

State of the State Address
Governor Frank Keating
February 7, 2000

Lieutenant Governor Fallin, President Pro Tempore Taylor, Speaker Benson, Members of the Judiciary, distinguished members of the House and Senate, my wife, and my fellow Oklahomans.

Before I begin, I would like to reference two special events. The first special event is that we have Larry Dickerson back with us and I know you have honored him already. As the only Governor to have served in both the House and Senate, I have got to say how splendid it is for us to celebrate our history by restoring the Senate chamber and now having fully and finally restored this magnificent House chamber. I think all of you need to give each other an applause.

We come here every year to celebrate Oklahoma. To look back and to honor the things we have done right. To look at the present and commit ourselves to the decisions we must make to have a brighter and more prosperous tomorrow. And, to look forward to the future to ensure that our children and grandchildren will remain in Oklahoma and enjoy the good life in a good land. We do have a great land!!

From green country in northeast Oklahoma - the Tall Grass Prairie, to the sparkling granite mesas of southwest Oklahoma - Quartz Mountain, this is a fabulous land. From the high plains of the northwest - Alabaster Caverns, the highest place in our state - Black Mesa to the ridge-lined, tree-lined wonderment of the southeast, the blue water of Beavers Bend. This is one of God's natural beauty places. And our people are very special. A state of astronauts, teachers, preachers and businessmen and farmers and ranchers and workers, enormous talent from all walks of life who made Oklahoma what it is. What great people we have. This is the state of Jim Thorpe and Will Rogers; Tom Stafford and Shannon Lucid; Angie Debo and N. Scott Momaday; Vince Gill and Reba McEntire; Mickey Mantle and Steve Owens; Jeanne Kirkpatrick and yes, the late great Carl Albert.

Before we begin our deliberations here over the next several months, we need to reflect on those wonderful people who have made us what we are. We need to reflect on this great natural heritage, our wonderful Oklahoma that has been given to us by our wonderful creator. Five years ago, when I first appeared before you I outlined to you what I thought was necessary for us to become an enriched society. Not only a better society economically, but a better society morally. A society that our children and grandchildren deserve.

I said at that time there were four things that we needed to do to become rich. We needed to reduce the size of government. We needed to reduce and eliminate artificial barriers to growth. We needed to cut taxes and we needed to dramatically increase the number of college graduates in our state. I said specifically those things were important because every society, every state, every community that does these things, does better to reduce the size of government.

We are all government employees and we honor government. But, the reality is for so long and too many years we increased government. We sent a chilling message to businesses that this was not a welcome place. We need more private sector entrepreneurs. We need more private sector jobs because that is where the wealth comes from. We, on

the public side, consume wealth, we do not create it. So it is important for us to do everything we can within public policy constraints to advance the number of private sector jobs. I said we needed to remove artificial barriers to growth. I focused specifically on a very expensive Workers' Compensation system and the absence of right-to-work. I said also that we needed to cut taxes. To say to the people of Oklahoma, the men and women who earn the money that we spend here as their trustees. To give them an opportunity to hold those assets that they created and spend them and save them and invest them in the way they feel they should do so - that they can enrich our society as a result of the expansion of the economy that they made possible. And I said also that we needed to dramatically increase the number of college graduates. We are 70,000 college graduates short. In order for us to attract the high value, high wage jobs of tomorrow, we have to have more college graduates in the information technology fields in engineering. I noted that OSU and OU, combined, produce about 520 engineers a year. Yet, Penn State by itself produces 3,600 engineers per year. We need to focus on the workforce, the workplace of tomorrow.

Over the course of the last five years in a bipartisan environment, we have achieved a lot. Yes, there will be squawking and squalling, there will be arm wrestling; there will be partisanship, but that is not unhealthy to have Republican questions and Democrat answers and Democrat questions and Republican answers. But when it is all over, it is Oklahomans that have to win. When it is all over, it is important for us to do what is best for our state. Think of what we have accomplished in a bipartisan effort. It really is quite significant.

It goes in the direction of those four things that I have talked about year after year. Things that I think are necessary for us to become a more prosperous society. We passed Tort Reform. We limited punitive damages to double actual damages in civil lawsuits. We said to small businesses, "You are welcome here." We cut the income tax by a quarter point. We reduced welfare by 70%. We said we are a rich enough society to help those who are physically or mentally incapable by age or infirmities to take care of themselves. But for those who are able-bodied, for those who can take care of themselves, they must to be full human beings. And, we reduced the welfare load by 70%, one of the top rates of any state in the union.

