INAUGURAL MESSAGE TO THE SIXTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By Honorable Harold E. Hughes, Governor of Iowa

Joint Session, January 17, 1963

MR. PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. CHIEF JUSTICE, SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES, STATE OFFICIALS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMAN:

Let me say at the outset that I am deeply appreciative of the warm reception I have been accorded here today. As I look about this historic chamber and reflect on the years of distinguished service to the state represented by the personages in attendance — the members of the assembly, the high officials of the judiciary and the executive branch — I am awed as well as profoundly honored to be addressing you for the first time in the capacity of the chief executive of this great state.

As we meet, the question uppermost in the minds of the citizens we represent is whether or not you of the legislature, with a very substantial Republican majority, and I, the Democratic governor, can work together to develop a constructive legislative program for the good of the state.

As I see it, we have no choice — if we are to keep faith with our oaths of office. Our constitution states that “all political power is inherent in the people.” The people of Iowa elected a Democratic governor. They elected a large Republican majority in both houses of the Assembly. They expect us to do our jobs regardless of party labels.

I have read statements by the distinguished leaders of the House and Senate and have received personal assurances from numerous individual legislators indicating a willingness to cooperate toward constructive goals in the public interest. I accept these statements in good faith — and I hereby pledge to the members of the General Assembly and to all of the people of Iowa that I, myself, will allow neither personal prejudice nor divisive partisanship to deter me from any reasonable effort to work with the majority and minority parties in the legislature for a program that will keep faith with the will of the people as expressed on last November 6.

Throughout the legislative session, the schedule of my office will be set up to assign first priority to conferences with members of the Assembly at such times as the legislative leaders, committees or individual members may desire to meet with me. In short, the door of my office will be open to you at all times; our facilities will be at your service; and I will meet you at any and all times in an atmosphere of good will and cooperation.

We have recently been through an arduous political campaign. In a campaign, it is fitting and proper that we should emphasize our opposing points of view, as candidates and as political parties, so that the voters may make aninformed choice at the polls.

Yet, now that the campaign is over and weproceed to the constructive tasks of legislation and administration, it is worth noting that the differences that divide us as partisans are small by comparison with the common ground that unites us as fellow Iowans. We all want a better, more progressive, more prosperous Iowa. To attain it, we must seek both unity and continuity in government.

Governor Erbe has been most gracious and cooperative in assisting me to effect an orderly transition in administrations. I am very grateful, indeed. In the same spirit, I can assure you that I do not intend to set aside any constructive accomplishments of his years in office simply because of a change in administration.

Although gallantry is not precisely my long suit, I would like to extend a special greeting to the ladies whose presence adorns this session of the Assembly. Your being here attests to the increasing importance of women in the public life of our state and your talents, I am sure, will contribute greatly to the constructive accomplishments of this session.

While it is not leap year, I think it is also my duty to call the attention of the unmarried ladies throughout Iowa to the unusual supply of eligible bachelors among the members of the Sixtieth General Assembly. After all, the shoring up of our population growth is an important element in the economic development of the state.

In addition to submitting to you certain specific recommendations for legislation in this message, I would like to communicate to you, in the interests of better understanding, something of my basic intentions with reference to the new administration. These intentions reflect a broad philosophy of government which, I hope, will fall — at least in part — in the area of the common ground to which I referred earlier.

When I first commenced work for the state government, following my election to the Commerce Commission in 1956, I experienced a frustration that I am sure many others have experienced before me. I could see any number of changes that needed to be made to improve the operation of the commission — ordinary, common sense improvements that any qualified business executive would regard as self-evident.

But at every suggestion of change, I was told that “it couldn’t be done.’’ In most cases, the reason given was that the proposed move wasout of harmony with long-standing custom, law or legislative intent.

So, in exasperation, I said to my staff: “Your job is not to look for reasons that we *can’t* effect these administrative changes that make sense and are clearly in the public interest. Your job is to help get them done — unless they are actually prohibited by law.” And we did get the job done — so far as I know without violation of the law or damage to legislative intent.

