

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

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

In Joint Session Assembled  
January 2, 1945

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

We gather here today as fellow workers in the people's service. You have been chosen by the citizens of a great state as their representatives in the State's Twentieth Legislature.

The wisdom of the ages is reflected in our governmental institutions. The basic law of our State is the product of the richest experience of a free people, and at the same time, the foundation for their further progress and development. We must never lose sight for a moment of the high objective of our free government, WHICH IS TO GUARANTEE THAT EVERY CITIZEN SHALL ENJOY THE PRIVILEGES OF FREEDOM WITHOUT DENYING A SINGLE ONE OF THOSE PRIVILEGES TO ANY OTHER CITIZEN OR GROUP THEREOF.

Our state government was wisely conceived and has been expertly developed to bring this about. In order that it may be effective, the people have vested great powers in their state government.

In order that those powers may never be abused, a system of checks and balances was inaugurated and has been zealously guarded and preserved. The story and application of this system of checks and balances are as old as the story of free government, but at the same time, they are as new as the budding life of the youngest citizen of our state.

You who constitute the legislative branch of Oklahoma's government have your responsibilities, which are as great, if not the greatest, of either of the three branches.

Our judiciary, selected by the people, is clothed with the exalted obligation and solemn duty of interpreting and applying the laws which you enact.

The laws so passed by you and so interpreted and applied by the judiciary must be put into effect and carried out by the executive branch of the State.

Our Constitution is so written that each of these three branches has its definite responsibilities and obligations. Though each branch is in many ways dependent upon the other two, neither can ever usurp the powers of the others. *Therein* lies the strength and majesty of our government and *thereon* rests the security of the people's liberty and freedom.

The world is amazed, and we in this state and this nation, are most fortunate and happy, as Americans daily demonstrate their ability to successfully meet the most awful challenge a free people have ever encountered.

Our enemies know, and what is more important, our people know that our fighting men and women are marching to victory on the battlefields of the most terrible war, ruthless and wicked *men and nations* have ever forced upon a free people. Yet, in the midst of fighting this war, we carry on the necessary and ordinary processes of our government, to the end that our sacred institutions, the home, the church, the school, may be maintained, their integrity guaranteed, and their progress assured.

In fulfillment of my duty as Governor of Oklahoma I am happy to submit to you certain proposals and recommendations for your consideration.

We, together with all the people shall soon witness the passage by our State of a great milestone. We have long been a debt-ridden state. We are about to become a debt free state.

When we met two years ago the State's outstanding bonds, plus the interest coupons thereon amounted to nearly forty million dollars.

*By Reason of legislation passed by the Nineteenth Legislature and a Constitutional Amendment submitted by it and approved by the people, this great indebtedness will either have been paid or fully provided for with funds unequivocally ear-marked and dedicated to the payment thereof and on hand by June 30 of this year – 1945.*

The income to the general revenue fund from the present tax structure, according to the estimate heretofore made by the State Equalization Board is approximately \$11,000,000.00 (aside from the amount required for debt service which will no longer be required) in excess of the amount appropriated from the general revenue fund for the current fiscal year.

This fortunate condition makes it possible for you to give consideration, FIRST, TO A REDUCTION OF STATE TAXES, and, second, to making additional provision for the services maintained by the State for the general welfare, which have been and now are being operated on a basis of rigid and puritanic economy in order that the State's debt may be paid.

If, after a careful study of the state's entire tax structure, you should decide to reduce taxes, I know you will do so on what you feel will be the basis best calculated to encourage the fullest possible development and expansion of our agricultural and industrial welfare.

In connection with needs for increased appropriations, I urge your serious consideration of the following:

1. Public Schools
2. Public Health
3. Public Roads
4. Public Safety

Our returning Service men and women are ever present in our minds. Our institutions of higher learning will soon have the responsibility of greatly increased enrollments caused to a considerable extent by the re-enrollment of thousands of them.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

In order that the youth of Oklahoma may have that which is the minimum to which they are entitled, equal opportunity with those of other states in the Union for education, a more adequate program must be provided.

Every citizen has just cause for pride in the educational progress we have made in the last forty years. No citizen, particularly you and I, and all others charged with official responsibility, can afford to be satisfied until Oklahoma boys and girls have educational opportunities equal to the *best* in the nation.

