

**State of the State
Governor David Hall
January 2, 1973**

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR NIGH,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE HAMILTON,
SPEAKER WILLIS,
MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
MY FELLOW OKLAHOMANS:

In this 73rd year of the 20th century, the State of Oklahoma is sound.

Justice prevails.

There is prosperity.

Our economy is strong.

Our government remains dedicated to the people.

This is the People's Administration!

In the two years of this 20th Administration for Oklahoma, great innovations have been achieved. Fine progress has come. We credit this to our close cooperation with our Legislature.

As this 34th Legislature convenes, it remains our commitment to promote unity. We extend a friendly spirit. But, we respect the great and Constitutional separation of powers.

Most of the members in this room are my personal friends. You share my commitment to the great adventure that Jefferson called "the boisterous sea of liberty."

The 33rd Oklahoma Legislature was led by outstanding men. President Pro Tempore Finis Smith and Speaker Rex Privett were competent in their counsel, and resolute in their dedication to Oklahoma.

Equally outstanding new leadership has been elected by the 34th Legislature. Men equal to the task – and willing to make the sacrifices of service – lead these bodies.

The Oklahoma Senate was wise in the election of the Honorable James E. Hamilton of Poteau as President Pro Tempore. His dynamic influence upon the affairs of this state far exceed his years of service. Senate President Pro Tempore Hamilton has toiled with skill and understanding to build a greater Oklahoma. He also was groomed in the crucible of appropriations and he knows Oklahoma's needs.

Speaker William P. Willis of Tahlequah has worn the mantle of responsibility for many years. He understands the fiscal affairs of Oklahoma. His record is outstanding. Speaker Willis knows the complexities of this economy and the intricacies of state finance. Experience and wisdom were properly recognized by the Oklahoma House of

Representatives when the speakership was bestowed upon the Honorable William P. Willis.

The majority leaders, Representative Leland Wolf, and Senator Jimmy Birdsong, have proven records of honor and careers built on strength.

This is a year of fiscal plenty. Appropriations and budget – prudent spending and wise allocation of resources – challenge this Administration, this leadership and these august houses of Legislature.

You, too, are dedicated to keeping freedom alive through conscientious enforcement of good laws; by changing weak laws; by strengthening the economy; by enriching justice, and through the highly important process of extending quality education for every Oklahoma student on an equal basis.

Many in this room joined and supported a great revision of taxation for Oklahoma. You brought fairness and equity to our state. You treaded the necessary change in direction of our state; especially for education.

History and posterity will praise the courage and justice of the past 33rd Oklahoma Legislature. Likewise, I expect the 34th Legislature to achieve its own mark of excellence for Oklahoma's posterity.

Today, we present a five-point program of progress for Oklahoma.

Quality Education

First is education. Education remains the top priority of this Administration. Within the budget, 25.5 percent of all state growth revenues is dedicated to higher education.

Fifty-one percent is requested for other areas of education – common schools. These new monies total \$28.5 million. They meet the tests of equity as mandated in the Serrano-type court decisions. Because of federal revenue sharing, we will add \$7.5 million to that \$28.5 million for a \$36 million total educational program increase in public schools.

We can account for the benefits. When we took office, up to 32 children were lawfully allowed in an elementary classroom. When our four-year term ends, that will be statutorily reduced to 25 pupil maximums. The money to finance this reform will be available.

This year, we can hire 500 new teachers to reduce classroom sizes to 28:1 in elementary grades and 38:1 in junior high. With this expansion, 2,225 new school teachers will have been employed in Oklahoma since we took office – 900 for the specific purpose of reducing classroom size.

This budget includes \$1 million for new special education classes. We must give special attention to children with learning disabilities and extraordinary talents. In addition, we seek \$1 million to install a professional counselling program in elementary grades. This is the first line of defense in the fight against crime. In total, we will have 1,598 special education classes next year – 760 which have started since new funding was provided in 1971.

We have recommended a \$300 teachers' pay hike in 1973 and propose an even greater increase for the next year of \$500.

The monies that will benefit higher education total \$14 million. Of that, \$9.5 million comes from growth revenues and will meet demanding needs of our colleges and universities.

We seek \$1 million to build an animal diagnostic center at Stillwater. We seek \$3.5 million to further enrich higher education. We seek to expand medical education including osteopathic training and the extension of the University of Oklahoma Medical School in Tulsa.

