

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:45 PM, 1/14/2009

**Second Inaugural Address
Washington Governor Christine O. Gregoire
Jan. 14, 2009**

Thank you, Father Ryan, for that beautiful prayer and blessing.

And thank you, Kate Elwanger, for your wonderful performance of the National Anthem.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, distinguished justices of the court, honored officials, members of the Washington State Legislature, former governors, tribal leaders, local government officials, members of the Consular Association of Washington, my fellow citizens:

Good afternoon.

I first want to express my condolences at the passing of Representative Steve Hailey of the 9th District. His career ended much too soon. I also want to share my personal sadness at the passing last week of Representative Bill Grant. All of us, this chamber, Bill's beloved 16th District, Bill's family — and the people of Washington — are the poorer for his loss.

Bill brought to this chamber a sense of bi-partisanship, humor and compassion that we will sorely miss.

I am deeply honored to stand before you in the first moments of my second term as governor of the Great State of Washington.

I am grateful and humbled that the people of Washington have chosen me to lead this state through the most difficult and trying times maybe since the Great Depression.

I know all of us in this chamber are honored to be here, and are ready to take on a crisis the likes of which our generation has never seen, let alone imagined.

All of us, Democrats and Republicans — the newly elected and the seasoned — have a huge opportunity — the opportunity to bring Washington more firmly into the 21st century.

For us — and for all Washingtonians — there are two words that will define us as we confront the challenge and seize the opportunity.

Those words are Courage and Generosity.

The people of Washington are looking to us to act with remarkable courage.

In turn, I believe Washingtonians will respond with very personal compassion and generosity for their neighbors.

And more than ever, the people of Washington do not want partisan politics! They want us to work together to build a better state for them and their children.

So I will challenge all of us today — and throughout the session — to join together. Let's use this crisis! Let's summon the courage to make the hard decisions.

And let's make sure Washington emerges better positioned to create jobs, prepare our kids for the future and provide affordable health care.

Let's make sure we improve our ranking from third best place to do business — to number one!

With me today is my family: My husband Mike, who plans to continue his work on behalf of veterans' and children's literacy; our daughter Courtney, and, of course, our brand-new son-in-law Scott; and our daughter Michelle.

My family is here not only to share this important day with me, but to remind us of just what we have at stake this legislative session — and it's the well-being of all Washington families.

Too many of our families are struggling just to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. They are worried about keeping a job or finding one.

They lose sleep wondering if they can save the business where they have poured their sweat and their savings.

And last week, Mother Nature laid on another layer of misery, forcing thousands of people from their homes when our rivers rose and hillsides came down.

Our highway transportation system and the commerce that depends on it ground to a halt.

But it could have been worse if Washingtonians had not responded so quickly and wisely to the warnings and evacuated by the hundreds. For that, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the skill of local responders, and our own state and federal agencies.

I also want to thank the hundreds of Washingtonians who stepped up to help their suffering neighbors and friends. But the misery continues, and we're working very hard to help with recovery.

Last fall, a different kind of storm rolled over the nation's incredibly mismanaged mortgage and credit markets. That financial storm is now parked over Washington and almost every other state, and it's raining buckets of hardship for families and businesses.

We've all worked to create a world-class education system and affordable, accessible health care, and to rapidly build on our already amazing, diverse economy. I promise you we cannot and will not forget that work. But today, our work is more basic and urgent.

Our work is to help our families and businesses survive at a time when they are forced to juggle bills and cut back spending ... when too many stores, restaurants and car dealerships are struggling for customers ... and last month, when 75 percent more Washington workers filed for unemployment benefits than a year ago.

We all know our state didn't make this economic crisis, and we all know we can't unilaterally solve it.

But we cannot just ride out the hard times and then go back to business as usual.

Instead, we must renew hope for Washingtonians who are suffering today, and lay — for them — a platform for a better tomorrow.

First, we can and must quickly create new jobs for working families by rebuilding roads and schools, and creating a green economy for the 21st century — all in partnership with President-elect Barack Obama's "American Recovery and Reinvestment" plan.

