

**Shaping the Future:
The Promise and Potential of the 21st Century
1998 State of the State Address to the Utah Legislature, January 19, 1998**

Governor Michael O. Leavitt

Good Evening, President Beattie, Speaker Brown, members of the Legislature, Chief Justice Zimmerman, Lieutenant Governor Walker and my fellow Utahns. I am pleased to address you on the opening day of the 1998 General Session of the Utah State Legislature and to commemorate Human Rights Day.

One hundred and two years ago, Utah was a new state of 270,000 people in the twilight of a waning century. Two years from now, our young, vibrant state leaves the epochal cradle of its infancy and charges into the next millennium.

Our past is both grandiose and gritty. We have honored it and learned from it during two years of celebrating a statehood centennial and the sesquicentennial of our first settlers. But tonight, as we examine the state of this great state, let us lift our eyes to the horizon beyond our time. Let us envision our future so we can shape it.

Tonight, the 21st century beckons. We are a little older, more poised and prosperous than we were in 1896. Microchips have replaced mule teams. Our pioneer settlement has become a metropolis. Two hundred-seventy-thousand people are now two million.

The next century will be a time of supercomputers and smart highways. Digital television will be used for entertainment, but also for education. Microprocessors will be in our kitchens. We'll get the morning's Dow Jones on our toast.

It will be a world of increasing complexity and change. Utah can become a diamond in the desert -- shimmering with growing communities and the lights of cities framed by timeless mountains. We can have grandeur and greatness, if we have the foresight to go after them.

Last month, I was asked to participate in a panel discussion with a dozen world-renowned economists, futurists and a handful of corporate leaders. There we were on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center by those huge windows overlooking New York Harbor. The Statue of Liberty in the distance.

The point of the panel was to discuss the future, and to get it rolling we were given a scenario: "Look forward to 2015 and tell us what will be most surprising."

It went around the table. And then it came to me.

You're surrounded by the smartest economists in the world, what do you do? Mesmerize them with macro theory? No, you create a diversion. At least that's what I did. "Since

we're forecasting the future," I said, "I'll tell you how the Nobel Prize in economics will be won in 2015."

I'll tell you, too. But first I want to focus on their question in a Utah context. "What will Utah look like in 2015, 2020, and beyond? What do we want it to look like?"

As I scan the horizon, I see some things that will shape our future more than any others. Let's start with population.

Picture this state with a million more people, and then a million more. The Wasatch Front will be filling in from Brigham City to Nephi. We'll be adding 43,000 people – a new Bountiful – every year. St. George might be nearly as big as Salt Lake is now.

More people, but no more land, air or water. We have to balance the needs of the environment and the needs of humanity, and we'll have just one shot to get it right. We need to protect our state's sense of openness and agricultural heritage. Future generations will judge us poorly if we don't -- and they should.

TRANSPORTATION

The Centennial Highway Fund, with I-15 and dozens of other projects across the state was an unexceeded expression of optimism about the 21st century.

The I-15 project is slightly ahead of schedule. We all feel a little grumpy about it from time to time, but for the most part, the people of this state have responded with good spirit and patience.

The rewards of our travail will shortly begin to materialize. By summer we'll start to have new overpasses in use. By late fall, new on-ramps and pavement.

Safety is a major concern. Recently, I met with parents who lost two children in a tragic pedestrian accident. We will step up the state's efforts in this area, but please, please be careful. We can accept inconvenience, but not loss of life.

The I-15 project is bigger than we expected. Some have suggested that we step back and cancel projects in other areas of the state. That would be unfair. We cannot cancel projects and we will not raise taxes this year. We need to pay for the additions to the project just like we have the rest -- with a balanced approach. I've proposed one way. There will be other good ideas.

What we cannot do is shortchange education. Our children will travel those roads to the future but if it comes at the expense of their schooling, we've taken away their destination.

I was at the Department of Transportation recently, and was shown an old report. It was written by a man named Frank Muir, whose job it was to log the traffic on a road north of

Salt Lake.

