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## **Governor Gives Nontraditional State-of-the-State Address**

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's State-of-the-State Address was as different in length and scope as his timing of that address. Normally, the Governor would give his State-of-the-State Address prior to releasing his January Budget Proposal, and would use a 5:00 p.m. time slot for his delivery. This year, his address was made at 10:00 a.m. on January 15, 2009, six days after the release of the complete 2009-10 Budget Proposal. Not changed, however, was the formality of the event, including the introduction of numerous nonlegislator attendees, and the Joint Committee on Escort comprising a bipartisan selection of legislators who escorted the Governor as he entered the Chamber and walked to the podium.

The Governor kept his remarks brief, about a third of the length of last year's address. The tone set was initially one of optimism as the Governor stated that, "Our nation should be proud of what President-elect Obama's election says to the world about American openness and renewal." He then added, "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."

The Governor went on to describe the reason for people doubting that California can change. He cited the inability to reach agreement on the largest Budget deficit in California history, the fact that we're in our third special session, and the fact that every day that goes by makes it harder to solve the Budget problem. While not forecasting a timeframe for resolving the Budget mess, the Governor's message put a positive spin on the Legislature's recent work, describing legislators as being "in the midst of serious and good faith negotiations to resolve the crisis." The words provided a sharp contrast to the description the Governor gave only last week in vetoing the Democrats' special session bill package.

Rather than providing substantive proposals regarding education and other areas, Governor Schwarzenegger announced he would "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 Governor instead promised to talk about his vision for education and other areas as soon as they get the Budget done.

Governor Schwarzenegger touched on the politics of reaching a Budget compromise. Referring to his 1982 movie, *Conan the Barbarian*, the Governor said, "Conan's sword could not have cleaved our political system in two as cleanly as our own political parties have done." He described California's Legislature as having been engaged in a civil war during which the needs of the people became secondary. The Governor said the only course now open was to work and sacrifice together, thinking of the common good rather than our individual good. His message was that everyone will have to give up something.

Without focusing on the details, the Governor mentioned December's suspension of funding for infrastructure projects, which has stopped work on schools and other projects. The Governor opined that everyone in the room would like to hear the sound of bulldozers operating once again, but gave no indication of when he thought that might occur.

The Governor closed by expressing that he was "encouraged that meaningful negotiations are under way."

He promised to send legislators his package of legislative goals and proposals once a Budget agreement had been reached. He said he had big plans, including action on education, but provided no details, except with regard to a proposal that would reform the Budget process. Governor Schwarzenegger's suggestion that legislators commit to losing per diem expenses and paychecks for every day the Budget goes past the June 15 constitutional deadline met with silence in the Chamber. Finally, the Governor cited the courage shown by California's firefighters in battling and putting out the record number of wild fires (2,014) that were burning at once last year. The Governor urged legislators to also be courageous for the common good of the state.

***-Deborah Harmon***

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