We are all aware that the present program for financing the common schools of Oklahoma is woefully inadequate, first, by reason of the insufficiency of funds, and, second, by the total lack of coordinated and permanent financial structure. This problem is as close to each one of us as our own fireside. Yet it extends to the furthest outpost of civilization where Oklahoma men are fighting today.

Surely we can not feel that a problem is solved merely because we have become accustomed to the inconvenience and adverse conditions involved. Surely we can not feel that the present hardships and inadequacies suffered by our youth should be continued merely because they have demonstrated that they can survive them. Our interest in and attention to problems of long standing should become sharpened by a greater desire to solve them rather than dulled by indifference merely because of continued association with them.

You in this Twentieth Legislature probably have the greatest opportunity and therefore the greatest responsibility and Legislature has ever had to meet these issues and solve this problem. The people of Oklahoma are more keenly aware today than ever before of it and the necessity for its solution and, in my opinion, will wholeheartedly support you in this effort.

### ***Petitions For Constitutional Amendments***

There are at this time four petitions being circulated in Oklahoma seeking by constitutional amendment to make certain material changes in our educational program. Without recommendation as to what your action shall be, I urge that you give these measures your most serious consideration in order that they may have the benefit of your study and such action as you in your judgment may feel them entitled to.

It is a matter of common knowledge that adequate provision is not being made in Oklahoma for our public schools, elementary, secondary, and institutions of higher learning.

I believe this problem should have full consideration and appropriate action at your hands and that a program of adequate and permanent financing should be provided by you.

### ***TEACHERS' RETIREMENT PROGRAM***

I recommend a reasonable appropriation for the State's participation during the next two years in the Teachers' Retirement Fund. This program was voted by the people in 1942, vitalized by the Nineteenth Legislature in its regular session in 1943 and has met practically universal response and participation by the teachers of the State.

### ***Free Textbooks***

I recommend that appropriate legislation be enacted providing a system of free textbooks for the common schools of Oklahoma. You are aware that Oklahoma is one of the few remaining states without such a system.

### ***State Owned and Operated School Transportation***

We are all aware of the inadequacies and inequities of transportation facilities to our rural and consolidated schools. The State at the present time is providing a large part of the funds being used in this program. In order that adequate and uniform service may be provided on a more economical and effective basis I recommend that appropriate legislation be enacted providing for a system of State owned and State operated transportation facilities for the rural and consolidated schools.

### ***Langston University***

The Nineteenth Legislature placed Langston University under the State Board of Agriculture, which at that time was the Board of Regents for all of the agricultural and mechanical colleges of the State. The Legislature then submitted a constitutional amendment to the people creating a Board of Regents for the agricultural and mechanical colleges, which was approved. It was my understanding at the time, and I believe the intention of the Legislature when they submitted the measure, and the people when they approved it, that the new Board of Regents have charge of Langston University. The Board of Agriculture has recommended such a transfer. The alumni of Langston University and large numbers of our other negro citizens have made similar recommendations. The Attorney General has written an opinion advising that an Act of the Legislature will be necessary to authorize the transfer. I recommend your consideration of the passage of such legislation.

I favor careful study by the Legislature and enactment of the necessary legislation to insure the full accrediting and recognition by standard accrediting agencies of the Langston University.

### ***School of Medicine***

In order to meet the greatly increased need for trained physicians and nurses and to enable us better to solve the acute health problem in Oklahoma, I recommend that the facilities of the Medical Department of the University of Oklahoma and for nurses' training of the Medical Department of the University of Oklahoma be substantially increased.

### ***School of Veterinary Medicine***

For many years the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College has conducted courses in veterinary medicine, but not on a basis of training veterinary doctors. In view of the great increase in livestock production in Oklahoma and the definite and increasing need for veterinary doctors in our state, I recommend that provision be made for the training of veterinary doctors at the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College.

### ***Public Roads***

An enlarged program of highway construction and maintenance is an absolute necessity if Oklahoma is to develop on a basis worthy of her resources and her people. The building and upkeep of an adequate highway system for Oklahoma directly affects the economic and social welfare of every citizen of the State, It is directly connected with the effectiveness of every school in Oklahoma, every hospital, the delivery of mail on every rural route and with the operation and development of every farm and every business in the State.

Such a program will also be one of the greatest contributions we can make in providing the opportunity for immediate profitable employment for our returning Service men and women.