Second, like our struggling families and businesses, we can and will tighten our belts, balance our budget and focus on basic needs — protection of our children, our schools and colleges, our public safety, our environment and our economy.

Third, we won't waste this crisis! We can and must reform state government. In this moment of clarity, we must grab the opportunity to reform so we can respond to the evolving needs of this century.

Fourth, we can and must approach all our challenges as a computer engineer might. Let's build a new platform that makes Washington unique — that can support the exciting possibilities of the 21st century rather than the fading possibilities of the last.

And finally, this is the time for generosity among all Washingtonians.

Real solutions to many of our problems will come from partnerships with our families, our communities, our faith-based organizations and our service groups.

This is our time. A time like no other ... Our time to show courage ... Our time to reach across the aisle — Democrats and Republicans — to help our people ... Our time for all to light the lamp of generosity.

And if we need an example of this can-do spirit, we can reach back 76 years to an even worse time — the Great Depression — a time of breadlines, massive unemployment, despair and hope for a better day.

The first thing President Franklin Roosevelt did was get people back to work, and by the way, so did Governor Clarence Martin right here in Washington.

Indeed, the most visible Northwest project built under Roosevelt's jobs plan was the world-famous Grand Coulee Dam.

Tomorrow, I will introduce the "Washington Jobs Now" plan. It is nowhere near as big as the Grand Coulee Dam project back in the 20th century, but it will leave a legacy of roads, schools and green-collar jobs to thrust our state firmly into the 21st century!

And I urge you to help me do it — and in the first days of this new session.

This is our moment to act with courage — boldly and urgently — as our President-elect is doing — to speed up a recovery.

We can quickly create thousands of new jobs this year and next by accelerating nearly \$1 billion in public works projects.

These projects will build new roads and schools, and create green-collar jobs to lay more groundwork for the prosperity to come.

The time to act is now!

My "Washington Jobs Now" plan will stretch over the next two years — even as we undertake the largest transportation construction cycle in state history!

We now have 1,400 transportation projects under way, or about to start, worth \$3 billion.

By combining this historic transportation package with my "Washington Jobs Now" plan, we will provide nearly 20,000 jobs in the next two years.

Franklin Roosevelt did more than create jobs. And so must we.

That's why I'm urging you to also act on an unemployment insurance proposal I'll soon introduce to help laid-off workers and struggling businesses.

Our state has the healthiest Unemployment Trust Fund in the country. We need to put these funds to work through a temporary increase in benefits for workers and a temporary tax cut for businesses.

Unemployment benefits are a uniquely powerful tool to benefit our economy. Benefits go directly to folks who need help and they are spent locally to boost business. Every dollar of benefits results in another \$1.64 of buying power in our economy. And the tax break will help businesses weather the downturn.

And we must help ease the suffering of families struggling to feed their kids.

Last fall, we greatly expanded eligibility for food stamps, which brings to our state \$825 million in federal funding this year. Every \$5 spent in food stamps ultimately means \$9.20 circulating through our economy.

And finally, I have an urgent proposal to keep families in their homes.

We helped homeowners last year, and this year, I'm asking you to approve legislation to help struggling homeowners work out ways to avoid foreclosure with time extensions.

My "Washington Jobs Now" plan and the recovery proposals address some short-term needs, but they amount to more than a short-term fix. They help us build that new foundation to prepare Washington for the future.

I welcome a new dawn in Washington, D.C. — where Barack Obama and the new Congress are ready to create jobs, rebuild our nation, and help working people and businesses.

Next week President-elect Obama will introduce his plan to get Americans back to work. His plan includes funding for schools, infrastructure and expansion of a green economy.

I am working with the President-elect to make sure his plan includes ready-to-go projects here in Washington. The President-elect's plan will double our commitment to renewable energy production — a huge opportunity for Washington, which is already leading in renewable energy production.

Let's join that new dawn with our own plan to accelerate jobs and economic recovery.

I know many of you have ideas for an economic recovery plan. I want to work with you, and with everyone else, for an effective package that will quickly pass.

There is no reason to delay. The sooner we do it, the better it will be for working Washington families and businesses.

