

State of the State
Governor E. W. Marland
January 5, 1937

To the Members of the Honorable Senate and
Honorable House of Representatives
Gentlemen:

The Constitution of the State of Oklahoma, Article VI, Section 9, provides, "At every session of the Legislature, and immediately upon its organization, the Governor shall communicate by message, delivered to a 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. He shall also transmit a copy to each House, of the full report of each State officer and State commission."

I hereby and now transmit a copy to each House of the full report of each officer and State commission, as has been submitted to me. For the convenience of your Honorable Body a summary of these reports is attached hereto and made a part of this message.

Before trying to deal with the problems before us we should understand the condition of the State, and it is my constitutional duty to lay that before you as best I can.

Apparently conditions are much improved over those of two years ago when I first addressed you, I say "apparently" because I believe that only on the surface have conditions improved; fundamentally we are on a very little sounder basis than we were. The cost of production of almost everything we produce from our soil by our labor, has increased and has not yet been met by the rising prices for products. Until this condition is corrected I see no practical solution for our industrial problems in Oklahoma.

It is true that we have less unemployment today among able-bodied men but we have thousands of our citizens employed on made-work, paid for by the Federal Government wholly, or in part by the Federal and State governments. In addition to this number, as of December 1, 1936, we had 182,169 individuals for whom we are providing a bare existence through our State Board of Public Welfare. We also have 44,043 people over 65, whom we are granting some old age assistance, and we have 25,088 dependent children to whose support we are contributing. We have a total of approximately 300,000 men, women and children receiving Federal and State aid in work or grants.

The inability of willing, able-bodied men to find employment at wages in private industry challenges the best political thought. I cannot feel that conditions are fundamentally sound when there is so much unemployment, want, misery, and human suffering.

In industry, which should provide opportunity for every man able and willing to work, we find conditions to be most unhealthy. We find intense destructive competition in some branches, and monopoly destructive of individual effort in other branches. We find labor dissatisfied with both competition and monopoly.

The human problems of labor and unemployment are probably such as cannot be solved by our State alone but must be attacked through co-operation of the several states or failing that by the Federal Government itself. I hope that many of our problems may find solution through interstate compacts.

We must examine into the "lag" of the social and political sciences. Over four years ago this lag was being recognized as in part responsible for the mess the country was in. "The social, political, and economic machinery was not being advanced in anything like the degree physical

sciences were advancing. The law stood still while business with its new weapons, was making new achievements, new conquests. Our trouble was not that the physical sciences went too fast, but that the social sciences did not go fast enough. As the past generation found a magic key in the physical sciences to unlock a world of plenty from our inheritance, so you will find your major task in the social sciences to control and apportion that world of plenty which is your inheritance.

The test of any economic system fostered by government is whether it provides food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education and cultural advantages to all the people who live under it. Our system has failed to meet this test; our State is very rich, our men and women who constitute it are terribly poor.

We must advance the political, economic machinery to match the speed caused by the inventive mind of man. The improved machinery, the improved mass production, the labor-saving devices and methods that have gone into our plants and on our farms have far outstripped our political and social advance. The tractor with which one man can plow as much land as ten men did is now in use on our farms. The harvester, the combine, have lightened the load of the harvest hand and enabled one man to do the work that required many men formerly. The labor-saving devices in our manufacturing industries are even more pronounced than on the farms. There one man in some cases can do the work that formerly required on hundred. I cannot hold out any hope that all our unemployed may ever again be employed in productive, private industry. As I see the picture, many of them may never again be needed in productive occupations but it is my judgment that useful work can be found for them, and should be found for them, by the government, State or National.

However, I hope that we will remember that the ends sought for the general welfare cannot be achieved by a magic key to open the doors through which we can leap from the undesirable conditions of the present into a Utopia.

There are no magical powers in the policies and actions of government. We must build upon the foundation long since crystallized into the realities of customs, institutions, more or less fixed habits of thought, and often stubborn prejudices. But I cannot believe that collective effort to improve the common lot of man, will be futile.