In order to provide additional funds for the development and expansion of highways in Oklahoma, I recommend the following:

1. Transfer the income from the 1c gasoline tax now going to the General Revenue Fund to the Highway Department, after having exempted farm used gasoline.
2. Appropriate the surplus remaining in the General Revenue Fund for the present fiscal year, after full provision has been made for the public debt, to the Highway Department for the construction of roads and highways.
3. In order that more rapid progress may be made in building and maintaining a system of farm-to-market roads, I recommend that the gasoline excise tax, the gross production tax and the motor vehicle license *fees on commercial vehicles* and bus mileage tax now being collected by the Oklahoma Tax Commission and apportioned to the counties of the State of Oklahoma, be by appropriate legislation transferred and thereafter apportioned to the State Highway Commission to be ear-marked and used in the development and maintenance of a farm-to-market road system in Oklahoma. In this connection, I call your attention to legislation recently passed by the National Congress providing funds with which to match state funds in building far-to-market roads on a basis of: 52 81/100% by the Federal Government and 47 19/100% by the State.

The Highway Department is not in position with its present revenues to match these Federal funds for this purpose. Nor are Federal funds available to match funds spent for this purpose by our county governments. Thus, by making this transfer the counties will receive more than twice the amount of benefits it is possible for them to receive by these funds continuing to be apportioned to and spent by the counties themselves.

The Federal law making the money available for this purpose contains the following pertinent language:

“Provided, that these funds shall be expended on a system of such roads selected by the State Highway departments in cooperation with the county supervisors, county commissioners, or other appropriate local road officials and the Commissioner of Public Roads.”

#### ***Collection of Taxes***

In connection with the subject of taxation, I recommend your consideration of legislation providing for the collection of all taxes and fees by the Oklahoma Tax Commission. This should include such items as premium taxes from insurance companies now being collected by the State Insurance Commissioner and such fees as are now being collected by the Department of Agriculture or any other department or division of State Government.

#### ***Veterans' Legislation***

Elsewhere in this message I have made recommendations calculated to promote the opportunity for profitable employment to our returning Service men and women.

I further recommend for your consideration the enactment of such legislation as you feel may be necessary to more fully protect the interests, the estate, the families and the dependents of our Service men and women.

In this connection, I recommend specifically:

1. Legislation authorizing the judge of the probate court to appoint a conservator of the estate of any Service man or woman, or any other person necessarily out of the continental United States by reason of activity or duty in connection with the war, who may be missing in action, or a prisoner of war, or in any similar position where the estate, or family, or dependents of such person may be best served by such conservator being appointed.
2. During the Special Session of the Nineteenth Legislature Title 72, Chapter 1, shown at page 22 of the Session Laws of 1944, was enacted. This made provision with reference to acknowledgements and other notarial acts in connection with Service men and women outside of the continental United States.

I recommend your consideration of legislation making similar provisions for other citizens who by reason of their connection or duties with reference to the war are beyond the continental limits of the United States.

3. I urge the examination of existing laws by the Committees on Veterans' Legislation of the two Houses with the purpose of enacting such other legislation as may be needed to more adequately protect the interests of our Service men and women and our other citizens connected with the war effort in their absence from home and upon their return to the State.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

I recommend your consideration of submitting to the vote of the people amendments to the constitution, as follows:

1. An amendment reducing the required age of voters of Oklahoma from twenty-one to eighteen years.

We have long been aware that improved educational facilities, methods of communication, including newspapers, magazines and books, and the radio, have enabled our youth to have an understanding of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship at a much younger age than was formerly possible.

Under the necessities of modern war our country has impressed our eighteen, nineteen and twenty-year-old young men into the armed forces of the nation. Under the trying and exacting conditions of modern war these young men have proven themselves capable of meeting every test of their willingness and ability to fight for and defend, and if necessary, die for their country. And I believe they are likewise worthy of full citizenship. Hundreds of thousands of them are in the front line of battle at this very hour, and they who have proven themselves capable of preserving the security of their Country's existence on the battlefield can be depended upon to maintain its honor at the ballot box.

2. An amendment providing increased compensation to members of both the House and Senate of the Oklahoma Legislature.

The people of Oklahoma realize that members of the Legislature perform some of the most important services under our form of government. They do not want this done at financial loss and personal economic sacrifice to the members. There have been many

changes, resulting in the general material advancement of our people, since the Constitution with its present provision for your compensation was adopted. It is a matter of common knowledge that the present fixed per diem provided is insufficient to meet necessary living expenses, to say nothing of providing compensation for services.

