

SPEECH BY GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH  
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE 62ND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
SEPTEMBER 14, 1983 10 A.M.

PREPARED TEXT

MR. PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MEMBERS OF THE OREGON <sup>LEGISLATURE</sup> ~~SENATE~~  
~~AND OREGON HOUSE~~, MY FELLOW OREGONIANS...

I HAVE CALLED THIS 62ND OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY INTO  
SPECIAL SESSION TO SOLVE A PROBLEM THAT IT COULD NOT SOLVE DURING  
THE SIX-MONTH REGULAR SESSION... A SESSION WHICH, I NEED NOT  
REMINDE YOU, WAS THE SECOND-LONGEST IN OREGON HISTORY.

NEVER IN NEARLY 25 YEARS AS AN OREGON LEGISLATOR AND AS  
YOUR GOVERNOR HAVE I SEEN SO MUCH FRUSTRATION, SO MUCH CONFUSION,  
SO MUCH ANGER AND <sup>so much</sup> EMOTIONAL ENERGY AS DURING THAT EXHAUSTING  
REGULAR SESSION.

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- A 4 PERCENT SALES TAX PLAN, WITH VARIATIONS, DID NOT PASS.
  - A PROPERTY TAX LIMITATION AND SUPER-HARRP PLAN DID NOT PASS.
  - A TRANSACTION TAX DID NOT PASS.
  - HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS DID NOT PASS.
  - A "MENU" APPROACH DID NOT PASS.
  - AN INCREASE IN THE INCOME TAX FOR PROPERTY TAX RELIEF DID NOT PASS

IN JUNE, A SALES TAX PASSED IN ONE CHAMBER, BUT FAILED IN THE OTHER. / IN ~~AUGUST~~ <sup>JULY</sup>, A TAX-RATE LIMITATION AND SUPER-HARRP PLAN MET A SIMILAR FATE. / LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES WOULD NOT ACT, FORCING THE CREATION OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES WITH ENOUGH VOTES TO SEND BILLS TO THE FLOOR. / THIS LEGISLATURE EVEN APPOINTED AN UNPRECEDENTED SPECIAL COMMITTEE... MADE UP ONLY OF REPUBLICANS... TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS. / IT MADE RECOMMENDATIONS... AND THEY WERE IGNORED

NEVER HAVE SO MANY LABORED SO LONG ON A MATTER OF SUCH IMPORTANCE TO OREGONIANS... AND COME UP WITH SO LITTLE. / THIS LEGISLATURE HAD TOO MANY TRAIL BOSSES AND TOO FEW MEMBERS WILLING TO WORK FOR A COMPROMISE. / WHEN YOU CIRCLED THE WAGONS, YOU FOUND THE ENEMY... INSIDE THE CIRCLE.

INDEED, / IF THE PIONEERS HAD HAD AS MUCH TROUBLE CHARTING THEIR COURSE FOR THE OREGON TERRITORY AS THIS LEGISLATURE HAD IN CHARTING ITS COURSE FOR PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, / THE OREGON TRAIL MIGHT HAVE ENDED SOMEWHERE IN WYOMING.

BUT IT DID NOT. / HISTORY TELLS US THAT OREGON'S PIONEERS HAD THE VISION, / THE COURAGE AND THE COMMON RESOLVE TO PUSH ON EVEN WHEN THE GOING GOT TOUGH. / BECAUSE OREGON'S PIONEERS HAD FAITH IN THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT AWAITED THEM, THE OREGON TRAIL DID NOT END PREMATURELY.

AND OREGONIANS WILL NOT PERMIT THIS LEGISLATURE TO REACH  
 A DEAD END ON PROPERTY TAX RELIEF. / NO VOTER IN OREGON QUESTIONS  
 THAT THIS IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FACING OUR STATE TODAY. / AND NO  
ONE IN THIS ASSEMBLY SHOULD IGNORE THE FACT THAT OREGONIANS'  
RIISING FRUSTRATION IS QUICKLY TURNING TO ANGER.