The point I am making is that the hand of the past lies heavy upon many of the departments of state government. Because certain basic improvements have not been made through the years, it is assumed that they can’t be made. The tendency is to wait for new legislation or full-scale governmental reorganization before making necessary administration improvements.

Elsewhere in this message, I will make reference to certain needs for reorganization of the state government. But in the meantime, I want to point out that I consider it the administration’s duty to get the best performance possible out of the existing machinery of government, tocut through inertia and red tape , and to effect sensible changes and modernizations that will result in greater efficiency and economy.

In short, the keynote of our approach will be to realize as fully as possible the potential that exists in the present framework of government and to use with initiative and prudence the authority that our constitution and statues have placed in the hands of the executive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the past decade there has been a steady, encouraging progress in the state’s economic development. Yet, every thinking citizen knows in his heart that we haven’t fulfilled the rich potential for growth in Iowa.

According to predictions of the Census Bureau, Iowa’s population will increase by only 5 percent between 1960and 1970, compared with an expected nationwide gain of more than 19 percent. In other words, 46 of the 50 states will grow faster than ours. I believe it is within our power to change the pattern of these forecasts.

We have tended to place our faith in methods and gimmicks, in get-rich-quick schemes for developing our state, and too little faith in basic community improvement and over-all planning.

We have failed to grasp the fact that Iowa is essentially one big community — rural and urban people, industry and agriculture, labor and management, with all of its components depending upon one another for their well-being.

What is good for agriculture is good for the entire state; along the same line, the growth of industry affects the well-being of all of our citizens. Progressive cities — with good streets and parks and schools — enhance the advantages of rural living. Well-kept, prosperous farms, good county government and roads are a blessing to urban citizens. To create jobs, we need bold and venturesome capital. To make industry and business flourish, we need a steady, dependable labor supply. We all depend on one another. We need to plan together and work together to prosper together.

To achieve these objectives will require the concerted leadership of the best talent in both political parties. Among the specific recommendations I would make concerning Iowa’s economic growth are these.

First , I propose a substantial strengthening of the Iowa Development Commission along the general lines recommended by the Citizens Committee for Industrial Growth in Iowa.

Second, I ask the General Assembly to give serious consideration to legislation for financing industrial development, including legislation to permit communities to issue revenue bonds for industrial sites and buildings.

Third, I recommend that the moneys and credits tax be reviewed thoroughly to eliminate features which are considered inequitable, illogical and a deterrent to the state’s industrial growth.

Finally, we need tofurther bold new programs of research. We need a stepping up of scientific research to develop newuses for agricultural products. And there is an equal need for economic research and analysis — studies of raw materials, products, by-products, adaptation studies for industry, income studies, manpower surveys and many more.

The facilities of our great universities should be utilized to the fullest extent in a new all-out emphasis on research in Iowa.

PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

School district reorganization in Iowa has shown significant and commendable progress in recent years. However, the fact remains that only 10 states have more school districts than Iowa. It is clear, therefore, that efforts toward further school reorganization must be continued.

In my budget message, I will recommend an increase in state aid to local school districts. I would make to make it clear that I oppose any distribution plan which penalizes local districts for the support of their schools or rewards them for non-support.

In principle, I favor the so-called ‘‘foundation plan” which would establish a permanent formula for distributing general and supplemental aid and would insure an adequate sum to educate each public school pupil in the state. However, if, in the face of current revenue demands, the legislature considers it impracticable to institute the “foundation plan” at this time, I would recommend that steps be taken to set the stage for enactment ofthe plan in the next session.

HIGHER EDUCATION

One of the gravest responsibilities of the Sixtieth General Assembly is to provide wisely for our institutions of higher learning so that Iowa can attract and retain the highest caliber educators in these institutions, in order that they can keep up with the need for modern equipment and research facilities, and to enable them to meet the need for additional classrooms to accommodate expected increases in enrollments.

