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*Remarks as prepared for delivery by Governor Mark Parkinson to a joint session of the Kansas Legislature:*

## **AD ASTRA PER ASPERA**

“At the outset, I want to thank Speaker Mike O’Neal for granting me the honor to speak with all of you in this spectacular chamber. I had the privilege of serving in the House almost 20 years ago and to be back in this magnificent setting is invigorating.

“I also want to acknowledge all the other dignitaries who have taken the time to be here. Thanks to all our legislative leaders: Speaker O’Neal, President Morris, Leader Hensley, Leader Davis. I appreciate all the other legislative leaders for being here and each of you.

“I especially want to thank some groups of people who could not be here today: our brave troops fighting in two wars, including our own Melanie Meier; and the men and women of our public health and emergency management teams. From floods to flu, they are protecting communities across the state and I know you join me in thanking them for their continued hard work. Last but not least, I’d like to thank my wife Stacy for being here. We’ve been best friends, confidants and husband and wife for the last 26 years and she is everything to me.

“In this era of political division, we harbor many differences. We will not see eye to eye on every issue. We will not always agree. We will not. But, we will always share one thing: we share, all of us here, a love for the state of Kansas. Today, I’ve come to tell you all that this common bond will always be stronger than our differences. I have lived here for all of my 51 years and I love the state: our heritage, what we stand for, what we are and what we will become.

“I love our origin. I’m proud that we could have chosen to be a free state or a slave state and that we chose to be a free state. I’m proud that our ancestors migrated here from the east coast, not looking for fame or fortune, but rather to protect freedom. I’m so happy that I grew up in Wichita. As a small child, our two blocks seemed as big as the whole world. We explored, and we felt safe, secure and loved. And later I would become grateful for the education that I received at Heights High School and Wichita State University.

“I loved the time I spent as a child during the summers in Scott City. The economic engines of the state are all over, but the heart and soul of this state is in the West. As I grew older I spent time in every nook and cranny of the state and learned to love it all: the great heritage of Southeast Kansas and the Northeast, where we now live with its incredible entrepreneurs and opportunities for all Kansans. I love that we are the state of John Brown, William Allen White, Birger Sandzen, Alf Landon, Dwight Eisenhower, and Bob Docking.

“Most of all, I love our state motto: Ad Astra Per Aspera. The message that our founders sent us almost 150 years ago has never been more relevant than it is today: though our path may be rife with difficulty, we will reach the stars.

“That is why I’m honored and humbled to serve at a time when Kansas is hurting. You all know the numbers. The state and country are in the midst of the longest recession since the 1930’s. Tens of thousands of Kansans have lost their jobs, our revenues have plummeted, retirees have seen their accounts dwindle and fear is rampant. In spite of this, my message today is one of optimism.

“Throughout history, we have faced challenges that appeared to be insurmountable. The Great Depression, the Dust Bowls and the challenges of two world wars. In each of those occasions, Kansans have not only survived, we have prospered. Make no mistake: we will face and defeat our current economic challenge in the same way we have in the past: with a determined optimism, rooted in the common spirit that pushes all Kansans to the stars no matter what the obstacles. And when we defeat it we will come out stronger and better than before.

“The message of our shared past is clear: our belief is stronger than any doubt; our determination greater than any obstacle; and our passion more furious than any storm.

“State government must play a central role in this turnaround. For us to succeed in defeating this challenge, we must do three things. Our immediate need is to balance our state budget in a responsible way. This will require a post-partisan spirit of shared sacrifice.

“Our current deficit is \$328 million. Filling that deficit will not be easy. The number is too large to fill it solely with additional budget cuts. Those cuts, on top of the cuts we have already imposed, would jeopardize critical state programs. Cutting these budgets \$328 million would hurt education. But it is more than that. We talk about across the board cuts in numbers and percentages, but behind each of those numbers are real Kansans. Drastic cuts would hurt education, public safety, our corrections system and those that are disabled. And for those who believe business would be benefited by this approach, let me tell you that drastic cuts would diminish economic development efforts and hurt our ability to attract and retain new business to this state. On the other hand, I recognize that \$328 million is too large a number to fill the hole solely with revenue enhancements. It would be a mistake to raise taxes.