We passed Truth-in-Sentencing. In 1995, the crime rate was going up and now the crime rate is down in every category because of the actions of the bipartisan spirit of this legislature - addressing the fact that those who are violent and those who are chronic should not be let out. Those in the business of crime, we will not permit them to apply their trade. This has worked. The crime rate is down virtually across the board.

We began the largest highway construction program ever in Oklahoma's history with no tax increase and no scandal. We have taken the position that we as a state are going to build out the infrastructure. You build it, they will come. We build it and they will come. We can bring companies to our state who would otherwise not be here because of the absence of that infrastructure. I can cite along the Kilpatrick Turnpike alone, Sprint, Williams Sonoma, the Hartford, three companies that have located here that are employing our citizens and providing us an opportunity to take their tax revenue and use it for the purposes that you in this Legislature feel are appropriate.

We passed together, the first Poultry Regulation bill and the toughest in the nation Swine Regulation bill. We said that for the sake of Oklahoma's future, the quality of life

in our State is extraordinarily important. We say "yes" to agriculture. We say "yes" to the energy industry. But we also say "yes" to clean water and clean air. Something that we know is essential for us to be prosperous and livable in the 21st century.

We have reduced state employment by five percent by privatizing prisons and University Hospital, putting entities on the tax rolls and celebrating the efficiency of a reformed government. Yes, we have done a lot, but there is much yet to do.

One thing that I did not mention was in the arena of education. This last year we did take the first tentative steps to raising the bar mightily in public education. Providing for a well-educated workforce that is so necessary for this generation. We passed one of the top ten charter school laws in the United States. We said to schools that were failing, bring in the college community, bring in the vocational-technical community and let them refer to the school and make them work. We said to the parents who feel that the course offerings in their schools are not satisfactory, vote with your feet. And we passed one of the top school choice laws in America. We took the curriculum rigor that we had already passed and raised the bar, four years of English, three years of math, science and social studies. Understanding as we all must, that the future to a prosperous tomorrow is a good education. The future to a highly productive tomorrow is a good education. We together said "yes, we are going to do that." But these tentative steps, these first steps were just the beginning. There is the opportunity now, this legislative session, to address the remainder and to finish the course.

I want to remind you of some of my long range goals that I set out when I appeared before you in my last State of the State and my second Inaugural message. I said first that we must equal the nation's per capita income by 2025. We must. Second, we would surpass the nation's ACT average by 2005. We must. Third, by 2010 assure that 1 in 3 Oklahomans have a college degree. We must. Fourth, we will reduce the divorce rate by one-third by 2010. We must. By 2010, we would cut the out-of-wedlock birthrate by one-third. We must. By 2010, we would reduce drug and alcohol dependency by half. We must. By 2010, we would cut child abuse in half. We must. But we did very little to address those specific agendas that we could address here in this Legislature. This is not a moral crusade. Today, it is a good citizenship crusade. For efficiency, decency, honor, goodness, truth and economic success to take place, you have to address these moral dislocators. We must.

I would ask that during this legislative session you do the things we did not do last year. First, approve the Covenant Marriage bill. Second, lower the DWI threshold to .08. Third, support initiatives to expand drug enforcement and treatment, including drug testing in schools. And, fourth, remove mutual incompatibility in grounds for divorce with children. A healthier Oklahoma will be a more prosperous Oklahoma. Our goals are ambitious, and the steps we take to meet them must be equally ambitious.

Our state is plagued, as all states and all communities are, with factors that hold us down and hold us back. Tragedies that occur that we do not understand. Dislocation and discord that only the heart can address.

With us today is Ron Holuby, the brave teacher who confronted a troubled boy with a gun - whose bravery saved the lives of his students at Fort Gibson School. Let me ask all of us to honor Ron Holuby.

We do not know all of the reasons for that boy's actions, but we do know what prompted Ron Holuby to stand for right. He faced a problem head-on at great personal risk.

Can we do any less? Government cannot solve all of our social ills, but we can and we must help create conditions that make honorable and responsible conduct once again the norm.

Over the last several months, I held five press conferences outlining the five agendas that I would ask in a bipartisan spirit that this legislature address. All of those five agendas are covered in the balanced budget.