I am convinced that the time has come when we should face the long-recognized need for a long-range program of capital improvements for these institutions. I will give my unqualified support to any sound plan of financing, such as revenue or general obligation bond issue, which have been suggested in the past.

The frenzied public demands for crash programs in education, following the launching of the first Sputnik, have not abated. But thoughtful citizens realize that the vital need for strengthening our educational system on all fronts is greater than ever.

GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION

In general, I am in support ofmost of the recommendations made in 1950 by the Governmental Reorganization Commission commonly known as the Little Hoover Commission, and the Commission on Economic and Social Trends of 1958.

Among the recommendations of these forward-looking commissions, I would particularly point out the advocacy of four-year terms for elective state officials and the recommendation for item veto of legislation by the governor — especially in appropriations bills.

I recommend the immediate establishment of a non-political civil service for the state government so that we may attract and retain the able, competent and efficient personnel so desperately needed in public service.

However, I do not favor the substitution of one-man directorships for present commission, such as the Conservation and Commerce Commissions.

CONSERVATION

There is no department of state government in which I have a greater personal interest than Conservation. While I have no major legislative recommendations to offer in this field at the present time, I feel that the organization of the Conservation Department can be substantially strengthened.

I am principally concerned that the state conservation program should be brought more closely in line with the needs and desires of the people of Iowa.

One legislative recommendation I would like to make is that hunting and fishing licenses be provided without cost to Iowans who are 65 or over.

HIGHWAYS

The enactment of a new formula for the allocation of the road use tax by the Fifty-ninth General Assembly was a significant step forward toward the equitable distribution of these funds. I do not recommend a change in the allocations at this time.

A great deal oflight was cast upon our over-all highway program by the reports ofthe Iowa Highway Study Committee to the Fifty-ninth Assembly. It is my recommendation that the continuation of the committee be authorized by this session of the Assembly.

I support the League of Iowa Municipalities proposal that requirements in the present road use tax law relating to arterial streets be eliminated for communities of less than 5,000 people.

Certain organizational changes should be made in the present framework of the Highway Commission, but I believe that this can be accomplished on the administrative level without the need for additional legislation.

The emphasis of the new administration will be on the continuation and acceleration of highway construction on a needs or sufficiency basis.

APPORTIONMENT

With all due respect to the sincere people who believe that the Shaff plan is “at least a step in the right direction,” I believe that the Sixtieth General Assembly should reject this bill and meet the responsibility of developing a sound and equitable plan of legislation reapportionment.

Although the Shaff plan clearly falls short of providing equality of representation, my objections are not wholly on this basis. In my opinion, this proposal — which would place the Senate or small house on population and the larger house on area — sets up an unwise, “upside-down” bicameral system under which one house would frequently stalemate the other on important issues in the public interest.

IPERS

I am fully in accord with the proposal of the Iowa Public Employees Association for an increase in benefits under the Iowa Public Employees Retirement System.

LIQUOR CONTROL

It is well-known, I think, that I favor legislation to legalize the sale of liquor by the drink. My principal reason for taking this stand is that I believe it would be a more enforceable system of liquor control and would eliminate the illegal key clubs which I consider a Number One source of crime and youth delinquency in the state.

I have indicated that the new administration will exert its best effort to enforce the law, whatever it may be. In recent weeks, many local law enforcement authorities and businessmen have made a conscientious effort to bring their communities in line with the liquor laws for the first time in a number of years. I think we all owe them a debt of gratitude for their voluntary actions. In justice to those people who are now abiding by the law, the state agents will be alerted to enforce the law against those who have not complied.

It is clear that the present law, in addition to being difficult to enforce, is not desired by the majority of our citizens. I sincerely hope that the Sixtieth General Assembly will adopt a system of liquor by the drink under strict licensure and control. I have no doubt that such a change will result in better law enforcement, a more temperate use of alcoholic beverages, and the elimination of the atmosphere ofofficial hypocrisy that has prevailed with respect to our liquor laws.

