

State of the State
Governor Raymond Gary
January 8, 1957

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 members of the Oklahoma Legislature tonight in joint session, I feel it is appropriate for us to look two ways – first, look back over the fifty years of Oklahoma as a state and review briefly the accomplishments we, as a people, have made; and then look forward to the beginning of a great new era in Oklahoma. In this modern era, we shall venture out into new frontiers in our efforts and determination to build a stronger, better, more progressive Oklahoma. In looking back, we can receive a great deal of satisfaction from the important accomplishments we have already made.

We started out fifty years ago as a state – the 46th state to enter the Union. The people who populated our state at that time were sturdy, pioneer citizens who had migrated to Oklahoma from practically every state in the union and from many nations of the world. In addition to our pioneer citizens who moved into Indian Territory, which later became Oklahoma, we had thousands of Indians. This was the home of the five civilized tribes and many other Indian tribes. We have been known ever since our admittance to the Union as the Indian State. We are justly proud of the great contribution the Indians have made to the growth and development of our great state. We are proud of the Indians who have held – and still hold – high positions in our government, in education, religion, business, and many other professions and vocations.

Our state in the beginning was primarily agricultural. Our forefathers broke out the land and began planting crops. They developed a great agricultural state, supported principally by cattle, sheep, wheat, cotton, corn, and many other agricultural products. On the basis of this agricultural economy, our state continued to grow and prosper. Then oil was discovered. The great petroleum industry was established and expanded. Lead and zinc mines were opened. Coal was found in abundance. Gypsum rock, glass sand, and many other mineral deposits were discovered and new industries were established as a result of these findings. Our economy began to grow a little more into balance. Then, as time went by, World War I caused our people to break out millions of acres of grassland, which should never have been broken out, in order to produce food and fiber to help supply the needs of the world.

After the war, drouth and depression hit our state. Our agricultural economy suffered a great setback. We sank into a dustbowl depression. Our population began declining. We were faced with a great challenge as a people. The people of Oklahoma rose up and met this challenge. We began revising our laws to make Oklahoma more inviting for industrial growth and development. We improved our school system because we recognized the importance of a well-organized educational program to the development of a great state. Gradually, we have beaten back and overcome the decline

we suffered between 1930 and 1950. We can look back now and see a state which developed, from a very meager beginning, one of the finest school systems in the nation, one of the finest mental health programs in the nation, the pioneer of all states in the field of soil conservation, the pioneer of all the states in the field of upstream flood control.

With a population of two and one-third million people, we now embark upon our second fifty years and a bright new era in Oklahoma. We start this second fifty years with a feeling of confidence and hope. We will profit from the mistakes we have made in the past by developing new and better programs. We begin this new half century with a well-balanced economy. We have more people gainfully employed today than ever before in the history of our state. We have gained thousands of new jobs during the past year in newly established industries.

This Legislative Session will, to a great extent, develop the blueprint to guide our state during the next 50 years. We are all challenged to use every care in drawing this blueprint. An error now could change the whole course of our economic development during the next 50 years.

Before we actually start drafting this blueprint in its final form, it would be well for us to take inventory of what we have, as well as reviewing our accomplishments during the past 50 years.

As a people, we are in a far better position to plan a blueprint to work from today, in the beginning of our second fifty years, then we were in 1907. We are in this better position because of our experiences of the past, our greater and more accurate knowledge of our resources, and our firm desire, as a people, to develop a better balanced economy that will bring a higher standard of living to everyone.

We have more known reserves of oil and gas today than ever before. We have sufficient coal reserves to meet the needs of the world for many, many years to come. We have great deposits of salt that, in the years to come, will prove more and more valuable. We have developed a program for restoration that will enable our millions of acres of forest lands to be productive from now on. We have learned to utilize more efficiently and profitably our deposits of minerals, sands, gypsum, and many other natural resources that have been discovered.

With this background of information available to us, plus the experiences we have had in recent years, I feel obliged to make certain recommendations to you that I believe will be of vital importance to you in developing the important new blueprint which will guide Oklahoma's destiny for the next fifty years.

