

TALKING POINTS, GERRY THOMPSON

AAUP PANEL DISCUSSION:

"HIGHER EDUCATION & THE COMING LEGISLATIVE SESSION"

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4th; 10:20 a.m.

276 Education Building, Eugene

- o It is fair to say that the ball is now in the Legislature's court. Restoring our momentum in higher education --- and furthering its links to economic development --- were top priorities of the Governor in the recent election campaign, and were top priorities of the Governor in our budget process.
- o That budget process is now complete. The Governor has recommended that we add more than \$70 million General Fund dollars to our Higher Education budget in 1983-85 than are available in the current biennium. These added dollars will freeze tuition, bolster high-tech programs, boost faculty salaries, upgrade libraries, and pay for long-needed building repairs.
- o Let me say a few words about the budget cuts and tuition hikes in higher education during the current biennium. Higher ed, as all of you know, took its lumps. Academic salaries were cut, tuition hiked, facilities maintenance was deferred, and overall state general fund support dropped. Oregon has found itself in the position of being dead last among the 50 states in support for public 4-year higher ed schools-----yet simultaneously charging average tuition rates that are among the highest of public institutions in the West.

- o The Governor feels very strongly about the importance to Oregon of quality institutions of higher education. He knows very well that higher ed has done its share in cutting back during this recession to keep our state budget in balance. But the Governor has said, time and again, that budget cuts do not equal policy.
- o The Governor wanted to move our education programs in Oregon to a higher level priority when he was first elected in 1979. The recession that struck Oregon in 1980 not only prevented us from doing that, it forced us---as you know---to retrench.
- o But with this budget, the Governor is serving notice that higher education must once again be restored to its vital role as a continuing leader in our state's economic and social future. Oregon can no longer afford to fall behind the rest of the nation in its support for our keystone institutions of learning. The Governor asks the Legislature and Oregonians to once again provide the support needed for higher ed to resume its leadership role.
- o That is not to say that the Governor has recommended that higher ed receive an open charter or a blank check. Our state is still in the grip of a serious recession. Our economy is still bumping at the bottom----and the recovery indicated will be only a gradual recovery. Higher ed is one of only three areas of state government recommended by

by the Governor for additional funding over and above the reduced base level of the current biennium. The other two are public safety and economic development. The Governor's economic development recommendations are, however, also closely linked---in part---to higher education through strengthening our links to high-technology industry.

- o The high-technology/economic development component of the Governor's budget includes \$2.7 million which will be coupled with \$1.3 million from a special fund administered by the Educational Coordinating Commission. A total of \$4 million will thus be made available to UO, OSU, and PSU to strengthen programs directly related to future job-producing industries within our state. Programs targeted include computer science, electrical engineering, cell biology, and bio-engineering.
- o It is certainly fair to say that higher ed did not get everything it wanted in the Governor's budget. But it received a major boost in the right direction for restoring the momentum the system needs for building continuing excellence, and contributing actively to the intellectual and economic life of our state. The Governor feels very strongly that anything less would be an abrogation of his responsibilities as Governor.

- o Following up on the Governor's recommendations----seizing the opportunity before us----is now up to the Oregon legislature. Many members of that legislature have spoken very urgently of the importance making substantial improvements in our budget for higher education. Those improvements have now been recommended by the Governor of the state. Our ability to make them depends upon the support of the legislature and the support of the people of Oregon for the revenue requirements we must have.

In short, the Governor is asking that we put our money where our mouth is. He has proposed a sensible, sensitive revenue package that will make needed reforms while accomplishing the fundamental priorities of government.

Now, he needs your support. It is up to each of you to tell your legislator, tell your local officials, and tell your colleagues that the lead taken by Governor. Atiyeh should be followed by the Legislature. I can tell you that the Governor has had the courage to put himself out on a limb----and to take the heat-----for taking what he regards as the only responsible road to a better future for Oregon.

I hope that you will give him your active support.

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