UTILITY REGULATION

I recommend the creation of a state agency within the framework of the present Commerce Commission to regulate public utilities in the State of Iowa for the protection of both utility companies and consumers. If such an agency is to function usefully, it must be given adequate staff and adequate enforcement powers. I want to make it entirely clear that I will oppose any regulatory agency that does not fully protect the citizen-consumers in matters relating to utility rates and services.

BRUCELLOSIS CONTROL

I give my unqualified support to the proposed legislation for brucellosis control through mandatory testing of Iowa farm animals. Iowa lags far behind most other states in this field. Iowa farmers suffer severe financial losses from this disease, and transmission of the infection to human beings constitutes a serious health problem in our state.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

It will be the policy of the new administration to direct that meetings of state agencies shall be open to the press and to the public.

KERR-MILLS

The Fifty-ninth Assembly enacted legislation authorizing Iowa’s participation in the Kerr-Mills program of medical aid to the aging. However, no appropriation was made to fund this program.

It is my recommendation that the Sixtieth General Assembly should appropriate adequate funds to implement the Kerr-Mills program and I will make provision for this in my budget message.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

It is my conviction that justice requires adequate defense for all accused persons regardless of their ability to pay. Voluntary legal aid societies in many of Iowa’s counties have done a praiseworthy job in this direction. However, in order to insure capable defense of every defendant, I would recommend that the Sixtieth General Assembly give consideration to the establishment of a public defender system in Iowa.

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

Under section 285 ofthe lowa Code, children attending private schools are denied transportation on public school buses, despite the fact that their parents pay taxes for public schools. It is my recommendation that this section be repealed to allow all children to ride on public school buses.

COMMISSION 0N ALCOHOLISM

In 1958, a citizens committee on alcoholism was created by Governor Loveless to counteract the disease which afflicts an estimated 5O,OOO Iowans. The Fifty-ninth General Assembly followed up this action by creating an Alcoholism Study Commission. It is recommended that chapter 123A of the Code be clarified to furnish funds directly to the commission for a statewide research, treatment and education program to combat this major problem in our society.

ABOLITION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

In the field of criminology, statistics indicate that through the years capital punishment has failed as a deterrent to capital crimes. In my opinion, the hanging of a human being inflicts severe spiritual damage upon all of the citizens of our state. I therefore strongly recommend the abolition of the death penalty in Iowa criminal law.

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

In both the Loveless and Erbe administrations, the Governor’s Commission on Human Relations made a valuable contribution toward the prevention of discrimination, based on race, creed, national origin or economic status.

It is my recommendation that a permanent Commission on Human Relations be established by the legislature.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The energy of the new administration will be directed at all times towards the vitalization of the great human resource programs ofthe state — mental health, care and education of the retarded, and programs for the handicapped, the aged and the needy.

It is my profound conviction that good welfare and rehabilitation programs justify their existence while half-hearted programs in these areas are a waste of the taxpayers’ money.

One of our major objectives will be to strengthen the mental health program in Iowa in every way possible. The current proposal for providing a security hospital for the criminally insane has my full support.

I am firm believer in the concept of providing the best psychiatric care for the mentally ill. While humanity is our primary motivation in this area, the record of the past decade shows unmistakably that the populations of mental hospitals are reduced by modern psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation techniques. In addition to restoring human beings to happy and productive lives, this results in substantial savings to the taxpayers.

Enlightened programs for the rehabilitation of prisoners in our penal institutions and offender who have been discharged or paroled and efforts towards the prevention of youth delinquency are plainly in the public interest and will receive the continuing attention of the new administration.

Iowa is one of the leaders in the nation in its programs for orientation of the blind and other programs for the handicapped. These worthwhile activities should be encouraged in every way possible.

