

State crime plan praised

CENTRAL POINT, Ore. (AP) — Gov. Neil Goldschmidt said Wednesday he's had to spend much of his first term repairing a criminal justice system suffering from years of disregard.

In a talk billed as his second state-of-the-state speech this week, the governor said he's keeping a campaign pledge he made in 1986 that Oregon would stop being a place where criminals laughed at police and judges.

"For the last decade, Oregon's criminal justice system was shamefully neglected by state leaders who must have believed that fighting crime was somebody else's responsibility," Goldschmidt said.

"This governor will have built nearly half of the prison beds that have ever been built in the history of the Oregon corrections system," he said.

Goldschmidt is taking an unusual tack with the traditional state-of-the-state address by giving one speech a day for four consecutive days at various locations around the state.

Each talk emphasizes a different topic. His address Wednesday on crime and corrections largely was a recounting of accomplishments.

Governors usually give one state-of-the-state address at the start of each year.

Goldschmidt, a Democrat, hasn't formally announced whether he's running for a second term. But he has some campaign staff and is disclosing proposals he intends to make to the 1991 Legislature.

Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer, who's seeking the Republican nomination for governor, took issue with Goldschmidt's assessment.

"The system wasn't neglected," Frohnmayer said. "We were in tough economic times."

He said only the advent of the lottery made possible prison construction that had been urged by himself and others.

"The statement is a bit ungenerous to people of both parties who had worked on the problem for a decade or longer," Frohnmayer said.

Goldschmidt said 3,000 additional prison beds are to be in operation by the end of 1991 and that a host of new laws are on the books to combat crime.

He said lottery funds were diverted by the 1989 Legislature to prison construction use "on a one-time-only basis."

Goldschmidt proposed in his opening speech Tuesday that 30 percent of net lottery proceeds be used to finance Head Start programs for preschoolers from low-income homes.

That would require voters to amend the state constitution, which now restricts uses of lottery profits to economic development.

Frohnmayer concluded in an opinion that prison construction would qualify as economic development.

Goldschmidt aides say the governor's proposal would have the effect of shifting the lottery funds used for prisons to Head Start.

The 1989 Legislature "was the most productive anti-crime session in decades," Goldschmidt said.

Goldschmidt said the National Guard, along with state and local police, will submit a plan to the Legislative Emergency Board in March for using \$1.2 million in federal drug interdiction funds Oregon is to receive this year.

Frohnmayer calls for session

PORTLAND (AP) — Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer said the Oregon Legislature should convene soon in special session to deal with what he called a crisis in the state's workers' compensation system.

Frohnmayer, a Republican who's running for governor in this year's elections, faulted Gov. Neil Goldschmidt and said businesses are endangered by further delay on the issue.

Goldschmidt last week convened a group of business and labor representatives who plan weekly meetings toward adopting a workers' compensation reform package by April 15.

Goldschmidt, who hasn't announced whether he'll seek re-election, earlier said he would call a special legislative session to adopt the plan if it appeared there was sufficient support for it.

At a news conference, Frohnmayer called the development "a classic case of too little, too late."

He said the SAIF Corp. plans to notify another 4,000 to 5,000 businesses in March that it will not renew their coverage when it expires April 1.

The public insurance company is dropping its least profitable business in an effort to eliminate financial losses.

"We don't need to wait for further study," Frohnmayer said. "All we need is the courage to take decisive action to fix the problem now."

"To delay any longer means to sentence more businesses to closure, and more Oregonians to unemployment," he said.

Goldschmidt spokesman Gregg Kantor said he agreed with Frohnmayer that workable solutions are available.

"But you've got to have a consensus before you go into a special session,"

Kantor said. "A special session without a consensus beforehand about what should be done could end up melting down into a long, unproductive affair that wastes taxpayers' dollars."

Kantor said Goldschmidt took issue with Frohnmayer's characterization of members of the governor's advisory committee as "select interests."

Kantor said both business and labor are represented on the panel.

"These are the people the system was designed to work for," he said.

Frohnmayer said too many separate efforts are under way. He said legislative committees are working on the problem and that legislative leaders also are conducting meetings on the issue.

"We do not have time to hold a battle of the bands," Frohnmayer said. "We need to start with a process that is right, not with a process that gingerly tests what selected interests might possibly accept."

Frohnmayer singled out problems such as skimpy benefits under the system and workers' compensation insurance rates that are among the highest in the nation.

Frohnmayer said solutions must include an end to "outrageous fraud, abuse and exploitation" that allows felons to collect benefits while in prison and compensation for workers injured because of illegal drug use at work.

The attorney general said any reform plan also needs to encourage people to get back to work instead of remaining off the job and drawing benefits; control medical costs; and allow employees to settle workers' compensation claims with employers, which Frohnmayer said is permitted in 43 states.

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