First, is to make a capital investment in Oklahoma to build out our infrastructure. I propose a bond issue to do precisely that - to address technology in the classroom. To address those special economic development and tourism needs of Oklahoma, which are statewide in scope. And also, to address the higher education capital needs remaining in our state things such as the OU and OSU Research Center in Tulsa and the National Weather Center in Norman. After the May 3rd tornadoes, President Clinton and the Congress both made a commitment that the National Weather Center would be married with University of Oklahoma genius and talent in Norman, provided that we come up with the money. This will create jobs and research opportunities that will doubtfully expand the economic prosperity of our state. We need to do it.

The U.S. Army Museum of the Southwest is committed to giving us that magnificent collection of Native American regalia, the soldiers, the weapons, and the uniforms of the soldiers of the plains. They will donate the land and they will give us the collection. They will provide a lifetime of curator service if we will only build the building.

The Museum of Oklahoma History in Oklahoma City to celebrate the history and tradition, the genius of Oklahoma. These are the things that we need do and must do if we are going to have the kind of destination sites that Henry Kravis, former Tulsan, spoke of when he chaired our first Growth Summit in 1995. But there is more, it is essential for us to tie in every single school to the Internet. Every single school to the high tech communication's highway which will permit every single school, no matter how remote or how poor, no matter how sparsely populated, every single school so children can have a distance learning opportunity. There can no longer be the excuse, we could not teach fine arts, we could not teach upper math, we could not teach upper science, we could not do the things necessary to have a well-educated workforce because we simply could not get the teachers. In today's world, we can pipe in the instruction in a distance learning environment.

A cancer center...We are the only state or at least one of the very few states that does not have a public supported research center for cancer care and treatment. In my judgment, that is a good example of where some of the tobacco revenue can be spent.

Secondly, workers' compensation reform. To help Oklahoma workers, those that are sick and injured and to encourage growth. The workers' compensation system in our state, even though we have made some modest progress over the last several years, is still too expensive, is too time consuming. Interestingly, it provides a lot of cost at the front-end to small business in Oklahoma, but very little benefit to the injured worker. That benefit, as you all know, is frequently delayed and delayed and delayed. I ask you to address that issue.

Let me share with you pieces of several letters from companies around our state that have something to say about what we need to do this session.

Here is a letter from Glass Trucking in Newkirk: It says that the enclosed figures show that we probably could readily build new facilities in a few years with just the savings on Workers' Compensation. Glass Trucking finishes by saying if Glass were based in Kansas, which is only thirteen miles North of Newkirk, we would save this year alone, \$24,871. Why do we tolerate this?

Michelin in Ardmore: Over the years, our cost for handling workers' compensation claims in Oklahoma has been multiples of the cost for other states. Our experience in Oklahoma is still substantially more than the cost per employee in any other plant in the United States. Why do we tolerate this?

American Airlines in Tulsa: In 1995, the average cost of the claim in Oklahoma was more than double the average claim cost for all other states combined. While the average cost per claim in Oklahoma has decreased by 17% since 1995, it is still almost one and a half times higher than American Airlines overall average plan cost. With the exception of the other expense category, average costs for each component in Oklahoma are higher than all other states combined. Why do we tolerate this?

Love's in Oklahoma City: Workers' compensation cost in Oklahoma are still out of control and significant reform is truly needed. In Arkansas, our claims cost are 25% of the claims cost in Oklahoma; in Colorado, our claims cost are 63% of the claims cost in Oklahoma; in Kansas our claims cost are 76% of the claims cost in Oklahoma; in New Mexico, our claims cost are 60% of the claims cost in Oklahoma; and in Texas, our claims cost is 64% of the claims cost in Oklahoma. Why do we tolerate this? YORK in Norman: As you are aware, YORK International is a significant employer (over 1,000 employees) and investor in Oklahoma. Their regional headquarters is in Norman. We are continually reviewing and assessing the cost of operations in all locations, as demanded by today's competitive world. The present level of workers' compensation cost is a major detriment to our ability to be competitive in our Oklahoma operations. Their letter concludes, without reform the state will drive existing and prospective employers into a more insightful, realistic cost environment. That is a euphemism for we will or we will not expand. They conclude. If the workers' compensation legislators choose to keep their heads in the sand, then it will ultimately bury them and the state's economy. Why do we permit this?

