

SPEECH BY GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH
INDEPENDENT INSURANCE AGENTS OF OREGON
LEGISLATIVE DAY
TRUFFLES RESTAURANT, SALEM
FEBRUARY 24, 1983 11:15 A.M.

PREPARED TEXT

I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH YOU AT THE MIDPOINT OF YOUR "LEGISLATIVE DAY." I SEE BY YOUR AGENDA THAT YOU HAVE COVERED A LOT OF GROUND THIS MORNING ON INSURANCE ISSUES FACING THE LEGISLATURE -- AND ON THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS ITSELF.

I APPLAUD YOUR PARTICIPATION. OREGON GOVERNMENT AND OUR LEGISLATIVE PROCESS DEPEND SO MUCH ON YOUR AWARENESS, YOUR CONCERN, AND YOUR PARTICIPATION -- BOTH AS A CITIZEN AND AS A PROFESSIONAL. AFTER YOU HAVE MET WITH INDIVIDUAL LEGISLATORS THIS AFTERNOON, I KNOW THAT YOU WILL HAVE COMPLETED A DAY THAT WILL LEAVE YOU BETTER INFORMED, BETTER ABLE TO MEET THE MANY NEEDS OF YOUR CLIENTS, AND BETTER EDUCATED AS PROFESSIONALS THROUGH THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE HEARD AND DISCUSSED.

BY WORKING WITHIN THE PROCESS, BY MAKING YOUR VOICES HEARD, YOU HELP TO CHART THE FUTURE FOR YOUR INDUSTRY AND -- TO NO SMALL EXTENT -- FOR OUR STATE. EACH OF YOU REPRESENTS A PROFESSION THAT KNOWS, PERHAPS BETTER THAN ANYONE, THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING AND INVESTING TODAY FOR THE FUTURE STILL TO COME.

AND THE CHALLENGES TODAY ARE SO MUCH GREATER. EARLY IN MY ADMINISTRATION, MY AGENCY HEADS USED TO COME TO ME AND SAY, "HERE IS THE PROBLEM." I WOULD TELL THEM, "THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM... THAT'S AN OPPORTUNITY." WITH THAT ATTITUDE, WE COULD WORK TOGETHER NOT JUST TO MAKE REPAIRS, BUT TO MAKE PROGRESS... TO IMPROVE A GIVEN SITUATION.

OF COURSE, LATELY WE HAVE HAD SO MANY "OPPORTUNITIES" THAT WE HAVE ALMOST BEEN OVERWHELMED BY THE CHANCE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM ALL.

OREGON HAS WORKED VERY HARD TO BRING ITSELF OUT OF THIS RECESSION. WE HAVE FACED HARD REALITIES, AND MADE THE TOUGH DECISIONS FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS NOW. OTHER STATES HAVE NOT MADE HARD DECISIONS, AND MANY ARE FACING A FAR BLEAKER IMMEDIATE FISCAL FUTURE THAN OREGON. WASHINGTON STATE HAS BEEN WRESTLING WITH ITS OWN BUDGET AND TAX PROBLEMS, AND CALIFORNIA HAS HAD TO ISSUE IOU'S.

BUT IN OREGON, THE SIGNS ARE MUCH MORE ENCOURAGING TODAY. MORE ENCOURAGING THAN THEY HAVE BEEN, REALLY, IN THE PAST TWO YEARS. INTEREST RATES ARE COMING DOWN. BANKERS, INDUSTRY LEADERS, AND ECONOMISTS PREDICT A RISE IN HOUSING STARTS. TRENDS HAVE BEGUN -- FRAGILE BUT HOPEFUL TRENDS -- THAT SHOW OUR ECONOMY MAY FINALLY HAVE BOTTOMED OUT.

WE HAVE GONE THROUGH A VERY TUMULTUOUS PERIOD. BUT WE KNOW THAT THE KEY IN ALMOST EVERY INDUSTRY -- INCLUDING THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY -- IS GREATER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY. THAT MEANS MOVING AHEAD EVEN MORE RAPIDLY ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

NO BETTER UNEMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, NO BETTER WELFARE AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAM, AND NO BETTER FISCAL RECOVERY PROGRAM EXISTS FOR OREGON AND ITS TAXPAYERS THAN A VIGOROUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

THAT IS WHY I THINK IT IS APPROPRIATE, TODAY, THAT I DESCRIBE FOR YOU MY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE AND ITS PLACE IN THE ONGOING PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN.

WE BEGAN THOSE ACTIONS IN 1979, AND REDOUBLED THEM WITH A MAJOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY PACKAGE I SUBMITTED TO A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE OREGON LEGISLATURE ONE YEAR AGO. THE PROGRAMS WE BEGAN THEN ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE STRONG NEW STRATEGY I HAVE PUT FORWARD THIS YEAR. THAT STRATEGY IS REFLECTED BOTH IN THE BUDGET I HAVE RECOMMENDED TO THE LEGISLATURE -- AND IN SEPARATE LEGISLATION I HAVE SUBMITTED AS PART OF OUR OVERALL PLAN FOR DIRECT ACTION TO GET OUR ECONOMY MOVING ONCE AGAIN.

LAST YEAR, WE WON OVER \$2 MILLION FOR A SPECIAL PACKAGE THAT INCLUDED FUNDS TO SPUR TOURISM, A MAJOR NEW MARKETING PLAN FOR OUR STATE; HIGHER EDUCATION MONEY TO MOVE US FORWARD IN COMPUTER SCIENCES AND HIGH TECHNOLOGY; AN INVENTORY OF LAND AVAILABLE IN OREGON FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; A REORGANIZED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT; AND THE CREATION OF AN ECONOMIC ACTION COUNCIL WITHIN STATE GOVERNMENT TO CREATE A RAPID RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS WITHIN THE STATE.

