

State of the State
Governor David Walters
February 7, 1994

I thank the leaders of the Legislature, the members of the Senate and the House, and the members of the Judiciary for being here today to hear my message. I welcome the members of the public who are listening or watching today.

I extend a special thank-you to Senate President Pro Tem Bob Cullison and Speaker Glen Johnson for their hard work and leadership. Together, we have passed and signed a lot of legislation that has made a difference. I am honored to have Vice Chief Justice Robert Lavender and the Justices of the Supreme Court here today as well.

Let me begin introducing the members of my Cabinet, staff and family who are in this chamber today.

To my staff, the most resilient, tenacious and focused group of men and women with whom I have ever had the honor to be associated, my appreciation for all that you have helped me do.

To the most professional and innovative Cabinet ever assembled in Oklahoma history, I am grateful to you for your service to Oklahoma, and I am very proud of your success.

Two of my four brothers are here today, Wayne from Canute who farms, teaches, and is a leader of the OSU alumni, and Tom, a decorated Vietnam War veteran.

My daughters Tanna, Kristen and Elizabeth.

And a woman who has done so much in her own right and has made a difference in the health of children in our state, who has been asked to bear more than she should in the name of public service, the First Lady of Oklahoma, my wife Rhonda.

As I look out at this audience of friends and a few foes, I am humbled to realize that so few have had the opportunity to speak to you in this way and from this position. State of the State speeches are always special, and each of mine has been different, but today's speech is very special for me. Having the privilege of standing before you three other times to share my vision and plans, this State of the State speech is different in that it is my last. While that makes it all the more important to me, I hope it has some meaning to you in that my words may be of more value because I can speak with freedom of someone released from the considerations of political caution.

I will leave here with a great sense of the responsibility that we have in this life and in this democracy to care for those whose lot in life leaves them helpless – children, the poor, the sick, the elderly, the victims. I will leave awed by the power that you possess to make laws and change peoples' lives, millions of lives. But I will also leave realizing the frustrations of bureaucracy and special interests and the ability of those who care more about themselves than our state's future to stop needed changes. I also, of course, will leave with the personal pain of loss and damage that this whole experience has brought to me and my family.

I know it sounds a little unusual, but I hope you can understand when I say that I am both honored and humbled to have had this chance to serve, and at the same time regretful that I ever asked my family to let me pursue my dream of serving as Governor of Oklahoma. The risk can be so high, the price so great, that I hope and pray that somehow our democracy survives the mounting pressures of the modern-day treatment of

our candidates and our public officials. We need good people and we need people of courage and we need people who will risk failure in order to succeed.

Oklahomans would be so pleased if I could somehow show them how many people there are in this chamber and in government who are good and courageous and who only want to do great things for our state. When I leave this office I will regret whatever has happened in these years to add to the public cynicism about what goes on in this government of theirs. While performance alone is not enough, I hope we can reflect on the good things that have happened and draw on them as sources of hope for the next year.

Who would have imaged that so much could be done together?

It's still hard for me to believe that we will successfully complete the five-year plan set out by you in House Bill 1017. You took a risk in passing the plan in 1990, and it must be with great pride that you see this foundation, this beginning of such important improvements in elementary and secondary education, put in place with such steadfast commitment.

Most of you understand how difficult it has been to increase the funding by over 30 percent during this four-year period without a tax increase, particularly since economic growth was less than projected when you determined in 1990 what the price tag for each of the next four years was going to be. Well, the bills arrived, almost \$100 million a year, and we went to work, cut budgets, reallocated funds and fully funded this plan. We believed and we were committed and we were successful. On behalf of the State of Oklahoma, I thank you and those who stood with you but are no longer here – such as Steve Lewis and Henry Bellmon – for taking the risk that allowed us to succeed.