THAT ANGER HAS PUT OREGON AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR FOR  
 ENACTING PROPERTY TAX RELIEF TO PREVENT FINANCIAL RUIN FOR OREGON  
 SCHOOLS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. / IT IS NOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO  
 STOP THE CLOCK.

YOU CAN STOP THE CLOCK. // AND YOU CAN STEM THE ANGRY  
 DEMANDS FOR PROPERTY TAX RELIEF. // BY ENACTING THE FOUR-POINT  
 PACKAGE FASHIONED BY THE BIPARTISAN LEADERSHIP OF BOTH HOUSES AND  
~~THE GOVERNOR~~ MYSELF. / YOU CAN SHOW OREGONIANS THAT PROPERTY-TAX RELIEF IS NO  
LONGER CHOKED IN A LEGISLATIVE DEATH GRIP.

THE BIPARTISAN PLAN WOULD SEND A DRAMATIC MESSAGE TO  
 OREGONIANS:

- BY FREEZING SCHOOL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROPERTY TAX RATES, AND BY CONTINUING THE LIMIT ON THE GROWTH OF ASSESSED VALUATIONS.
- BY SETTING AN EXPENDITURE LIMIT TO CONTROL STRICTLY THE GROWTH OF SCHOOL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETS.

● BY GIVING A MAJORITY OF SCHOOL BOARDS, CITY COUNCILS AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS THE POWER TO PUT A TAX PROPOSAL TO A STATEWIDE ELECTION TO RAISE REVENUE TO CUT PROPERTY TAXES FURTHER.

● AND BY GUARANTEEING OREGON'S SENIOR CITIZENS THAT THE STATE WILL NOT TAX THEIR SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS.

EXISTING PROPERTY TAX RELIEF AND HOMEOWNERS' AND RENTERS' TAX RELIEF PROGRAMS WOULD STAY IN PLACE, AS WELL.

THIS IS A WORKABLE PLAN. / THIS IS A FAIR PLAN. / THIS IS A PLAN WITHOUT THE EXTRA BAGGAGE THAT HAS KEPT OTHER PLANS FROM PASSING THIS LEGISLATURE. / AND THIS IS A PLAN THAT WILL PREVENT THE FISCAL CATAclysm THAT AWAITS EVERY OREGON SCHOOL DISTRICT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IF THIS LEGISLATURE DOES NOTHING.

AND, / CLEARLY, / THE WORST THING THIS LEGISLATURE CAN DO NOW... IS NOTHING.

THIS IS GENUINE PROPERTY TAX RELIEF. / NOT ONLY WILL THIS PACKAGE IMMEDIATELY PUT THE BRAKES ON THE GROWTH OF TAX RATES... / NOT ONLY WILL THIS PLAN LIMIT THE GROWTH OF BUDGETS AND ASSESSED VALUATIONS... / BUT IT WILL ALSO ESTABLISH A NEW WAY TO INITIATE DRAMATIC PROPERTY TAX REDUCTIONS.

Now, SOME CRITICS CHARGE THAT THIS IS NOT THE PERFECT PLAN. OF COURSE, THEY ARE RIGHT. THEY ARE RIGHT BECAUSE THERE NEVER WAS... NEVER WILL BE... TAX LEGISLATION THAT EVERYBODY EMBRACES ENTHUSIASTICALLY. / ANY <sup>ONE</sup> BODY WHO THINKS <sup>THEY</sup> HE CAN FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD TO A POPULAR TAX PLAN MIGHT JUST AS WELL SPEND <sup>THEIR</sup> HIS TIME WAITING FOR A CHILDREN'S FANTASY TO COME TRUE.

SOME HAVE SAID THAT THIS PACKAGE DOES NOT GRANT TAX RELIEF. // THAT IS FALSE. // CONSIDER JUST ONE ELEMENT OF THIS PROPOSAL... THE TAX RATE LIMITATION. // IF IT HAD BEEN ENACTED IN 1979, <sup>AS I PROPOSED</sup> OREGONIANS ALREADY WOULD HAVE SAVED 300-MILLION DOLLARS IN LOCAL PROPERTY TAXES. // THAT IS RELIEF.

