

Patterson's Positive Message About a Tough Budget Year

Pontiac, MI, February 3, 2010 – Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson outlined new initiatives and successes in his 2010 State of the County Address that will continue to make Oakland County one of the best places to live, work and raise a family.

He also described how his prudent fiscal management and foresight allows Oakland County to lead southeast Michigan out of the economic doldrums by retaining Wall Street's coveted AAA bond rating.

"It's thoughtful management versus crisis management," Patterson said.

Oakland County's ability to create new initiatives and to succeed in this challenging economy begins with Patterson's Budget Task Force. At his direction, they created a three-year, line-item balanced budget approved by the Board of Commissioners last September – the first and only county in the United States to do so.

The Budget Task Force is already looking beyond 2013. "As an aside, let me tell you what we see on the horizon is not pretty, but it is manageable," Patterson said.

One of the keys to maintaining the three-year budget cycle is vigilance, Patterson said. His Budget Task Force and Equalization Division constantly review current budget and revenue conditions and make adjustments accordingly.

Patterson thanked Oakland County employees for helping to bear the burden of budget and benefit reforms during these trying times, including a 2.5% pay cut this fiscal year and next.

At a December 7th symposium, Patterson shared with 250 government leaders his budgeting method and economic forecast. In that forecast, Patterson expects to see continuing significant declines in taxable value of residential and commercial property as foreclosures continue.

To combat the decline, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program is refurbishing foreclosed or abandoned homes in order to move in families as soon as possible. The Oakland County Home Buyer Program is helping low-income families who qualify pay 49% of the cost of purchasing a foreclosed home. And, 70% of homeowners who seek advice and intervention from Patterson's Community and Home Improvement Division are able to mitigate the threat of foreclosure.

But what this economy truly needs are jobs. "Most of the challenges we see can be resolved by one simple thing: a job," Patterson said. His Automation Alley, Emerging Sectors and Medical Main Street initiatives, along with the newly-created Economic Growth Alliance, are working toward transforming Oakland County businesses and workers into the knowledge economy.

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There are two exciting developments in 2010 for Automation Alley. They will open up a military office within its Troy headquarters to assist local manufacturers garner high-paying, high-tech military contracts with the Pentagon. They also will construct an International Business Center in Troy as a place for international companies to have a soft landing in America.

Patterson's Emerging Sectors program continues to exceed expectations. Since its launch in 2004, Emerging Sectors has brought 137 Emerging Sectors companies into Oakland County representing \$1.4 billion in new investment. That amounts to 17,217 new jobs, 7,246 jobs retained.

The fastest growing Emerging Sector is life sciences. In his 2009 State of the County address, Patterson announced his Medical Main Street initiative, his effort to brand Oakland County as a destination for life science and health related businesses. Medical Main Street is about to get a big shot in the arm.

On Tuesday, Oakland University and Beaumont Hospitals announced their medical school won preliminary accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education. This means they will soon be able to begin enrolling students for its first class in fall, 2011.

"I can't emphasize enough the significance of this medical school; a multi-billion dollar shot in the arm will go a long way to restoring our challenged economy," Patterson said.

Indeed, the impact of the medical school will reach beyond Oakland County. Last year, Patterson announced his creation of the Economic Growth Alliance, a consortium of five counties including Genesee, Livingston, Lapeer and St. Clair, that will leverage regional assets and a skilled workforce drawn from more than 2 million residents to fuel regional business development. Patterson said he will announce soon that the EGA will expand by one neighboring county that will "be a vital partner in these strategic relationships."

He also announced the launching of a contest within the EGA counties called the "OakGov Challenge." In conjunction with AT&T, who put up prize money totaling \$10,000, Oakland County's IT Department will seek local tech-savvy programmers to create new ideas and applications that could be published as a web application that will take public data and make it more accessible to residents.

The film industry continues to grow in Oakland County. Among the biggest developments for Oakland County Film in 2010 comes from Ferndale-based S3 Entertainment Group. On Monday, February 1st, S3 began operating a 25,000 square-foot sound stage at the old Kasper Machine property in Madison Heights. They have six film projects slated there for 2010 that will create 1,000 jobs. And Raleigh Studios is moving forward with its state-of-the-art studios at Centerpoint in Pontiac. Slated to open in 2013, they expect to generate 3,600 jobs.

In 2007, Patterson challenged Oakland Schools to develop Mandarin Chinese language and cultural programs in all 28 districts. The intention was to show the world's fastest growing economy that Oakland County is serious about developing a workforce that understands their language and culture so they will invest here.

