

**State of the State  
Governor David Boren  
January 6, 1976**

**"The Different Road. . ."**

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

As we begin our second year of work together, I want to first thank you for the spirit of cooperation which has prevailed.

After this first year I can say with even greater understanding that progress can only be made when the Governor and the Legislature work together in a spirit of cooperation.

We can see all around us, at the national level and in other states, the paralysis which results when the branches of government fail to work together for the common good. No one person has all the right answers. We have worked together as a team, not always agreeing, but always listening to each other with respect, and working toward the same positive goals.

Two outstanding leaders deserve particular credit for this achievement. I have constantly sought their advice and counsel. Their advice has always been thoughtful and based on honest conviction. The impact of the positive leadership of Speaker Bill Willis and President Pro Tempore Gene Howard will be felt for many years.

This spirit of cooperation and leadership has resulted in a year of achievement in which Oklahomans can take pride. The accomplishments are many: record funding for education including an expansion of special education classes and an innovative program of elementary counseling; new programs for medical education designed to meet the needs of Our state; welfare reforms which have increased benefits to the truly needy while at the same time requiring those able to work to actively seek a job; and a master plan for corrections to put a failing system back on track.

This past year we have worked together to bring sound management and fiscal responsibility to state government. Oklahoma has been an example of fiscal sanity by placing limits on the numbers of state employees, having a balanced budget, reducing taxes, setting aside a reserve fund and paying off some of our debts early. Last July 22 the people, by a solid majority, voiced their support by strengthening the budget balancing amendment.

Increased openness has helped restore public confidence in state government. I urge the continued increase in accountability of public officials and therefore support the

bill by Senator Lambert and Representative Elder to strengthen the state open meeting law.

In 1975 while other states and our federal government took the road of overspending and financial irresponsibility, we in Oklahoma chose a different road. Robert Frost once wrote:

*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I ...  
I took the one less traveled by,  
and that has made all the difference. "*

In 1976 Oklahoma must not choose the road of financial insanity as others have done, but instead, as Frost suggests, continue to follow the road less traveled by. I could catalog city after city and state after state that face financial collapse, deficits, and layoffs of employees all because they built their operating budgets higher than they could sustain on a recurring basis. We must not let this happen in Oklahoma.

This fall the state treasurer, the attorney general, and I transferred \$80 million in surplus funds to the state sinking fund in accordance with Article 10 Section 23A of the state constitution. It is my sincere belief that it was our constitutional duty to make such a transfer. The transfer was done in a way to give maximum benefit to the state. We did not payoff 4% bonds with 7% money. Instead, we put aside the funds to guarantee payment of our debts and continue to earn extra interest on the money until the bonds come due. By doing so, almost \$6 million of cigarette tax revenue each year from now on will be available for priority needs like education. We have translated an unpredictable surplus into funds which can be safely used for recurring items.

Above all, we must never make the mistake in Oklahoma of building into recurring operating budgets money which may not come in again next year. No one can say with certainty that our state revenues will continue to grow at a pace sufficient to allow us to build the so-called surplus into our operating budget. The President's signature of the energy bill alone will cost Oklahoma many millions of dollars in revenue this year.

Oklahoma must stay on the road of fiscal responsibility. Two measures adopted last year need to be re-enacted this year. The first will allow a continuing transfer of sales tax revenues to the general fund. By expressing the figure as a percentage instead of a dollar figure, we can avoid the need for a bill each year. I urge passage of the bill to be introduced by Speaker Willis and Senator Howard to transfer three and one-half percent of the sales tax collections to the general fund. This bill, which has the support of our welfare director Lloyd Rader, will help assure continued use of sales tax dollars for pressing needs. Greater accountability in the spending of sales tax dollars is also assured this year by the inclusion of the welfare department budget in the executive budget presented to you.

Last year, employee limits in most appropriation bills and the passage of Senate Bill 205 by Senator Funston and Representative Riggs set up a system for controlling the number of fulltime state employees. More important, for the first time it set up a

structure which forces state agency heads to carefully evaluate the need for new programs before starting them. I urge re-enactment of the bill by same authors this year which will not only continue the present system but will strengthen it. We need to take firm action to halt back-door pay raises not authorized by the legislature. While the legislature approved cost of living increases for state employees averaging about 7%, an analysis of actual figures shows that state employees averaged about twice that much last year. These unauthorized pay increases were accomplished through grade changes approved by the Wage Adjustment and Salary Board. Funds have been shifted from other areas of agency budgets into payroll. To halt this practice and to place control of the payroll in the hands of elected officials, where it belongs, appropriation bills this year will also place dollar limits on each agency's payroll as well as limiting the number of employees. Another bill will abolish the Wage Adjustment and Salary Board.

This does not mean state employees will suffer as the cost of living increases. This year's budget calls for a one step cost of living increase for those state employees who have been employed for at least one year. The one year requirement recognizes the need to encourage good state employees to make a career of public service.

