

Remarks of Gov. Bill Ritter
Gov. Ritter's State of the State speech
January 11, 2007

Selected Text from the Governors' Speech:

Two short days ago I was sworn in as your new governor, and the 66th General Assembly convened just yesterday. You have less than 120 days to conduct the business of the people. There's much work to do and not very much time.

Over the past 130 years, there has been no shortage of encouragement from the Governor to the General Assembly. John L. Routt was Colorado's very first governor after statehood. In 1876 he told the legislature:

"The people, by their choice, have signified their faith in your wisdom, integrity and patriotism, and I feel assured that their confidence will not have been misplaced."

I share that same sense of hope and confidence. I call it the Colorado Promise – the promise of creating a better Colorado for our children and our grandchildren. The promise of a brighter tomorrow, a new direction.

LEGISLATIVE, POLICY AND BUDGET AGENDA

I. New Energy Economy

Our calling card to the 21st century must be the New Energy Economy. People all across Colorado are excited about the possibility of creating jobs, adding economic value to the state and establishing Colorado as a national leader in renewable energy. This is our chance to build a New Energy Economy in Colorado.

Fossil fuels will continue to be a major part of our energy economy. But with our abundant supplies of wind, sun and crops, renewable energy plays an important role. It's how we create new jobs and stimulate the ailing economies of the Eastern Plains and San Luis Valley. It's how we breathe new economic life into our farms. It's one way to give new economic relevance to our colleges and universities. It's how we prepare our workforce for 21st century industries.

All around the country, states are already making great headway. This means competition and urgency. Energy is today's version of the space race of the '60s and the technology race of the '80s and '90s. We have a head start because of our natural resources, our intellectual resources and our entrepreneurial spirit.

Last year, the legislature and governor wisely created the "Collaboratory," linking some of our finest research facilities – NREL, CU, CSU and Mines – to harness the tremendous intellectual power here in Colorado.

Now we must do everything possible to ensure that the futuristic technology coming from the labs and the classrooms is transferred to the marketplace. And it's already happening. Private companies are knocking on our door wanting to build the biggest wind farms and solar parks in the country right here in Colorado.

All we're missing is a state government to lead, to inspire and to invest. If we miss this opportunity, we miss the opportunity of a lifetime. We cannot fail, so I am proposing several immediate initiatives.

- By executive order, I will adopt the Western Governor's Association's recent resolution calling for a 20 percent improvement in the efficiency of electricity use statewide by 2020.
- I look forward to seeing legislation co-sponsored by Senator Fitz-Gerald, Representative Cory Gardner and Representative McFadyen that will solve one of the biggest challenges when it comes to clean energy – loading it onto the grid. Getting wind energy on the wires will be one of my highest priorities.
- I'm eager to see the bill from Senator Schwartz and Representative Pommer that will double the renewable energy requirements of Amendment 37.
- I'm excited about the possible creation of a Colorado Clean Energy Fund that will help with the technology transfer of research to the marketplace and finally into our communities, homes and businesses.
- State government also will lead by example. We must convert our vehicle fleets to hybrid or flex-fuels as they are replaced. We must increase the use of bio-fuels which are produced right here in Colorado. All new and renovated state buildings must comply with higher energy-efficiency standards and become High Performance Buildings.

- Finally, each year, I will recognize the remarkable people, businesses, institutions and nonprofits who work in the renewable energy field. Today, I am happy to announce the creation of the Governor's Excellence in Renewable Energy Award.

CONCLUSION

Colorado is what it is today because of God's gift, because our parents and grandparents were wise enough to protect it and to invest in it.

Now it's our turn to keep the Colorado Promise. It falls to us, in this first decade of the 21st Century and our 131st year of statehood, to renew the promise and update it to the realities and challenges of our time.

The voters have entrusted us to serve them well. Not to be placeholders, but to be leaders. Not to tinker around the edges, but to find real solutions to real problems. Not to advance narrow agendas, but to be ambitious and courageous.

Fifty years from now, another governor will stand at this podium and another group of 100 legislators will occupy this chamber. They will be confronted with challenges we can't even imagine.

My hope is that those future leaders are able to look back at us for inspiration.

Inspiration because we pioneered the New Energy Economy.

Because we created the Colorado Health Plan.

Because we reduced the drop-out rate and closed the achievement gap.

Because we kept college affordable and built the best transportation network in the nation.

Because we were stubborn stewards of our environment.

Because we fulfilled the Colorado Promise for our children and our families.

Let me close by going back to something I mentioned two months ago on Election Night. I talked about two little babies who were born earlier that day: Keller Kuna and Trey Thomas. Keller's parents are here with us today up in the gallery.

I said the election was about those two babies, about every baby born in Colorado on November 7th. The election was about our future and how we as a state go forward in fulfilling the Colorado Promise.

At the end of this legislative session, at the end of the year, at the end of four years, I hope we can report back to Keller's parents, to Trey's parents, to all Coloradans, that we made progress.

That we solved problems. That we are in fact fulfilling the Colorado Promise – together.

Thank you, and God bless Colorado.