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800 Summer Street NE

Salem, OR 97310

503-373-0701 ext. 1

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GOVERNOR BARBARA ROBERTS ADMINISTRATION

January 14, 1991 to January 9, 1995

Legislative Message, 1993

Source: Legislative Message Governor Barbara Roberts, Oregon, 1993

Today, we begin again. Today, Oregon watches as we launch our states agenda, as we choose our state's priorities for the next two years --- and beyond.

Over the next few months, you, as legislatures, and I will face choices about Oregon's future and the trade-offs we are willing to make to achieve our constitutional responsibility for a balanced budget.

A month ago I presented that balanced budget. I started with major efficiencies --- 4,000 fewer jobs, eliminating duplication, and providing services smarter. I proposed over \$900 million in additional cuts. And I offered options to realistically meet our responsibility for the most vulnerable Oregonians.

But, once you have met those short-term responsibilities, we must prepare to address the need for tax reform and long-term stability. For if Oregon is to prosper, the decisions we make during this session must be sound, responsible and compassionate.

History, however, will not define this legislature or this governor solely by the budget we build tin this capitol This legislative session is not just about managing today's crisis. Oregon's national image, our reputation and our place in history have been carved, not by our budgets, but by legislators and governors who captured an idea, took a risk, and turned it into a reality.

Our contributions --- yours and mine --- will determine the path we travel ahead and the legacy we leave behind.

Gov. Tm McCall believed Oregon's beaches should be accessible to all Oregonians, yet it was legislators for Grants Pass, Medford, and Portland who made that belief a reality in 1967. Today, while other states fence their beaches Oregonians can walked from Astoria to Brookings.

In 1971, Paul Hanneman, a coastal representative, heard the conceits of his district that bottles and were cluttering the beaches. So he did something about it. And Paul Hannemen, the 1971 legislature and Oregon created history with passage of the nation's first bottle bill.

John Kitzhaber, a Roseburg emergency room doctor, believed that effective health care could be made available to every Oregonian. Today Senator Kitzhaber's Oregon Health Plan has changed the way America discusses health care reform. And it was the 1989 and 1991 Legislative Assemblies that breathed life into those ideas.

Representative Vera Katz understood that our investments in public education could give us the best educational children in America. The 1991 legislature agreed and passed America's most respected education reform plan.

What will Oregonians be proud to from the 1993 session? Will there be the spirit, the creativity and the tenacity to breed new ideas and forge partnerships?

Today we begin.

Predictions seem grim, but I don't accept those predictions.

Prove them wrong. I believe you have the ability and the will to make this a productive legislative session.

Step forward. Make your ideas as much a part of Oregon's legacy as the Bottle Bill and the Beach Bill.

Remember, innovative public policy in Oregon has never has a partisan label.

Two years ago, in this chamber, I committed myself to providing affordable housing for Oregonians, preparing and training our workforce, and overhauling Oregon's tax system.

And, in 1991, together, we substantially increased affordable housing and launched a nationally recognized workforce training system. I don't have to tell you, however, that we have not finished the job on tax reform.

Yet I'm moving ahead with my vision for Oregon. And that vision cannot we achieved by standing still.

First, we must set a national standard for rural economic development. Second, we must ensure that every Oregonian has value and that we do not become a state divided by our differences. And finally now is the time to elevate water policy form a special interest to a public interest.

Let us begin with our rural communities. They are a vital part of the personality and strength of this state, and they are in trouble. I believe we can do something about it.

WE must enable rural communities to take control of their future. Yet, smaller rural communities cannot thrive without the water systems, roads and sewers that allow businesses to come and stay. The need medical facilities, libraries and community centers to keep people healthy, informed and involved. And they need good, affordable housing so that rural families can stay in the communities they hold dear.

So I have proposed several building blocks to empower Oregon's rural communities. They have the resolve and we're offering them the tools.

Yet, as we help fulfill the potential of each Oregon community, we must do the same for each Oregonian.

This fall, in our state capitol city, we face the stark, brutal crime of hate. Hatti Cohen and Brian Mock were killed when a fire bomb hit their Salem apartment. Was it because Hatti was African American? Was it because Brian was gay?

The type of bias that fueled both the hatred and flames doesn't really matter. The cost is the same. The bigotry is a carbon copy, regardless of the victim.

And what we do as a culture to shut people out is just as unacceptable as the violence that intolerance breeds

Oregon is daily becoming more diverse, and we can't afford to waste a single engineer, farmer, police officer, doctor, artist, mechanic or teacher. We can't afford to waste a single Oregonian. For our diversity adds to our strength.

Just over two months ago, Oregon sent the nation a message when we defeated Measure 9, that we are unwilling to go backward and embrace bigotry. Let us now show our willingness to move forward and embrace understanding, human rights and full opportunity for all of our citizens.

So I have therefore proposed a human Rights Commission that will fight hate crimes in Oregon, and will identify and remove the barriers that keep too many Oregonians from reaching their highest potential.

And as a state, Oregon's highest potential rests on the thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources. We grow crops better than anyone, we enjoy fishing and boating, we have low-cost energy, and Oregon possesses scenic ridders and diverse wildlife.

Few of us can imagine an Oregon without those qualities. And yet we have done little to ensure they continue in the years to come.

Will we balance the needs of fish with energy, drinking water with irrigation, and will we avoid the loss of water quality and quantity?

It is time for all Oregonians to treat water as the finite and fragile resource that it is.

A new spirit of cooperation and new level of state leadership is necessary to resolve problems that seem intractable today. My watershed management strategy, watershed health initiative, and increased support for the Water Resources Department will provide a heightened state commitment to real solutions.

Together, we will meet the challenge of managing our limited water resource for today and for the benefit for future generations.

Today, I've focused on important initiatives that say a lot about who we are as a people and a state, and the things we care about – today and into the future.

And now, we must decide if we have the fortitude to keep Oregon a place of opportunity, a place of beauty, a place to fulfill dreams.

It will not be easy, but it can be done

I am committed to the belief that we will take the risks necessary, rise above our individual differences and give Oregonians a reason to be proud of the work we begin today.