It is absolutely essential that our people have the utmost confidence in the stability of state government. We have made much progress in recent years, causing others to have confidence in the operation of our state government. Unfortunately, we have also had a few things happen which jarred the confidence of the people. In every such case, however, the Oklahoma Legislature has met the challenge and made necessary corrections in the laws which enabled the people to maintain their confidence in our government. During the past primary campaign, a terrible thing happened. Our absentee ballot law was abused. Ballots were distributed in wholesale lots by campaign workers and voted on a mass-production basis. Relief checks were distributed to people who were not eligible for emergency relief, as a method of paying them for their services in a political campaign. It should never have been possible for this to happen. It has caused much embarrassment to me personally, to my administration, and to you members of the

Oklahoma Legislature. A black mark has been chalked up against us. We can remove that mark, however, by acting immediately and passing, within the next few days, a new absentee ballot law which will prevent a thing like this ever happening again. I have already, by Executive Order, transferred supervision of the Emergency Relief Department to the Department of Public Welfare. In order for this to stand and become permanent, it will be necessary for you to vitalize my action. I hope you will pass this bill during the first two weeks of the Legislative Session and place it, along with a new absentee ballot bill, on my desk for signature by the end of next week. If you do this, we will remove the black mark against our record. The dark clouds of distrust that have hung over our state for months because of this unwholesome happening will disappear, the sun will shine again over the government of Oklahoma, you will make me very happy, and the people will have their confidence restored.

Roads and Highways

Two years ago I outlined a road building program to the joint session of the Legislature that would enable us, during the next four years, to build completely new and modernize existing highways totaling 2,500 miles. I am happy to report to you that my estimate at that time, though it appeared to be very ambitious, has proven to be far less than what we will be able to build during the four year. We have completed during the past two years, or have under construction or contracts awarded, including the resurfacing of highways, modernization of old highways and new ones, a total of more than 3,000 miles. This includes resurfacing by the Maintenance Department, modernization by contract, new two-lane highways and four-lane expressways.

Since the National Congress has enacted a new federal highway program, we will be able to step up our highway construction greatly, provided, of course, you gentlemen enact the necessary legislation that will enable us to match all federal funds. If the present trend in the collections of road users' taxes continues for the next two years, then we will need not less than \$18,000,000 to enable us to match all federal funds for the primary and interstate highway systems, and all the secondary funds available to the State Highway Department. We now have a backlog of secondary funds accumulated for farm-to-market roads available to the County Commissioners of the state on a 50-50 matching basis. Some counties have been able to take advantage of this program, while others, for various reasons, have been unable to do so.

My *recommendation* to the Legislature will be that you pass a \$9,000,000 appropriation in order that we may continue our road building program without letup. I further recommend that during the Legislative Session you appropriate, from the General Revenue Fund, \$9,000,000 to be used for the next biennium to supplement our earmarked road users' taxes.

I *further recommend* that you limit the amount of state funds going back to the counties, for county roads, to \$29,000,000 per year, with a provision that all over \$29,000,000 collected in road users' taxes for the counties be diverted to the Highway Commission, with specific instructions that it be used to match federal secondary money on farm-to-market roads. Under this program, we will not be reducing the amount of money going to the counties. We will actually be increasing it. This money we place into the trust fund will go back to the counties of the state on a matching basis with federal funds; so the increase will be the amount of the federal funds that we match.

County Commissioners will not have any reduction in the amount of money they are now receiving for general maintenance and general construction programs within the various counties. I cannot conceive of any County Commissioner, farmer, or rancher who would object to this policy. If we do not do something to enable us to match federal secondary money for farm-to-market roads, then we are going to lose several million dollars in federal funds to the other states of the nation. After three years the money lapses and reverts back to the federal government. If you will enact this legislation, it will enable us to increase our highway construction program to approximately \$85,000,000 per year, or an average of more than \$7,000,000 per month.

As you know, we have been unable to market any toll road bonds during the past two years. Two principal factors have contributed to the poor toll road bond market. These factors are the new federal road program, and, secondly, poor traffic count on some of the newer toll roads, particularly in West Virginia and Ohio. Most toll road bonds are being offered for less than par; some for as much as 25% below par. I believe we will be able to market our Southwest toll road bonds if we amend our toll road laws. First, we should earmark the road-user tax collected on toll roads for the trust fund to help retire the bonds. Secondly, we should remove the \$1,000,000 clause in our toll road law.

It is my desire that we exert every effort to build the Lawton road because it connects the Tinker Air Depot and the Capitol City with the great Fort Sill base. Too, it will place the Capitol City closer to points in southwestern Oklahoma and Texas.