With this money, we request the regents to continue to leave tuition and fees unchanged. If education is to be available without regard to personal finances, direct costs to students and their families must be minimized.

Prescription Drug Tax Relief

Second: Important for additional tax relief is passage of legislation to exempt prescription drugs from the state's sales tax. This is estimated to save Oklahomans \$1.5 million dollars each year. With the statewide sales tax collections increasing some \$11 million annually, we believe funded programs will not suffer.

This tax savings will benefit families who face excessive medical costs: the elderly and couples with young children. In our original tax reform, this relief was part of a total undertaking to bring assistance to lower income groups. We seek your support.

Four-Year Terms for County Officers

Third: Four-year terms for county officers will increase efficiency and decrease costs of local government. In this time when centralization threatens the basic concept of local, responsive government, longer terms are needed. They will add to stability and long-range planning at the local level.

This Administration favors and seeks passage of a resolution calling for a statewide vote to amend the Constitution to provide for these terms.

The Death Penalty

Fourth: The U. S. Supreme Court, in historic but regrettable action, has effectively struck down the death penalty as it has existed. Oklahoma's competent and effective Attorney General, the Honorable Larry Derryberry, has coordinated and led a national effort to draft model state legislation to restore capital punishment. This carefully conceived and technically refined legislation demands your immediate action. It has the full support of this Administration. It is a plank in our program.

We will seek the death penalty in cases of premeditated murder. We would include the killing of peace officers or prison guards – the key guardians of our lawful society.

We would seek the death penalty when killings are for the purpose of concealing a crime or the identity of the perpetrator of a crime.

We must carefully spell out these and other conditions of premeditated murder when capital punishment would apply – and administer the death penalty uniformly and rigidly within the law.

Major Drugs Program

Fifth: Too often in our state, the advent of illness and the high costs of health care have catastrophic effects on the finances of families and the economic well being of individuals.

Within the budget presented to this Legislature is over \$2 million in allocations to finance a program for payment for prescription drugs for persons 65 years and older or indigents with extraordinary drug expenses. We will present authorizing legislation along with an appropriations request for this important, humanitarian program.

Ad Valorem Tax Considerations

In its wisdom, the 33rd Oklahoma Legislature created our requested commission to study issues surrounding ad valorem taxes and the funding of common schools.

The Serrano-type court decisions remain important to Oklahoma. One such case, Rodriguez vs. the School Board of San Antonio, Texas, is pending with the U. S. Supreme Court. Observers expect a decision early this year.

The joint executive-legislative tax study committee, which will be reporting directly to the appropriate legislative committees, feels that action in Oklahoma should await this high court ruling.

Certainly, within our work for quality education is a commitment to equal educational opportunity.

When the U. S. Supreme Court sets down its rules, we must be prepared to act with good judgment and wisdom. We feel we have already attacked the problem of equal educational opportunity through the tax reforms of 1971 and the dedication of those funds to education. We seek your continued support of these ideals.

In addition, as you know, the people amended the state constitution last November by passage of State Question 486. This has great ramifications and will require important legislative augmentation. You have my promise of counsel as you review the necessary statutes. The ad valorem tax study committee has delved into the questions relating to this amendment such as the issues of preferential assessment and property classification. Their discussions are available to you.

This is a demanding challenge before this Legislature and worthy of your most earnest individual and collective reasoning.

Public Safety and Highway Construction

The highway death trap elimination program was launched because of new revenues obtained in 1971. Because of federal revenue sharing, we will increase funding of that program by \$5.7 million.

In addition, we will continue the \$10 million appropriation to enrich highway building. With completion of Phases I and II of this program, 181 of these “killer” locations have been repaired.

The total 294 will be complete in 1974.

We also urge this Legislature to petition Congress and the National Administration for quick passage of the Federal Aid Highway Program.

Because of delays in this enactment, highway building faces a possible cutback this year in Oklahoma. We have about a 40 percent deficiency in our roads – and federal aid is needed badly.

We also seek to preserve the ideal that the four-cent federal gasoline tax should be used solely for road construction and not diverted to mass transit in urban areas.

Corrections Reform and Crime Fighting

This Administration remains firm in its commitment of being tough on crime and tough on paroles, but dedicated to helping people improve themselves and their lives.

The penal system of Oklahoma has a long history of neglect. We have reversed that trend and sponsored a far-reaching program of rehabilitation.