3. An amendment providing a short ballot. In this connection I recommend for your consideration the submission of a constitutional amendment reducing the elective executive officials of the State of Oklahoma to include the following only:

1. Governor.
2. Lieutenant Governor.
3. Attorney General.
4. State Auditor.
5. State Treasurer.

4. I favor the principle of the graduated land tax, as applied to cultivated lands only, on a basis that will encourage and promote home ownership of the small family size farm and at the same time not penalize other Oklahoma farmers or ranchers in those sections of the state where a large acreage is an economic necessity. I recommend your consideration of the submission of such an amendment.

5. I recommend your consideration of the submission of an amendment providing for a reduction in the "killing power" of the silent vote on initiated and referendum measures.

6. I recommend your consideration of the submission of an amendment changing and limiting the investment of the trust funds belonging to the school children of Oklahoma by the State School Land Commission.

We are all well aware of the alleged abuses to which these funds have been subjected in the past. The need for farm loans which was so acute when the provisions of our present Constitution were drafted and adopted is now being met in so many and such abundant ways, both by private capital and through loan agencies of the Federal government, it is evident that the School Land Commission can just as well now be relieved of the expenses and difficulties involved in operating a very large, far-flung loan agency.

The School Land Commission at this time is responsible for the handling and investment of some sixty million dollars of assets, including vast amounts of cash. Through the operation of law the membership of this Commission is constantly changing. I believe that their duties can best be performed if their responsibilities in this capacity are simplified and the investment of their funds limited to a field wherein the security of the principal can never be impaired.

#### ***Complete Audit of School Land Commission***

I strongly urge that the present applicable provisions of the law be implemented by your appropriating a sufficient amount to enable a complete audit down to the present time of the School Land Commission, and that by appropriate amendment or enactment that the Governor, the Attorney General and the State Treasurer be designated as a committee to arrange for and bring about such an audit.

#### **OLD AGE ASSISTANCE**

We are very happy in the knowledge that the average monthly payment to our old people on the Old Age Assistance rolls has increased nearly 50% during the past two years. We believe that further economies in administration of this program are possible

and that every effort should be made to bring them about in order that the amount paid under this program may at all times be as great as possible.

Two years ago the Nineteenth Legislature memorialized the National Congress to amend the national Social Security Law by providing that the first \$240.00 annual not earnings or income of our eligible old people be exempted and not taken into consideration in determining the amount of assistance they receive. Congress gave a partial response by providing such exemption where the income was earned in or received from agricultural production or wages in connection therewith.

I request your consideration of again memorializing the Congress to pass the necessary legislation to make this exemption general.

#### **PARDON AND PAROLE PROGRAM**

The Nineteenth Legislature submitted a constitutional amendment to the people creating a Pardon and Parole Board, which amendment was approved. The Board has been appointed in accordance with the amendment and is now serving in a very efficient and creditable manner. No provision, however, has been made, for compensation of the members of the Board for this service.

I recommend your consideration of legislation whereby the Chairman of the Board and each member thereof shall be paid reasonable compensation and expenses for their services in this connection.

I further recommend legislation providing a more adequate supervision of parolees and others receiving executive clemency of a similar kind.

In this connection I want to call your attention to the fact that during the past two years a voluntary system of parole supervision through cooperation by citizens in the local communities has been set up and is now in operation. Our Pardon and Parole Officer and Board secured the wholehearted and general cooperation of the American Legion and Auxiliary of Oklahoma in this work. They, in turn, have enlisted the support of many civic and church groups and individual citizens and there are now some eighty-three local Parole Advisory Councils in 57 counties actively engaged in this work. These local groups do this on a purely voluntary basis, and I feel that they are entitled to the gratitude not only of those receiving clemency, but also, of all our people.

#### **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

I recommend your careful consideration of the Oklahoma Unemployment Compensation Code and that appropriate amendments thereto be enacted to provide the following:

1. In order that the solvency and adequacy of the fund may be fully protected, I recommend that the rate of contribution as provided in Chapter 6 of Title 40, Session Laws of 1943, for the calendar year of 1943, be extended, and that the calendar years of 1941 or 1942, whichever is the lesser be made the base for computing the employer's contribution rate.
2. I recommend that the coverage under the Act be extended to persons working for employers of less than the present required minimum of eight, and the supplement any action which Congress may take with respect to the extension of the Federal Unemployment Tax Act to employers of less than eight employees. I recommend that the Act be amended to cover employees of state and local government.