It was 6 a.m. on an April morning in 1915, and I can just see Frank parked there, drinking a sarsaparilla, watching that road. Writing it all down with his fountain pen:

".... Observed between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m ... five one-horse wagons ... loaded traveling northbound 19 loaded headed south 54 empty one-horse wagons northbound and south five saddle horses ... and 102 automobiles."

That spot where Frank recorded the road history in 1915 is roughly the route through Davis County where Legacy Highway will go. By 2005, more vehicles will travel that stretch in 20 seconds than Frank Muir counted all day, including the horses.

Legacy Highway needs to be built. If we don't, within the first decade of the 21st century, Davis County will be a traffic congestion nightmare, and the rest of the Wasatch Front will follow.

Legacy Highway will unfold mile by mile over the next 20 years. It needs to stretch along the western perimeters of our valleys, from Willard on the north as far south as Santaquin.

The Davis County piece is the most urgent. Defining the exact route for a project like this is always difficult. We'll do it in a way that minimizes environmental impact, but the project needs to move forward.

HOUSING

While we're building next-generation highways, we also need to build future neighborhoods and next-generation housing.

Do we wall off the Wasatch Front and tell our children this is not the place? No. We plan now and start building the 17,500 new houses and apartments that will be needed yearly to house them.

A roof over one's head is a basic human requirement. Owning one's home is a quest that should be advanced by any society.

But some local governments have begun to use their planning and zoning authority to exclude everything but big lots, double garages and expensive brick homes. Nice, if your earnings allow it. But what if they don't?

Two of my most passionate beliefs are in play here: the importance of local control and the power of the free market. But it is unfair for any community to make income the price of admission. The long-term consequences are so great, the state may have no choice but to begin apportioning responsibility.

If we're smart and forward-looking, we can find the right mix of density and design.

ENVIRONMENT

There is another kind of open space we have to safeguard. In Utah, we are blessed with landscapes that astound and uplift us. They are our sentinels, we are their stewards.

This year we will launch a parks and recreation initiative of unprecedented scope to protect our forest lands, campgrounds and waterways.

In the spirit of protection of the environment and our safety, I am asking the legislature this year to make a clear statement to out-of-state utility companies that want to dump nuclear waste in the west desert, near a military compound where cruise missiles sometimes get lost. Our policy is simple: we don't want it!

TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN CHANGES IN THE WORLD AND ECONOMY

Every couple of centuries the world goes through a massive transition. At such times nations are shaped and entire economies defined. America became a world power because it combined unprecedented freedom and leadership in the transition from the Agricultural to the Industrial Age.

The world is now moving from the Industrial Age to the Knowledge Age at blinding speed. Our nation's future as world leader is dependent on our navigating this change as skillfully as we did the last. Education will play a critical role.

The state or nation that leads that trend will rise to pre-eminence because its sociological and geo-political implications are enormous. It is a force that will push and shape governments for the next half century. Utah will not be a bystander.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

If knowledge is the shaping tool of the 21st century, our schools are the sculptor. Over the past four years we have taken some giant steps. Class sizes in the early grades -- reduced. Teacher salaries -- increased. Test scores -- improved.

Three hundred seventy-two schools accepted a challenge to become Centennial Schools by establishing performance goals and assuming control over their own progress. Now we go to the next level. We want to raise the bar of excellence, with two more steps forward.

First, 21st Century Schools. This program builds on the foundation laid by Centennial Schools with more individualization, more parental involvement and heightened commitments to technology.

It's a simple but powerful concept. To become one of the sixty 21st Century Schools this

year, the entire school community, must set measurable goals to improve reading, writing and math. Develop a three-year plan and commit to it as a team. Accomplish the goal and each school and teacher will be rewarded financially.

Alongside 21st Century Schools is a proposal to establish eight public chartered schools. They are public schools that are free, public schools that are open to any student and public schools that are accountable to an elected board. They are public schools, but not necessarily government schools.

They serve diverse needs and interests. I envision one specializing in math or the arts; another for students with the drive to earn an associate degree with their high-school diploma. There are endless possibilities.