When this recession ends, and it will end, we must be ready for a new economy. We need to preserve our education system to make sure we provide workers skilled in science, math, engineering and technology.

We need to nurture and cultivate our growing life sciences and global health sectors. We need to deliver on the promise of a green economy and thousands of green collar-jobs. This is the economic future for our children and our state.

Economic recovery also means tightening our belts and living within our means. We must do what the people who sent us here are doing.

There is a growing number of Washington families out there right now who suddenly find themselves living on an unemployment check. They know what it means to tighten their belts.

I have proposed a two-year spending plan that addresses the largest budget gap in state history.

This budget contains as much care and compassion as we could muster. But it still hurts real people, and with each cut I chose, I saw their faces. I don't like this budget, but I proposed it for one simple reason — I must.

Let's face it. We were dealt a terrible hand by forces beyond our control. We are forced to make unprecedented and difficult choices.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a time for real courage!

I sent you a budget that rests on our basic values. And we lay the foundation to reap the results when the recovery comes.

And so we will — all of us — Democrats and Republicans — working together to make the wisest, most compassionate decisions. I'm ready to work with all of you. This is what the people expect.

And one thing we have to do together is reform state government to bring it into the 21st century, and soon. At very basic levels, businesses are struggling to reform, to change the way they do business because they simply must to survive. And our business leaders tell me that American companies, large and small, will emerge from this recession forever changed.

We have to do the same. And that's government reform.

This is our chance to reform state government to make it a more nimble and relevant partner in a new state economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to reboot!

Over the decades, state government has evolved — layer upon layer upon layer. But too much of what served the people well in 1940 or 1960 or 1990 does not serve the people well in the 21st century.

There are sacred cows standing in the way. There are political roadblocks. But let's step up to the challenge for the people who sent us here. For example, we have some 470 separate boards and commissions across numerous agencies.

Is there anybody in this chamber, or this state, who believes we need any more than half of 470 boards and commissions to serve the people of Washington? There are almost 60 involved with the Department of Social and Health Services alone.

And that's not the only issue we face. For instance, we have three agencies managing natural resources, each with its own scientist standing in the same Washington stream.

We need to reform, and we will.

We need a lean, nimble state government serving our people in the 21st century.

We know we can do it because in some cases we already have.

Today, almost 40 percent of license tabs are renewed online, saving hassles and gas.

We can close 26 licensing offices across the state while extending hours of operation at the 10 most popular locations. We are finding new ways to serve our customers. And customer service is what it's all about.

Today, 18,000 full-time students at our community and technical colleges are earning course credits online. It would take an additional four community colleges to offer all those classes the old-fashioned way.

Thousands of people go online to check the balance on their food stamp debit card. And more than half of small business owners are filing their state taxes online.

I ask you, if we can serve our motorists, our businesses, our students and our poor with 21st century technology, why can't we serve all citizens in ways that are more convenient for them, and cheaper and more effective for government?

The answer is, we can. The answer is, we will!

I'm putting the finishing touches on a package of reforms for you to consider this session. I'm asking you to act on them this year. It will take courage. But the time has come to put our sacred cows out to pasture forever.

I can't reform government all by myself. For starters, I've asked Auditor Sonntag to help us figure out ways to sunset boards and commissions and to help us establish a 21st century way of doing business.

I am also partnering with business and labor, state employees, citizens, and you, to get the job done.

We need to make sure we have a government for the 21st century so our workers and businesses can compete with anyone in the world.

Finally this afternoon, I issue an urgent call to all Washingtonians — each and every one of us — to come together to help our neighbors in a spirit of shared generosity.

First, please join me by recognizing the men and women, who, for the past five years, have sacrificed by putting their lives on hold to fight in distant wars — and who, in some cases, have sacrificed their very lives.

In Iraq last week, I met, among others, Sergeant First Class Gerald Frazier of the Washington National Guard's Heavy Brigade Combat Team. Jerry is typical of the Washington men and women helping Iraq rebuild into a democracy — focused, committed and above all, generous.