IT IS TRUE THAT THIS PLAN DOES NOT PROVIDE AN IMMEDIATE TAX REDUCTION. / BUT WHO AMONG YOU CAN OFFER A PLAN THAT DOES? REALITY DICTATES THAT ANY IMMEDIATE PROPERTY TAX REDUCTION WILL REQUIRE NEW TAX REVENUES TO PAY FOR IT, // AND ANY NEW TAX WILL BE REFERRED TO OREGONIANS FOR A VOTE.

THAT WOULD TAKE MONTHS... // SO, / CLEARLY, / THOSE WHO DEMAND AND EXPECT IMMEDIATE PROPERTY TAX CUTS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE REAL WORLD.

THIS LEGISLATURE <sup>ABUNDANTLY</sup> DEMONSTRATED ~~PAINFULLY~~ DURING ITS REGULAR SESSION... // AND THE LEADERSHIP HAS REPEATEDLY SAID SINCE THEN... // THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE THE VOTES TO RAISE NEW TAXES TO CUT PROPERTY TAXES NOW.

SO TO GIVE A MAJORITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THE POWER TO ASK VOTERS TO APPROVE A NEW TAX IS THE ONLY RESPONSIBLE CHOICE... INDEED, THE ONLY CHOICE... YOU HAVE.

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NOW, / I KNOW THAT EVERYONE IN THIS CHAMBER HAS HIS OR HER FAVORITE PLAN. / I HAD MY OWN PLAN. / I FAVORED THE PROPERTY TAX RATE FREEZE, / SUPER-HARRP, / THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE LIMIT AND LETTING OREGONIANS VOTE ON A SALES TAX... // ALTHOUGH I HAVE NEVER ADVOCATED A STATEWIDE SALES TAX. / BUT COMPROMISE WAS NECESSARY. / NO ONE CAN REFUSE TO PLAY THE GAME BECAUSE SOMEBODY ELSE IS CALLING THE PLAYS.

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AS GOVERNOR, / I AM STANDING BY MY COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE BIPARTISAN PLAN.

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AND YET IT IS SAID THAT EVEN THE RESOLVE FOR THE BIPARTISAN LEADERSHIP PLAN IS ERODING. / THAT IS PUZZLING. / DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE LEGISLATURE WANTS OREGONIANS TO WREAK DISASTER ON THEIR STATE WITH A ONE-AND-A-HALF PERCENT PROPERTY TAX LIMITATION? / AND THEN YOU WILL ACT? / I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT IS YOUR INTENT.

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LAST NOVEMBER, OREGON VOTERS WERE GIVEN A CHANCE TO APPROVE A ONE-AND-A-HALF PERCENT PROPERTY TAX LIMITATION THAT WOULD HAVE DRAINED THE LIFEBLOOD FROM LOCAL SCHOOL AND GOVERNMENT FINANCING. MORE THAN ONE-MILLION PEOPLE VOTED ON BALLOT MEASURE 3, AND IT FAILED BY FEWER THAN ELEVEN-THOUSAND VOTES.

THAT THEY REJECTED THIS MEASURE WAS AN EVERLASTING CREDIT TO OREGONIANS. BUT THIS MEASURE'S FRIGHTENING FLIRTATION WITH SUCCESS WAS A FINAL WARNING TO ALL OF US.

EVEN NOW, SPONSORS OF YET ANOTHER BALLOT MEASURE 3-TYPE PROPOSAL ARE PREPARING FOR A NOVEMBER 1984 ELECTION. IF THIS LEGISLATURE SIGNALS THAT IT WILL DO NOTHING TO BREAK THE LEGISLATIVE LOGJAM THAT HAS BLOCKED PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, IT WILL HAVE GUARANTEED THAT MEASURE'S PASSAGE... AS SURELY AS IF LEGISLATORS THEMSELVES HAD CARRIED PETITIONS FOR THE MEASURE.

THIS LEGISLATURE MUST NOT LEAVE OREGONIANS WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN RESPONSIBLE PROPERTY TAX RELIEF THAT THEY CANNOT HAVE AND IRRESPONSIBLE PROPERTY TAX RELIEF THAT THEY DO NOT WANT.