Step two: A middle-school initiative. It begins by reducing class sizes in 7th and 8th grade. Anybody who has had a 13 or 14 year old knows that this is an age group perched at the crossroads of opportunity and vulnerability. These are the wonder years and the attitude years. They can look 9 but act 19. We cannot overlook them but we can set higher expectations for them.

In the next couple of years, as we reset the clock for a new millennium, let's establish a new measure of greatness. Let it be said we were bold as we looked around the bend of the next century. That in a valley of flat public school enrollments we set out to scale a mountain top of quality.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The future will explode with opportunity for colleges and universities if they adapt. This transition will encompass new competitors, a market place that requires agility and adaptability.

We will continue to build our traditional campuses, where people come to think, study, take instruction and interact with other people, but we will have to add a new technological dimension.

This year, I am proposing several important steps to prepare our higher education institutions for these changes. First, a new master plan that will see this new horizon, plan for it and position our schools accordingly.

Second, our five community colleges have proposed the formation of the Utah Electronic Community College to pool their distance education courses for delivery anywhere, anytime.

Third, this is not a time for us to be stepping back from our investment. The budget I have proposed this year would reverse the downward trend in higher education's share of the state appropriations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is a strong state economy that has allowed us to make school improvements yearly, to build new highways, fight crime, care for the needy and at the same time reduce taxes.

Our people are employed. Our economy is vibrant and sustainable. Last year we created 42,000 new jobs and saw unemployment drop to 3 percent.

In the last five years, taxes have been reduced by \$769 million, yet state government has not grown relative to personal income, meaning it is no more burdensome on the Utah taxpayer today than it was in 1988.

Our rural communities still need help. Rural Utah can have it all in the 21st century – safety, sense of community, scenery, and, thanks to technology, global sophistication.. But we must enhance its opportunities.

The state has launched the 21st Century Communities partnership to help rural cities and towns find their niche in the global marketplace. And they will. In small-town Utah it will be possible to live in Salina and transact with Singapore.

All of the state must become progressively global. Utah has seen dramatic expansion in international commerce. That is why the Olympics are so important. The perfect way to open the 21st century.

February 2002 will be a milestone. We will befriend nations, we will reap economic benefits for generations to come and we will kindle an Olympic flame in the hearts of our children that will burn long after the Olympic torch is extinguished in Rice Stadium.

SOCIETY, THE FAMILY AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

I have traveled most of this state as governor and talked with many of you. I have seen nobleness in its highest form, but I have also seen faces of children etched in sadness and pain.

This past week I attended the opening of a shelter for domestic abuse victims in Salt Lake. The director told me about a 3-year-old who stepped between his parents during a fight to protect his mother and came out of it with an adult hand print inflamed on his face. Three years old and the pattern of abuse was already imprinting.

How does this child go to school and learn? How does he grow and play with an unburdened heart? How does he become an adult when he hasn't been allowed to be a child?

We will never have enough money, enough foster parents, enough volunteers, to wipe out the economic disparity, the dysfunction. But we will do what we can and we will not look the other way or fail to listen simply because their stature is the smallest and their voice

the softest.

We have taken a child welfare system in disarray and invested hundreds of millions of dollars. We are committed to become a national leader. But still there is one dilemma we haven't been able to solve yet.

FOSTER CHILD

I have talked about this problem. We have reduced it to statistics, to emotions and even to anguish. Now let me put a face to it. (Mrs. Leavitt brings in baby).

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you to meet someone special. A little boy who will not remember that he was here or that his coming held significance for us. We could not stave off what is already now his past. But we can stand in solidarity and promise him a future.

Bo was found at a bus stop in the middle of the night last summer. His mother was sprawled out near him with a bag of heroine. Bo had experienced drugs before he was ever born.

He was quickly placed with foster parents who love him, care about him and want to make the bond permanent through adoption. But he has hundreds of little soul mates who have not found solace or security. Tonight there are 2,442 children in protective custody in our state, but only 950 foster families. All of us can do more!

I propose that the Legislature approve the Utah Child Welfare Foundation, which will recruit and train more foster parents so the gap between protection and placement is diminished.

It will rely to large extent on the cooperation of churches and community organizations, which can move more hearts to give willingly through love and devotion, than a government can do with the power of taxation and law. We need 3,000 foster families by the year 2000.