Education

I don't think there is any question in the minds of the people of this state concerning my views on education. It has always been my policy to support legislation that would improve our education system, from kindergarten to the higher institutions of learning. I regret that we have never had sufficient funds available to write the kind of program we would like to have for the children of this state. I am please, however, by the fact we have made progress every two years. I feel that we now have one of the best all-around education programs of any state in the Union. I am grateful to the thousands of dedicated, well-qualified school teachers we have within the borders of this state. I know many of them have remained in the profession, not for the small compensation, but because of their feeling that they have been called to a worthy and most honorable profession. I am also thankful for our young teachers, and those in our colleges and universities who are preparing themselves to enter the teaching profession.

I want to go on record now as telling you that I endorse the base salary schedule of \$3,000 set by the Oklahoma Education Association. I endorse the fifteen year increment. In fact, I was the author of this provision of the school code. I endorse a program making the Teachers' Retirement actuarially sound. But even though I do endorse these programs and feel we should try to attain these goals at the earliest possible date, I know it will be impossible during this Legislative Session to accomplish it all without greatly increasing the tax burden of the people in our state. *It is therefore my recommendation* that you amend the school code to provide that, at the beginning of the next school term, the minimum base pay for beginning teachers shall be \$2,700 per year, with a further provision that the base pay shall be increased, beginning with the school term of 1959, by another \$300, thus bringing it up to the \$3,000 figure. *I recommend a*

further provision in the school code that the increments shall remain at twelve until such time as we have reached a \$3,000 minimum pay for beginning teachers. Then it should be increased at the rate of \$100 per year until the fifteen years have been reached.

I further recommend that the State Board of Education be granted authority to increase the base pay and increments of our teachers at a faster rate than I have recommended above if, in their judgment, they feel the financial condition of our schools will justify taking such action. In other words, if the State Board of Education feels, at the beginning of the school term of 1958, that they can increase teachers' salaries from \$2,700 to \$2,800 or to \$3,000, they be empowered to do so instead of waiting until the beginning of the school term of 1959. Also, if they feel sufficient money is available to increase the increments from 12 to 14 or to 15, they should be empowered to do so. The reason I am making this recommendation to you is because I feel that business conditions will continue to improve in this state, new properties will be added to the tax rolls, and our schools will have more money available to improve their program than we have estimated. I feel that everyone in the state who really has the interest of Oklahoma at heart will agree with me when I say we should reach this minimum goal of \$3,000 base pay for school teachers at the earliest possible date. I believe we can meet this program without disturbing our tax structure, and without depriving other governmental functions of their rightful share of the state's available funds. I believe our general economic conditions will continue improving enough so we will be able to pick up this much additional revenue for the support of common schools in Oklahoma.

I further recommend that you earmark the gross production tax on natural gas, both present and future collections, for the Teachers' Retirement Fund. The tax on natural gas has been going up rapidly in recent years. At the present rate of collection, it will bring to the Teachers' Retirement Fund, in round numbers, \$5,000,000 for the next biennium. This is about \$2,000,000 over the appropriation made for the present biennium. I believe the natural gas tax will, within a period of ten years, make the Teachers' Retirement Program completely actuarially sound, and no teacher will be deprived of drawing full payment from the Teachers' Retirement Fund, either now or in the future.

I further recommend that you appropriate \$2.50 per pupil for free textbooks. This is 50c per pupil less than the law provides, but it will be approximately 50c more per pupil than was appropriated two years ago.

I further recommend that you place a limit on the per capita expenditure for high school pupils. We have a few small high schools that are costing us too much money. I know, however, that there are some extreme cases where it is necessary to isolate schools in order not to deprive children of an adequate educational program. But I believe we owe it to both the taxpayers and the children of Oklahoma to take a new look at our isolation clause in the school code. We are rapidly improving our roads. There may be some districts that were isolated a few years ago, when this code was adopted, that should not be considered isolated now. I feel we should tighten up on the isolation clause of the school code.

Experience has shown that the \$250 limit set on the emergency five mill district school levy is insufficient in many school districts. *Therefore, I recommend* increasing that limit to \$400.

Health and Welfare

In recent years we have gone a long way in improving the care of our mentally ill. We no longer need to be ashamed of our mental health program. In fact, we have a program in which we can take pride. But it is still far from adequate. We have reached a point where our inmate population, instead of increasing, is being reduced. This has been brought about by our emphasis in recent years upon the use of new medicines, and by taking advantage of new methods of treatment. It is also due to the Legislature making additional funds available to employ more doctors and nurses, thus providing better general care for the mentally ill. I know you are proud of the improvements that have been made and the Legislature is entitled to full credit for them.

