

SENATOR LAUDS KEATING CONVERSION, GOV FINALLY RECOGNIZES STATE'S ATTRIBUTES

From Senate Media

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Saying he's glad "Governor Keating has finally seen the light," a Senate leader is congratulating the State Chief Executive for recognizing Oklahoma's many economic attributes in the State Department of Commerce's new business recruitment site on the Internet.

"I don't know what caused his 11th hour conversion, but it's certainly good news for our economic development efforts," said Sen. Cal Hobson, vice-chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.



Sen. Cal Hobson

"Governor Keating has finally recognized publicly that Oklahoma is economically competitive, low tax state with a favorable business climate. He even acknowledged that education is an economic development tool."

"Now if we can just get him to follow through with additional funding for schools this year, we'll be batting a thousand."

On the Commerce Department's Internet home page, Governor Keating urges industrial recruits to "visit our pro-business state," saying "it simply costs less to do business here." Keating then directs their attention to a series of informational pages detailing Oklahoma's recent economic growth, its low tax status, its low cost of living, its commitment to education and other positive statistics. Some of the highlights of the Keating/Commerce page include:

- Oklahoma's wage and salary employment has grown seven consecutive years;
- Oklahoma's tax and incentives package is now the most competitive in the U.S.;
- Oklahoma's annual per capita state and local tax burden of \$1,632 ranks 44th lowest in the U.S.;
- Cost of Living: A recent survey of 40 major metro areas show Oklahoma ranked as 3rd lowest in the U.S.;
- Oklahoma has increased public education expenditures by 50 percent since 1990 as part of a comprehensive reform package. Test scores are up and significant results are being realized.

"I know Governor Keating and his people have spent a lot of time and energy trying to refute those favorable statistics. I hope they'll spend an equal amount of time and

energy using those statistics to promote our state," said Senator Hobson.

"I'm especially encouraged by their recognition of education's role in economic development. It indicates that Governor Keating will be supportive of the Legislature's plan to invest an additional \$218 million in education this year."

Another section of the Keating/Commerce page is subtitled "Business Taxation in Oklahoma." Some of the highlights include:

- Oklahoma has stabilized its business and industry tax system to a greater degree than many older states;
- Unemployment compensation tax rates have been reduced three times;
- State business and tax incentives are available to both new and expanding Oklahoma companies;
- State Question 640, adopted in 1992, requires that either a 75 percent majority of

the Legislature or a vote of the people is necessary to raise taxes.

"This should end the debate over our tax structure, once and for all," said Senator Hobson. "By the Keating administration's own admission, we have one of the most business-friendly tax systems in the country."

Before his latest statements on the Internet, Governor Keating has painted Oklahoma as a "third world economy" with a poor business climate in speeches and media briefings around the state.

"I'm glad Governor Keating has finally seen the light and recognized the many positive aspects about our economy and our education system. I think he'll be a much more effective job recruiter and state spokesman because of it," said Senator Hobson.

For those interested in visiting the Commerce site, the web address is www.odoc.state.us

DISASTER DECLARATION VITAL FOR OKLAHOMA

From US Sens. Don Nickles & Jim Inhofe

■(WASHINGTON) Oklahoma Senators Don Nickles and Jim Inhofe commented on the USDA disaster declaration announced Monday following their letter to Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman.

"This is good news for Oklahoma farmers," Nickles said. "Last year was one of the toughest years Oklahoma farmers have ever faced. Adverse temperatures and a terrible drought all combined to have a major impact on many major crops. The low interest loans provided by this long awaited declaration are badly needed to keep many Oklahoma farmers in business."

"I am pleased with the Administration's quick action in response to our request," Inhofe said. "This is good news for Oklahoma's farmers. Those who have suffered from drought related crop losses will now get the relief they so desperately need."

Nickles and Inhofe wrote to Secretary Glickman on May 2, 1996, pointing out that Gov. Keating's request for the disaster declaration had been filed on January 11, and urging the Secretary to act promptly to approve the request and make funds available for the low interest loans. The declaration was announced Monday making low interest loans available for qualified Oklahoma farmers in all 77 Oklahoma counties.

KIRKPATRICK FOUNDATION TO RECEIVE

SHIRK PRESERVATION AWARD

From Oklahoma Historical Society

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Kirkpatrick Foundation of Oklahoma City will receive the Shirk Memorial Award for Historic Preservation during the May 17 Awards Banquet of the Statewide Preservation Conference at the Duncan Simmons Center.

"During the past 10 years, at least 20 different entities have received grants directly from the Kirkpatrick Foundation," said Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Melvena Heisch, "or from a special fund provided by the foundation to the National Trust for Historic Preservation for Oklahoma."

The award will be presented during the 6:30 p.m. banquet, which will be a featured event of the May 16-18 conference. In addition, 17 Citations of Merit will be presented for individual preservation projects, said Heisch.

Kirkpatrick Foundation funds have been distributed to projects from Fort Supply Historic Site near Woodward in northwestern Oklahoma to Checotah's downtown district in eastern Oklahoma, said Heisch, and from the Main Street of Altus in southwestern Oklahoma to Claremore northeast of Tulsa.

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