

**State of the State**  
**Governor Robert S. Kerr**  
of the State of Oklahoma

Delivered To The  
**SENATE and HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
of the  
**NINETEENTH LEGISLATURE**

In Joint Session Assembled  
January 12, 1943

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

It is your honor and good fortune to constitute the Nineteenth Legislature of Oklahoma. You are the people's chosen representatives, selected for legislative leadership in the most fateful and portentous hour in the history of this great State. It is no little thing, no small responsibility. But it should be, and, I am sure, it is to each of you an inspiration and a call to unselfish and patriotic service.

For myself, the constitutional oath of office which was administered to me yesterday is sufficient to inspire the highest resolves and noblest impulses of the human heart. To assume that obligation, even in ordinary times, immeasurably thrills and stirs the soul of any man. To take the time-honored oath, as I am privileged, when this glorious State and this mighty Nation are engaged in defending the great cause of Freedom on the far-flung battle lines of the World, is to me not only an honor beyond expression, but a challenge to give all I have of physical and mental strength to the tasks ahead.

The Constitution has wisely provided for the Legislative, the Executive and the Judicial departments of government, none of which "shall exercise any power properly attached to either of the others except in the instances" expressly permitted therein. I heartily assure you of my recognition of the wisdom of these profound principles and of my earnest desire to assist you in meeting the problems ahead.

The Constitution, however, has imposed upon you and me certain duties and obligations. Among other things, the Governor is required by the Constitution to recommend to the Legislature from time to time such measures as he may deem expedient. In view of unprecedented conditions familiar to us all, it is doubly imperative that we should at all times work harmoniously for the common cause. To facilitate the attainment of the high purposes to which we are dedicated, I tender to all the members of the Legislature the freedom of the Executive Offices. I want you to come to me with your suggestions and give me the benefit of your views upon any public question. I pledge you my whole-hearted co-operation and assistance in enabling this great State to make its maximum contribution to the war effort and in making Oklahoma a better place in which to work and live.

As incoming Governor it is now my duty to give to you an expression of my views and recommendations. In this message I desire to direct your attention to what I deem to be our more pressing problems; and to submit by specific statements, for immediate consideration, a limited number of subjects.

### REVENUE

It is incumbent upon us, of course, to provide the revenue for the operation of the necessary functions of our government. We are committed to the principle that no existing tax shall be increased nor any new tax levied, unless emergencies beyond our control should arise. I recommend that this pledge be kept with strict fidelity.

In this connection I urge that you do not at any time lose sight of the cost of the continuing operation of our state government. The orderly processes of government must be maintained. The necessary departments and institutions of the State must be financed. And, of course, a considerable part of the fixed cost of government in *Oklahoma* is represented by the interest and installments maturing annually on *the public debt*.

Much has been said about reducing this tax or eliminating that one. I, too, would like to see some of our presently existing taxes reduced or repealed. In fact, I would like to see *all* of them reduced. But, unfortunately, you as Legislators, and I, as Governor, find our State with the largest state debt which as ever confronted any incoming Governor and Legislature since statehood. As you and I assume our solemn obligations today *we find our State is burdened with more than thirty-four millions of dollars of public debt*.

You and I did not create this debt. Time was when Oklahoma had no state debt. Only a few short years ago Oklahoma was a debt free state. Four years ago Oklahoma's public debt was *many millions of dollars less than it is now*. We must not deceive ourselves or the investing public which in good faith purchased our interest-bearing bonds. Oklahoma is not a debt-free state – it is a *debt-ridden* state today! And, let me remind you, that these debts were not paid when the state's bonds to the extent of *nearly forty millions of dollars* were issued and distributed to the trusting public to buy.

No mathematician has ever been able to figure out how you can pay debts by giving your interest-bearing bonds to cover them. The obligation is an obligation until the bonds are paid, with interest, to the last hard dollar! And there is nobody to pay them but the citizens of Oklahoma. We didn't create it but it is our debt. As long as I am Governor every effort will be made to *pay* debts and not *create* them.

No, our debt isn't paid. It's still here. The State's honor is pledged. That's the pitiless fact and here's the record that attests it. (State Auditor's report) And to talk about eliminating our income tax or any other tax, without levying a new one to take its place, is not only unsound, it is not even good faith. And I don't care from how prominent a source a fallacious suggestion to the contrary may come!