Now it is my recommendation that you pass the appropriate bill, outlined in my budget message, which will provide an increase in appropriations to the mental hospitals of this state of approximately \$2,250,000 for the biennium. You may think this is too great an increase. But when you can see what has been accomplished with a little extra expenditure per patient, and visualize what can be done with this increased amount of money, I'm sure you will agree that I have not been extravagant in this recommendation. This increased appropriation will enable us to do a number of things. First, we can increase the starting pay for wardkeepers and caretakers at our mental hospitals from \$130 per month to \$160 per month. I don't believe any of you, or any other citizen of Oklahoma, can say that I am out of line in making this recommendation. Most of you will say it is not enough. But we have to keep our overall program in mind. This will be a step forward.

Secondly, this will enable us to buy more of the beneficial drugs and provide more needed equipment and personnel. In short, it will enable us to cure more of our mentally ill people. It will let them return to their homes and communities to resume a productive place in the society of our state. It will allow them to enjoy their families, their home and church life, and the freedom of the great outdoors. This is one more of the many Christian services and government of Oklahoma provides for its people. On the basis of per capita expenditures for the mentally ill, we rank 40th among the states. Yet on the basis of patient recoveries, we rank 20th. This shows we are doing an outstanding job with the money available.

It won't be necessary for you to pass any enabling legislation to permit our Department of Public Welfare to take advantage of the hospitalization program enacted by the recent Congress. We are in a position, financially and otherwise, to take advantage of this new hospitalization program for our aged and needy citizens as soon as it becomes effective, July 1, 1957.

Since the beginning of 1955, we have increased payments to the aged citizens an average of \$9 per month. The budget has been increased to \$94 per month, and when this health and hospitalization program goes into effect, the budget will be raised to \$100 per month, in order to cover the \$6 per month for hospitalization. This is the goal I set when a candidate for Governor – a \$100 budget per month for our aged citizens, including a hospitalization program. This will enable us to provide better care than most states do for our aged citizens, dependent children, and the totally disabled.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

There will be legislation proposed which will provide additional funds for the Vocational Rehabilitation Division. These additional state funds will be matched, two to one, by the federal government. By taking advantage of the additional federal funds, many more handicapped people will be rehabilitated sufficiently to be reinstated in our society and earn a livelihood for themselves.

Soil and Water Conservation

For the past 18 months, we have had a Citizens-Legislative Committee working very conscientiously and consistently in an effort to develop a water policy program for the State of Oklahoma. *It is my recommendation* that you study the findings of this committee and their recommendations very carefully. We have spent approximately \$27,000 of the people's money in making this study. Members of the committee, including legislators and citizens, have worked without pay. I want to commend this committee for its outstanding contribution to the state and its people in making this very thorough study and coming up with some very definite recommendations.

It is my recommendation that you enact legislation that will provide for the creation of a Water Commission that shall be charged with the responsibility of carrying out the recommendations set forth by the Water Study Committee, which you will find on your desk in another prepared report.

For years, Oklahoma has been recognized as the pioneer state in the field of soil conservation. We pioneered in many phases of the Soil Conservation Program. One that has attracted national attention is the Upstream Flood Control Program with which many of you gentlemen are familiar. We have an opportunity in Oklahoma to greatly expedite the Upstream Flood Control Program on the Washita and other rivers of this state, providing the Legislature will provide sufficient funds to make the planning and survey and acquire easements for the land. I feel we cannot fail, as a people, to take advantage of this great program. It is a program which, when carried to completion, will enable us to reclaim millions of acres of land that is flooded annually. It will enable us to hold water in the arid sections of the state where it is badly needed during the hot, dry summer season. It will enable us to have an abundant supply of water for irrigation and municipal use, and it will improve the quality of our water by reducing the amount of silt and foreign materials.

Agriculture

During recent years, our farmers and ranchers have been badly hurt by the drouth and low farm prices. I feel we should, during this session, enact legislation to benefit these farmers and ranchers. One thing they have been trying for years to have enacted into law is a measure that would exempt them from paying sales taxes on feed, seed, fertilizer and farm machinery. Each time they have met with opposition from those who felt this exemption would cripple the Old Age Assistance Program. I know none of you want to enact legislation that would reduce the amount of payments to our aged and needy people of this state. But I feel we should grant the farmers and ranchers of Oklahoma the same rights and privileges we grant to manufacturing industries of our state. Therefore, *I would like to propose*, and I have a bill prepared to present to you, that you enact legislation which will permit a farmer, rancher or a commercial feeder to file a

