

State of the State
Governor David Boren
January 14, 1975

Governor Nigh
Senator Howard
Speaker Willis
Member of the 35th Legislature

A few weeks ago I predicted that the spirit of cooperation between the legislature and the office of the Governor would be the strongest in state history. I made that prediction for several reasons. I have served with many of you and I know that you are committed to building a better Oklahoma. I have also met with the new members and I know that you come to public service with dreams and hopes of making a lasting contribution to our people. I have counselled with the leaders of each house. I am proud to serve with Speaker Bill Willis. Through his quiet, unselfish leadership he has set a tone of statesmanship for all of us to follow. In Senate President Pro-Tempore Gene Howard, the Senate has a leader of integrity and ability. He has constantly been an innovator, on the cutting edge of constructive change.

In my inaugural address yesterday I made it clear that I am personally ready to assume full responsibility for my acts as Governor. I will accept the saying of Harry Truman that as far as the executive branch of government is concerned, the buck stops with me. Let every one of us resolve to have but one guide to our actions in this capitol building, to do what each of us in his conscience believe is best for Oklahoma.

The people of Oklahoma this year turned out to vote in greater percentages than any other state in the Union.

They have sent us a message. They care and care deeply about our state and nation and where it is headed. We must not let them down. I extend my hand to you. Let us work as a team. Our citizens are first in the nation in showing concern by voting. We will not stop until our state stands first as a model of excellence among all of the states of the Union.

Tonight I ask that you and I join together to declare war on waste, inefficiency, and dishonesty in government.

Already you have acted by passing new rules to make our legislature among the most open in the nation. You have brought all of your major actions into the light of day. You have taken the greatest single step in the history of our state to protect the people's right to know. I applaud you for your faith in the people. Your blow against secrecy is a blow against corruption, for secrecy is the closest ally of corruption.

As we have declared war on corruption and secrecy, let us declare war on waste and efficiency. Today more than 40 cents of every dollar earned is paid in taxes and the

percentage going to taxes continues to climb. For every government employee there are only five taxpayers. The growth of government is out of control. In Oklahoma we have burdened the taxpayers by adding between four and five more people to the state payroll every day for the past 10 years. No governor and no legislature in modern times have finished their term without huge increases in the number of government employees. Some say that this trend cannot be stopped. I say it must be stopped. I ask you to join with me and take this pledge, "Oklahoma will be the first state in the nation in 1975 to hold the line. We will finish the year with no more state employees than when we started." Let us send a message to our taxpayers, to other states, and indeed to Congress itself, that Oklahoma has public officials who are thinking of the taxpayers for a change.

For the first time in state history I have in the recommended appropriations bills set a limit on the number of employees for each agency. A bill to be introduced by Senator Funston fixes a limit on all agencies to which we make no direct appropriation. It also creates a board composed of the Governor, the leaders of both houses and the state directors of finance and personnel to grant temporary exceptions to agencies under emergency conditions.

I ask you to support these limitations which will help make it possible to provide for cost of living raises for our good state employees. The budget recommends the largest increases for those who are at the bottom of the pay scale who need it most. I also support the bill by Representatives Townsend and Miskelly to give increased retirement benefits to our state employees who are already retired. They have been hit hard by inflation.

Let us declare war on bureaucratic red tape and duplication. The taxpayers of Oklahoma are fed up with a disorganized bureaucratic maze of almost 250 boards, agencies, and commissions. You and I both know that the present wasteful maze of agencies cannot be properly administered or effectively watched and checked by you. I urge you to support a set of legislative proposals to bring order to this chaos and relief to the taxpayers. The first is the reorganization bill to be introduced by Senator Luton and Representative Craighead to empower a joint citizens and legislative commission to bring about a streamlining of all statutory boards and agencies subject to legislative veto. The second is a bill by Senator Howard and Speaker Willis to create a management analysis division of the state budget office. This highly qualified team will do efficiency studies and compare costs and benefits of programs so that you and I can uncover more areas where we can save money.

I urge the passage of a bill to be authored by Representative Miskelly to create a single agency to coordinate all of the federal grant programs for economic development and opportunity. It will stop the present wasteful duplication between these agencies.

