have enjoyed these advancements, we haven't even scratched the surface insofar as our possibilities for agricultural and industrial advancements are concerned. We are fortunate to be living in a state that is rich in resources. We have coal reserves, oil reserves, gas reserves, thousands of acres of rich timberland, many valuable deposits such as glass sand, granite rock, gypsum, and clay. In addition to all these natural resources, we are a rich state in the field of agriculture. We have our plain lands suitable for wheat, cotton, and small grain growing. We have the hill lands good for cattle grazing and we also have our mountainous country filled with beautiful lakes and streams, which provide one of the best recreational areas in the nation.

In addition to all these resources we have a good, stable state government that we hope to improve during this Session of the Legislature. We have a good educational system and we are rapidly developing a fine highway system. But the greatest of all our assets is our people. We have the right kind of people. They are the kind of people who are willing to do a day's work for a day's pay. The government and people working together can develop a much stronger, better-balanced economy which, in turn, will mean better living for all the people of Oklahoma. With this thought in mind, *I am recommending to you to enact as soon as possible House Bill No. 501* which is known as a State Economic Development Act. This Act will set up a new department, under the direct supervision of the Governor, known as the Department of Commerce and Industry. This Department, under the direction of the Governor and Advisory Committee, will attempt to first acquaint the people of Oklahoma with Oklahoma. I mean by that we will let the people of this state know about our resources, our manufacturing concerns, and our agricultural and manufacturing possibilities. We will consider this as our number one job of selling Oklahoma to Oklahomans. We will constantly study ways and means of developing a program in this state which will help the business concerns already established and cause them to expand. We will also encourage business concerns who are not now established in Oklahoma to want to do business within its borders. I hope that within a few days you will lay this bill on my desk to be signed and become a law of Oklahoma.

After you have studied this message and the bills that are being introduced to carry out the contents of this message, I hope you will find that it merits your support and enact it into law at the earliest possible date.

I know that you have a hard job serving in the Legislature and carrying on your business and professions back home. I know from experience that on my weekends back home I was able to keep in close contact with my own business and with my constituents. It is my firm conviction that a four-day legislative week is actually better for the people in the long run than a five-day week because it gives you the opportunity over the long weekend to do the things which you need to do for yourselves and to stay close to the people. As long as public officials listen to the people and stay close to the people, we will have a government more nearly the kind of government which we believe in and which we all want to see continue – that is, a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

As your Governor, it will always be my intention and my sincere desire to work with the Legislature and the people of this state in developing a program. My ears will always be open to listen to words of wisdom and counsel from both the members of the Legislature as well as the people.

I do not present my legislative program to you as a program of perfection. If, within your wisdom, you see where it can be improved, I will welcome your recommendations and amendments to the program.

The Governor's office will be open to you. Feel free to consult and talk with me concerning your personal problems as well as state problems.



## **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.