### APPROPRIATIONS

In the matter of appropriations I would respectfully remind you that we are committed to a program of puritanic economy and to see to it that our expenditures do not exceed our revenues. In the discharge of this obligation I recommend that you act with complete fairness and strict impartiality concerning all the departments, institutions and functions of government to the end that we do not balance the budget by placing an undue portion of the burden on any single element for which we are responsible. In this connection, I specifically recommend and urge that the public schools and institutions of

higher learning in Oklahoma be dealt with as fairly as the revenues permit and the necessities demand. I believe that there should be a minimum term of nine months school each year available to every boy and girl in Oklahoma. I believe their teachers are entitled to a living wage and that the state should help provide a program making this possible. As I conceive our duty in the national emergency, it is a duty not only to provide men for the armed services, money, food, sinews of war, technicians for war industry, and all of the material contributions that we must make to the cause of victory, but it likewise entails the duty of keeping the democratic structures and privileges for which we fight intact and to lay a firm foundation for our society and our economy for the days that will follow our victory. To the accomplishment of this objective it is vital that our public schools and institutions of higher learning be protected and not permitted to deteriorate. These things I submit for your consideration.

In addition to the other suggestions herein made and matters herein referred to, I recommend that your most careful and serious consideration be given to every item of appropriation provided by you. This recommendation is made in order that as individuals and public officials we may honor and keep our pledge to operate state government in Oklahoma on the basis of the most rigid and puritanic economy consistent with constructive and safe principles of government.

#### **AGRICULTURE**

In connection with the subject of appropriations I wish here to refer to the requirements of agriculture in Oklahoma. You and I know that agriculture is our primary industry. No nation and no state can be great unless it has a great agriculture.

“Food will win the war and write the peace,” says Secretary of Agriculture Wickard. When we read in our newspapers and other periodicals and hear over our radios of the growing hunger in Europe, of privation-gaunt France, of starving Greece, of severely rationed Germany and even England, we are not inclined to doubt this. And when we reflect on the terrible devastation that is going on there and of the slaughter of European man-power, we know that the farmers of Oklahoma and of the United States will have both the opportunity and the humanitarian obligation to feed a large part of the world when this terrible war has been won.

We have pledged ourselves to support soil conservation. We have pledged a fair and equitable land tax. (And I shall refer to this matter later in connection with certain proposed amendments to the Constitution.) We have promised to help see that rural youth receives its deserved educational aids; that there shall be increased support of 4-H Clubs and Future Farmers of America, and that vocational agriculture and home economics courses shall be extended to every high school attended by rural children that applies for and co-operates with such a program. We have further pledged that agricultural research shall be pushed, agricultural extension services promoted, and that farm security shall be extended, in so far as we may effect it.

I therefore recommend that when you come to the consideration of the State’s share in the financial support of these agricultural activities, that adequate provision, consistent with circumstances and the state of our revenues, be made in this regard.

#### **FREIGHT RATES**

I wish to again call your attention to a burden under which Oklahoma agriculture has labored, as has industry, for many years. Oklahoma has been and now is terribly discriminated against by unfavorable freight rates. I urge that we make every effort in

co-operation with the Corporation Commission and the national administration to lift and remove this barrier to our agricultural and industrial welfare. At this point I want to pay my respects to Oklahoma's Corporation Commission. Especially do I commend them for their continued effective work in the matter of lowered freight rates and necessary conservation of our natural resources.

#### **STATE PLANNING AND RESOURCES BOARD**

All of us are keenly aware, I am sure, that we have before us not only the problem of winning the war, but likewise the problem of winning the peace. And to that end we must look ahead, plan ahead and work ahead. We must demonstrate to our brave men in the armed forces and to their parents that ours is a grateful government and that we will render every help in keeping secure an industrial and agricultural economy to which our men may victoriously return with confidence. We must not forget or fail in this solemn and sacred duty.

In this connection I am convinced that the State Planning and Resources Board must be strengthened and assume increasing responsibility and a wider scope of activity. I recommend that the position of Director for said Board be created by suitable legislative enactment. I favor and recommend a further enactment designating the Planning and Resources Board as the State Housing Authority to co-operate with the Federal Housing Authority. It may be that it will be necessary to submit other legislation to you increasing the authority and broadening the powers of this Board. In that event I ask your favorable consideration on such measures.

