



## Oregon State Archives

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# GOVERNOR BARBARA ROBERTS ADMINISTRATION

January 14, 1991 to January 9, 1995

## Farewell Message, 1995

Source: Farewell Message Governor Barbara Roberts, Oregon, 1995

On November 6, 1990, you elected me as your thirty-fourth Governor and afforded me an honor given to only a few citizens in history, I will be forever grateful. I look back on these four years with much the same excitement and awe I felt on the night I was elected. I also recall, as governor Kitzhaber will soon attest, the huge responsibility and great expectations that are placed on the shoulders of each governor as they take the oath of office. It is responsibility and expectations that I want to speak to you about for just a few moments.

First, and let me say this clearly, Oregon is not a wimp. Oregon is not a political football. This state is not a commodity to be traded off or bartered away by any group of citizens or any group of elected officials. This state is a legacy that all three million Oregonians hold in trust and the time has come for each of us to take that obligation to heart.

First, we must stand up to those who attempt to divide Oregonians and tell them they are damaging our state and we are not going to take it anymore. We can no longer listen to those who preach division, whether it be Republican versus Democrat, city versus rural, liberal versus conservative, or gay versus the OCA. We are all Oregonians and we must live in peace and harmony, respecting our differences and celebrating our commonality. We are not enemies and we will stop the battles that pit us one against another, we will stop them or Oregon and each of us will be diminished.

Secondly, to those who would turn the natural push and pull between the environment and the economy in a short-sighted power game to brand thoughtful environmental regulations the enemy of economic growth, I would caution you, and the includes some in this chamber. I would caution you, threat businesses and professionals, investors and highly skilled workers are choosing Oregon for that exact quality of life that you could irrevocably damage. Our land use laws, our water and air standards, our forest practices commitments are future. Your responsibility toward our natural resources base must be approached with a sense of history and stewardship.

IN my opinion, Oregon must begin today to set an example for the entire nation about bringing government and citizens to the table together. Our citizens in both Oregon and the US are angry and disillusioned and they no longer believe or trust their government or their elected officials. Well, that's no way to run a county and it is no way to run a state, and Oregon must not lead the way in rebuilding and active, inclusive citizen-government partnership. It will require very hard work and creativity on the part of those of us in government. It will require equally hard work and personal involvement on the part of Oregon's citizens. Each of us must recommit ourselves to a relationship where we are all members of the same team. We can no longer allow Oregon's future to be a spectator sport.

I made a real effort at that shared involvement when I launched "The Conversation With Oregon" and for the skeptics, and I know there are those who believed it failed, you should talk with the ten thousand plus Oregonians who actually participated. WE learned from each other. WE shed light on complicated tax and budget issues and on government expectations from their point and ours. We found almost unanimous support statewide on what mattered to Oregon citizens. But the thousand people is not enough to reach

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inclusiveness in a state of three million. We must rebuild our citizen's belief in their government expectations from their point and ours. WE found almost unanimous support statewide on what mattered to Oregon citizens. But ten thousand people is not enough to reach inclusiveness in a state of three million. We must rebuild our citizens belief in their government and we must, we the politicians, must stop the simplistic political rhetoric that wins favor in elections but breeds misinformation and false expectations on complex, multifaceted policy choices. THE partnership between the people and their government has broken down. Repairing our democracy will require leadership, thoughtful ideas, team work, some political sacrifices and a new commitment that places shared responsibility over partisan blame. Muscle flexing, chest thumping and finger pointing are not the tools for rebuilding the bonds between our citizens and their elected representatives.

Now, unless you think I am here just to preach to you, let me before I step down, share three or four very brief reflections on these four years as the Governor of Oregon.

No one, I believe, would question that I served my term as Governor against an imposed backdrop that added huge hurdles to an already difficult job. At his moment, at this very moment, it is as if all those trials and challenges and frustrations have suddenly just melted away. Believe me that is one small miracle. Truthfully, I am not really sure I would want all those challenges and those tough issues I faced to disappear. They represented a time of testing and transition for both Oregon and for me and I would like to believe that history will show that we passed that test and both of us are better for it.

I will remember so much about these years, the campaign, the issues, the wins, the debates, the traveling every corner of this wonderful state. THE special celebrations like the Oregon Trail. The great announcements like Intel and Sony, and Worker's Comp and unemployment rates. "The Conversation with Oregon", the earthquake at the Capitol, my inaugural day, I will remember so much. Mostly, I will remember the people. My wonderful staff and policy team who carried such big workloads and cared so much about Oregon. They gave me their all for four years. And the State employees and managers who did yeoman's service in difficult times. The provided ideas, were willing to try new approaches, became advocates for government reinvention, worked hard and whined little. Business leaders, local government folks, education leaders at every level, every time I needed risk takers or work horses, they were there. The ordinary citizens of the state, who are in fact, not ordinary at all. I have worked with them, debated with them, marched with them, celebrated and laughed with them, mourned and cried with them, they are not ordinary at all. And my family, they have my gratitude and love, for they have been with me every step of the way.

Four years ago, many of you will remember, I took the oath of office, not from this podium in the traditional place, but on the House floor so Frank could be by my side. I knew then, that I stood beside my very great supporter and my best fan. He was with me then, he is with me now.

I return to private life today and the outward patterns of my life will change. The greater change that has come from these four years means that I will never again return to the person I was. The people I have met, the insights I have gained, the experiences I have and, the kindness and generosity I have been given, have changed me forever. Mine is a permanent bond with Oregon and Oregonians. I leave the Governorship knowing that Oregon has had my full energies and total commitment for these four years. Where we experienced real Oregon successes, I feel proud of what this administration was able to accomplish. Where we fell short, it was never, never for lack of trying or an unwillingness to take risks.

I have been privileged to be you Governor. I have been honored to serve you. Thank you.