THIS YEAR, WE ARE MOVING FURTHER AND FASTER TO BUILD ON THE EFFORTS ALREADY UNDERWAY:

WE HAVE DEVELOPED AND SUBMITTED A BUDGET PACKAGE THAT PUTS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON THE FRONT LINES. MY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE EMBODY A COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT EXTENDS TO EVERY AGENCY OF OREGON STATE GOVERNMENT.

SPECIFICALLY, I HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT WE:

- BOOST THE BUDGET OF OUR DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM \$2.7 MILLION TO \$8.7 MILLION GENERAL FUND DOLLARS, AND INCREASE THE AGENCY'S STAFF FROM 35 TO 55 FULL-TIME POSITIONS;
- TRANSFER THE TOURISM PROMOTION PROGRAM, CURRENTLY HOUSED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT;

● CONTINUE AND EXPAND ON THE PROGRAMS WE INITIATED IN 1982, INCLUDING A COMPUTERIZED INVENTORY OF AVAILABLE INDUSTRIAL LAND, A MARKETING PROGRAM DESIGNED TO FORGE A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL AND STATEWIDE EFFORTS, AND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE THAT WILL HELP COMPANIES AND SMALL BUSINESSES OBTAIN PERMITS, MEET LAND USE REQUIREMENTS, AND RELOCATE OR EXPAND TO CREATE JOBS FOR OREGONIANS;

● PROTECT AND EXPAND THE GAINS WE HAVE ALREADY MADE THROUGH OUR VERY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS IN DOMESTIC MARKETING AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE;

● ACTIVELY INVOLVE OUR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATEWIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORT, THROUGH CREATING PROGRAMS DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE NEEDS OF INDUSTRIES WE SEEK TO ATTRACT; AND

● MAKE PERMANENT THE REORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WE ACCOMPLISHED LAST YEAR. THOSE CHANGES PUT ME, AS GOVERNOR, IN A POSITION TO UNITE AND COORDINATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS STATEWIDE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORK OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS OREGON.

THE BUDGET I HAVE SUBMITTED TO THE OREGON LEGISLATURE IS ONE OF A SERIES OF STEPS WE ARE TAKING TO GET OUR ECONOMY MOVING ONCE AGAIN. THE BUDGET ITSELF HOLDS MOST STATE AGENCIES TO THEIR CURRENT REDUCED FUNDING LEVELS -- BUT RESTORES OUR MOMENTUM IN A VERY FEW CRITICAL AREAS. AND NOTHING IS MORE CRITICAL THAN DIVERSIFYING OUR ECONOMIC BASE AND CREATING LASTING PERMANENT JOBS THAT WILL PUT OUR PEOPLE BACK TO WORK.

I KNOW THAT EACH OF YOU IS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS EFFORT -- BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND AS AN INDUSTRY.

IN FACT, AS AN INDUSTRY YOU CONTRIBUTE DOUBLY -- NOT ONLY WITH THE TAXES YOU YOURSELVES PAY, BUT WITH THE INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX WHICH CONTRIBUTES TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ANNUALLY TO OUR STATE GENERAL FUND -- ONE OF OUR VERY SIGNIFICANT REVENUE SOURCES.

IN RECOGNIZING YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT I ALSO RECOGNIZE YOUR CONCERNS.

YOU HAVE SPENT MUCH OF TODAY REVIEWING IN DEPTH THE REGULATORY AND INSURANCE ISSUES NOW BEFORE THE 1983 LEGISLATURE.

AS THOSE ISSUES GO THROUGH THE PROCESS, I CANNOT ADVISE YOU STRONGLY ENOUGH TO MAKE CERTAIN YOUR FEELINGS ARE KNOWN, AND YOUR VOICES ARE HEARD -- NOT ONLY WITH THE LEGISLATURE, BUT WITH MY OFFICE AS WELL.

I STAND READY TO LISTEN, AND WORK WITH YOU AND WITH THE LEGISLATURE IN RESPONDING TO YOUR CONCERNS -- IN LICENSING, CONTINUING EDUCATION, WORKERS' COMPENSATION, MANDATED BENEFITS, RATE REGULATION, OR ANY OF THE OTHER ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU AS INDEPENDENT INSURANCE AGENTS.

AS GOVERNOR, I RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY OREGON INSURANCE INDUSTRY TO BUSINESS, CONSUMERS, INVESTMENT, CAPITAL FORMATION, AND A HEALTHY ECONOMIC BASE FOR OUR STATE.

THE MONEY INVESTED BY YOUR INDUSTRY IN OREGON HELPS COUNTLESS OREGON COMMUNITIES AND CITIZENS MEET MANY NEEDS WHILE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE. I VALUE YOUR INDUSTRY'S ADVICE. AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, MY EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT GERRY THOMPSON, WHO HOLDS THE HIGHEST NON-ELECTIVE POST IN STATE GOVERNMENT, IS A VETERAN OF YOUR INDUSTRY.

THAT IS WHY YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT YOUR CONCERNS AS INSURANCE AGENTS HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING EAR IN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE. AND WE WILL BE LISTENING TO YOU AS THIS LEGISLATIVE SESSION MOVES FORWARD.

AGAIN, I CONGRATULATE YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS LEGISLATIVE DAY. AND I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU IN THE FUTURE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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