LABOR

Considering the importance of nonagricultural workers in the Iowa economy, the attention ofthe General Assembly is respectfully directed to the following laws affecting labor, which, in my opinion, require modification:

1. The Employment Security Act should be amended to provide increased benefits; the waiting period should be eliminated; and the scope of coverage of the act should be increased.

2. The Workmen’s Compensation Act should be modified to raise the benefits, to eliminate limitations on the provisions for medical and hospital care, and to broaden the occupational disease provision to cover any disease caused by a person’s employment.

3. The Right to Work Law should be amended to abolish the statutory prohibition of “union shop” contracts between employers and employees.

4. A Fair Employment Practices Act, similar to the one that is presently in existence in the State of Kansas, should be enacted.

5. The Labor Commissioner should be given the rule-making powers that other departments have so that he can enforce safety in industrial plants.

6. A prevailing wage law covering public works contracts should be enacted.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The department of public safety, as you know, is a vast department consisting of nearly a dozen divisions, including several concerned with traffic safety, the division of criminal investigation and the division of the fire marshal. At this point, I am more interested in strengthening the administration of this department and coordinating its multifold activities than in seeking new legislation. In general, I am interested in a total approach to our problems of law enforcement — stressing prevention and education across the board along with enforcement itself.

Of major concern to all Iowans is the staggering toll of highway accidents and fatalities. In general, I believe that our highway safety program demands steady, consistent, and completely strict law enforcement, rather than crash programs. The recent innovations by the present safety commissioner, including the use of unmarked patrol cars, I think should be given a thorough trial. In the meantime, I feel that every effort should be made to build up the morale of the Highway Patrol, to provide it firm and unwavering guidance, and to keep the patrol cars on the highways 24 hours a day. I believe safety education should be re-emphasized as an important service of the public safety department.

The basic emphasis on prevention over punishment should extend to criminal investigation activities and the division of the fire marshal. I think a great potential lies in the effort to gain continuity in our law enforcement and corrections system, and believe that the surface has not been scratched in developing co-ordination between state and local authorities concerned with crime and punishment.

CITIZEN COMMITTEES

In the Loveless administration, unprecedented use was made of citizen committees that served as valuable working adjuncts of the government. Governor Erbe also made good use of certain committees of this type. In the new administration, such committees as those on mental health, penal affairs, and the aging, to name but a few, will be recommissioned and used to the best advantage.

HOME RULE

The citizens of Iowa are a proud and self-reliant breed. The motto our state flag bears: “Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain” is more than a decoration. It is a way of life of our people.

It is my profound conviction that the people of Iowa believe in government close to the people — in the right and capacity of local citizens to govern themselves in affairs of local concern.

Yet, in the past century, we have departed, little by little, from this mainstream democratic concept into a cumbersome legal relationship between the state and local government that deprives local jurisdictions of their prerogatives of self-determination in local matters.

The dominance of the state over local government in matters of general application is accepted as valid and consistent with our democratic traditions. But the mongrel doctrine that cities and towns are “creatures of the state” and that they and other jurisdictions of local government cannot function on even the most trivial level without the express or plainly implied authority of state law, is entirely inconsistent with the democratic traditions of our republic.

In the meantime, our biennial legislative sessions, heavily burdened with matters of important and statewide concern, must direct their attention, each session, to scores of proposals of purely local significance — simply because silence in the statutes is prohibition, under the present system, for local government to act.

I consider it high time that the necessary measures be taken to change the obsolescent and undemocratic relationship between state and local government, as some 30 other states have already done.

I therefore throw my full support behind the proposal for home rule as a sensible method of state control over municipalities in Iowa — and the extension of this grant to other local jurisdictions, if they desire it. It is clearly understood that the legislation calling for the broad grant of home rule will be set up in such a manner that the state is in full control in matters of general application, leaving only local matters to the discretion of local jurisdictions. Such constitutional provisions as the 5 per cent debt limit and other general statutes that the legislature has enacted or shall see fit to enact would still be in full force. But the inalienable right of local communities to make the decisions of local self-government should be reaffirmed without further delay.