Jerry and his fellow soldiers run the American combat base at Ramadi.

Let me describe their lives to you. They live in a dusty, barren desert, and they work 12 to 14-hour days, seven days a week. Jerry and his fellow soldiers definitely don't come home to home-cooked meals — one of the seasonings on their food is dust, a lot of it.

They live in retro-fitted shipping containers, and for recreation, they have a little temporary building with a TV and some weights. Because they're in a combat zone, they don't go outside the camp.

They were tickled pink when I gave them a Washington state flag to hang alongside their 12th Man flag. Let us thank them for their generosity — to the people of Iraq and to all of us.

So today, I am honored to introduce to you Jerry Frazier's wife Val, and their two children, Caitlin and Jerry junior, who are here to represent all the families of the dedicated men and women of the 81st Brigade. These families care enough about this world to see their spouses and parents off to a dangerous war in order to help others, and us, maintain the freedoms we have.

Val and you children, please stand for a well-deserved round of applause.

Thank you, each of you, for your generosity to our country and our community.

Let your spirit of giving be our spirit too.

Let's help our neighbors in need, as the Frazier family has, and as our grandparents and great-grandparents did during the Great Depression so long ago.

We must find and embrace the generous spirit of those times.

Let's recognize the suffering of our neighbors.

With the terrible flooding last week, we saw once again the spark of generosity in the hearts of Washingtonians. We saw it from the people of Spokane, who turned out in huge numbers to help the city clear storm drains to ease flooding.

We saw it in Snohomish where neighbors are still helping neighbors clean up, in Orting where townspeople packed sandbags, and in Lewis County where a hotel cut its room rates in half to accommodate people fleeing their homes.

Today, I want to issue a challenge. I ask every Washingtonian right now, today, to commit to at least one hour a month to help other Washingtonians in need. I personally embrace that challenge. And so does every member of my family. Will you join us?

Mother Teresa once said, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one."

And please know that we are in a time when for too many people, the things that matter most are incredibly basic — food, shelter, utilities and something deeper — the knowledge that somebody cares about them.

There is no shortage of things we can do — help build shelter for poor families ... volunteer at a food bank or homeless shelter ... check "yes" on our utility bills to donate heat and lights to a fellow customer. And we can start by looking around — knocking on a neighbor's door to see if they need help — and by opening our hearts.

You know, the Jewish faith teaches that any society in which people care only for themselves is a society that — literally — is headed for poverty. I believe that, too.

As Mother Teresa says, no one person can do it all. But just think what we can do for each other if everybody takes responsibility.

I also want to challenge each person — if you have the means — to commit to donating four non-perishable food items each month to a food bank, or the equivalent in cash.

I asked Northwest Harvest what it would mean if even one in four Washingtonians answered the challenge for just one month.

Here's what it said: The donations would feed more than 4,200 people for a month!

That's a lot of food for hungry kids, seniors and families if we all stepped up to the challenge.

And there is another challenge we can embrace next Monday — the holiday celebrating the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. President-elect Obama is calling for a national day of service, and I urge all who can take part to do it. Let us join hands, and let us help each other through these difficult times.

Ladies and gentlemen, we will get through this hard time and open the door to a better, brighter day. We are Democrats and Republicans. But we are so much more ...

We are the sons and daughters of our gleaming high-tech cities ... of our rolling wheat fields and lush orchards ... of our fishing and timber towns.

We are from small hamlets and far-flung suburbs. We are teachers, lawyers, salesmen, homemakers, cops, retirees, engineers, nurses, firefighters, computer experts. We are the people of Washington.

We represent all the people of Washington, and we share a distinction that transcends who we are and what we are. We are One Washington and we come to serve.

We are here in the year 2009 to make hard choices with courage and political will.

We are here to protect families, get people back to work and prepare for the 21st century. We are here to reform our government to better serve our future, and we are here together as a family is together — to help and support each other, and to build for tomorrow.

This is the time for courage, and this is the time for generosity among all Washingtonians.

Let's do it, ladies and gentlemen, let's get to work!

God bless you all.

And God bless the Great State of Washington!