3. In order that the amount and duration or benefits under the Act may be adequate to maintain workers and their families during periods of temporary unemployment, and in order that an adequate standard of living may be sustained and the deflationary effects of unemployment be minimized, I recommend that the Act be amended to provide a larger maximum weekly payment, for a maximum duration of twenty-six weeks instead of the sixteen weeks now allowed.

### **AVIATION**

In view of the certainty that we face a tremendous expansion of transportation of airborne passengers and freight, and in view of the necessity for supervision, regulation and control of the operation of airplane traffic and to protect the public safety and welfare, and in view of the necessity for a state agency through which Federal assistance to the cities and towns for the development of the aviation industry may be channeled, I recommend the creation of a state aviation commission of five members with an executive director. I further recommend the enactment of legislation providing for their qualifications, appointment, duties and powers, compensation and expenses.

### **LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING**

I call your attention to Article V, Section 9, 10 and 11 of the Oklahoma Constitution, touching upon the question of legislative apportionment and to the second, third and fourth paragraphs of the syllabus in the case of *Jones v. Freeman, Speaker of the House of Representatives*, et al. decided by the Supreme Court of Oklahoma on October 12, 1943, and reported in 146 Pacific Reporter, 2nd Series, at page 564, which said paragraphs of the syllabus read as follows:

- “2. While it is impossible to appropriation representation in the House of Representatives and the Senate with mathematical exactness and Legislature is allowed some discretion in enacting apportioning statutes, yet provisions of the Constitution require at least as close an approximation to exactness and equality as is reasonably possible.
- “3. Constitutional provisions are mandatory unless it appears by express terms or by necessary implication from language used that they are intended to be directory only.”
- “4. The word ‘shall’ being used throughout constitutional provisions relating to legislative apportionment those provisions are mandatory.”

I recommend your consideration of the enactment of necessary legislation to conform with the provisions of these sections of the Constitution and the language of this decision by the Supreme Court. In this connection, however, I recommend further that in any redistricting legislation which you see fit to enact that provision be made that no county in the state shall be without at least one member in the House of Representatives of the Oklahoma Legislature.

### **PENSION AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR FIREMEN AND PEACE OFFICERS**

I recommend your consideration of legislation for the State’s participation in an equitable and adequate program of retirement benefits for firemen and peace officers in Oklahoma counties and cities.

I further recommend your consideration of legislation providing for retirement benefits for members of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

I further recommend your consideration of legislation providing benefits to the widows and orphans of peace officers, firemen and State Highway Patrolmen killed in the line of duty.

### **SURPLUS PROPERTY**

The United States Congress has recently passed the Surplus Property Act of 1944, which provides for the disposition of surplus property accumulated by the Federal government in the prosecution of the war. Under the provisions of this Act, such properties will be available to the State and its subdivisions. In this connection, I urge that you consider the enactment of necessary legislation whereby the State, for itself and its subdivisions, may be empowered to purchase, lease or otherwise acquire, such surplus property from the United States under the terms of the Act.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH**

The preservation of public health has long been recognized as one of the first obligations of government.

Since the outbreak of the war, The Public Health Service, has gone far in protecting troops and civilians alike from disease. Measures developed during peacetime and wartime have been put to work on every front, with the result that few serious epidemics have occurred. The health status of the American people has been comparatively good. This contribution to the efficiency of the war effort and to ultimate victory is recognized.

Now that we are beginning to turn our eyes to the winning of the peace, it is no less important that we have a strong, physically fit population. Civilization will have to be rebuilt on a more enduring basis, and public health will be a vital factor in attaining this goal.

Through the inevitable necessities of war tens of thousands of our doctors and nurses have been called into Military service. Many of those will remain there permanently. Most Oklahoma communities have a serious shortage in medical services, and some have almost none at all. Oklahoma has supplied all the doctors and nurses to the Armed Forces that have been required of us and many more. We are intensely proud that we have been able to do this, but the resulting situation greatly emphasizes our needs for increased medical and public health services.