Not all of our education problems are solved. But when I leave this Capitol and go to Hugo, and walk through their modern new elementary school, and watch those kids in Principal Jethelyn Gregory's sunrise program, or when I danced – not very well, I might add – with little Geeaneka Maxey in Tahlequah at Greenwood Elementary School's general assembly and then answer their questions, or when I visit any of the other 30 schools across the state that I have toured – but particularly when I stood in this chamber 13 days ago and for two hours discussed our state's future with young high school leaders whom we had invited from across Oklahoma, I realize that a great good has happened, the kind that few states can match. Few legislatures and governors can claim the progress that has been our privilege to be a part of.

I thank the parents and citizens who helped defeat State Question 639 in 1991. I thank the teachers who marched at the Capitol. I thank Sandy Garrett for her steady leadership; Kyle Dahlem, Babara Smith and all of the leaders of the Oklahoma Education Association; George Singer and Task Force 2000; Terry Almon; and all the teachers, administrators, cooks, maintenance staff, bus drivers and students who have made this success. We are ahead, not behind. We are moving up the list, not down, and we should be very grateful and we should be very proud.

I will recommend that you finish the five-year funding plan for elementary and secondary education with a \$66-million dollar appropriation and that we keep our commitment to reform and improvement of our childrens' schools as strong as that day in April 1990 when you passed House Bill 1017. This funding will bring the total increase during the four years of our time together to \$377 million - \$54 million from the original 1017 tax increases passed in 1990, \$41 million from the local direct funds, and \$282

million from general revenue funds. This has been a piece of work and a good one. Congratulations.

After years of debating whether education improvement or job development should come first, I am pleased that our state launched aggressive efforts simultaneously.

At first this jobs business looked a little grim. As you recall, I asked for a special session the first day I took office, and we passed the incentives for United Airlines and McDonnell-Douglas. After thousands of hours of work, including my waltzing into the United chairman's office in Chicago uninvited to make our case when they initially refused to see us, both prospects melted away.

The job and economic numbers in 1991 were not great. Oklahoma had at least nine bank failures a year, retail sales were stagnant, bankruptcies were near the 4,000 mark and construction was flat.

It began slowly and then with more force. Weaknesses were identified, programs and bills were developed, and with your help and leadership we started licking this problem. Tyson Foods said that corporate farming laws kept them from investing in Oklahoma, and so you passed Senate Bill 518.

I didn't know when I signed that bill – and I don't think that Senator Ed Long and Don Williams and Representatives Jim Glover and Fred Stanley knew when they authored the bill – what was to come: an avalanche of food processing plants that thrust Oklahoma into the No. 2 spot in the country, second only to California in the number of new food processing plants opened in the United States. New jobs for Holdenville, Heavener, Altus, and Ponca City . . . and the great pig deal in Guymon – 1,400 jobs in a town of 8,500 people.

I will never forget standing in Heavener at a dedication to bring 450 new jobs to that community. Representative Jim Hamilton, the Commerce Department and all of us had worked really hard on this company. Representative Mike Mass stood and pointed to the children in the band who had just played a great rendition of "Oklahoma!" and then he pointed to the beautiful hills surrounding Heavener. He said, "What this is all about is allowing those kids to enjoy that view for the rest of their lives," and then he sat down.

No amount of rural development programs and policies could ever say it better.

Having tasted success, we all cut loose – workers' comp reform, the capital access program, the manufacturers alliance, recently recognized by the White House with a \$2.7-million dollar grant to fully expand the program, were all passed. We closed two international trade offices and opened new ones in Mexico and Western Europe, redirected how all six offices did their work and up went international trade – twice the growth rate of the national average.

We organized the rural summit and then followed it with the AG 2000 working group. Another workers' comp bill passed, and it wiped out any increase in rates last year. Do you know how many states can make that claim? Tax increases were avoided and then the Quality Jobs bill was passed.