claim, quarterly, with the Oklahoma Tax Commission for refund of sales taxes they have paid during the quarter on feed purchased for cattle, swine, sheep, poultry and horses actually used in their farming and ranching activities. *I would recommend* that the bill provide for setting up a refund account in the Tax Commission. This account can be provided for out of the surplus in revenue the Tax Commission has available each year from the 3% they are allowed to collect for policing the sale tax law in this state. We don't know how much will be enough to take care of the refund in taxes paid on feed, and perhaps sufficient to include fertilizer. By placing it on a refund basis, and specifying the livestock that can qualify, we eliminate the roundup clubs and people who have pets. We are limiting it to those people who actually earn their living as farmers, or who operate farms and ranches for profit. If we enact this legislation, we will not only aid our farmers and ranchers through a savings on their feed purchases, but we will encourage the establishment of commercial feed lots in this state. This will actually cause a number of large feed lots to be established. When such feed lots become established in Oklahoma, they will provide additional employment for our people, cause a greater demand for Oklahoma feeder cattle, and help develop a better market for our feeder cattle. It would actually be of great benefit to our packing industries in this state, thereby contributing to Oklahoma's economic growth.

Public Safety and Defense

It is my recommendation that you create a Public Safety Commission and give the Commission authority to set up rules and regulations governing the Department of Public Safety, plus authority to employ a Director. The terms of the Commission Members shall be staggered so that all members will be appointed by any one Governor, unless there happens to be deaths or resignations.

I have also recommended that the entire amount of Driver's License money be made available to the Department of Public Safety.

I further recommended that the Crime Bureau be separated from the Department of Public Safety and be provided with an appropriation from the General Revenue Fund to take care of its operational expenses.

I further recommend that an increased appropriation be made for Civil Defense. I make this recommendation because of unsettled conditions in some parts of the world. We should take precautions now so that we can be ready to protect ourselves in case of an attack.

Grand River Dam Authority

Since creation of the Grand River Dam Authority, northeastern Oklahoma has been transformed from a ranching and strictly agricultural economy to a manufacturing and agricultural economy. The impounding of water in the Pensacola Reservoir and the generation of electrical power through hydro-electric generating plants has enabled the people of this area to attract many new industries. The industrial expansion program has now developed to the point where it exceeds the Grand River Dam Authority's present capacity. GRDA is not now producing enough power to take care of the manufacturing industries' needs, for municipal uses, R.E.A., and new industrial growth. We find ourselves needing greater production capacity. For a number of years there has been talk of constructing a Markham Ferry Dam to impound additional waters and provide

additional hydro-electric generating capacity. The United States Congress has made available \$6,000,000 as a contribution to this construction program. GRDA wants to construct the dam. The area needs the additional water and the additional electricity. We have been working for two years now trying to arrive at a way whereby we can construct this Markham Ferry Dam. A proposal has finally been made that would, if carried out, enable the GRDA to construct the Markham Ferry Dam. This proposal provides for an exchange of power contract between the GRDA and the Public Service Company of Oklahoma. Public Service would agree to purchase all the surplus power that GRDA can produce, over and above its present and future market demands. *It is my recommendation* that you study this proposal carefully and if, within your judgment, you feel that the interest of Oklahoma could and would be served better by the GRDA entering into a contract with Public Service, then you should pass the necessary legislation authorizing this contract and the construction of the Markham Ferry Dam. If you turn down this proposal, then I challenge you to come up with another proposal that would enable GRDA to expand its present production capacities, because the condition in Northeastern Oklahoma is becoming grave. Some of the manufacturing industries already established want to expand, but they can't because of lack of an adequate supply of cheap electricity. Other manufacturing industries are looking toward that area as a possible location for expansion. They, too, want assurance of an adequate supply of electricity and water. The challenge is ours. This is a part of a new blueprint for developing Oklahoma. Let's meet the challenge. Let's provide the electricity and water to meet the needs of the greater industrialization program for Northeastern Oklahoma.

General Government

We have many people working for the State of Oklahoma at starvation salaries. Some of our caretakers around the Capitol Building and grounds are drawing as low as \$175 per month. We have some working for as low as \$130 per month. We should not ask people to work for these low salaries. You might ask, "Why do they work?" The answer is, "Because they must work to live." Most of them are elderly citizens, but not old enough for the Old Age Assistance. Others want to work as long as they are physically able, then retire on Social Security or Old Age Assistance. Some are physically handicapped people and can't find employment other places. Most of them are good workers. *It is my recommendation* that you enact a Wage Stabilization Law, patterned after the recommendations worked out by the Wage Stabilization Committee, which is made up of legislators and other citizens. This Wage Stabilization Act will enable us to adjust the salaries of these people working for less than \$200 per month.