As to the need for the training of doctors and nurses I have made specific reference and recommendation in another part of this message.

I remind you that tuberculosis up to November 30, 1944 has killed 145,000 U.S. civilians since Pearl Harbor, a figure which exceeds by more than 20,000 the total number of our fatal casualties in this war for the same period.

We can not ignore the rising tide of infectious diseases discovered in the newly liberated countries of Europe. There is real danger that some of the deadly enemies of mankind which have been pretty well under control for some years past may slip in the back door while we are engaged in the more pressing business of global war.

We must also be prepared for an invasion of tropical diseases upon the return of our heroic fighting men who have been fighting our battles in the jungles and lowlands of the East. We must bring all the ingenuity and resourcefulness we have, to bear upon the solution of these problems.

No criticism is intended here of those who have had the responsibility of protecting public health in Oklahoma, or of those who have ministered to our stricken

citizens. They have done magnificently and are entitled to our praise. What is intended is that adequate provision shall be made to meet the greatly increased need.

I therefore recommend that you make a diligent study of the State's needs in the field of public health and when they are determined, that you provide for them within the State's means and ability.

Finally I call you attention to the following language in the Oklahoma Constitution, Art. V, Sec 39: "The Legislature shall create a Board of Health, \*\*\*\*". I further call you attention to Title 63, Section 1 of the Oklahoma Statutes of 1941. Said section reads as follows:

"A State Board of Health *to be in charge of one commissioner*, to be known as the State Commissioner of Health, is hereby created. Said Commissioner shall be appointed by the Governor (with term co-terminous with that of the Governor) for a term of four years. \*\*\*\*"

I do not believe that this provision of our Statutes complies either with the letter or the spirit of the Constitutional provision above quoted. I am also of the opinion that a State Board of Public Health composed of at least five members, or whatever number you in your good judgment may find proper, could and would be of great service to the people of Oklahoma.

Experience demonstrates that a greater program of physician-Public Health cooperation is not only desirable but essential in accomplishing the tasks before us. I am sure that we could secure the services of some of Oklahoma's outstanding doctors on a basis that would be of great and lasting benefit to the people.

I therefore recommend that you consider the enactment of the necessary legislation to make this possible.

#### ***Home For Confederate Veterans***

Shortly after statehood, in accordance with the desires of the people, provision was made by the State of Oklahoma for veterans of the Armies of both the North and South in the War between the States.

Some years ago the Home for Union Veterans at Oklahoma City, having completely served the purpose for which it was created, was transferred to and has since been used by the Department of Public Health.

It is now apparent that the Home For Confederate Veterans at Ardmore has likewise served the purpose for which it was created and in my opinion is now available for other use in the service of the public welfare.

I therefore recommend your consideration of legislation transferring the Confederate Veteran Home at Ardmore, Oklahoma, to the Board of Regents of the Oklahoma University to be used as a part of the Medical Department of the University of Oklahoma.

#### **CHILDREN'S CODE**

For many years widespread interest has been manifested by numerous citizens and organizations of our State concerning the laws governing our youth. This interest is exceedingly well founded. It has arisen and now exists because of the definite need for amendment to and modernization of the statutes of Oklahoma on this subject. A voluntary Children's Code Committee is now at work on this problem and will make recommendations to this session of the Legislature. I urge your careful consideration of these recommendations and of the needs for remedial legislation.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

I recommend your attention to the vital question of Public Safety. The loss of life and the maiming of men in battle is deplorable beyond our ability to describe. It is America's purpose to win this war, which was forced upon us, with the smallest possible loss of life consistent with our determination to achieve complete victory.

It is shocking when we realize that *here at home* more people are being killed and wounded in traffic accidents than are being killed and wounded in our war with Japan.

In Oklahoma the traffic fatalities in 1942 were 348, in 1943 they were 267, and in 1944 they were 307. In addition many thousands were injured each year, and property valued at millions of dollars has been destroyed. Our Highway Patrol has done heroic service, but its ranks are greatly reduced due to many of its members having been called into the armed forces. Replacements have not been secured.

I urge your thorough study of this problem. I suggest that you give consideration to calling to the attention of the proper Federal authorities the result of your study, and that you consider requesting those authorities to give priority to former members of the Highway Patrol and peace officers in the matter of being discharged from the armed forces on a basis that will make them again available at the earliest possible date for service in our Highway Patrol and as peace officers.