I have presented, in this document, the funding to transition from a judicial system to an administrative system. Remember, we are only one of three states in the Union that still has a very expensive judicial system. This system will create an administrative system that handles claims fairly, fully, and efficiently. The administrative facilitator will handle those claims promptly and locally. Disputed claims will still have a court recourse through a magistrate system, but with attorney's fees capped. Let me say again, it is essential that we not only build out the infrastructure of Oklahoma, but that we address those things that will hold us back. In part, those are the high costs of workers' compensation.

Third, save rural Oklahoma and help all Oklahoma grow. Over the last ten years, we created over 300,000 jobs in Oklahoma. Of those, 140,000 were created in the last three and a half to four years. That is the good news for Oklahoma. The challenging news is that most of those jobs were created in the urban areas. Rural Oklahoma has been left

out and left behind. What matters here is to challenge the culture of a low per capita income. Because a low per capita personal income means a lack of productivity and a lack of education. Rural Oklahoma is the piece that is most left out. Listen to these figures: Oklahoma County has 92% of the nation's per capita income; Tulsa County has 108% of the nation's per capita income, but then it begins to slide. These are only a representative sample of our counties. Our people are paid less than the people who live across the borders, paid less than they should be paid. Our people, our working men and women who ought to be paid more money. McIntosh County 59%, that means that they make 59 cents on the dollar. People in the average of the United States make a dollar on the dollar. Beckham County - 68%; LeFlore County - 61%; Atoka County - 51%, half of the nation's salary at-large; Caddo County - 58%; and Coal County with 48%. With less money and less people, we are a lesser state. We want our children and grandchildren to remain, but remember this; that they will only remain if they make a good living. Money and jobs are fungible, they will leave if they do not think that they can earn what they deserve in our state. We must address those things that hold us back and keep us poor. This will only happen if we aggressively focus on what ails rural Oklahoma.

In this balanced budget, I have given you a series of initiatives to consider. I hope you will honestly and promptly consider them. First, we must continue to fund REAP. We need to do those things to provide an opportunity to build out our infrastructure.

Second, we need to continue to fund the replacement of rural fire equipment, especially for those volunteer fire services. Let's be realistic, if you can not provide fire service, you can not provide insurance. If you can not provide insurance, you can not build a house or establish a business. That needs to be addressed.

Third, we need to use some of the tobacco money to reimburse Medicaid for rural hospitals. Let me tell you why. Right now, we have some 25 hospitals, many of them are the larger hospitals - the acute care facilities that are on the verge of closing. Because we as a people have made a decision to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. But we have expected the hospitals to take care of them. We reimburse them at about 49% of what we should. So I am suggesting that we take \$42 million of the tobacco money and invest in rural hospitals and we will be able to match that by \$100 million from the federal government. This money, pumped into our rural hospitals will keep doctors, nurses, and health care professionals in those cities and towns still working. And, most importantly, our citizens will be safer and healthier.

We need to build out our rural telecommunications infrastructure. The partnership between this state and Southwestern Bell needs to be closed. We need to finish it so that we can insure that every rural community can have access to the Internet and high-speed transmission devices. So anywhere we live, people can enjoy the fruits of the modern economy.

We need tax relief to provide us, as a state, "pick up" state status on the federal estate taxes, so that rural ranches and farms and small businesses, particularly, cannot be imperiled. We need to focus efforts of the Oklahoma Housing Finance Authority on rural communities.

Lastly, we need right-to-work. We need the right to vote on right-to-work right now and it should be on the ballot in November. Also, we need to finish the road building program that we started. We need to complete it. This budget provides for \$62 million so that we can finish out that infrastructure. Let me tell you, and all of you that I have

worked with on economic development issues know this to be true. When we make a commitment on a company to locate as we did with Family Dollar in Duncan, we need to be able to say to them, we will finish the roads that we promised you. Not to carry our commitment is to say to those who would expand here or locate here, do not listen to what we do or for that matter do not listen to what we say. We cannot have that, we need to finish the road bill.

Fourth, tax policy. It is time to give back the money the people earned. It is theirs. They earned it. We did not. They should be given the opportunity to save it, to invest it, or to spend it the way they wish. Let me tell you what that will do. It will generate further tax revenue as a result of spending decisions made, not by us, but by our people. I propose over the next five years that we reduce the state income tax by a quarter point a year every year for five years to bring it from 6 3/4% to 6 1/2% this year. Today, in Oklahoma, the full 6 3/4% income tax rate kicks in at \$10,000 for a single person and \$21,000 for married couples. This is not tax relief for the rich. This is tax relief for the average Oklahoman who desperately needs this money to buy groceries, to pay for a child's college education, to pay for an illness or to pay for things that he or she would like to do because this is their money.