Much has been said and written about human waste, the waste of human lives. There is some little we can do about it and I hope to be able to make recommendation to you toward that end.

The welfare of human beings, that very life of human beings, is dependent upon the natural resources of the State. The wasteful conditions surrounding our natural resources are continuing in spite of the waste that has been committed for generations. We were bountifully endowed by nature with almost everything necessary for our livelihood and comfort, so bountifully endowed that men thoughtless of future generations destroyed forever that which they could not use themselves in taking the little they could use. We have denuded our forests, destroyed millions of acres of fertile soil and profligately wasted our mineral resources.

Thanks to the development of human intelligence and a sense of responsibility toward our children and grandchildren and generations yet to come, we are now paying attention to the prevention of waste and conservation of our natural resources. We are just beginning to think of conservation. Much must be done in this connection. We must conserve our soil through flood control measures. We must terrace and we must rebuild. We must restore certain areas to grass and certain areas to forests. We must not produce in excess of our ability to consume and market our products but must save our land by better use so that it can sustain our future increased population.

The State Planning Board created by the Fifteenth Legislature has made a great land-use study, which I am sure your Honorable Body will find more interesting if you avail yourselves of it.

Oklahoma has generously shared its petroleum production with every State in the Union and every nation in the world. We have produced our oil extravagantly and wastefully and have given magnanimously, often below the cost of production, so that all the world might use it for their stationary or automotive power.

I recommend to your Honorable Body stringent conservation laws governing petroleum and natural gas, which will provide against physical waste and the production of our petroleum in excess of market demand.

Scattered over the State are one and two room, unpainted shacks in treeless yards; these are the hovels, for they could not be called homes, of the farm tenants. Inside are scenes of desolation and want almost beyond human endurance; bare floors, often of earth, perhaps one inadequate stove, furniture consisting of patched chairs and tables, one ragged quilt covering a bed in which the whole family huddle to find a small degree of warmth. Pinch-faced, hollow-eyes, stunted children suffering from malnutrition and an impossible, inadequate diet.

This is the human erosion of our State for which we are paying a great cost in relief and which will be even greater in the future if the situation is not corrected. It is not an abstract problem nor a new one since the last 46 years it has steadily increased until more than sixty-two per cent of our farms were operated by tenants in 1936.

Farm tenancy is the major cause of rural Oklahoma's social and economic problems. It is inseparably tied to the problems of soil erosion and relief.

We have paid a tremendous price in wasted soil because the transitory tenant farmers, at least fifty per cent of whom change farms every year, make no effort to conserve the soil through crop rotation, terracing, or contour listing. We are at present paying an even greater price in the form of relief money for our failure to solve this problem since the relief load is always far greater in counties where there is the greatest percentage of tenant farming. The land is owned by absentee owners whose interest is only in a year to year income and who make no worthwhile improvements. The houses present a minimum standard of human habitation and offer no inducement to the skilled tenant farmer.

In the State as a whole in 1935 the average Oklahoma farmer owned only an equity of \$29.00 out of every \$100.00 invested in the land under his operation. The other \$71.00 was in persons who did not tend the land.

Much of the human want and suffering in our State could be alleviated by a solution of the farm tenancy problem. If we do not solve it we merely postpone a reckoning until a time at which the cost will be greater and our citizens, weakened by its ravages, will be less able to meet the cost.

I recommend for your consideration the entire problem of farm tenancy with the most solemn hope that through your study the deplorable conditions of so many of our citizens will be improved.

I have dealt with human conditions briefly, with natural resources briefly. I wish to direct your attention to the conditions surrounding law enforcement and law violations. We are piling law upon law in our statute books to the confusion of our citizens, our enforcement officers and our judiciary. The condition of law enforcement in Oklahoma is deplorable. I invite your discussion and study of the causes of our failure to enforce our laws and suggest that you earnestly search for the remedy. As I see the condition, the multiplicity of our laws and our failure to enforce even some of the simplest of them is leading our people toward a disrespect of law.