I further recommend your consideration of legislation enabling the immediate reorganization of our National Guard when the conditions of the war permit, without the necessity of waiting for a regular session of the Legislature or the calling of a special session for that purpose.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION**

I call your attention to Art. XXIV, Sec 2 of the Oklahoma State Constitution, which reads as follows:

“No convention shall be called by the Legislature to propose alternations, revisions, or amendments to this Constitution, or to propose a new Constitution, unless the law providing for such convention shall first be approved by the people on a referendum vote at a regular or special election, and any amendments, alterations, revisions, or new Constitution, proposed by such convention, shall be submitted to the electors of the State at a general or special election and be approved by a majority of the electors voting thereon, before the same shall become effective: PROVIDED, THAT THE QUESTION OF SUCH PROPOSED CONVENTION SHALL BE SUBMITTED TO THE PEOPLE AT LEAST ONCE IN EVERY TWENTY YEARS.”

## **AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

Interest in soil conservation in Oklahoma has never been so high as now and this is a very reassuring thing for the future of our great state. Our very existence is dependent upon the fertility of our soil. For many years Oklahoma, together with all of her sister states was somewhat careless in the preservation of this basic and priceless resource; However, Oklahoma agriculturists were among the pioneers in the nation to become aware of this vital problem and to take steps to repair the damage and establish practices for the future conservation of our resources.

The State Soil Conservation Committee has done notable work in this regard and is deeply deserving of our appreciation and gratitude. Through its program of education and organization activities we have reached a point where by the end of the year the

entire state will have been organized into soil conservation districts with the possible exception of two or three counties. In many districts the work has proceeded far beyond the organizational stage and soil building practices have been and are now being successfully conducted. However, we are just at the beginning of the great work and the effort must be vigorously supported and prosecuted. This will not only insure the preservation of our greatest resource for ourselves and our posterity but will also have the very practical effect of providing a substantial amount of profitable employment for our returning Service men and women and the rank and file of our citizens in the years of adjustment which lie immediately ahead.

I therefore recommend your most earnest and sympathetic consideration and study of this vital problem, and urge that wherever it is found necessary and possible, that additional funds be made available for the carrying on of this great work.

I recommend for your consideration an increased program of vocational agriculture, vocational home economics and vocational trades and industrial education.

A prudent people, whether as individuals or as a State, will make every effort to conserve the State's natural resources, its soil, its timber, its water resources, its minerals. Oklahoma's wealth has been developed primarily from her soil, her timber and her vast mineral resources.

Economic considerations based on good judgment, as well as necessity, urge a program of sound conservation as to every one of our natural resources. This is one debt we owe posterity, the paying of which will indeed be a labor of Love.

#### ***Secondary Recovery of Oil***

In this connection, I would remind you that Oklahoma has in the past produced more than five billion barrels of oil, being exceeded in this respect by only one or two states. At this time the State is producing in excess of 360 thousands barrels of crude oil per day, of which approximately 10% is being produced by secondary recovery methods without which it could not be produced.

Engineers tell us that there are hundreds of millions of barrels of crude oil in presently known and developed oil fields which can never be produced by primary methods but which can most certainly be obtained through secondary production methods. Economic considerations make it impossible to operate under secondary recovery methods in areas where there is diversification of ownership, unless voluntary agreements can be reached. This can not always be done and when it is not, the secondary oil cannot be recovered and great loss occurs, not only to the operators, but also to the royalty owners, the workers and the State.

I therefore urge that you give your most serious consideration to the enactment of secondary recovery legislation providing a means whereby oil not recoverable by primary methods can be saved and produced through legalized procedure on a basis of equity and justice.

#### **DEPOSITORY FOR THE STATE CONSTITUTION**

A little over thirty-eight years ago a group of able and distinguished citizens of the Indian and Oklahoma Territories met in Convention at Guthrie and drafted our great State Constitution. For this valuable service to our State, to our generation and the generations that come after us, we owe these men our unfailing appreciation and gratitude. Our Constitution is our most important and cherished state document. I deem

it very fitting and altogether proper that we should now prepare an appropriate depository for its preservation and exhibition to the public.

I therefore recommend your consideration of the enactment of legislation providing for such a depository and directing the place and manner of its keeping, either in the building of the State Historical Society, or in some other place to be designated by you.