#### **PUBLIC DEBT**

In regard to the public debt, we have pledged, and the Democratic Party Platform has pledged, that not one cent shall be added to the existing public debt of the State. I recommend and urge that this pledge be kept with fidelity. *I further recommend that legislation be enacted authorizing the use of the surplus in the general revenue fund of the State Treasury as of June 30, 1942, in purchasing and retiring the State's outstanding bonds now owned by the State School Land Commission, and that you further enact such legislation, as in your judgment may seem wise, authorizing the use of any surplus that may accrue during the present fiscal year or the succeeding biennium, either in the purchase of outstanding bonds of the State of Oklahoma, or United States Government bonds to be held by the State and used in paying off outstanding bonds of the State as they mature.*

We must meet and pay the annual maturities, both of interest and principal, of our heavy state debt.

In view of the principles of sound common sense involved; in view of the fact that you and I find a larger state debt than has ever before existed at the beginning of a Governor's term of office; and in view of the overwhelming desire of our people that this state debt be not increased, but retired as quickly as possible, I suggest for your consideration the proposal that every member of both House and Senate become a joint author of this legislation.

#### **STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

I favor the equitable restoration of the Department of Education to the dignity and usefulness contemplated by the Constitution, and desired by the people. I recommend that suitable legislation be enacted to effect this result.

## **TEACHERS' RETIREMENT ACT**

The people of the State have amended the Constitution authorizing a teachers' retirement system. I recommend that legislation vitalizing this amendment be enacted. However, this legislation should be carefully dealt with and should not be made effective until the Legislature provides sufficient appropriation to pay whatever contribution to the fund you may cause the State to make.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE**

While the armed services and the demands of war industry have given employment to many of those heretofore served by our Department of Public Welfare, emergencies will continue to arise affecting communities and citizens that are dependent or in need of temporary help. Certain elements of the program now maintained by the Department need to be continued. Due, however, to the reduced need in the general program, now and heretofore carried on, and in the interest of effecting every possible economy, I recommend that the appropriation for the Department be reduced by at least one-half, and that the responsibility for the administration of the program be transferred to the Board of Affairs.

It is not my recommendation that you cause the State to shirk any responsibility that it has, or may have, in connection with any of our people who by reason of temporary unemployment or misfortune find themselves in such need as to require our reasonable assistance. But you and I have the solemn obligation to see to it that only such money shall be appropriated as is truly needed; and it is our *even more solemn duty to put a stop to the practice of dissipating these funds in political extravagances or manipulations.*

## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

In time of war the safeguarding of public health becomes a matter of urgent state and national interest. Increasing numbers of physicians and nurses are being called into the armed forces. Many communities and even counties will be left with limited medical services.

It is therefore important that careful consideration be given by this session of the Legislature to the matter of expanding and improving the public health services and facilities.

In like manner, provision should be made for keeping the University Medical School open for instruction on a twelve month basis for the duration of the war. Careful study should be made looking towards the improvement of its facilities so that it may adequately meet the needs of the State.

## **OLD AGE ASSISTANCE**

Our old age assistance program is and has been since its inception, regulated and controlled by federal laws. Any legislation changing the present pattern must originate in the national Congress. I believe the permanent cure for the problem of old age assistance is revision of the national program, providing a monthly retirement annuity based on age rather than need, which is the ultimate goal of the present Social Security program.

Pending the necessary changes in the national law to improve the lot of our elder citizens, we have pledged an increased assistance, among other ways, through reduction of administrative expense, collection of old age assistance taxes now being evaded and through encouragement of reemployment of our older workers. Thousands now on our rolls have replaced and will continue to replace younger workers called to war-time tasks.

These patriotic older Americans must, at the expiration of that employment, be immediately reinstated to the rolls with unimpaired status.

While the relief that we of the state government may bring to the older people of our state must necessarily be largely a matter of administrative policy, I invite the suggestion and co-operation of the Legislature in our attempt to bring some solution to this problem. If legislation must be enacted or modified to secure this end, I ask your cooperation in securing its passage or modification.

I also recommend that you give consideration to the passage of a joint resolution memorializing the national Congress to amend the National Social Security law by providing that the first \$240.00 annual net earning or income of our eligible old people be exempt and not taken into consideration in connection with determining the amount of assistance they receive under the old age assistance program.

I know of no single source of productive capacity not now being utilized that is greater than that of our old people, who at this time are limited in their production of food and other agricultural products and in other worthwhile productive enterprise by the fact that any income or resource which they may produce or create will result in the amount of assistance they receive being reduced.