I recommend a simplification and codification of our laws governing the rights of persons and property and the creating of a strong law enforcement body to protect these rights once they are understood.

The conditions surrounding the finances of the State are much improved over two years ago. I am informed by the State Treasurer there has been a reduction in the State debt of \$4,060,773.79 since the convening of the Fifteenth Legislature. The success also in funding over \$10,000,000 of debt at the low rate of 2.28 interest saves the State approximately \$25,000 a month. This changed condition is due in part to improved conditions in the State, the tax laws passed by the Fifteenth Legislature, more efficient tax collection, and to economies in government.

We cannot discuss the financial conditions of the State without mention of the financial condition of the Highway Department. When the Fifteenth Legislature convened the Highway Department had as near as can be ascertained \$2,515,426.08 of past due obligations on outstanding contracts with cash on hand of \$806,952.26. Thus two years ago there was an apparent deficit of \$1,708,473.82. At the present time the Highway Department has \$8,613,763.38 of past due obligations and outstanding contracts as compared to the total present resources available of \$5,057,099.50. Thus the present deficit of the Highway Department is \$3,556,663.88. However, it should be borne in mind that the Highway Department has built and contracted for the following road mileage during the past two years; 394 miles of unimproved earth, 501 miles of oiled road, 299 miles of asphalt road and 135 miles of reinforced concrete paving. The work done by the Highway Commission during the past two years has vastly exceeded the work done in a similar period of the State's history and was accomplished with a smaller number of employees than was engaged in a smaller amount of work under the preceding administration.

The entire debt of the State, including the Highway Commission, shows a reduction of \$2,212,583.73 since the convening of the Fifteenth Legislature.

It should be borne in mind that included in these figures is the expenditure of \$5,000,000.00 on general relief.

In considering the condition of the State the cost of State government is a matter which requires your earnest thought. It is apparent that an accurate and intelligent analysis of each type of government is needed, and I have provided this analysis through the Research Division of the Oklahoma Tax Commission. I respectfully refer to your attention Bulletin No. 15, April 20, 1936, on this subject.

The summary of that bulletin points out that the cost of State government in Oklahoma has been materially reduced since 1931. For every dollar our State government cost in 1931 the cost was seventy-three and seventy-three one hundredths (.7373) cents in 1935.

Of the three divisions of government, executive, legislative, and judicial, the executive costs have shown the greatest reduction. I am attaching for your convenience to the printed copy of this message a table showing the expenditure of the Oklahoma State government by years from 1930 to 1936, classified by function of government. These figures are shown by the records and reports of the State Auditor's office.

The cost of government, of course, must be paid by the people, and they have a right to expect good government. However, it is my conviction that few of us take the proper view of taxes; we rarely consider the benefits that come from our tax dollars. When we buy automobiles, pay our pledges to churches, buy necessary food and clothing, purchase admission to shows, and so on, we feel that we get income or benefits from our expenditures. But when we pay taxes we think of them merely as a burden. Seldom do we think that because we pay taxes our children are permitted to attend public schools without tuition fees, we have fire and police protection, we

have free access to publicly maintained streets, highways, and bridges, and that our rights in property are protected in the courts. I wish it might be possible to induce the average taxpayer to keep an accurate account for one year of the amount of money he spends for strictly non-necessities. Then I wish he might place this total alongside his total tax payments. I feel certain that if this comparison were fairly made our tax payments would not be considered a burden. It has been said that good government is costly but that it is worth every dollar it costs, and that generally the masses of the people get more for their tax dollars than they receive for any other dollars they spend. The more I have tested this statement in my own observation and experience the more I think it is true.

In considering the condition in Oklahoma today it should be borne in mind that when the depression began in Oklahoma in 1929 the State was already badly in need of a building program to meet rapidly expanding requirements.

During the depression the State finances were in such shape that there were not sufficient funds available to take care of obsolescence and maintenance. As a result we are faced today with this condition as far as our public buildings are concerned:

First, the buildings already in existence are greatly in need of repair. Second, the requirements existing have greatly increased the need for additional buildings.