I urge the passage of the bill by Senator Howell and Representative Cotner to consolidate state computer services. In the long run it will save the taxpayers millions of dollars.

I urge the passage of the bill by Senator Howard and Representative Nance to transfer key functions of the labor commissioner to the Corporation Commission to insure that these details will be effectively discharged.

I urge passage of a bill to make more efficient uses of the Tuberculosis Sanitorium at Talihina by transforming it into a needed state veterans hospital facility.

To assure that we get the most interest on the taxpayer's money deposited in banks and to obtain fair and impartial distribution of state deposits, I endorse the provisions of Senate Bill 516 introduced last year to be refiled this year. It reconstitutes the state depository board to make certain that we do not have any one individual with full control over millions of dollars of the people's money. I support passage of a resolution urging Congress to take similar action to protect our deposits as federal taxpayers.

We cannot be faithful to the taxpayers or to those people in need in our state if we neglect another area. We must declare war on welfare abuse in Oklahoma. It is high time that those who can work be made to work for any check which they draw from the state. We must stop welfare waste which steals from the elderly and disabled and gives to those who can help themselves. I suggest four immediate changes in our welfare program. I am proud to say that these proposals have the support of one of Oklahoma's most able administrators, our welfare director Lloyd Rader.

First, let us give more help to those who truly need it by passing the resolution to be offered by Representative Sparkman and others to immediately increase the old age pensions by \$5 per month. Second, I urge you pass the resolution to be introduced by Senator Martin and others to establish a program which will provide \$9 million in prescription drugs to the elderly through local drug stores with two-thirds of the cost to be borne by the federal government.

Third, I urge the passage of three bills to put able-bodied welfare recipients to work. These bills together will require that all parents who apply for aid to dependent children must actively seek work through the local employment office to qualify for benefits. Fathers who desert their children and force them onto the welfare roles will be sought out and prosecuted. This bill will be authored by Representative Morgan and Senator Garrett.

These irresponsible fathers will be given a mandatory jail term if they refuse to support their families. If they are unable to obtain a job they will be given a chance to earn money through a pilot work program with projects administered through state, county, and city governments.

Fourth, for the first time in state history the welfare department will account for the use of earmarked funds through a presentation of its budget to the legislature. In addition under a bill to be filed the department will transfer to the general fund \$5.4 million of sales tax revenue.

This is an important first step in greater legislative control and scrutiny of earmarked funds. Let us resolve the make our welfare program a model to the nation.

As we week to create a model welfare system, let us also make certain that our priorities for spending are sound.

The budget before you if frugal and it addresses priority needs.

It provides for a record-breaking commitment to excellence in education. I recommend an increase of \$30,812,000 for common schools and vocational-technical education. This recommendation will provide funds for flexible use by local school boards and will fully fund a cost of living increase for our teachers of \$600. It recognizes the special needs of higher education where we now rank at the very bottom of the states in support for students. My budget calls for \$20,000,000 in new operating funds for higher education.

It recognizes the dire need for improved medical services for all Oklahomans with a combined increase for University Hospital, the two branches of the O.U. Health Sciences Center and the rural medical scholarship program of approximately \$6 million. For once the state should fully fund the medical education needs of Oklahoma. I have conferred with the State Regents about this and the recommended figure in the budget is sufficient to underwrite the program. It increases the Health Sciences Center appropriation by 30.6 per cent. It is my recommendation that the State Regents give high priority to this budget and fund fully the needs of the Health Sciences Center. I also urge that we double the funds for rural medical scholarships and set aside approximately \$325,000 to create more residency programs for family doctors spread out across the state. Our state has a grave doctor shortage in the rural areas. Only 10 percent of our doctors are located in rural areas where 40 per cent of our people live. The budget provides further help in the improvement of primary health care by providing adequate funding of the Osteopathic Hospital at Tulsa. I will also direct that emergency medical services be improved in all geographical parts of the state. I will use available federal highway safety funds under the control of the Governor's office to support the training of ambulance crews and to obtain radios and monitoring equipment for emergency vehicles. Regardless of where they live, all Oklahomans should be within minutes of adequate health care.