Therefore, in order that they may be encouraged and inspired to improve their own economic condition, and to help in building the total economic resources of the State and help in the production of food for victory, I feel that we should do all in our power to help bring about this amendment to the national law which would, in my opinion, be of such great help in this matter.

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND INVESTIGATIONS**

In recent weeks and months charges have been made that there have been crimes and violations of law against public justice committed which should engage your attention.

My position and the position of the Democratic Party is clear and unequivocal on this issue.

We have pledged that this administration will investigate all wrong-doing that may be brought to its attention or evidence of which the executive arm of the state may be able to discover. We have also pledged to recommend that the Legislature investigate these charges. We will not stop our investigation at determining whether or not there have been violations of law in connection with the adoption and purchase of school books. We have pledged that we would also look into the matter of executive clemency granted by the previous administration, as questions concerning that issue have been raised in many quarters. And, permit me to repeat, we shall investigate *all* matters brought to our attention which raise the suspicion that the law has been violated or the people of the State injured.

I therefore suggest that the appropriate committees of the two branches of the Legislature proceed in an orderly manner with such investigations which, in their judgment, the situation demands.

Let the investigating committees act with firmness and decision, but also with complete fairness and impartiality. Let accused persons be given every opportunity to appear and make whatever defense or give whatever explanation they may have in regard to the matters being investigated. I wish to make it very clear that this Administration will vigorously prosecute the guilty regardless of who they are, friend or foe, Democrat

or Republican. And, if men are convicted, we shall keep them behind the bars in accordance with their sentences and we will halt any commercial exodus from the portals of our penal institutions.

On the other hand, I wish to make it equally clear, that vicious and groundless accusations against the citizens of the state or its public officials, will not be the policy of this Administration.

### **PRIMARY ELECTIONS**

The Democratic platform has committed us to give attention to the modification of our election laws to the end that all nominees for national, state and county office in primary elections may more nearly reflect the will of the majority of the voters of the respective parties.

The purpose of our laws governing primary elections is to enable the voters of each party to choose their candidates for public office. It was undoubtedly the hope and intention of the framers of our primary election law to secure for each of the political parties the strongest candidate from those who offered their services. The law as it now stands does not always do this. At present, when three or more candidates are on the same party ticket, it is possible for one of them to be nominated by a decided minority of the party because of the majority being divided between two strong candidates, either of whom could have commanded a majority had the other not been in the field. We are therefore confronted today with a primary election system which has resulted in the placing upon our tickets as nominees, persons who do not always represent the popular choice of the voters of the several political parties. This regrettable situation should be corrected to insure that each candidate who goes before the voters in the general election shall have been selected by a popular majority within his own Party.

For these reasons I recommend that you give consideration to legislation that will result in the selection of nominees in party primary elections who will more nearly reflect the will of the majority of the respective parties.

I strongly urge upon you the advantages of a preferential primary system, whereby the will of the majority can be expressed and determined at one election, thus saving the expense of a run-off primary election. Any legislation in this regard must conform, of course, to the provisions of our Constitution, and in your considerations you might even determine that an amendment to the Constitution would be necessary to permit the enactment of legislation establishing a preferential primary system.

On the subject of elections, I further suggest for your consideration a careful study of the need for a shorter state ballot.

### **FREE TEXTBOOKS**

The question of the adoption of school text books is now and always has been an extremely vexing and controversial one in this and other States. I have given much thought and study looking towards a satisfactory solution of this problem. I have informed myself of the situation in other states. The latest reliable information discloses that of the forty-eight states of the Union, forty-six (and the District of Columbia) have some form of district or state-wide free textbook law, either optional or mandatory. Most of the states having optional laws permitting separate school districts or county boards of education to provide free textbooks also have provisions authorizing or requiring the furnishing of such books to pupils whose parents are unable to supply them.

Of the remaining states, South Carolina has a statewide rental system of textbooks, while Oklahoma has neither a free textbook nor a rental system.

I therefore recommend that you give your serious consideration to the enactment of a free textbook system for the first eight grades on a gradual adoption plan of approximately two grades each year, and that the books be owned and distributed by the State.

I make this recommendation to you because I am convinced that this is the most economical method whereby the necessary textbooks may be provided for all of the children of all of the people.