### **STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY**

The United States Housing Act was enacted in 1937 to promote the general welfare of the nation by providing financial assistance to the several states and their political subdivisions for the purposes of (1) alleviating present and recurring unemployment, and (2) remedying the unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling for families of low income in urban and rural communities.

A vast majority of the states have heretofore taken advantage of the benefits of the Act. Oklahoma has not done so. The needs of Oklahoma citizens in the field of low-cost housing have not been met. The need exists in every Oklahoma community for the type of program afforded by the United States Housing Act under the supervision and administration of the Federal Public Housing Authority.

At the present time, the exigencies of war have temporarily suspended this construction program, but as soon as war conditions permit the program will surely be resumed, on a wider scale and at an accelerated pace. I deem it most important that Oklahoma, which has been sharing the expense of the Federal housing program elsewhere, shall likewise share in its benefits.

I therefore urge your most serious consideration of appropriate legislation, creating a State Housing Authority, with adequate powers and resources to act as Oklahoma's agency to work with the Federal Public Housing Authority in this great program in our State.

### **REPORTS OF STATE OFFICERS AND COMMISSIONS**

I am today submitting as a supplement to this message the reports of each State Officer and State Commission as required by the Constitution.

At a later date I shall have further recommendations to make upon the condition of the State and from time to time will submit to you specific suggestions in the interest of good government.

I am happy in the expressions I have had from individual Members of their purpose to expedite the business of this Legislature on a basis that will adequately meet the needs of the State and at the same time be consistent with the stern conditions and necessities of a great people in the midst of total, global war.

I want you to know that I have the highest regard and esteem for your position, your integrity of purpose, and your unquestioned ability to handle the task you have undertaken. I am greatly honored in having the opportunity of working with you on a basis of mutual co-operation. I seek your advice and counsel and your suggestions as to how the Governor's office may at any time be of service to you as individuals and as public officials.

You are a part of a great tradition. You are the product of all our past. You are the forebear and inspiration of all our future. You are an indissoluble link that binds the two together.

Oklahoma is more than a name. In it and of it are included the plains and the mountains, the hills and valleys, the streams and forests, the inexhaustible storehouse of our national resources and material wealth. In it are the people, the old and the young; those who have lived in the past and today rest beneath its soil; those of the future yet unborn. We are many races, colors and creeds, but we are all one people.

Each succeeding Legislature has made its contribution in planning and constructing this magnificent Ship of State we know and love. The portion you build rests upon the structure built by others in the past. Today it will enhance and adorn their work like the mighty gun turrets above the decks of a giant battleship. Tomorrow it will be the foundation upon which others will erect even broader and higher breastworks of progress and achievement.

The plumb line of Destiny of a great people and a great state is in your hand. I know you will hold it firm and true.

Robert S. Kerr  
Governor of Oklahoma.

## About Digitizing the Governors' State of the State Addresses

Section 9, Article 6 of the Constitution of Oklahoma provides as follows:

“At every session of the Legislature, and immediately upon its organization, the Governor shall communicate by message, delivered to joint session of the two houses, upon the condition of the State; and shall recommend such matters to the Legislature as he shall judge expedient.”

From statehood in 1907 to present, the state of the state addresses of Oklahoma's Governors have been recorded in pamphlets, booklets, and Senate Journals. One could not foresee the toll that time would take on the earliest of these documents. When these items first arrived at the Oklahoma State Archives, the leather bindings had dried considerably, cracking the spines significantly. Due to the acidity in the paper, many pages have darkened with age. Some of the more brittle pamphlets crumble at the slightest touch.

Thus when we decided to digitize these materials, we faced two challenges: the safety of the original documents and ease of viewing/reading for patrons. Our primary objective was that the unique and historic qualities of the documents should be reflected in the website. However, older fonts would not digitize clearly when scanned and even using a flatbed scanner could cause the bindings to worsen. An image of each page would increase download time considerably and any hand-written remarks or crooked pages could be lost. We decided to retype each document with every period, comma, and misspelled word to maintain the integrity of the document while placing some unique images of the documents online. Patrons can download the addresses quicker and view them clearer as well as save, print, and zoom with the Adobe Acrobat Reader. We have learned much from our efforts and we hope that our patrons are better served in their research on the state of the state addresses of Oklahoma's Governors.