I concur in principle with the League of Iowa Municipalities’ recommendation that a continuing commission on state and local government relations be established by the Assembly to furnish the legislature and the administration insight into the problems of local government operation under state law. Such a commission could, for example, have provided this Assembly with valuable background on local law enforcement problems that would have been helpful in the consideration of proposals for liquor control legislation that will come before this session.

I would hope that the Assembly will give high priority to legislation that will permit state banks to pay interest on current operating funds deposited with them by municipalities, counties and school boards.

This would provide local governments with millions of dollars in interest each year, and would furnish property tax relief in the most direct manner without raising taxes.

The problems of every legislative session are vast and complex, but I believe it is generally recognized that the matters before you ladies and gentlemen of the Sixtieth General Assembly are unusually momentous by comparison with most sessions of the past. It is not without reason that people refer to this as “the money session.” We are all aware that the state surplus is down to a minimum and that additional revenues must be raised to sustain the present level of government operation and to provide the state aid for property tax relief to which we are all committed. In my budget message, two weeks hence, I will transmit to you my detailed views concerning the financial needs of the next biennium and suggested revenue measures to meet those needs.

In the meantime, I want to convey to you my respect for the magnitude of the job that lies before you. The constitution assigns to the Governor certain important roles in the legislative process, but the major burden of responsibility and the ultimate authority rests with you ladies and gentlemen of the General Assembly. Whatever our differences may be, I want you to know that I have faith in the integrity of your purpose, the quality of your dedication, and in your ability to get the job done.

In the past two months, I have been conducting the departmental budget hearings and acquainting myself as rapidly as possible with the activities of the various departments of the state government. I must say that I have come to realize — more clearly than ever before — the vast range of our state government’s operation.

The scope of government covers the entire spectrum of human life, and all of its different departments and agencies have vitally important services to fulfill. Such departments as public health, public instruction, the tax commission, social welfare, board of control, public safety and the board of regents — to name only a few — are immense complexes within themselves.

As I see it, the responsibility of the new administration is to take a total approach — rather than to concentrate on a few areas and neglect the others. In government, the sins of omission are often greater than the sins of commission. It seems to me that people have a right to expect their governor to give his best efforts to all the diverse fields encompassed by the government ranging from fiscal operation to the great human resource programs of health, education and welfare. To this end, I pledge the full effort of the new administration.

We live in a conservative state, as we all recognize, but in my opinion, it is a conservatism of prudence, rather than of fear and inertia. It has been said there are times to watch and wait and there are times for action.

It seems to me that the needs of this hour call for decisive action on the part of all of us entrusted with the responsibilities of government. I am convinced that our people want action in the fields of tax reform, apportionment, law enforcement, education and rehabilitation, and in the restoration of self-government to local jurisdictions.

Such action requires people in government who are willing to put their political futures on the block — because they believe in something.

It is sometimes said that the knack of skillful government is to hang back, do as little as possible, and make some mistakes. I hope there is another way — for between you and me, this prospect does not invite my soul.

Frankly, I expect to experiment and make no mistakes — whether it be in installing new programs in departments or hiring a band. But I can assure you that this new administration will not stop moving — towards the goals to which we have pledged ourselves with the people of Iowa.

I have said it before and I say it again now that our basic problem is psychological and spiritual — rather than technical. It is fundamentally a matter of attitude, rather than method.

As a people, we in Iowa have within our power the capacity to do virtually anything we make up our minds to do. We have the resources, both human and material, to accomplish giant goals.

What are we afraid of, then? What are we waiting for?

The time has come to set aside old prejudices, face our problems squarely, and work together to fullfill our state’s immeasurable potential.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is the devout hope of the new administration that we can together provide the citizens of Iowa with a progressive, prudent, pay-as-you-go program of government in the biennium ahead.

To this end, I pledge you my unreserved cooperation and wish you Godspeed in the crucial task of enacting wise legislation to assure the future of our beloved state.