My budget sets a high priority on reducing crime in Oklahoma. It provides significant raises for our highway patrol troopers, who are among the finest in the nation. Oklahomans appreciate the risks which these men take for us and we do not want them to continue to be the lowest paid in our region.

The budget provides for immediate improvements in our corrections system. Politics, incompetence and outright corruption have far too long been the trademarks of our corrections system. We must not waste the taxpayer's money by rebuilding large institutions which lump together the violent and non-violent, the first offender and the hardened criminal. The taxpayers don't want to finance schools for crime. My budget

meets two pressing needs. First, we now have no secure place to house the most violent and dangerous of our inmates. I have recommended capital funds to begin construction at McAlester of a maximum security unit for 300 prisoners using present buildings. We will not waste tax monies on new buildings when old buildings can be remodeled and used.

Second, we must develop an effective classification system so that first offenders and non-violent offenders are not mixed with hardened criminals. We must begin immediately to develop a diagnostic center to be located at Norman.

On the long run an effective corrections system will require more than new buildings. It will demand a new approach – more professional with higher levels of competence. We must cut the number of those who threaten our safety and repeat crimes and instead transform inmates into productive taxpayers when they come out. To help us better train inmates to become productive taxpayers, I propose the establishment of a statewide school district for our corrections system. A bill to create this district will be introduced by Senator Cate and Representative Visanio Johnson.

Finally my budget, is an honest budget. It says openly and plainly how the people's money is spent. I have asked for a supplemental appropriation to run the Governor's office. In the past, employees of the Governor's office have been hidden on the payrolls of other agencies while we have pretended to operate the office on about one-third of its real cost. I have pared its cost to the bone and put them out in the open for all to see. The budget of the Governor's office will match the candor of the legislature in living up to the people's right to know.

In the beginning I said that it was high time that we consider the taxpayers for a change. As I have worked on this budget I have struggled to meet our pressing needs at the lowest possible cost. As every citizen has to struggle with the family budget because of inflation, I have also had to struggle. Just as your grocery bill has gone up, so has the price of everything the state must buy from gasoline and road oil to paper and hospital linens. Inflation forces us to spend more than we did last year.

In the final analysis, this budget is a taxpayers budget. It holds the line so that you can become the first legislature in many years to make a major return of money to the taxpayers themselves. It is just a beginning. If you enact programs like those for executive reorganization, management analysis, computer centralization, welfare reform, and many others, we can continue to return money to the hard-pressed taxpayers.

I urge you to immediately pass the inheritance tax reform bill offered by Senators Smith, Holden, and Murphy and Representatives Rogers, Henry, and many others in both houses. It would completely end the Oklahoma inheritance tax between husband and wife. For years under Oklahoma tax law the women of this state have been told that their contributions as wives and mothers were of no value and they were taxed on what they helped to build up. Let us stop this injustice. I urge you to pass this bill so that it can be signed into law by the end of this month.

There is another issue before you which effects the women of our state. I support all equality for all citizens under the law. For that reason I favor ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

In the last election the people spoke loudly in favor of an end to double income taxation. Let us make a start this year. I strongly support the bill to be offered by one of our state's soundest budgetary analysts, Senator Ed Berrong. The bill provides that for both individuals and corporations the federal income tax deduction will be fully restored on the first \$600 of federal taxes paid. This completely ends double income taxation this year for almost half of our taxpayers. For the 300,000 in the lower brackets there will be a complete end to a tax on a tax.

In addition the bill provides that for individuals 15 per cent of the deduction will be restored for amounts of federal taxes paid above \$600. All in all, it is the first step toward complete removal of a tax on a tax – state taxes on what we pay in federal taxes and never even get to see or use. It will provide almost \$21 million in permanent income tax relief which will touch every taxpayer. It is not a one shot proposition, here this year and gone the next. It is a sound and healthy program. It will help force us to do in the long run what we should do – run state government efficiently and less expensively.

Tonight I ask you to take swift and decisive action to attack the forces which are steadily eroding the strength of our state and nation – runaway growth of government, inefficiency, waste, and red tape.

The people of Oklahoma have their eyes on each one of us.

Never have hopes been higher.

Never has the need for honest and efficient government been greater.

Join me in saying to them tonight, “We will do our best. We will not fail you.”

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.