



Rotary Club of Tucson

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

“Where we've been since January, and how we're building a better Arizona together”

Tucson, Arizona
Wednesday, July 15, 2009

Thank you very much, Joe (Pennington).

It is a pleasure to be with all you Rotarians and guests today to share some thoughts about where Arizona has been -- where we are going.

... AND perhaps more importantly, how we are going to get there.

But first, I wanted to Thank Tim Bee, the Director of my Southern Arizona office. Tim is both my eyes and ears here, and lets me know of YOUR concerns -- and YOUR interests.

You know, back in January, when I first took office, I knew we Arizonans had a rough economic road ahead. However, I have been through tough economic times before.

When I was first elected to higher office in 1982, our state's economy was dealing with a substantial recession.

When I was first elected to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, the County was on the verge of bankruptcy.

I worked hard to correct the problem and I urged my colleagues on the Board to return to fiscal sanity.

We DID recover, and Maricopa County was ultimately recognized as the best run in the country.

As Governor, one of the FIRST things I did was to put forward a 5-point plan that included:

- Structural budget reform
- Improving Proposition 105
- Spending cuts
- Targeted Tax cuts, and as a last resort
- A temporary tax increase

I did not make this decision without much consulting from some of the best economic forecasters in the land. My 5-point plan, is a true strategy that if properly implemented can turn Arizona's economy around.

So, after months of negotiations – which included a Supreme Court hearing – my line-item vetoes – and a Special Session -- I was pleased to sign into law four bills that will fund my top priorities.

These include education -- public safety -- and health care for the state's frailest among us.

Now, I am all for pruning government -- all aspects of government -- I have said that time and time again.

But what I will NOT do, is mindlessly cut education, public safety and basic health care to a level that puts our future in jeopardy.

Make no mistake, further spending cuts are necessary, but they need to be balanced at a level that does not "eat the seed corn" that is Arizona's future.

After much work, I am delighted the Legislature retained higher funding levels for K-12, for Universities, for the Department of Economic Security, and for the Department of Health Services.

This will allow Arizona to proceed with my application for federal stimulus funds, both for education and for AHCCCS.

As Governor, I was also pleased to sign into law HB 2572 – allowing Pima County voters to decide for themselves if they want to pay for stadium construction and improvements. This legislation has serious economic potential for Tucson and the local economy.

Similarly, I've made no secret that I am all for getting voters input in deciding the question of additional revenue for Arizona in the form of a temporary tax increase – just as Pima County will likely do with the baseball stadium question.

The fact is, Arizona's economic shortfall is no small matter, and we must determine the best way to solve our budget deficit.

And to that end, the Legislature still needs to work with me on a revenue solution, because the budget is massively out of balance.

Every day that goes by is a dangerous delay.

We must work together -- both Republicans and Democrats -- to address our serious revenue shortfall, and we must act quickly.

I remain eager to work with both sides to design a revenue solution that balances the budget wisely -- prudently -- and without delay.

My ongoing discussions with the House and Senate leave me cautiously optimistic that we can get something done, but stay tuned.

Let me next turn to education for a moment:

You may recall, I boldly determined last February that Arizona should utilize federal stimulus funds and we immediately began the application process.

At the time, there were many who urged me to reject such funding. But I recognized that as Governor, I have a responsibility for doing what's best for Arizona.

Now, Arizona is projected to receive a little over \$1 billion in State Fiscal Stabilization Funds -- 82 percent of which are for K-12 and higher education.

I have spoken with the Board of Regents and have let them know that I am committed to using the federal stimulus dollars over the next few years to mitigate the impacts of a potential INCREASE of university tuition.

But, with that commitment, I require THEIR commitment to prepare for the day these federal dollars disappear.

By this fall, I expect to see a new Regents business model that is accountable, predictable, and affordable to taxpayers, parents and students.

Predictability means having the classes that you need to graduate as well as knowing how much it will cost to graduate.

Affordability means giving students choices and financial certainty that recognize differences in the types of degrees, types of institutions, and the location of our students.

I have great confidence that the Regents will provide me with a thoughtful and groundbreaking proposal this fall, and together we can begin to implement a worthy new model.

In addition to education, I know that border security is a major concern throughout the state, especially here in Pima County.

Make no mistake, it is a major concern of mine, as well. While much remains to be done, we have had measurable success with border security. Let me give you a few examples.

While Arizona's border with Mexico is 377 miles long, I am pleased to tell you that Arizona's section of the southwest international border with Mexico has the highest rate of interdiction in the nation.

One of the functions of the Arizona Department of Homeland Security is to advocate for -- and manage -- Homeland Security grants from the federal government.

One such program is called OPERATION STONEGARDEN, which is providing grants to local and county law enforcement to work side-by-side with Border Patrol agents in their interdiction efforts.

OPERATION STONEGARDEN also supports law enforcement efforts at the official Ports of Entry to identify and seize cash and weapons heading into Mexico.

I am pleased to tell you that last month Arizona was awarded over \$12 million in OPERATION STONEGARDEN funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2009 – a 29 percent increase over 2008 funding!

In addition, my office has been busy helping Arizona in other ways that I know the Rotary cares deeply about as well.

-- I recently signed legislation that restores previously eliminated funding for hospitals, preserving a critical safety net for many Southern Arizona residents.
-- Millions of dollars in federal transportation stimulus, or the so-called "shovel ready projects," have been approved. At least \$50 million will flow to Pima County for projects that include: road widening, pavement preservation, and bridge deck rehabilitation.

-- I continue to be a strong advocate for regulatory reform, and deeply believe that this is hardly the time for new and burdensome regulations that only serve to strangle businesses and add needless costs and frustrations to people who are simply trying to make an honest living.

-- In fact, on my second day in office, I issued a directive freezing all new agency regulations and rulemaking. That edict is still in place to this day.
So in conclusion, let me say that I've had a busy first 6 months in office as your Governor.

I believe it was Dwight D. Eisenhower that once said, "History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid."

The truth is, those who are entrusted to govern here in Arizona right now, cannot be weak or timid, but we must go forward.

We all must be willing to put everything on the table. So, I ask each one of you: help me and help your legislators to help Arizona.

Again, thanks to the Tucson Rotary for the kind invitation to speak to you today, and thanks to all of you for your time this afternoon.