So there I sat with Mayor Susan Savage and Clyde Cole of the Tulsa Chamber in Dallas on December 10, 1993 competing with Texas to move the operations division of Central and South West Corp. to Tulsa. Six-hundred solid, high paying, great jobs. We have done this dozens of times, but I tell you this because Dallas was tough and Ann Richards was personally involved and we blew them away.

Quality Jobs is so powerful that when combined with all the other tools you have now given us, it is impossible to ignore us and pretty difficult to beat us. Already, in just nine months, we have signed 27 deals for 7,000 jobs and many other negotiations are under way. Thank you Greg Main, Senator Ted Fisher, Representative Don McCorkell and the dozens of others who made that happen.

Not all of our economic development problems have been solved, but 13,700 new jobs last year – a seven-year record – was not peanuts. Oklahoma jumped from 45th to 25th in the nation in new job creation, and 17,000 new jobs are projected for this year. More than 1,000 new jobs are now being created every month. Oklahoma wage and salary employment for 1993 will finish at its highest level since 1982, the year the boom went bust.

Our job gain since 1987 is in the neighborhood of 110,000. Our wage and salary employment growth from 1987 to 1992 is 50 percent above the national average. Bankruptcies in 1993 were down more than 15 percent from 1992 and are at their lowest levels since 1985 or 1986. The Oklahoma General Business Index stands at levels not recorded since 1982.

A \$50-billion economy in 1988 has now passed the \$71-billion mark. I had to smile when I read a report in the Wall Street Journal that there were 43 bank failures last year – and not one, not a single one in Oklahoma. I'm here to tell you this state is back, we are back strong and we ain't playing second fiddle to anyone.

Yes, I will ask you to pass yet another workers' comp bill this year and yes, I will ask for another job-incentive package called Saving Quality Jobs. The comp bill will reduce the rates for businesses in Oklahoma – that's right, reduce the rates. Do you know how many other states are going to compete for jobs next year with a workers' compensation insurance rate reduction in their back pocket? None of them. The incentive bill will help us keep good companies in Oklahoma while we are seeking expansions and new businesses. I'm not going to be around to enjoy the full success of this one but do the next governor a favor and give them the same boost you have given me.

I have had the privilege of campaigning on five state questions in the last three years. In three of them my position won and in two my position lost. I have one more to go. Next to retaining House Bill 1017 there was not a finer moment than when the public – with your help – decided to break the 25-year drought on investing in education facilities and equipment.

We passed \$350-million higher education bond issue, and the results are impressive. On every college campus there is either fresh dirt being turned for new construction, or needed renovations being made, or better equipment being installed. The biggest expansion of veterans' facilities in our state's history and critical improvements to our tourism infrastructure and critically needed improvements to this Capitol are finally under way.

When a review team visited Oklahoma to decide whether to give us a Robert Woods Johnson Foundation grant for our health care reform efforts – which we ultimately beat out 30 other states to get – our Oklahoma Family Choice health care proposal was analyzed. This review team, comprised of former governors and distinguished national health care leaders, called our plan, which features individual health care accounts, “the boldest plan in America.”

When a national business magazine reviewed our pay incentive plan, which has resulted in the first sustained decline in state government employment in modern history and has saved \$100 million, they called it innovative and named it “The Oklahoma Carrot.” When U.S. News and World Report ranked Oklahoma in 1992 as No. 1 among states in improved economic activity, we all beamed.

These are points of progress and we should put partisanship aside long enough to understand how they happened and why.

We love being first. We have being last. All of us enjoy seeing this state on the top of the lists and that’s why we have worked so hard together and have come so far together.

Now, I understand the incumbents are paid to be positive and challengers are paid to be negative, but surely just for a moment all of us can be Oklahomans and acknowledge our progress and feel a little proud of what we have done. Maybe by celebrating our progress, Republican and Democrat, urban and rural, we can summon the strength to better attack our problems instead of attacking one another.

Why is it necessary to only focus on our weaknesses and shortcomings? Of course, this state has its share of challenges – I’ve talked about them from one end of the state to the other. But I also revel in our accomplishments and this state’s strength, and I hope that I exude the confidence that I feel in our ability to make things happen.