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Back in November, Patterson observed Chinese investment taking root at Changchun Auto Parts Base in Southfield. Changchun is China's Motor City. At the Auto Parts Base, the local auto manufacturing community can invest in and cooperate with 13 Chinese auto parts manufacturers.

Of course, as Oakland County expands into the realm of the knowledge economy and international business, it is important to make a great first impression when people land at the state's second busiest airport. This spring, Oakland County International Airport will break ground on its new, green terminal at no expense to Oakland County taxpayers.

The new terminal will be the first LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building in Oakland County government. It will take 14 months to complete.

"The existing terminal is obsolete. It no longer portrays the technologically advanced image on which Oakland County prides itself," Patterson said.

Oakland County International Airport also extended its main runway 320 feet to 6,825 feet. Aircraft can now fly without refueling from the airport to the west coast, Mexico, Europe and Asia.

"The airport currently has a \$175 million economic impact on the region," Patterson said.

Turning to quality of life issues, Oakland County completed its third successful year of the Fire and Ice Festival in Rochester this past weekend. The Oakland Edge Hockey Tournament returns April 16th to 18th. Arts, Beats and Eats will draw families to its new location in Royal Oak the weekend of September 3rd through 6th.

And Patterson's "Count Your Steps" program to encourage children be active in order to fight child obesity continues its success. Last year, 20,000 kids from 128 schools walked 1.2 billion steps.

There may be no more important quality of life issue in 2010, however, than the renewal of the Oakland County Parks millage. Patterson challenged everyone attending the State of the County and listening on the radio to do all they can to encourage a "yes" vote on the renewal.

Once a decade, Oakland County taxpayers are asked to renew the millage that amounts to \$25 a year for a home worth \$200,000. The millage provides 60% of the revenue to operate the county's 13 parks, 68 miles of biking and hiking trails, five golf courses and well-preserved open spaces. Among the great additions to Oakland County Parks will be the addition of 186 acres to Independence Oaks through the acquisition of the Upper Bushman Lake Property.

Many of Patterson's quality of life initiatives focus on improving the physical well-being of Oakland County residents. This includes the Brooksie Way Half Marathon and 5k Race named in honor of his late son. Last October, it drew more than 4,400 participants.

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The Brooksie Way has become so successful, Patterson announced in his speech that he will take \$50,000 from its net proceeds for a mini-granting program where health-driven community programs and organizations can apply for funds to support their activities. It will be administered through the Brooksie Way organizers and the Department of Health and Human Services. For more information go to www.thebrooksieway.com

Patterson announced the establishment of the Dennis Toffolo Endowed Scholarship at Oakland Community College which will honor his late friend and deputy executive who passed away suddenly last May at the age of 62. Toffolo was a big supporter of community colleges. The scholarship will recognize achievement and provide assistance to OCC students pursuing careers in the Emerging Sectors fields. The first scholarships will be granted fall semester 2010, with an application deadline this summer. For more information, go to www.oakgov.com/exec.

Among the many success stories that stand out this year is the Health Division's management of the H1N1 flu pandemic. In their mass vaccination clinics, Health Division nurses inoculated an individual against the H1N1 virus once every three seconds.

"They did a superb job at protecting the public through their vaccination clinics," Patterson said.

Health and Human Services also will manage, store and maintain Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) equipment through its Homeland Security Division. Several years ago, Patterson's Risk Manager Julie Secontine brought to his attention that nowhere in the State of Michigan was there a USAR team that could respond to natural or manmade disasters. With Patterson's full support, Secontine formed a six-county coalition including the City of Detroit to create four USAR teams which include doctors, structural engineers, crane operators and other specialists.

Patterson wrapped up the speech with a look at his nationally-recognized, award-winning Internet Technology Department. They are virtualizing county servers, saving energy and hardware costs. They are developing software that will keep county food inspectors and well and septic inspectors in the field longer, filing their reports from a laptop in their cars.

IT also is developing software that allows Oakland County residents easier access to their government. The public can now pay traffic tickets online, examine the county budget and register for a flu vaccination appointment.

And, IT has launched Patterson into the world of social media. They "tweeted" key points from State of the County. The Executive Office is communicating important information and events on Facebook. And the State of the County will be placed on YouTube.

To sum it all up, Patterson closed the speech with "a positive message that we have a great team here in Oakland County ...they are all managing through these tough budget years in a manner which I hope makes you proud."

A downloadable version of the speech can be found at www.oakgov.com/exec. For media inquiries only, please contact Bill Mullan, Media and Communications Officer, at (248) 858-1048.

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