

# That's Good for Oklahoma!®

## TREASURER STRESSES INTEGRITY, SAVING, MAKING MONEY



Reobert Butkin

(GIT) "Integrity," Oklahoma Treasurer Robert Butkin said last month, "is our chief commodity."

Words similar to those were keystones to the Duncan man's campaign for what many consider one of the most, if not the most, controversial offices in state government.

But since taking office last year, the Butkin administration has been more than devoid of negative morning paper headlines. In fact, headlines concerning Butkin, his administration and office have headed in the opposite direction and stories about the treasurer's

office are now filled with praise from other state agency heads.

One newspaper's editorial page put it this way:

"Stated plainly, Butkin is bringing simple competence to an office renowned for its byzantine politics."

### THE OPEN WINDOW

One of Butkin's earliest observations about his new office concerned the windows: "In the not so distant past," Butkin said, "an attitude of secrecy prevailed. Even the windows were covered."

Accessibility was a key part of Butkin's plan for improving the operation and perception of the treasurer's office. One of Butkin's first efforts was The Open Window, a homepage on the World Wide Web of the Internet.

"With the simple click of a button on your home computer, you can find out what the Treasurer's office is doing with your tax money," Butkin said when the page went on-line last September. "Complete monthly investment reports are on-line, along with my administration's investment and certificates of deposit policies."

In addition to investment reports, The Open Window gives a general overview of all Treasury operations, including investments, banking services and linked deposit programs. The homepage also allows users to send electronic mail questions and comments directly to the Treasurer.

"People can easily check with their banks to find out about their personal bank account. the people should have the same access to information about their tax dollars," the treasurer said. "It's a matter of restoring trust and confidence in the Treasurer's office. Easy access to complete information is a key component."

Another component of Butkin's accessibility plan calls for the installation of a user friendly computer in the lobby of the Treasurer's office so that visitors to the capitol can access the same information provided on the homepage.

### SAVING MONEY

It takes more than a pen and a checkbook to be state treasurer.

Part of the job involves saving money.

Even before taking office," Butkin said, "I began a comprehensive review of all aspects of the State Treasurer's operations to determine ways we could save the taxpayers money and make government more efficient."

In October, Butkin announced an agreement with Governor Frank Keating's administration that would save approximately \$175,000 in state funds each year. "I realized early on that one area where significant savings could occur was in our computer operations.

"Why should Oklahoma taxpayers pay \$250,000 a year to private computer vendors, when right next door to the Treasurer's office is a mainframe computer already owned by the State of Oklahoma which might do the job just as well? I approached Tom Daxon (State Finance Director) with the idea of moving our computer operations to the Office of State Finance."

The agreement required the Democratic State Treasurer to work closely with Governor Frank Keating's Office of State Finance.

"Turf and partisanship were never issues," said Butkin. "Getting the best deal for the taxpayers of Oklahoma was our ultimate goal. My staff identified unnecessary duplication in computer operations — and thanks to the cooperation of all involved — we've now found a way to end it."

Daxon, too, praised the effort, saying, "We are pleased and excited about the opportunity to work with the Treasurer. We are committed to making this an example of what can happen when two agencies cooperate to reduce costs and increase service. Treasurer Butkin deserves praise for this initiative."

"It's quite a complex operation," Butkin said of the effort. "We process several million payment warrants each year and the mainframe is used to check and balance the entire process. Everything must be in place and working."

The final changeover is scheduled to occur on July 1. Once completed, it will reduce \$250,000 in annual external expenses for mainframe computer needs to less than \$75,000 to outside vendors.

In addition, Butkin found ways to save \$340,000 while generating an additional \$1.1 million in interest earnings during the 1995 fiscal year.

Specifically, Butkin said savings are being realized in three areas — elimination of unneeded banking services, special processing of deposits and improved cash management techniques.

"First, we were able to greatly reduce charges from banks by

### OKLAHOMA STATE TREASURER'S OFFICE Senior Staff

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