To talk of improved efficiency and fiscal responsibility and to allow a continuation of our present hodge podge of bureaucratic disorganization would be a contradiction. The people, by a large majority on July 22nd, cast their votes in favor of less bureaucracy and more efficiency in state government. They demonstrated that they saw the need to reorganize state government. You demonstrated that same resolve last year in passing the reorganization bill.

In one sense, you and I serve together as the executive officers of one of Oklahoma's largest businesses, state government. We are not only policy makers, we are managers of the tax dollars for all the citizens of our state. All across this country government is failing the people through inefficient management of their tax dollars. If we really care about people, their futures, and their jobs, we must do a better job of management. No task facing this legislature is more important than the task of reorganization.

There is an old, but true adage that when everyone is in charge, no one is in charge. Reorganization will reduce the bureaucracy, and improve accountability by agencies to you and to the taxpayers. The present system allows for bureaucratic buck-passing and makes it nearly impossible to accurately determine where the buck really does stop.

Five major reorganization bills will be introduced this session. I urge you to pass them. I am proud to say that all five are sponsored or co-sponsored by the Speaker and the President Pro Tempore. They are the product of many hours of work by a joint legislative citizens committee, assisted by a volunteer staff who freely contributed at least half a million dollars worth in salary time.

These bills, which represent the first step of re- organization, wisely focus on the major agencies which spend the largest amount of tax dollars, instead of the numerous minor agencies which have little budgetary impact.

The first bill, authored by Senator Crow and Representative Draper, puts the state's business on a business-like basis. It will bring together operational services such as payroll, personnel, and purchasing into a single Department of Administration. The current system of duplication goes so far as to maintain two separate police forces on either side of 23rd Street. Currently, you would have to consult with at least 27 persons for a report on these basic support functions. Under this bill you will be able to fix responsibility and to demand accountability. This department would also maintain a public record of all state agencies receiving and requesting federal funds which have an impact on the state budget.

The second reorganization bill, authored by Representative Townsend and Senator Howell, will bring together the transportation functions of state government into a Department of Transportation. More effective planning at reduced costs should result. The bill would also allow the Turnpike Authority to contract with the Department of Transportation for needed services which should reduce duplication.

The third reorganization bill, authored by Senator Howard and Representative Stratton, creates a Department of Natural Resources. The planning and coordination for recyclable natural resources – air, water, timber, and soil – will be placed in a single department. Local conservation districts and county health sanitarians will remain as they are. This new department should reduce the overhead costs, but more importantly it will reduce the bewilderment experienced by a citizen concerned about an environmental problem or a businessman who wants to expand. It will stop our citizens from being shuffled back and forth between as many as six different agencies before getting a full answer. The Corporation Commission, and Departments of Agriculture, Wildlife, and Tourism, would remain independent agencies, but their directors will join the Director of the Natural Resources Department in a mini-cabinet on natural resources to coordinate program planning.

The fourth reorganization bill, authored by Representatives Abbott and Rogers and Senator Murphy, reconstitutes the Education Council to include the education committee chairmen in the legislature, the governor, the heads of our three main education branches, and a group of citizens. It will reduce down several advisory education groups into one effective panel to hammer out problems.

The final reorganization bill, authored by Senator Terrill and Representatives Twidwell and Riggs, will expand the current Crime Commission to provide planning and budgetary coordination for law enforcement in Oklahoma. The new commission will be fully representative of all state and local law enforcement agencies.

Welfare, Health, and Mental Health will remain independent agencies, but the directors of each agency will be members of an informal mini-cabinet to coordinate human resources programs. In addition, the Department of Economic and Community Affairs will be assigned to evaluate children's services in Oklahoma in an effort to end overlapping programs.

It all boils down to this. Now, in our six major functions of government, little long range planning occurs. There are simply too many agency heads and board members to coordinate. Waste and duplication result. This program, which is a practical, reasonable first step of reorganization, will make its most important contribution in cost avoidance for the future. Every citizen has an interest in improved management. It will help us hold down the tax burden and do a better job of meeting priority needs.

The budget now before you is an education-oriented budget. Seventy-eight cents out of every new dollar will go to the improvement of education in Oklahoma. This budget reflects my continued commitment to quality education. My recommendations include \$800,000 for the second increment of elementary counseling, more than \$1 million for increased special education and detection of learning defects, and a seed program for the gifted and talented children of our state. It further includes a recommended \$500 per year pay increase for common and vocational-technical school teachers.

As the legislature considers the formula for the distribution of state aid, I urge you to give serious consideration to the resolution passed by the State Board of Equalization on January 2. It recommends that changes be phased into the school code so that districts making voluntary local enrichment efforts through higher assessments will not be penalized for doing so.

The budget further calls for approximately a \$12.5 million increase for higher education operating costs and a \$3 million increase for capital improvements in higher education. The budget also focuses upon the need to get Oklahoma on a different road in the area of fighting crime and violence in our society. No single problem has caused more concern among our citizens than the growing crime rate. I ask you to join with me in waging a war on crime. This year there will be much over-simplified election year rhetoric about crime across the country. Let us try to do something meaningful and comprehensive about it in Oklahoma.

