

January 15, 2009

The full text of Schwarzenegger's speech

The complete prepared text of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's State of the State address is after the jump:

His 2008 address, as prepared, clocked in at 3,026 words. This year's speech is a mere 1,364 words.

Lt. Governor Garamendi, Chief Justice George, President pro Tem Steinberg, Speaker Bass, Senate Republican Leader Cogdill, Assembly Republican Leader Villines, Members of the legislature, ladies and gentlemen, we meet in times of great hope for our nation.

Although we hear the drumbeat of news about bailouts, bankruptcies and Ponzi schemes, the nation with great anticipation is also awaiting the inauguration of a new president.

Our nation should be proud of what President-elect Obama's election says to the world about American openness and renewal.

President Reagan used to tell about the letter he got from a man who said that you can go to live in Turkey, but you can't become a Turk. You can go to live in Japan, but you cannot become Japanese. And he went through other countries.

"But," the man said, "anyone from any corner of the world can come to America and become an American."

And now, we know that any American child, no matter what corner of the world his father or mother comes from, can even become President of the United States.

What a wonderful national story for us.

This nation rightfully feels the hope of change.

Californians, of course, desire change here in their own state as well.

Yet they have doubts if that is possible.

For months, in the face of a crisis, we have been unable to reach agreement on the largest budget deficit in our history.

We are in our third special session and we've declared a fiscal emergency - and every day that goes by, makes the budget problem that much harder to solve.

As a result of all this, California, the eighth largest economy in the world, faces insolvency within weeks.

The legislature is currently in the midst of serious and good faith negotiations to resolve the crisis, negotiations that are being conducted in the knowledge we have no alternative but to find agreement.

The importance of the negotiation's success goes far beyond the economic and human impact.

People are asking if California is governable.

They wonder about the need for a constitutional convention.

They don't understand how we could have let political dysfunction paralyze our state for so long.

In recent years, they have seen more gridlock in Sacramento than on our roads, if such a thing is possible.

I will not give the traditional State of the State address today, because the reality is that our state is incapacitated until we resolve the budget crisis.

The truth is that California is in a state of emergency.

Addressing this emergency is the first and greatest thing we must do for the people.

The 42 billion dollar deficit is a rock upon our chest and we cannot breathe until we get it off.

It doesn't make any sense to talk about education, infrastructure, water, health care reform and all these things when we have this huge budget deficit.

I will talk about my vision for all of these things... and more... as soon as we get the budget done.

So, no, I did not come today to deliver the normal list of accomplishments and proposals.

I came to encourage this body to continue the hard work you are doing behind closed doors.

There is a context and a history to the negotiations that are underway.

It is not that California is ungovernable. It's that for too long we have been split by ideology.

Conan's sword could not have cleaved our political system in two as cleanly as our own political parties have done.

Over time, ours has become a system where rigid ideology has been rewarded and pragmatic compromise has been punished.

And where has this led?

I think you would agree that in recent years California's legislature has been engaged in civil war.

Meanwhile, the needs of the people became secondary.

Our citizens do not believe that we in government are in touch with their needs.

These needs are not unreasonable.

At the end of the day, most people do not require a great deal from their government.

They expect the fundamentals.

They want to live in safety.

They want a good education for their children.

They want jobs.

They want to breathe clean air.

They want water when they turn on the faucet and electricity when they turn on the switch.

And they want these things delivered efficiently and economically.

One of the reasonable expectations the public has of government is that it will produce a sound and balanced budget.

That is what the legislative leaders are struggling to do right now.

There is no course left open to us but this: to work together, to sacrifice together, to think of the common good - not our individual good.

No one wants to take money from our gang-fighting programs or from Medi-Cal or from education.

No one wants to pay more in taxes or fees.

But each of us has to give up something because our country is in an economic crisis and our state simply doesn't have the money.

In December, we even had to suspend funding that affects 2,000 infrastructure projects that were already underway.

So, now, the bulldozers are silent. The nail guns are still. The cement trucks are parked. This disruption has stopped work on levees, schools, roads, everything.

It has thrown thousands and thousands of people out of work at a time when our unemployment rate is rising.

How could we let something like that happen?

I know that everyone in this room wants to hear again the sound of construction.

No one wants unemployment checks replacing paychecks.

So, I am encouraged that meaningful negotiations are underway. And, as difficult as the budget will be, good things can come out of it.

Because, in spite of the budget crisis, when we have worked together in the past, we have passed measures that moved this state - and even the nation - forward.

When a budget agreement is reached, when some of the raw emotions have passed, I will send to the legislature the package of legislative goals and proposals that a governor traditionally sends.

These proposals are sitting on my desk. Let me tell you, I have big plans.

They include action on the economy, on water, environment, education, health care reform, government efficiency and reform, job creation.

But, our first order of business is to solve the budget crisis.

And I have an idea going forward.

As you know, in the last 20 years of budgeting, only four budgets have been on time.

So, if you don't mind, let me make a little suggestion.

We should make a commitment that legislators - and the governor, too - lose per diem expenses and our paychecks, for every day the budget goes past the constitutional deadline of June 15th.

You have to admit it is a brilliant idea.

I mean, if you call a taxi and the taxi doesn't come, you don't pay the driver.

If the people's work is not getting done, the people's representatives should not get paid either.

That is common sense in the real world.

And I will send you some other reforms, too.

Let me close by saying something about the fires of 2008.

At one point, I got a phone call that we had 875 wildfires burning all at the same time.

I said to myself, how do we deal with this?

The next morning I get a call, "Governor, there are now 2,014 fires burning all at the same time."

The largest number on record.

Imagine, 2,000 fires, a huge challenge and every one of those fires was put out.

You know why? Because we have the best trained, the most selfless, the toughest firefighters in the nation.

Thirteen of whom lost their lives.

They gave their lives for this state.

Ladies and gentlemen, the courageous examples of those firefighters should not be lost on us.

In our own way, we, too, must show courage in serving the public.

Ladies and gentlemen, let this be a year of political courage.

Let us be courageous for the people.

Let us be courageous for the common good of California.

Let us resolve the budget crisis, so that we can get on with the people's work.

Thank you.