We need to reduce the destructive estate tax burden on our family farms and businesses by making Oklahoma a pickup state, by bringing our estate tax levels in line with federal exemptions.

We need to pass REAL auto tag reform. By that, I do not mean the kind of reform that was attempted last year that I vetoed because it raised taxes on half and lowered them on the other half. That is not real reform. The proposal I have here is a \$68 million tax cut for all Oklahomans who drive. For the first five years, you will pay \$85 for your tag; the second five years, you will pay \$45 for your tag; and the third five years and beyond, \$15. This is real relief.

Fifth, comprehensive education reform and raises for Oklahoma teachers. Last year we made a real good start with House Bill 1759. We said to prepare the work force for a competitive market place for the 21st century we need to raise rigor. We need to encourage young children to take tough courses, rigid core subjects. We need to remove athletics out of the school day and require math, science, English, social sciences, language arts, fine arts and all of those things that make for a well-educated populus. We took those first steps. We passed charter schools and school choice laws. We did require four years of math and three years of English, science and social studies. We passed the new academic performance index to measure school performance. We were recognized for this. Education Week called our curriculum reforms, specifically noting what we did with HB 1759, "the most significant" in America...we got an A-. We must not waterdown the curriculum if we need to raise the bar even more so. That bar needs to be raised to attract high-valued jobs to Oklahoma and to prepare our young people to fill those high-valued jobs. They are for us. They are our children and grandchildren. They are the ones that deserve them. They only way we, together, can get them to Oklahoma is to raise the bar to make them come.

Let me tell you about Jason Sanders. He went to Tulsa Memorial High School, a public school. He asked to be challenged. He attended the University of Oklahoma and he demanded to be challenges there too. Today, he is Oklahoma's newest and proudest Rhodes Scholar. Once again, OU is in the Top Ten, this time in production of Rhodes

Scholars. At this time I would like to introduce our newest Rhodes Scholar, OU's own Jason Sanders, his family and President David Boren.

Several years ago, I was asked by President Clinton to accompany the other governors and one CEO per state to Palisades, New York to discuss the future of public education and education in America. At that time Lou Gertsner, the chairman of IBM made a very prescient comment. He said, "the distinction between the 21st century will not be between the haves and the have nots, they will be between the educated and the uneducated."

Recently, I participated in the ribbon cutting of Boise Cascade Office Products in Norman. Those are good jobs, not high tech jobs, not extraordinarily well-paid jobs, but good jobs that we need in Oklahoma. As I do in every case where we lose an economic development prospect or we gain one, I ask the CEO of the company to tell me the number one reason why you are here. The President of Boise Cascade said the number one reason we are here is because 48% of the people of Cleveland County have college degrees. What does that say to us? That says to us that the work force of tomorrow must be better educated.

I presented to you, within the confines of this balanced budget, LearnPower. A series of initiatives to push us ahead, to catch up and go forward. To continue to strengthen the academic curriculum, especially in middle school. Six hours of academic study each day in secondary grades. School bonds for technology. Advanced placement programs for every student who wants advanced placement. No more remedial classes in four-year regional universities. Stop all forms of social promotion. Testing in math and reading in early grades. Remedial after school and summer programs for those who need help. All of this, by the way, is funded in this budget. Forgivable loans to teacher's training in crucial subject areas. Sweeping deregulation, focusing state mandates only on those matters that contribute directly to learning.

Merit pay - To recognize that if a school achieves and if rigor results in higher academic achievement, we provide merit pay to that school to be divided to education instructors, those who provide the course work in the classroom. Bonus pay - To recognize the marketplace and there are some professions and occupations that are high paid, high wage position. To get people to serve in education, we have to pay more for those professions. And, we need fair, but prompt removal of incompetent teachers. And also, \$2,000 across the board for excellence in Oklahoma teaching.

Let me repeat something that everyone of you know, but I want to repeat it. School is first of all about learning. I want to read you a statement, "Accountability rests on achievement. Achievement rests on the curriculum. The curriculum rests on the ability of qualified, dedicated teachers who can successfully carry out the objectives of the curriculum." Who said that? Not some "elitist" school reformer, not someone who wanted to impose "unfunded mandates" on our school. No, who said that was Mitsuye Conover, Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year from Bartlesville High School and a Finalist for the National Teacher of the Year, who joins us today to celebrate education and instruction in Oklahoma. Please stand, Mitsuye to be recognized.