Before the depression began the State's population was increasing faster than appropriations for public buildings. During the depression crime increased as a result of economic conditions and this has imposed an additional burden on our penal institutions. For the same economic reasons insanity increased, tuberculosis and other misfortunes also were more prevalent and all these added to the burden of our charitable institutions.

Our educational institutions were no less affected. Each year young men arrived at an age when ordinarily they would find employment there was none to be had, so they stayed in school. The Federal Government through the National Youth Administration paid hundreds of boys and girls to remain in school. The demand, therefore, for education increased with the depression as the facilities for education decreased.

Since the beginning of this administration through the aid of the Federal Government over three and one-half million dollars have been spent on State public buildings. This includes funds from all sources; State appropriations, dormitory bonds, public works administration, and works progress administration.

The technical staff of the Oklahoma State Planning Board has been engaged for more than a year in assembling fundamental data necessary for the establishment of an effective policy for economic rehabilitation. These data are available to the members of your Honorable Body and present in detail the needs of each of the forty-four (44) State institutions as presented to the Oklahoma State Planning Board by the heads of those institutions.

Granting that the building requirements of our institutions must sometimes be met it would be well for the Legislature to keep in mind the fact that Federal aid in such a building program may be secured during the next two years.

I respectfully call your attention to a letter addressed to the State Planning Board by Harold L. Ickes, Chairman of the National Resources Committee, asking the State Planning Board to submit to the National Board a list of our public works requirements; and I call your attention to the report of the State Planning Board made to the Chairman of the National Resources Committee in answer to that request.

One of the most important matters coming before your Honorable Body is that of appropriations for the maintenance of various State institutions and departments. The amount of the appropriations is a matter of policy to be determined by the Legislature. Since an intelligent

determination of this question is impossible without a complete knowledge of the previous costs, the changed conditions such as increased or decreased enrollment and cost of operation of penal and curative institutions, the rise or fall in cost of living, the increase or decrease in revenues and other factors, the recommendation was made to the First Extraordinary Session of the Sixteenth Legislature that your Appropriations Committees be divided into three or more joint sub-committees to visit the penal institutions, hospitals, eleemosynary, and educational institutions. Those committees should soon be in possession of the actual facts regarding each State institution. The recommendations of these committees will I am sure receive your most serious consideration. In this connection, your attention is directed also to the report of the State Planning Board on a public works program for the State of Oklahoma, dated July 14, 1936, and to Oklahoma Tax Commission's Bulletin No. 15, dated April 20, 1936, which will be useful in aiding your Honorable Body to arrive at a proper and intelligent solution of this matter of appropriations.

I have described as briefly as possible the conditions of our State, reserving the right at a future time to call to your attention other conditions which merit your consideration. Relying on the wisdom of your Honorable Body and your desire to meet the conditions outlined with proper legislative measures, my recommendations will be few and general in character.

It should be borne in mind that Oklahoma is one of the richest States in the United States in natural resources in proportion to its population. Agriculture, cattle, and petroleum industries produce from our soil many times the consumptive requirements of our people.

We are the only State in the Southwest which contributed to the Federal Government more in the way of revenue than we received from the Federal Government in expenditures.

I recommend a liberal appropriation to match Federal funds for public works in Oklahoma, particularly for institutional buildings and improvements, highway construction, flood control and prevention of soil erosion.

In my several messages to the First Extraordinary Session of the Sixteenth Legislature recommendations were made that appropriate legislation be enacted on different subjects. Due to the short period of time available for consideration some of these recommendations were not acted upon and I hereby recommend again those subjects for your consideration during the Regular Session.

To provide proper sponsorship for a large public works program I recommend an adequate appropriation for the State Planning Board and the State Conservation Commission, or the Commission succeeding them, should they be consolidated.

It should not be lost sight of that the power and authority now vested in the Conservation Commission is most necessary in carrying on the work of co-operation with the Federal Government in its flood control and soil conservation program.