It is so frustrating to hear those who say there isn’t a thing we can do except raise or cut budgets, reduce services and go home. It’s so frustrating to hear the naysayers claim that performance does not count nearly as much as the outcomes of sensationalized conflicts. That is completely inconsistent with what we know it possible, and I hope you will reject this cynicism and help us make, mold and build Oklahoma into the best state in the nation.

In this spirit, we need to attach crime and believe that we can make a difference. If you don’t believe we can make a difference, please don’t try to impede those of us who think we can. Representative Loyd Benson has a fine juvenile reform proposal. Senator Sam Helton has a children and guns bill, Senate Bill 855. Representative Gary Bastin has a good Youthful Offender Act, House Bill 2265. I have announced a plan for a dramatic expansion of prison capacity and a substantial increase in rehabilitation and training programs. The problem is clear and the solutions are many, and I won’t labor through the details but I will tell you this – all the money and all the cells and all the social workers and prison guards and bills and judicial reform in the world won’t do a lick of good if we don’t come together, in our communities and in our neighborhoods, to reject violence adamantly and convincingly.

This is a community problem. This is a cultural problem. Our citizens in their communities aren’t repulsed by violence like they once were. It frightens us, not so much its frequency as its randomness, and it makes us angry and we complain for someone to do something. But individually we are not doing enough.

It’s up to you – the citizens, the elderly, the kids, the nurses, the mothers, the engineers. Everyone has to help tackle this problem. In the past five years, the homicide rate among young men ages 15 to 24 has jumped 40 percent. That’s 32 out of every 100,000. Break that out by race and it’s 17 for white and 159 for African-American males. There is a domestic crime in this country every 15 seconds, and in Oklahoma a violent crime is committed every 26 minutes.

The hard reality is that we know the problem and we know where it is, and yet it is so pervasive that a democratic government cannot solve it alone. Our children today see an average of 8,000 acts of violence on television before they get out of grade school. Our kids are frequently so brutalized that they are incapable of compassion or remorse. We know where the problem is, and we know we can't lock everyone up.

As of this morning, we have 45,324 Oklahomans under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. We lead the nation in many categories, including the number of women incarcerated. Ladies and gentlemen, this is 1.5 percent of our population! Do you feel any safer now than when we used to lock up only 1 percent of our population?

You have to solve this problem. Not you as legislators, but you (pointing to the gallery) and you (pointing to the cameras). We have to make our communities mean something again. The elderly have to know the habits of the neighborhood kids. We have to rekindle a spirit of caring that moves beyond shunning violent behavior by hiding from it. If violence and drugs and gangs become the substitute in our communities for family and work and education, then there isn't a thing we can do in this chamber to save this state or this great nation.

We have to adopt our schools, we must go to our schools and volunteer and help and show to show our children that we care about them and that there is hope for them.

Jack White, Secretary of Finance and Revenue, like many of our Cabinet officers, has volunteered during the last two years by tutoring a young man by the name of Calvin Hogg at Polk Elementary School. Before Jack showed up, this young man was introverted, had difficulty in communicating and had a difficult family situation. Jack noted an interest in art and asked Betty Price at the State Arts Council if she could help. Betty told Jack of a person in our artist-in-residence program who paid some attention to Calvin. His teachers now note a marked improvement – he is writing and even drawing and I bet his life is going to be better.

Calvin is in the gallery today as one of my guests. I don't know what impact Jack and Betty and the artist had on this young man, but I bet they have made a difference in his life. Jack, would you and Calvin stand and be recognized?

Crime watches, neighborhood alliances, mentoring programs and school support are all excellent programs, but we don't have enough of you involved. Since moving into the Governor's Mansion from our home in the Putnam Heights neighborhood in Oklahoma City, I have really missed the Fourth of July picnics, the monthly neighborhood meetings and the evening walks where we knew our neighbors by name. I have been remiss in my new neighborhood in not getting out and learning about others in the area and offering to be of help where I can. We all can do more of this and that is what it is going to take.