Let me say something about administrative cost because we have read a lot about administrative costs. In 1996, Oklahoma ranked third in percent of school dollars spent on district-level administration (4.16% versus a national average 2.30%). District-level administration is not bus drivers, counselors, food service workers, or anything, but the

central office staff of the superintendent. That is what district-level administration is. If we were to reduce, district-level administration in Oklahoma just to the national average, we could put an additional \$52 million into teacher pay raises. If we were able to move to the national average in general administration at the district level, we would be able to give every teacher in the state, in addition to the \$2,000 provided for in this balanced budget, an additional \$1,300 per teacher.

Here are some examples of our challenge: Seven Oklahoma school districts are paying \$1,000 per student just for district administration. Another 73 school districts pay \$500 per pupil just for district administration. One district, with less than 2,000 students, pays \$718,000 for district administration, that includes \$87,000 for the superintendent, \$73,000 for the assistant superintendent, and \$474,000 for nine coordinators. Another spends more than \$300,000 on assistant superintendent salaries alone. One district has 91 students and a \$100,000 district office budget. Another has 83 students. The district office costs \$109,000, more than \$1,300 per student, nearly one-fourth of what we pay as a state to educate our young. Oklahoma has 31 school districts with less than 100 students each. They educate just 2,100 students between them and spend almost \$1.5 million in district administration. It is simply not responsible. It is irresponsible leadership for us to just add more money without determining what is coming out the other end and how that money is being invested. These are our taxpayer resources. We need to look at this. This is not about consolidation. A school can have its identity. A school can have its life. A school can have its athletic teams. A school can have its unique instruction. It just does not need all of those white shirts in the superintendent's offices.

Some districts are already setting a good example and they are not all suburban ones. If they can do it, anybody can. For example, Graham Schools in Okfuskee County spend just \$61 per pupil on district administration. Blanchard, Hennessey, Carnegie and Lindsay - all are smaller districts that have done a significant job in controlling district administration costs - not site-based and, again not the school bus drivers, the maintenance workers, the cafeteria workers, and the counselors, but district administrative overhead. They understand, these school districts, that spending more on schools does not mean spending more on fat, but more on learning muscle. Because that is all that matters. This is not a Republican or Democrat issue. It is about finding ways to spend more wisely and efficiently. Can anyone of us, straightfacedly, justify spending more on support than on instruction?

When I was before you four years ago, I proposed that the highest paid person in a district should be the superintendent, then the principal, and then the master teacher. I still feel that way. The money should go for instruction. The money should go for instruction. The money should go for instruction!

I want to return to my original theme, "Oklahoma yesterday, Oklahoma today, Oklahoma tomorrow." To embrace in our past that which is worthy of being embraced, and to recognize the challenges that we face so that tomorrow we can have a more prosperous society, a better society, a moral and decent society, economically and well-educated society.

It is a struggle. The contrast between the old Oklahoma and the new, between poverty and prosperity, between ignorance and education. This is a battle we must join. It is not going to be easy. There are those who are very well meaning who simply do not understand the changing world, that the fleet of foot academically and the best prepared

academically will be those who will win. We need to emphasize and energize the creation of that model and the implementation of that growth and prosperity. The old Oklahoma versus the new.

Many of you were circulated a letter from a superintendent who I am sure is well-meaning and decent, but it represents the old Oklahoma thinking that must cease. This is not the Oklahoma that I want to see. Listen to this letter: It was circulated to generally all of you. "The majority of students," he writes, "will not benefit from additional math, science, language arts, or history classes. I do not understand the push for all students to take core curriculum." Students were taught in his days and in an earlier life, horticulture, lawn care and service skills. "This seems to be appropriate for me," he writes. He completes his letter by saying that 14% of the job market needs college degrees. (Remember, 68% of our students graduate high school and go to college) "Are we really doing what is best for the students in Oklahoma or the nation or are we merely filling Mr. Boren or Dr. Brisch's plates?" he writes. He cites with approval a letter attached that has this incredible statement. Think the old Oklahoma versus the new. Think of your children when this statement is read. This is an education professional, cited with approval by one of our superintendents and circulated to you members of the legislature: "One must ask itself at one point what our country would look like if all the students met the high standards and vision in the nation's at-risk report. Who would serve the meals, build the shelves, make the beds and clean the toilets," he questioned? You contrast the old Oklahoma with the new Oklahoma.