### **EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY**

Executive clemency is one of the greatest responsibilities resting on a Governor. Before he can act wisely and with proper regard for the safety of society there is a great deal of investigation required in the consideration of each case. Every man who is confined in one of our penal institutions is there as a result of an outlay of at least several hundred dollars of the taxpayers' money and as a result of weeks of work and investigation by prosecuting officers, sheriffs and county attorneys, and further as a result of several days of trial by a jury of twelve men and a presiding judge. In very many cases an appeal is taken in behalf of the convicted man and his cause is passed on by the Criminal Court of Appeals.

Yet all of this effort and expenditure of money is often discounted and held for naught upon a few minutes consideration by a Chief Executive, or merely upon his whim and, sometimes I fear, he may act from even less justifiable motives. I believe I interpret public sentiment aright when I say that people are tired of conditions with which we are all too familiar in the past. The matter of executive clemency, in my judgment, should be taken out of politics and largely out of the hands of a busy Chief Executive, however forthright and honorable his intentions may be in seeking to cope with this delicate problem.

In addition, I have always felt that it would be a good investment for the State to interest itself in a man when he come out of the penitentiary; to keep posted as to his whereabouts and what he is going to do and, in every way possible, to aid him in securing employment. In my judgment, this would pay big dividends in dollars and cents, in property saved which might be stolen by discouraged men, and in cost of additional prosecutions and apprehension of parole violators, many of them men who should never have received executive clemency.

Therefore, I recommend that the Legislature submit to the people a proposed constitutional amendment removing the unrestrained power of clemency from the hands of the Governor, and placing it in a non-partisan Board of Pardons and Paroles, composed of five members, two appointed by the Governor, one by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, one by the presiding Justice of the Criminal Court of Appeals, and the Commissioner of Charities and Corrections to be the other member. Let the Governor be authorized under the amendment to give such executive clemency as may be recommended in writing by a majority of such Board of Pardons and Paroles.

So strongly am I convinced of the necessity of reform of this kind in the matter of executive clemency, that I shall soon name a voluntary non-partisan Pardon and Parole Board, composed of five responsible, patriotic citizens of the state, including the



Commissioner of Charities and Corrections, to assist me in the matter of clemency pending action on the proposed amendment.

I shall also name a capable Pardon and Parole Officer to assist me and the Board in carrying out the provisions of the law in matters of executive clemency.

In concluding my remarks on this subject, I wish to say that it is my belief that the time is opportune, and the necessity existing, for an improvement in the administration of our penal institutions. It will be our constant endeavor to effect such improvements and in doing this we shall give due regard to the welfare of the men incarcerated. It will not be the policy of this Administration, however, to alleviate their lot by the wholesale and indiscriminate granting of clemency.

#### **STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS**

In accordance with the solemn pledge of the Democratic platform, I recommend that the Oklahoma criminal code fixing the statute of limitations on crimes against public justice committed by public officials should be amended to stay the running of the statute until public discovery of the offense, and increase the limitation to six years.

#### **INDIANS**

The Indian problem, though of unusual interest to Oklahoma, is largely a national one and we must look to Washington for its final solution. However, it is my firm conviction that the affairs of our Oklahoma Indian tribes should be brought at an early date to a just and final settlement.

I therefore request this Legislature to pass a joint resolution urging the members of our Oklahoma Delegation in Congress to call this matter to the attention of the proper officials and agencies immediately, and to render all additional aid possible. You and I know that this matter has already been too long delayed.

#### **HIGHWAYS**

In connection with the subject of highways, I would remind you that the needs of the State and Nation demand a highway program for the benefit of all. We must maintain the roads we have to avoid the greater expense of rebuilding them. We must build new roads where traffic and equity demand rather than where political favoritism dictates. The need for military roads, of course, tops the list in Oklahoma, caused by the coming of many wartime defense projects and the movement of large numbers of troops.

In addition, we have pledged to the farmers and citizens in the smaller towns and communities that they will not be forgotten, and whether it be a farm to market system or something similar, our pledge was given that all of our citizens will share in and enjoy a fair distribution of highway funds and the construction of needed roads and highways with no favoritism or partiality shown.

All of these aspects of the needed highway program must, of course, be harmonized with the anticipated revenues available for the purpose. But in connection with highway problems, I respectfully invite your attention to the considerations I have recited.