A tower of success has been the Ouachita Training Center at Hodgens in LeFlore County. We have graduated 225 from Ouachita with only two percent failure.

Comparatively, we have 30 percent recidivism from other institutions. This Legislature is asked to double Ouachita's capacity from 70 to 140 inmates.

We seek nearly \$3 million because of revenue sharing to improve our penal system. In addition, we ask for more than one-half million dollars to improve our corrections program. We are working – especially with our Crime Commission using federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration grants – to create more community centers to handle appropriate felons within their own communities.

We favor a philosophy of keeping these people active – and actually paying for the cost of their crimes – instead of spending inactive years in prison at great expenses to society.

Human Rights and Indian Affairs

This budget asks increases of more than 100 percent for the Indian Affairs Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

With the additional funding, we will seek to encourage Indian participation in the benefits of our dynamic society. We would counsel Indian youth and seek to guide them toward more rewarding lives.

The Human Rights Commission now is able to handle only 30 percent of complaints under the 1968 Human Rights Act. This additional funding should increase productivity to 80 percent. We believe this is vital and urge your favorable action.

Environmental and People Programs

This is an era of increased leisure time. People must have recreational opportunity, especially out of doors. Oklahoma lakes, woods and open space are a wonderful resource which must be enriched and kept available to people.

Tourism benefits our economy. Lieutenant Governor George Nigh has been especially visionary and resourceful in leading this development. We seek to increase the support of his work and to enhance this development.

Parks and wildlife habitat are vital to the ecology and to the relaxation of Oklahoma citizens. Because of federal revenue sharing, we have allotted \$400,000 for a major maintenance program in our parks and recreational areas. Emphasis will be on sanitation, furnishing pure water supplies and improving existing facilities.

We will bring Oklahoma parks to sufficiency by the summer of 1974.

In an effort to serve a neglected sector of society, the Department of Institutions, Social and Rehabilitative Services and the Division of State Parks are undertaking a special use, outdoor recreation facility, retarded and handicapped children, children of

low-income families, children in the custody of the Department and senior citizens groups would be served. This is a major humanitarian undertaking. A master plan for the development of this unique institution is being started.

Nearly one-half million dollars is requested for the state Department of Agriculture and particularly its forestry division.

Agriculture is Oklahoma's major industry. It deserves full support of this government. The animal diagnostic center funded in this budget will also be especially vital to the livestock business. Farmers, ranchers and forest resources are receiving responsive attention in this budget.

State employees in Oklahoma, likewise, deserve rewards for their stewardship. We have proposed a \$20 monthly government-wide pay increase. We also seek funds for merit pay increases for up to one-quarter of the people employed in this government. This is important recognition and inspiration. The raises fall within the federal pay board guidelines.

Conclusion

These are the plans for Oklahoma.

They are visionary.

Yet, they are fiscally conservative.

They would promulgate human liberty.

They champion individual opportunity.

They come at a time of dynamic expansion in Oklahoma. Industry has invested \$225 million in our state during the past two years.

Tonnage on the McClellan-Kerr River Navigation System topped five million tons last year. Usage soars three years ahead of expectations.

Wheat and cattle are booming industries of the west.

We led a successful fight to crack the artificially low barrier on natural gas prices. Besides business benefits, the state receives more than \$1 million with each one-cent increase in the average price of natural gas. The petroleum industry stands on the threshold of historic development.

Housing starts in the first 22 months of this administration totaled 72,622 – this is 27,551 more than the entire previous two years.

These reflect Oklahoma's prosperity. They are rewards for good government and strong free enterprise – working compatibly. They are the bounties of just law enforcement, quality educational opportunity and a spirit of progressiveness.

Oklahoma glows in the dawn of “tomorrow country.” We are realizing our destiny and building our future. You and this administration are teamed in the effort.

You enter a session where prudent but constructive spending of new revenues challenges your sensitivities and tests your resourcefulness. You are equal to that responsibility.

Your leadership is seasoned, yet sensitive. President Pro Tempore Hamilton and Speaker Willis embrace their charges with vigilance, yet with vigor.

They have been our counselors, our advisors, and our constructive critics in the formulation of this plan of action for Oklahoma.

Your help is needed in enactment of our program and budget. You have my counsel and assistance in every area of government which you may seek to strengthen and improve.

We pray that God will guide our paths;

That sound reasoning will prevail;

That providence will reward our labors, and Oklahoma people will be served and succeed.

Thank you.

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.