HUMAN SERVICES

We can do more for other children in the area of health care. Four years ago, the state created HealthPrint to expand access to quality health care. Each year we have moved closer toward the goal of making basic medical treatment available to every Utahn. This year, we can hit a milestone.

When we started the program, 88 percent of the state's children had health care. Today we are at 93 percent. If we pass the Children's Health Insurance Program this session, we finish the job by insuring the remaining 45,000 needy children.

The state cannot solve every social heartache, but it can muster every resource to save a

life, shape a future and speak up for a newborn who entered the world with nothing. This year I'm proposing substantially more money for more child care.

It is not the role of government to find babysitters. But it is in the state's interest to make sure a disadvantaged mother who is working or needs job training has someone to care for her children.

For those who can't see the human element of why that money is needed here's the financial angle: For every dollar put into child care, the state saves \$2.20 in welfare.

The new Workforce Services Department has already dramatically reduced welfare caseloads. This is a positive cycle: Off welfare roles. Onto payrolls. Use the savings to help others.

There is one other cycle we have to talk about that will determine whether Utah in the 21st century is dynamic, or simply dangerous.

When populations expand, so does crime. It is unacceptable that in a state founded on the sweat and spirit of freedom-seekers, that it is the law-abiders who could lose liberty and become prisoners.

We must have a state where the elderly are revered for their wisdom, not robbed of their life savings. Where children go to schools free of drugs, guns and gangs and walk home in groups for the fun of it, not the fear of it.

This is the right of every man, every woman, every child. Our founding principles never hedged. Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, they proclaim. It isn't "live in fear, lock your door, pursue your dreams with caution."

We will expand our prison system by more than 1,200 slots this year. We will hire more cops at every level and punish violent offenders. This state must remain safe in the 21st century.

I would like to conclude tonight by taking you back to the World Trade Center, and to our discussion about who would win the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2015. At the root of this is a lesson I've learned from public service that I believe offers a key to the state of our state in the 21st century.

The big surprise is that the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2015 will not be won by an economist, but by a sociologist who comes up with a new economic theorem called the Economics of Goodness.

It is a simple but powerful idea. Every nation or state has economic assets that produce wealth. It may be minerals, a seaport, favorable climate. But there is an asset of immense power inherent in any community that will use it -- the inclination of its citizens to do the

right thing, voluntarily.

The operative notion is that there is nothing more economically devastating than a growing population of people that instinctively do wrong. And there is no stronger economic force over the long run than people doing right.

Just one example: imagine the economic heft of a nation free of drug and alcohol abuse. Health care costs would plummet, worker productivity would skyrocket. Families torn apart by the abuse and financial hardship wrought by substance addiction would remain together. Welfare rolls would fall. Crime costs would shrink, and that society would build fewer prisons.

Imagine the power of a nation able to invest those trillions of dollars into education, investment or research. Such a nation would dominate the world economy.

One of the participants who heard this couldn't contain himself. "You're turning this into a religious discussion," he said. Before I could respond, one of the best known economists in the world beat me to it. "Wait a minute," he said. "I'm an atheist and this isn't about religion. It's about the supply and demand of human behavior and the predictability of its consequences."

It may have been the only time I said amen to the atheist. The discussion went on for nearly half an hour. Finally, another one piped up. "This kind of discussion irritates me," he said, proceeding to talk about the different values employed in the diverse world cultures. "Who's to say what's right? It is all relative."

It isn't relative. The idea that behaviors are relative was not invented by this generation, but it has been perfected by this generation, and this generation will ultimately declare it a fallacy. Because the recorded history of mankind is replete with examples that certain behaviors produce a long-term positive result.

They are ageless, timeless principles. People who work hard, are honest with each other and practice kindness and compassion will prosper. Civilizations built on a foundation of strong families and communities, patriotism and individual responsibility will endure. A nation is but the aggregate character of its people.

This is our moment to define a new century for our children. We are defining it tonight in the sunset of the 20th century. We are charging ahead to shape, to polish and to perfect it in the sunrise of the morrow.

Thank you. Good night and God bless Utah.