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800 Summer Street NE

Salem, OR 97310

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GOVERNOR NEIL GOLDSCHMIDT ADMINISTRATION

January 12, 1987 to January 14, 1991

Biographical Note

Born in Eugene, Oregon on June 16, 1940, Neil Goldschmidt is the son of Lester H. Goldschmidt and Annette Levin Goldschmidt. After graduating from South Eugene High School, Goldschmidt was student body president at the University of Oregon where he received his B.A. in political science in 1963. He earned a law degree from the University of California's Boalt School of Law in 1967 and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Portland in 1980. In 1964 he was an intern in the Washington D.C. office of former U.S. Senator Maurine Neuberger of Oregon. In Washington, he was recruited by Allard Lowenstein for voter registration work in the Freedom Summer civil rights campaign in Mississippi in 1964.



A legal aid attorney in Portland from 1967 to 1969, Goldschmidt began his political career as a city commissioner there from 1971 to 1973. A Democrat, he was the youngest mayor of a major U.S. city after becoming mayor of Portland in 1973 at the age of 32. Goldschmidt served as mayor until 1979 when he was named U.S. Secretary of Transportation by President Jimmy Carter. He served in that capacity through January 1981. As secretary of transportation, Goldschmidt authored "U.S. Automobile Industry, 1980," a report to the president.

At the end of the Carter Administration, Goldschmidt returned to Oregon where he joined Nike, the running shoe company based in Oregon. Working with Nike from 1981 through December 1985, he became head of its Canadian subsidiary, Nike Canada, in 1986.

In 1986 Goldschmidt entered the Oregon governor's race, which saw him locked with Republican Norma Paulus in one of the state's closest gubernatorial contests in modern times. The campaign was conducted against the backdrop of the state's continuing economic distress and high unemployment. Goldschmidt focused his campaign on a blueprint for Oregon's future, and stressed his role as an innovator while mayor of Portland in the 1970s. Goldschmidt was helped by his support from many businessmen and by his own business experience. He won with 52 percent of the vote. Analysts attributed his victory to his economic program and to his record of cutting crime as mayor of Portland.

In office, Goldschmidt called for "an activist state role in the economy." He was willing to place more emphasis on economic growth and a little less on environmental protection, a reversal of state policies of a decade earlier when many state residents feared growth. Goldschmidt supported an end to school closings mandated by excessive property tax levies, claiming that his efforts to promote the state as a good place to live and do business were harmed by such closings. In the area of higher education, he wanted to increase faculty salaries and to improve relations between the academic and business communities. Goldschmidt chose not to seek re-election to a second term.