You will enjoy this advertisement from the Asian Wall Street Journal. You almost chuckle when you read this, thinking that it could never appear in a paper in the United States. Remember, 3% of the world's population is not forever. It is because we beat the other guy. Here is the advertisement from the Asian Wall Street Journal for Siemens. It says, "Today's hobby could become tomorrow's production challenge." Here, you see a picture of an Asian father looking over his son's shoulder. This ad says as follows, "As a teenager, you probably had a lot of fun building and designing your own printed circuits. You had all the time in the world to solder the various components onto a PC board and in the end you were excited and proud of your accomplishment." This should be the new Oklahoma. Let me tell, you ladies and gentlemen, these are the people with whom we are in competition.

It is time for the chart. This chart examines the competition we face from the six states around us, comparing Oklahoma's rural border to our neighbor's rural borders. How do we compare with Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas?

How do we compare with the six states around us in per capita income? Because that is what it is all about, so that we can encourage our young people to remain here and for business to come here because they can get high quality workers because they are paying high quality salaries. In blue are the only counties in Oklahoma that adjoin the land or water border of another state and have a higher per capita income. Those are Grant County, in the north, and Washington County. Washington County because Phillips Petroleum is there. Grant County because the people are great. Those are the only two counties in the state.

In yellow are those counties with mixed messages - some across the border are a little more, some across the border are a little less. The red is our challenge. It is not our

curse, but the red is the challenge of the legislative session to address. In red are those counties that have a lower per capita income than the county directly across the border. Look. Virtually every county facing Arkansas in far eastern Oklahoma has a lower per capita income than the county right across the border. Arkansas remains a poorer state than Oklahoma, the richest part of Arkansas is right across the border. Go to Fort Smith; look east, you see light, look west, you see darkness. We need to ask ourselves why.

Look at Texas in red. This is rural county to rural county. With virtually every single county adjoining the Oklahoma/Texas border, Texas has a higher per capita income, some much higher. Hemphill County, Texas, has 104% of the nation's per capita income, rural to rural. The only county in the entire state of Oklahoma to match that is Tulsa. Wheeler County, Texas - 98% is right across the border. Harmon County, Oklahoma is 64%. Jackson County is 66%.

Same sky, same air, same clouds, same moon, same sun, same stars, same language, same people, same culture. What is it? Government. It has failed to do what needs to be done. Government.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no other explanation. Our people are wonderful people. You can not stand, as all of us did, after April 19, 1995 or May 3, 1999, of last year and not see our people as being extraordinarily gifted and good people. Efficient, brave, true, and conscientious people. How can we accept this?

Tomorrow must be better than today. We can not and will not accept this. We can with pride beat Texas in basketball and sometimes in football. We can, with pride, win in athletic contest in which we are engaged, but we cower and are intimidated when it comes to economic development. We cannot say to our children and grandchildren that the status quo will remain. It cannot. We must say "no" to being the sixth poorest state in the Union. We must say "no" to being the 28th state in population and 44th in income. We must say "no" to having to remediate 38% of our children who go from high school to college and have to be remediated in basic subjects. We need to say "no" to ACT scores that are below the national average.

We must, in this legislature, say "no" to out-of-wedlock births, to too much divorce, to violence and drug abuse. Because if you do not, who will?

We are all term limited. The sand is slowly leaving the hourglass. All of us will be here just a few more years. But, it is essential, Democrats and Republicans alike, that in this legislative session we address those issues that hold us back. Build out our infrastructure, complete our highway network, dramatically raise the bar in education, reward qualified, competent and superb teachers, cut taxes, pass right-to-work, fix the workers' compensation system and do all of those things that states around us have done to their great credit and advantage. We are too good to be so poor. We are too talented to accept these statistics. Tomorrow's children and grandchildren must look back upon us with affection and respect because of what we did here.

In this new chamber, let us commit ourselves to an agenda that is a "tomorrow" agenda and no longer the same, the same, the same, that gets us somewhere, somehow, someplace. We cannot do it. This state belongs to the people. We, in this isolated moment in history, represent the people. For the people's benefit, we need to strike for them, strike for the future and do great things for Oklahoma this year.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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.