In one sense the education program, with its emphasis on elementary counseling and the treatment of learning defects, is a part of the war on crime. The records of inmates demonstrate again and again that these inmates might never have become discouraged school dropouts who turned to crime if such programs had existed 20 years ago.

Closing loopholes in our laws is an important element of a war on crime. I strongly support a bill by Senator Randle and Representative Holden to strengthen our securities laws to halt fraudulent investment schemes in Oklahoma.

I support a bill by Senator Young and Representative Kilpatrick to strengthen public disclosure by public trusts, and a bill by Representative Payne and Senator Berrong to strengthen the real estate code to protect against unscrupulous developers of small tract developments.

Changes need to be made in the structure of our law enforcement system. I strongly urge passage of the bill by Senator Young and Representative Craighead giving statewide grand jury authority to the Attorney General.

Legislative support for the corrections master plan is necessary if we are to avoid a problem of overcrowding in our prisons. The budget includes matching capital outlay funds to be used along with federal funds for the construction of new prison facilities. It also contains funds for autopsy and criminal investigation facilities for the state medical examiner.

In deterring crime, swiftness and certainty of punishment are very important elements. I urge passage of the bill by Representatives Stratton and Hood and Senator Wadley to require that a judge file a report for the reasons for delay, which shall be public record, if the person charged with a felony is not brought to trial within 120 days. I also favor the bill by Representatives Morgan and Manning and Senator York to give the judge the right in the case of those convicted of non-violent crimes to make non-monetary restitution under the supervision of the Corrections Department. These persons can work on projects of use to the community instead of going into prison. Along with certainty, more uniformity is needed in sentencing, and I support the concept of the bill by Representative Hood to reduce the differences in sentences being handed down for the same crimes.

More certainty is also needed in parole policy. I will recommend to the Pardon and Parole Board and the Department of Corrections that they jointly work out a program for evaluating an inmate when he or she first comes into the prison system. This would include obtaining comments from the judge and district attorney. The Parole Board would then, in the first two or three months after the inmate enters prison, tell him what conditions he needs to meet to obtain a parole and when he can expect it, if he does. This will give the inmate a behavior goal to work toward. The unit management concept of administering each prison in small unit areas will also improve the information available to the Parole Board about an inmate's behavior.

The budget further reflects a need to provide more adequate state law enforcement services to help local communities. This budget provides for increased compensation for our highway patrolmen, whom I regard as the finest in the nation.

In addition, we must beef up the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation and the state Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to provide more help to local law enforcement officers. We have only nine state narcotics agents, who receive far more pleas for help from local communities than they can answer. The agency's budget bill, authored by Representative Duckett and Senator Tinsley, would double that number in two annual steps.

We have only 26 OSBI agents for the entire state, compared with over 146 in Georgia and 242 in North Carolina. The budget bills, authored by Senator Young and Representative Duckett, would double this number over two years, placing agents in the field where they are needed, within a 50 mile radius of any community in the state, on call to help local officials. Also, for the first time a small organized crime unit would be

created in the OSBI with attorneys and accountants cross-trained as investigators and agents. We now have no effective organized crime unit in state government.

This comprehensive package will strike out against crime in many areas and should make Oklahoma an example for others to follow.

There are many other areas which merit attention. I urge passage of the bill by Senator Boatner and Representative Dunn, passed by the Senate last year, to give farmers equal treatment with others on the exemption of their raw materials from the sales tax. I also urge passage of the bill by Representative Harper and Senators Dahl and Crow to make additional matching funds available to communities in rural areas for increased ambulance purchases and improved emergency medical care. Expansion of the rural medical scholarship program and matching funds for rural doctors and nurses, along with the funding of more residency and internship positions, are also provided in the budget.

I also urge you to give serious consideration to the bill which was the product of a special task force on workmen's compensation headed by Senator Berrong and Representative Morgan. The present workmen's compensation program hurts both the injured employee by providing inadequate benefits and the employer by costing very high premiums. When a system is unfair to both the employer and employee, the time has come for a major overhaul. Many of the provisions of the bill to be introduced have merit, including an effort to provide more accurate medical evidence. I hope that you will seriously deliberate about this bill with an eye toward making significant changes in the system.

To repeat Frost's words:

*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I ...  
I took the road less traveled by,  
and that has made all the difference."*

I believe many of the nation's office holders have turned a deaf ear to the will of the people and have chosen the wrong road. In Oklahoma, with active support and participation of our citizens, we have charted a different course. We have stuck to the road of financial responsibility. We have followed a course which improves the management of the taxpayer's dollars. We have charted a course which attacks the basic causes and effects of crime, which recognizes the work ethic, and which seeks to invest in our children and through them in our future. Together, let us continue on this road.

It will make all the difference.

## **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.