

KEATING OUTLINES EDUCATION PLANS TO APOE

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Governor Frank Keating pledged on Thursday to pursue an agenda he said he believes will make Oklahoma schools great and will promote further economic development in the state.



Gov. Frank Keating

Speaking in Norman before more than 100 teachers at the first Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators

statewide convention, the governor said the idea that "if we spend more, we'll get more" has been proven false. Rattling off a lengthy list of statistics, Keating said despite increases in funding for education at both the state and national levels that there has been no improvement in the students leaving public schools. In fact, the governor said, more and more students seem to know less and less.

Pointing to an educational summit of government and business leaders that he attended earlier this year, the governor said three key areas of focus were pinpointed: strong academic standards, assessments and accountability.

Keating said the issue of strong academic standards is one which has become blurred in recent years. The focus, he said, should be on the basics, such as the historical chronologies, the ability to do mathematical calculations and ultimately the ability to think. Assessment of those academic standards, the governor said, "should measure what every child is learning or should be learning," rather than focus on obscure teaching objectives.

Finally, Keating said, there should be accountability in public education. Students, he said, should be accountable for learning, teachers should be held accountable for teaching and administrators should be held accountable for creating an environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn. Parents, too, he said, should share in that accountability.

Those objectives, Keating said, could be accomplished by embracing his plans for education. One such proposal, which he advanced earlier this year, would increase the teaching of basic subjects — math, science, English and social studies — and gradua-

tion requirements. Called "4 by 4," the program would require four years of high school education in each of the subjects.

The governor said he was "bewildered by the lack of response" to the proposal from those in the education community.

"If learning has suffered in our public schools," the governor said, "it is because we have abandoned these basic subjects in favor of more obscure learning theories."

Other components of Keating's education plan included:

- ✓ School choice;
- ✓ Charter schools;

- ✓ Career teacher pay raises; and
- ✓ Increased emphasis on teaching what he called the state's "best and brightest."

Ultimately, the governor said, the way to improve public schools is "to return to what works and discard what doesn't."

The APOE was formed in 1989 and currently has approximately 500 members. The association's self-proclaimed "common bond" is described as "our shared concern for Oklahoma's children and the culture they will inherit." It is affiliated with the Association of American Educators and membership is open to any employee of an education entity.

TOP STATE OFFICIALS ENDORSE TAX QUESTIONS

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Four top state officials announced Thursday their support for three state questions designed to lower and impose limits on property tax increases in Oklahoma.

Governor Frank Keating, Senate President Pro Tempore Stratton Taylor and House Speaker Glen D. Johnson said they have agreed to serve as honorary co-chairs of a campaign to win passage of State Questions 675, 676 and 677. Joining the three in their support of the questions was State Treasurer Robert Butkin.

Keating, Taylor and Johnson will work with Oklahomans for Property Tax Relief, a coalition of state business leaders from both sides of the fight over State Question 669, the failed property tax reform effort from the spring.

"The legislative leadership and I wisely sought help from a group of citizens to come up with these meaningful reforms of Oklahoma's antiquated property tax system," said Keating. "These three state questions are exactly the direction we need to go to bring real relief to taxpayers."

The governor refused to take a position during the 669 debate, claiming at one point that "being neutral is a position."

Taylor called the state questions the result of a bipartisan effort and urged their approval.

"We put aside any political differences and focused on what's important — bringing relief to Oklahoma taxpayers," Taylor said. "These state questions will stop property tax rates from being raised without a vote of the people, will prevent county assessors from raising assessments by more than five percent per year and will freeze the tax value of homes owned by most senior citizens."

Speaker Johnson said he supports the questions because they offer taxpayers a well-deserved and larger voice in the taxation process.

"We finally have a good plan to bring property taxes under control," he said. "These three state questions bring solid change to the state property tax system by easing the tax burden on the elderly and giving the people greater control over their taxes."

Butkin, too, praised the bipartisan effort that put the questions on the ballot and urged approval of the questions.

"Unlike State Question 669," the State Treasurer said, "these three new questions are the result of a bipartisan effort to equally apply the benefits to everyone. These three questions will encourage economic development by limiting increases in property taxes on businesses and homes. In addition, these common sense reforms preserve an important funding source for local governments, public schools and vo-techs."

"I am most pleased with the provision that freezes property tax values on homes owned by senior citizens earning \$25,000 or less per year."

The three questions make up one-half of the state questions which will go before voters during next month's general election.

"For the saddest epitaph which can be carved in memory of a vanished liberty is that it was lost because its possessors failed to stretch a saving hand while yet there was time."

George Sutherland
dissenting opinion
Associated Press v. NLRB
1938