I further recommend that you enact a Personnel Law which will function in such a way that we could, over a period of years, have all our departments of government staffed with well-qualified, well-trained people.

I further recommend that the travel allowance for state employees be increased from 6c per mile to 7c per mile, and the per diem be increased from \$6 to \$8 within the state, and from \$10 to \$15 per day outside the state.

Wildlife

It is my recommendation that you vitalize, at the earliest possible date, the Constitutional Amendment adopted last July creating a Wildlife and Conservation Commission to replace the present Game and Fish Commission. When you vitalize this Constitutional Amendment it becomes a law. The Game and Fish Commission will then operate as a non-political commission, and sportsmen of the state will feel much better toward the Game and Fish organization in this state.

Indians

I would like to *renew my recommendation*, made two years ago, that you set up a committee to make a study of the Indian Tribal problems in Oklahoma, with a view toward preparing the State of Oklahoma to take over any new obligations that might become necessary for us to assume in event the Federal Government withdraws support of Indian schools and aid for the Indians of our state.

Negroes

Two years ago I stated that as Governor I would be fair and considerate toward problems of the Negroes of our state. I believe the Negro people will say that I have been. I would like to compliment the Negro citizens of this state for their very fine cooperation with the State of Oklahoma in working out some of our common problems. I pledge my continued support to a program that will enable our Negro population to prosper along with the rest of the citizens of this great state.

Labor

I have said on many different occasions that we have the finest labor force in Oklahoma of any state in the union. We receive compliments from everywhere about the working people of this state. *It is my recommendation* that we be very careful, and not enact any laws that would have as their purpose the hindering or crippling in any way the position of the laboring man in Oklahoma. I have found that we have in Oklahoma some of our finest people as officers and leaders of organized labor. These people have been working side by side with the capitalists and owners of the manufacturing industries in developing a program that will benefit all the people – those who work by the hour as well as those who receive dividend payments each year from their investments in the manufacturing industries of this state.

Tax Structure

Oklahoma has one of the best tax structures of any state in the Union. We are the only state, according to the Fantis Engineering Report, that has not increased state taxes during the past ten years. I would like for my successor to be able to come before the Legislature two years from now and say to you: “Oklahoma is the only state in the Union that has not made a general tax increase during the past twelve years.” By that, I am saying to you that it is my desire that you not enact any legislation that would increase the tax structure of our state. If we will continue to hold the line, we will continue to impress the people of the nation that Oklahoma’s government has stability. We will be able to continue using our favorable tax structure as one of the great drawing cards for industrial development.

During the past two years we have seen an increase of more than 43,000 jobs in non-agricultural work. We have reached a new peacetime high of 577,000 jobs in non-agricultural work. We have seen our manufacturing payrolls increase by approximately 10,000 jobs during the past two years. This increase in jobs has meant a \$175,000 increase in wage earners' incomes in the state. It has meant a higher standard of living for our people.

The challenge is before you. The eyes of Oklahoma are upon you. I know you have the courage, wisdom and desire to accept this challenge and emerge from this legislative session with a new blueprint, well planned, that will enable Oklahoma to take advantage of the new opportunities which are ours. Our forefathers gripped firmly the handles of a moleboard plow, as they guided it behind a strong team of horses. Their plows ripped through the sod that was turned for the first time in Oklahoma. They had faith in this brand new state. They breathed the fresh air that blew over the virgin soil of this new country.

We, too, have plow handles which we must grasp firmly. Ours is not a plow to turn new sod, but one to turn new ideas into new job opportunities. We, too, will hold the handles firm as we gaze into the future and visualize the new Oklahoma – a state with fine cities and towns, the finest institutions of learning in the country, crisscrossed with a system of modern expressways and feeder highways leading into them from every section of the state, beautiful lakes and streams running again with beautiful clear water, fine churches, a sound and stable government, and populated with citizens who are proud to be a part of this new Oklahoma.

As you work on this blueprint, let us not forget that the greatest planner of all is willing and anxious to help, if we are willing to accept his help. He is the Creator of all things, our God in Heaven. I trust we will invite Him each day to guide us on this session, the people will invite Him each day to guide us in deliberations. Then, when the curtain has been pulled on this session, the people will be able to see the basic principles of Christianity written all through this blueprint of progress, and we can go our way knowing that a job has been well done, with faith in the future of a greatly strengthened Oklahoma.

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.