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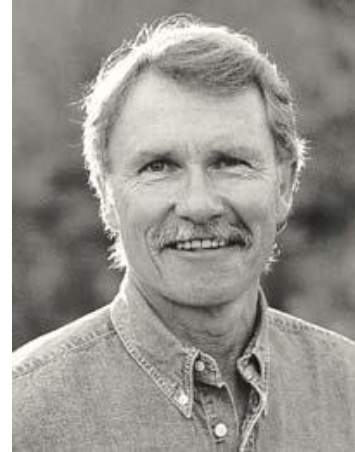
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GOVERNOR JOHN A. KITZHABER ADMINISTRATION

January 9, 1995 to January 13, 2003

Biographical Note

John A. Kitzhaber was inaugurated as governor of Oregon on Jan. 9, 1995. He was reelected in 1998. His second term expired in January 2003.



Kitzhaber was born in 1947 in Colfax, Washington. He grew up in Oregon and graduated from South Eugene High School in 1965. After graduating from Dartmouth College in 1969, he attended the University of Oregon Medical School, earning a medical degree in 1973. He practiced emergency medicine in Roseburg, Oregon for 13 years.

Kitzhaber first ran for public office in 1978 and was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives. In 1980 he was elected to the first of three terms in the Oregon Senate representing Douglas County and parts of Jackson County. He was elected Senate President in 1985 and served in that position until 1993. As Senate President, Kitzhaber was recognized nationally for authoring the Oregon Health Plan, which was designed to extend health care coverage to more Oregonians. He was credited both with crafting the plan itself and for bringing together diverse interest groups to pass the law, which took effect in February 1994. Central to the plan was the idea that eligibility for health care coverage could be expanded to more people if cost containment mechanisms, such as managed care and benefit limitations, were built into the system.

Incumbent Governor Barbara Roberts chose not to seek reelection in 1994 and Kitzhaber set his sights on the state's executive office. After an easy Democratic primary victory in 1994, Kitzhaber faced off against Republican nominee and former U.S. Congressman Denny Smith in the general election, in which he won with 51% of the vote to Smith's 42.5%. Kitzhaber met only token challenges in his 1998 primary bid for reelection. He won against Republican anti-tax activist Bill Sizemore in the general election, in which he gained 64.5% of the votes to Sizemore's 30%.

Once in office, Kitzhaber undertook several major policy initiatives. He oversaw the expansion of the Oregon Health Plan, which eventually reduced the rate of uninsured Oregon children from 21% to 8%. Kitzhaber also broke new ground with the Oregon Option, a cooperative approach with the federal government that attempted to increase accountability and reduce bureaucracy related to the delivery of a number of government services. As one result, the state reduced the number of welfare caseloads more than 50 percent, saved more than \$200 million in the state budget, and helped nearly 20,000 Oregonians find work. Kitzhaber also introduced the Oregon Children's Plan, which was designed to identify and assist at-risk children and their families. The plan sought to focus resources on front-end prevention and treatment instead of after-the-fact intervention.

Kitzhaber developed several policy initiatives related to natural resources during his two terms as governor. For example, his Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds attempted to restore dwindling runs of endangered native salmon species to Oregon's rivers and streams. The Oregon Plan was a collaborative

effort that encouraged federal, state and local government agencies to work with private landowners to restore watershed health and recover endangered salmon runs. In a related effort, he also took a high profile and controversial stand in favor of breaching several Northwest dams to help restore salmon populations.

Managing growth, particularly in the Willamette Valley, drew Kitzhaber's attention as well. A staunch supporter of Oregon's comprehensive land use system, he fought against attempts to weaken its protection of farmland and enforcement of urban growth boundaries. Kitzhaber also created the Governor's Growth Task Force and the Willamette Valley Livability Forum to help gather accurate information and outline integrated approaches for developing sustainable communities. His related Community Solutions program attempted to focus the efforts of numerous state agencies, other governments, and interested groups in collaborative problem solving and coordination to manage various community development projects across Oregon.

Kitzhaber also advocated for stable education funding, implementation of the Education Act for the 21st Century, and increased investment in Oregon's colleges and universities. However, solutions to the chronic lack of stable funding for public education continued to elude Kitzhaber as he left office in 2003.

The same 1994 election that chose Kitzhaber as governor also passed Ballot Measure 11, which applied mandatory minimum sentences for people convicted of any one of a long list of violent crimes. As a result, the state needed to build prisons to house the expected influx of long term inmates. Many communities, particularly in rural areas, wanted to be chosen for a prison site as a way to boost the local economy. However, Kitzhaber argued that the Portland metropolitan area should not be allowed to, in essence, "export" its problems to other areas of the state. Therefore, he chose to site one prison in Wilsonville on the southern fringe of Portland. Controversy followed claims that the site was too close to a school. Eventually, after months of protest and acrimony, a final prison site was selected at an alternate Wilsonville location.

In spite of his many policy initiatives, much of Kitzhaber's tenure as governor was spent on the defensive. He earned the nickname "Doctor No" from critics who pointed to his record number of vetoes. Kitzhaber engaged in numerous skirmishes with anti-tax activist Bill Sizemore and with members of the Republican majority in the legislature over the appropriate role and size of state government. Despite his difficulties with opponents, his popularity with the electorate remained high through most of his two terms. While he chose not to run, many saw Kitzhaber as the most formidable potential challenger to Republican U.S. Senator Gordon Smith in the 2002 general election.

Eventually, his popularity fell as Oregon's economy declined in the last years of his administration. It was eroded further by his chronically bad working relationship with the Republican legislative leaders. Five contentious special legislative sessions in 2002 seemed to illustrate the futility of the stalemate. In the midst of the turmoil, Kitzhaber's supporters claimed that he was making a stand on principles. His critics lamented his perceived failure to engage legislators in a dialog about how to fix the state budget.

Upon leaving nearly 25 years of public service in January 2003, Kitzhaber was named president of the Estes Park Institute, a Colorado-based education organization for community hospital and healthcare leaders.

Kitzhaber married the former Sharon LaCroix of Saskatchewan, Canada in 1995. The couple sought a divorce in 2003, soon after the end of his second term as governor. They have one son, Logan, born in October 1997.

Kitzhaber was elected to an unprecedented third term as Oregon governor in 2010.