AS GOVERNOR, I AM WILLING TO BE FLEXIBLE ON THE QUESTION OF HOW YOU SOLVE THIS PROBLEM, BUT I AM RESOLUTE THAT YOU MUST SOLVE IT. OREGONIANS DEMAND... AND I DEMAND... THAT WHATEVER PLAN YOU CHOOSE, IT MUST PROTECT HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS FROM THE UNBRIDLED GROWTH OF PROPERTY TAXES. THAT IS THE BOTTOM LINE.

IF THIS LEGISLATURE RECESSES TO LOOK FOR ANOTHER PLAN, IT WILL NOT FOOL OREGONIANS: / THEY KNOW YOU CANNOT PASS PROPERTY TAX RELIEF WHEN YOU ARE NOT IN SESSION. [ IF YOU ADJOURN SINE DIE, I WILL CALL ANOTHER SPECIAL SESSION. ] <sup>AS FOR ME</sup> I HAVE NO INTENTION OF BACKING OFF AS LONG AS I AM REPRESENTING OREGONIANS AND FIGHTING THEIR BATTLES.

AS YOU CONDUCT THE CRITICAL BUSINESS OF THIS SPECIAL SESSION, / I ASK YOU TO REMEMBER MY MESSAGE TO YOU WHEN YOU CONVENED IN REGULAR SESSION ON JANUARY 10:

"AS THIS SIXTY-SECOND OREGON LEGISLATURE CONVENES... AS YOUR LABORS PROCEED... I KNOW THAT EACH OF YOU WILL WANT TO WORK TO KEEP FAITH WITH THE PEOPLE'S TRUST. AS THE DIFFICULT PRESS OF LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS UNWINDS BEFORE YOU, I ASK THAT YOU MAINTAIN YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THE LIVING HISTORY OF OUR STATE... AND ON THE CHAPTER OF THE OREGON STORY THAT YOU / PERSONALLY WILL WRITE IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. AND I ASK THAT YOU NEVER FORGET THE SPECIAL OREGON QUALITIES THAT WILL LIVE ON LONG AFTER YOUR OWN WORK IS DONE."

ALL OREGONIANS BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE OREGON STORY IS OUR HISTORIC ABILITY TO SOLVE OUR TOUGHEST PROBLEMS. // PROPERTY TAX RELIEF IS... AND FOR TOO LONG HAS BEEN... / ONE OF THOSE PROBLEMS. / THE MOMENT FOR SOLUTION IS NOW.



I HAVE, / AS PROMISED, / BROUGHT THIS ISSUE TO CENTERSTAGE. / THE BRIGHTEST OF SPOTLIGHTS SHINES UPON IT. / THE FINAL CURTAIN WILL NOT FALL... NOR THE SPOTLIGHT DIM... UNTIL ALL THE PLAYERS IN THIS CRITICAL DRAMA HAVE PLAYED THEIR PARTS.

THE OPENING OF THIS SPECIAL SESSION IS THE BEGINNING OF THIS DRAMA, / AND EACH OF US KNOWS HOW IT <sup>CONCLUDE</sup> MUST END. / IT IS TIME TO STOP ENDLESSLY REWRITING THE SCRIPT.

EACH OF US WAS ELECTED TO REPRESENT THE NEEDS AND DREAMS OF OREGONIANS. / ALTHOUGH WE SHARE COMMON OBJECTIVES, WE SOMETIMES FIND THE SOLUTIONS UNCOMMONLY DIFFICULT. BUT WHEN WE HONESTLY AND EARNESTLY DISAGREE... AS WE HAVE ON THIS ISSUE... IT IS OUR TEST TO WORK TOGETHER TO FORGE A LASTING COMPROMISE THAT MEETS OREGON'S NEEDS.

PROBABLY NO LEGISLATURE IN OREGON HISTORY HAS NEEDED THAT SHARED SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE, / THAT SPIRIT OF COOPERATION, / THAT SPIRIT OF COMMON SENSE MORE URGENTLY THAN THIS LEGISLATURE NEEDS IT TODAY.

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