Proper co-operation with the Federal Government will in a large measure relieve the unemployment situation in the State and lighten our relief load, but it must be borne in mind that we have at this time 55,964 heads of families who are for reasons of age, physical infirmity or ill health classified as unemployables and that these people with their dependents, nearly 200,000, are hopelessly poor and destitute. I recommend adequate appropriation for their relief and care in the next biennium and that a State public works program be developed to provide employment for those not totally disabled.

I call your attention to the fact that the Initiated Act which provides for old age assistance and care of dependent children provided revenue for that purpose only to June, 1937. I recommend that revenue for old age assistance, blind, and dependent children be provided for the

next biennium by your Honorable Body by the enactment of a one per cent sales tax law expressly for that purpose.

Since proper education of our youth is no less important than adequate care for our aged, I recommend that necessary appropriations be made for the support of our schools so that every child in the State may be afforded the advantage of a good education, and I recommend that a sale tax of one per cent be enacted to raise revenues for this express purpose.

For the reason that modern conditions, the high-speed automobiles, and hard surfaced roads have made difficult the apprehension of criminals, I recommend the establishment of a State Police System, modern, well-equipped, and with proper legal authority in connection with law enforcement.

To the end that we may obtain a simplification of the Executive Branch of State Government, I recommend that a revision of the laws creating different departments of government which come under the Chief Executive be made in order that the Chief Executive may have full and complete authority over every department for whose conduct he is responsible.

I further recommend the appointment of a joint committee to study the subject of consolidating the departments under the Chief Executive.

One outstanding problem to be studied and dealt with by your Honorable Bodies is the problem of taxation for the purpose of raising necessary revenues. It is your constitutional duty to raise the necessary revenues. It is my duty to advise and assist you in every way possible in the study of any measure proposed. The Oklahoma Tax Commission has made statistical studies of the revenue measures of this and many other states. All data accumulated by the Tax Commission is available to you and my office will be open to you at all times for consideration of this or any other subject of legislation.

There is no doubt of the great natural wealth of Oklahoma. We can feed and clothe many times the number of our own population. There is no doubt about its great annual income. There can be no doubt but that this Legislature can pass measures which will bring the State the revenue needed and desired by you as indicated by your appropriations.

We have balanced the budget in Oklahoma since the Fifteenth Legislature by reason of its revenue measures and an efficient collecting agency. I know that you and I want to complete the record of our term with a balanced budget; we need not do otherwise.

I advise that by generous appropriations you meet the public welfare needs of our State and by enacting revenue laws you make certain that our expenditures will not exceed our revenues.

Government is not worthy of the name, if having all the natural resources we possess, we cannot take care of our aged, our children, and cannot provide work for our strong and willing when private industry fails to offer employment. Here in Oklahoma we have a chance to organize an economic system that will fulfill this purpose. This is not a Utopian dream but a scientific reality; few other states have ever faced such an opportunity.

We must remember that the general welfare of the State depends upon the welfare of the individuals of the State. A prosperous State requires a prosperous people, and prosperous people must be an industrious people. Let our State take up the problems and burdens of its distressed citizens. Science and invention, labor-saving devices, and greedy corporate ownership have disemployed thousands of our people. No longer is the breadwinner of the family sure to find work for willing hands to do. The fear of unemployment is a constant nightmare, advancing age a thing of terror. Political science must overcome its lag, its lethargy.

Government of the people, for the people, in the interest of general welfare, must assume the duty of providing useful public work at fair wages for its citizens unable to find employment

in private industry. The sovereign State of Oklahoma cannot sit back with folded hands and say, "Let Uncle Sam do it." To be worthy of our sovereignty we must sponsor and participate in all public works projects in Oklahoma.

Gentlemen, I pledge you my utmost co-operation in finding the proper solution for the difficult problems of State ahead of us. My shoulder will be at the wheel with you to make the Sixteenth Legislature the most memorable in Oklahoma history.

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE
STATE OF OKLAHOMA,
E. W. MARLAND.

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.