#### **RECOGNITION OF RIGHTS OF NEGRO CITIZENS**

The negro population of Oklahoma forms an integral part of the State's citizenship, and any program designed to benefit Oklahoma should embrace a consideration of their requirements. In view of the fact that there is no color line drawn in the Army, or in the defense of the country, I favor granting to the negroes of Oklahoma

equitable representation on draft boards exclusively handling induction of negroes into the armed forces of the United States.

I favor such legislative enactment and provision as is necessary to permit Langston University to become a fully accredited and recognized degree granting institution, meeting every requirement of the North Central Association.

I favor establishment of a strong vocational training department at Langston University to train the negroes of Oklahoma in vocations as well as educational pursuits.

I favor the manning of all negro institutions by competent negro personnel.

To better serve the health and economic condition of the negro in the state, I favor the following:

- (a) The establishment of a tuberculosis hospital for negroes, with negro doctors and negro nurses in charge.
- (b) The establishment of a division of the Public Health Department with negro doctors and negro nurses in charge.
- (c) I favor a Supervisor of Negro Education in the State Department of Education.
- (d) Wherever possible, and wherever the negro is exclusively served or housed, I believe that the negro should be given an equitable share of employment, thus providing for the negro people jobs if they are qualified, and offering encouragement to the negro youth of Oklahoma.

In so far as the State's authority extends and the State's revenues permit, I ask the passage of legislation to fulfill these pledges made to the negro peoples of Oklahoma both by the Democratic platform and by your Governor.

#### **HOME GUARD**

Recognizing the constant danger of sabotage and other fifth column activities and the possibility of air raids against our cities, oil fields and refineries, utilities, defense projects, air fields and other military objectives; and since the Oklahoma National Guard has been mustered into the armed services of the United States, and the State is now without any military force whatsoever for use in State emergencies, I favor the creation of an adequate State Guard to provide necessary protection for our people and their property.

At this time we have spread upon our statutes authority for the creation of such a State Guard. I now ask the Legislature to implement these provisions with a reasonable appropriation in order that we may proceed with its organization.

Because of present need and proved usefulness, I recommend that the State Highway Patrol be retained for its original duties in maintaining safety and regulating traffic on the highways of the State. I do not believe that these objectives can be accomplished with a smaller force than now authorized.

#### **PLACEMENT SERVICE FOR ORPHAN AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN**

I recommend for your serious consideration the re-enactment of legislation recently repealed, which will authorize the maintaining of a reasonable placement service through the office of the Commissioner of Charities and Corrections, to be of service in helping to place orphan and dependent children in good homes from our State institutions for children, the Whitaker State Home at Pryor, the Home at Helena, the institution at

Taft for negro children and the State Training Schools for boys at Pauls Valley and Boley, and the State Training School for girls located at Tecumseh.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

I now wish to refer to five proposed amendments to the State's Constitution which I shall ask that you submit to the voters of the State for their action. These are in addition to the proposed amendment creating the Pardon and Parole Board which I have already discussed with you.

The issue of whether or not the proposed amendment to the Constitution making Oklahoma women eligible to hold any elective office carried in the last election still seems to be in doubt. If on final determination it is found that that amendment failed to carry, I shall ask the Legislature to again submit this proposed amendment. In Oklahoma, and I believe in Oklahoma alone, of all the states in the Union, women are constitutionally barred from holding certain offices within the gift of the people. I recommend that this barrier be removed, and this administration is pledged, with your cooperation, to do everything possible towards this end.

I further favor the submission of a proposed amendment modifying and clarifying the so-called "co-ordinating amendment" recently added to our Constitution. I favor co-ordination of our educational facilities for the purpose of rendering the most service to the greatest number at the least cost, but I strongly oppose the grasping of power from the Legislature by the Chief Executive under the guise of "educational reform". I do not believe the people intended or want the power to destroy their institutions of higher education to rest with any board appointed by the Governor. Under the provisions of this amendment the State Legislature can no longer appropriate money directly for the Teachers' Colleges, the University of Oklahoma at Norman, the A & M College at Stillwater or any of the other institutions of higher education in our state. They must instead appropriate all of the money for those schools in a lump sum to this Board which has exclusive power to allocate and disburse this money in accordance with its own judgment and desires. This means that this board, appointed by the Governor, has the power to destroy any one or more of these schools. I do not by these remarks mean to criticize the personnel of this Board as now constituted or impugn their motives, as I have the highest respect and regard for them, but I do believe that theirs is an unnecessarily powerful and dangerous instrumentality. I recommend and urge that you submit an amendment to the people modifying the power of this Board and clarifying its duties. I think by such action it might then serve a more valuable purpose in the solution of our State's problems of higher education.