The state can help, but it can't do it all. I call on all Oklahomans to volunteer to join a new project that we will call United Oklahoma Neighborhoods. Be a block captain to help us begin to build the biggest grassroots organization in the country to finally stop crime, particularly among our children.

We have done it before. We have changed our collective view of drunk driving and we have reformed our views on smoking. When airline hijackings suddenly threatened our nation's air transportation system, it didn't take long to secure our airports. Why can't we, then, secure our neighborhoods and secure our sanctuaries of learning, our schools?

When I first walked into my daughter's school and saw metal detectors, a chill went up my spine. We were overcome with terror the afternoon that bullets from a drive-by shooting traveled the length of the school hallway just as my daughter, Tanna, was stepping out of a classroom. This has to stop. We'll spend the money, we'll build the prisons and we'll pass the laws, but ultimately the solution is up to each and everyone of us.

You provided us with a Department of Volunteerism in 1992. Let's use it. Let's launch the largest volunteer community and school support project in the history of this nation, United Oklahoma Neighborhoods. I'm going to go to churches and community organizations to enlist block captains. I ask each of you, as legislators, to help organize your communities, and I ask everyone who hears or reads of this to help.

I don't know if this will work but I do know that we have to try.

I ask companies, institutions and all Oklahoma organizations to help us. Give your employees one hour a week to volunteer in organizations to help our youth. To set the example, I ask you, the Legislature, to authorize all state employees to take one hour a week from their jobs to work in youth volunteer organizations. Let us set forth this challenge, and I am confident the private sector will follow suit. The Department of Volunteerism will provide information and guidance to those employees looking for the most worthwhile youth programs.

If we organize our communities and pass many of the plans that have been outlined prior to today, I believe that we will succeed.

I want you to meet some special people that I invited to join us here today to help show some of the people behind the words of our various proposals.

Trooper Greg Williams is 26 years old. He is married and lives in Wynnewood, where he has a house payment, a car payment and two young daughters. He holds a degree in law enforcement administration from the University of Oklahoma, and every day he gets up and proudly puts on the uniform and badge 385 of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

After three years of service following the most rigorous training of any Oklahoma law enforcement organization, there is still that unknown as to what he will face as he protects us. Facing danger so that we do not – every day. Trooper Williams, if you would stand so we can show you our appreciation.

He just got his W-2, and last year, for all his efforts, we paid him \$20,806.40. Almost everyone else in this building – and throughout state government, for that matter – is paid more. This is not right and we have to fix it this year. Please approve my requested pay raise for the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

Katie Cothran is the grandmother of a 14-year-old girl who has been terrorized by a juvenile offender. Rape, knifing, break-ins have been repeated and have left this family resigned to carrying weapons and trying to prepare themselves to use them. The juvenile is a product of the most confused juvenile justice program in the country – ours. Please pass the Youthful Offender Act and the plan to increase secure beds. Please disarm our youth and give us the resources we need to rehabilitate this juvenile. But most of all, please help us to allow Katie Cothran and her granddaughter to find peace and to rediscover what it is like not to live in constant fear.

I would like to share one other thought about crime. I know how popular it is to pound the podium this year and say “three strikes and you’re out.” You know it must be great politics when even Governor Mario Cuomo, Thomas Grasso’s great protector, suddenly talks tough and endorses this plan. But I don’t have to prove my toughness. I have carried out the death penalty and I’ve support law enforcement. My request to you is that we let reason and not rhetoric drive our policy decisions.

This is too important to play politics with. Everyone wants to be tough on crime – Republicans and Democrats – but how many really want to get serious about it? Attorney General Janet Reno told me a week ago in the White House that the certainty of punishment is more important than the length. I suspect that Representative Dwayne Steidley’s bill to establish truth-in-sentencing will do a lot more to seriously address this problem than all the “three strikes” proposals put together. Please pass his bill and lets get serious about crime and punishment.

When I took office, the clamor was great to dismantle the Department of Human Services, a \$2-billion dollar agency that employed more than 13,700 people. Last year, I said that was exactly what we were going to do, and we did. A phased plan to separate Medicaid from the department was passed last year, as well as the separation of the University Hospitals and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. These boards are appointed and operating and oversight has been increased. This year, if we pull Juvenile Services out like I and others have recommended, DHS will be less than 40 percent of the size it was when I took office. Dismantling complete.

This, however, is not enough. As the President said during his State of the Union address two weeks ago, “Even as we say no to crime, we must give our people something to say yes to.” If giving people opportunity and hope is our mission, we cannot do it through a welfare system that is broken and does a miserable job for people who really need help.

This is no small deal. In fact, the numbers are staggering and they’re growing for reasons unrelated to economic conditions. Consider this: 146,065 people involved in the families on AFDC and 372,000 people in the families receiving food stamps. Those numbers make the 6,391 folks whom we moved off of welfare into jobs last year seem almost insignificant.

Does more than 10 percent of our population really have to have food stamps? Does almost 5 percent of our population require cash payments – not counting Medicaid, energy grants, day care or other programs? As I have traveled the state, I have dropped in on numerous DHS county offices. I do two things. I ask them to show me the paperwork involved in their caseload and seek their ideas on how to reduce the bureaucratic burden. Then I ask these workers and supervisors to tell me confidentially how many people they serve really desperately need the benefits and how many have figured out how to work the system.

Do you know what they have told me? Forty percent on the average are working the system. These are not the estimates of right-wing nuts, or members of the wealthy elite who want to dismiss the poor. These are opinions of caring, hardworking souls who are in the trenches every day.

Increasing case loads and paperwork have created a spiral where less and less time can be spent checking and verifying eligibility, and so more and more recipients, some deservedly and some not, are added to the rolls.

Walk through one of these county offices – piles of paper that you can't see over, workers sharing phones and antiquated computers the link back to some massive mainframe computer that slows progress down more than it helps. It makes me sick to see the kind of money that we are wasting when it could be used to help those who really need help turn their lives around. It makes the public angry, and if we don't do something about it, it's going to make elected officials very temporary.

It is time to put a limit on cash benefits and begin to concentrate our efforts on those programs that help people go back to work.

This means assistance with child care, health care, and education and job training before and after they get employed, not taken away if they get a job. We have some of the best ideas in the country at work here in Oklahoma, but we are having a hard time expanding the programs so that they can impact large numbers of people.

Take, for example, IndEx Inc. in Tulsa. This program, which I described last week to the President and the nation's Governors, has formed a non-profit organization that contracts with private industry to employ welfare mothers who continue to receive their benefits for six months. Their wage earnings from their work in the morning pay for their education in the afternoon.

Without spending a dime of new money, this program gives individuals both work experience and an education.

I want you to meet Joetta Williams. She was another faceless statistic, one of the thousands of Oklahomans trapped in an out-dated, ineffective welfare system. For years she tried to get her GED while raising her two children, but something always happened. Nothing seemed to work.

But today Joetta is working. And it all started last February when she contacted DHS in Tulsa and was directed to IndEx Inc. For 42 weeks, she spent four hours a day wrapping fishing rods by hand, and for another four hours she took academic and skills training classes. Her children were taken care of at the local YWCA, and she was given bus tokens when she needed them. When she finished the program, she was hired full-time by Zebco.

Today, Joetta is a working, skilled, contributing member of society who feels the dignity of work and the thrill of receiving a paycheck.

Congratulations and best wishes to you, Joetta.