I favor the creation of a nine-member board of control for all State agricultural colleges, of which the President of the Board of Agriculture should be the Chairman, the original members, other than the Chairman, serving terms of two to eight years and each succeeding member serving a term of eight years, in order that these great schools may be freed from political domination and control. I recommend and request that you submit a proposed amendment to the Constitution giving effect to this purpose.

I also favor the principle of the graduated land tax as applied to cultivated lands only, on a basis that will promote and encourage home ownership of the small family-sized farm and, at the same time, not penalize other home-owning Oklahoma farmers or ranchers, or farmers in that section of the state where a large acreage is an economic necessity. Our platform enunciates this principle and endorses it. I therefore ask that you

submit a proposed amendment to the Constitution enacting this type of graduated land tax into law.

In connection with the Initiative and Referendum rights reserved to the people under our State Constitution, it has long been my belief that the killing power of the uncast or silent vote should be reduced.

I therefore recommend that you submit a proposed amendment to the Constitution, providing that when any proposed amendment to the Constitution, whether submitted or initiated, shall receive sixty-five per cent of the votes cast on the question of whether or not said amendment shall be adopted, the same shall become effective, whether or not it shall have received a majority of the vote cast at the election in which said amendment is voted on; and that in the case of laws initiated by the people or referred to them by the legislative bodies, that a law approved by sixty per cent of the votes cast thereon shall become effective, whether or not it shall have received a majority of the votes cast at the election in which said law is voted on.

At a later date I shall have additional comment to make upon "the condition of the State", and from time to time make specific suggestions to you in the interest of good government.

I am sure all of you will agree with me in a desire for a short economical session of the Legislature. Due to the fact that our nation is at war, the times demand that we expedite our business in every possible way. If physically possible the work of the Legislature should be completed in sixty legislative days. Skeptics say that this cannot be done. Let it be our happy pleasure to demonstrate that it can.

I wish to state to you again that this Legislature shall be free from domination, coercion and bad faith from the Executive Office. To the Legislature I propose a working partnership between the Executive and Legislature branches of the government in the interest of the people and the nation. At all times I shall welcome your suggestions and the doors of the Governor's office are now and shall remain open to you. I need your help and Oklahoma needs the devoted, consecrated service of all of us. I faithfully hope to see the sessions of this Legislature marked with a greater degree of harmony between the members and with the other departments of government than any other Legislature in the history of the State.

As a state Oklahoma is one of the youngest in the sisterhood of states. But it is older in song and story, and richer in lore and tradition than many of the colonial states.

Here four hundred years ago came Coronado and his adventurous band. Here came the Five Civilized Tribes across the broad expanse of intervening territory between their old and their new homes. Here the Plains Indians found their home centuries ago. Their signal fires flashed their messages and stories from point to point on the rolling plains. Here came the French traders and trappers. Here came the brave and adventurous spirits from all over this earth, in the vanguard of which were such gallant figures as Washington Irving, Custer, Sequoyah, Jefferson Davis and dauntless Sam Houston.

Then in the twilight of the 19th Century and the first blush of dawn of the 20th century, your forebears and mine came rolling across the borders of the two Territories, from the Mississippi and beyond. From North and South and East and West they came. Their campfires at night burned with a warmth and glow, matched and excelled only by the light in their eyes, the courage in their hearts and the smiles upon their faces as they

built their pioneer homes in this great land and laid the foundation for this beloved state.

They were tall men, fearless and courageous. They were faithful women, fearless and gracious. Together they were unafraid to face the storm!

The signal fires of the Plains Indians and the campfires of our forebears have long since ceased to send their flashing messages across the plain or mark the spot of the evening bivouac, but in the hearts of their sons and daughters there burns a brighter glow and fiercer flame. It is our determination to climb every upward along the pathway of human progress that leads to the stars. We shall not turn back. We shall not now, in the midst of the storm whose thunders roll around this world, be unworthy of their courage, their devotion and their patriotism. They had the faith to go up and possess the land. With the mantle of their spirit upon our shoulders, let us march on into a brighter and more glorious dawn!

## 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.