People tell me that we cannot limit benefits and direct the savings to child care, health care, and training because we cannot guarantee a job at the end of the limit. If, after two years of support, an able-bodied person who has been offered training and education and child care and health care programs and job placement services still does not have a job, then I submit that motivation, not ability, is keeping that person out of the work force.

If we make a guaranteed job a precondition to limiting welfare benefits, then we have said, in effect, that we are not serious about changing our welfare system. This should be a social contract, an agreement of mutual responsibility, a helping hand. If, after all of this the person, for whatever reason, does not have a job, then our support becomes the handout that holds people back. This is a disservice to the people we try to help and to the taxpayers who pay the tab.

The certainty that cash support will be cut off for able-bodied people will do more to reform welfare dependency than anything else we can do.

In addition to time limited benefits tied to expanded education and training, I have asked the Human Services Commission to concentrate on teenage pregnancy, which is driving our case load increases. I have asked the OSBI to become involved in a new task force to go after child support enforcement, and I have asked for a major initiative in work place technology to allow our social workers to meet their increasing responsibilities by easing the outrageous burden of paperwork.

Still, we have to do more and we will. Five days ago, the new federal waiver that we sought a year ago, was implemented so that we can now tie AFDC benefits to school attendance in Tulsa and Ardmore. A family cap on benefits needs to continue to be considered. Pregnant teenagers should not be allowed to move out of their parents' home to collect benefits. Paternity checks need to be made part of prenatal care, and young men need to be held responsible for their decisions.

At the same time, DHS needs to be able to cancel professional licenses issued by the state to those who don't take care of their kids, drivers licenses need to be pulled and credit card and labor records need to be opened up so we can get serious about child support enforcement. "Smart cards" should be used to provide benefits electronically. These changes and more can make our system efficient and worthwhile.

Oklahomans are compassionate people until we start spending their money on values that are inconsistent with theirs. Work and initiative and families need to be rewarded, not punished – that's all our citizens are saying. We have studied this to death. My administration alone has completed two comprehensive welfare reform studies. Now it is time to act.

As together we develop the specifics of the welfare reform package, let's be guided by the independence and the respect that Joetta Williams has achieved.

So you see, we have come a long way together but we have many more miles to go. What we have done and what we will do is meaningful and honorable – something to be proud of, and something for future generations to build on.

A young person asked me recently about the glamour and the power of politics and how do they get involved. I found myself trying so hard to give them a touch of reality, and a sense that the reason has to be better and stronger than that. You know what it takes, you know how hard it is to stay here. You know that if you really do your job a slow alienation sets in so that it is harder and harder to get 50 percent plus 1. The people you generally help generally forget, and the people you specifically hurt specifically remember. You ask for votes, you ask for contributions, you ask people to help make phone calls. "This isn't glamorous," I said, "this is humbling!" This is about humility of service rather than a quest for power.

In my own case, some may think I enjoy conflict. I do not. I hope you won't confuse my tenacity with a desire for a fight. I hate being controversial, I hate seeing the things that are said about me and occasionally my family. It is true that on a particularly bad morning I have rolled my paper around with a stick trying to decide whether to take the rubber band off. But I chose dramatic change, not tinkering around at the margins. I said I would make decisions like a one-term governor, and I have. I apologize to the bureaucrats and to the special interests because this has not been business as usual. I said change and I meant it. I offered a positive plan for the future and we achieved much of it.

Thomas Jefferson said that the true public servant builds up political capital so he can use it up doing what is right. My own interpretation of this is that the true public servants are the ones who have the courage to risk failure in order to bring success to those they serve.

Often that means risking failure that is very public and even failure that can result in public ridicule, the most painful kind. Well, I have taken the risk, I have faced the fire, and sometimes I have failed, but more often you and I and Oklahoma have succeeded.

I wish you Godspeed this year in your work as you risk failure so that all Oklahomans might see success.

Upon motion of Senator Roberts, the Joint Session was ordered dissolved at the hour of 1:30 p.m.

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.