“Fortunately, there is a middle ground. We need to share the sacrifice and address the deficit with both responsible budget cuts and revenue enhancements. Let me be very specific. On the revenue side, there are about \$250 million in enhancements that we can make that won’t raise a single person’s taxes. These include delaying tax cuts, decoupling and recognizing gaming revenue. The good news is that these revenue enhancements don’t require us to raise anyone’s taxes. Tax cuts would be delayed, but no business or person would see their taxes increase.

“Shared sacrifice will then require us to make modest additional cuts to state government. Cuts that will be painful but that will not be crippling. These votes will not be easy. But, they are necessary. And I am confident that you will rise to the occasion and show both the leadership and courage to make the votes to balance this budget.

“This shared sacrifice is the Kansas way of life. When we face a crisis in this state, all Kansans join in assisting the recovery. But no group should be forced to bear the burden by themselves. That’s not the way Kansas works.

“The second action that we need to take as a State is to create and protect jobs. Our unemployment rate has increased from 4 percent to 6.5 percent. Kansans need to know that we are fighting as hard as we can to prevent additional job losses. There are several strategies we have to do this. We must promptly and efficiently put the Recovery Act funds in place. With its investments in education we are protecting jobs. With its funding of new highway programs and energy efficiency programs, we will create jobs. A key priority of this administration will be to continue to get the Recovery fund money working in Kansas as quickly as possible.

“We will protect and create jobs by holding on to previous victories we have had with NBAF and the Base realignment and closure process. NBAF was a great victory and now Texas is trying to take it away. My message to Texas is simple: if you interfere with NBAF, not only will we mess with Texas, we will crush your frivolous attempts to take it away.

“We will create jobs by aggressively pursuing companies that build on our core competencies. I will work tirelessly with our Department of Commerce to assist in its efforts to increase employment in our agriculture, manufacturing and energy industries.

“We will also create jobs for the future. We’ll continue our close work with the Kansas Bioscience Authority to solidify our space in the animal health sector. We’ll work closely with the University of Kansas to make sure that KU becomes a National Cancer Institute designated center. We’ll also work hard to attract renewable energy companies to the state. Kansas should be a national hub of both wind farms and factories that supply parts to those farms. Working together we will make that happen. This hard work will bear fruit and together we’ll protect the jobs of Kansans as we move through this recession.

“Finally, in order to turn this economy around, we need to unify the state. The time for typical party politics is over. The challenges are too daunting and the stakes are too high. It’s time for all of us, Republicans and Democrats, to forget about party politics. It’s time for us to do what our ancestors have done when faced with great adversity. We will roll up our sleeves, work hard, make the tough decisions and move forward. Not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Kansans, to solve the problems we face.

“I am confident with the legislative leaders that we have in place we will get this done. In President Morris, Leader Hensley, Speaker O’Neal, and Leader Davis, you have provided the State with outstanding Kansans who have placed the best interest of the State ahead of their own. We will make a great team as we move forward.

“I know that we are fixated on the 2010 budget and rightly so. The pain and fear that people are experiencing is real. But there will be brighter days ahead. I’ve learned in business to not just think about the next year, but to think about five, 10 and even 20 years from now. If we make the right decisions, our long term future will be bright. Bear with me as I tell you the vision I have of our future. I can see it as clearly as I can see you sitting before me today.

“In the year 2030, agriculture and manufacturing will thrive in Kansas. China and India will have 600 million new middle class citizens and if we keep our markets open, they will drive demand for our agriculture products and our aircraft for years to come.

“In the year 2030, NBAF will have been built and tens of thousands of high paying jobs will populate the corridor between Columbia, Missouri and Manhattan. Kansas will be known as both the Air Capital of the World and the Animal Health Capital of the World. In the year 2030, we will have fully exploited our wind energy resource in Western Kansas. We won’t have the impressive 1,000 megawatts of wind power we have now, we’ll have 10,000 to 20,000 megawatts of clean, renewable power. Factories will dot the state to supply these wind farms, and a corridor of factories from Wichita to Salina will develop that will make Kansas the renewable energy leader of the country.

“In the year 2030, KU will have received National Cancer Institute designation and all Kansans, regardless of income or status will receive the highest quality of cancer care available in the world. In the year 2030, we’ll have a growing population, made up primarily by increase in our Latino and Asian American populations. We will recognize that these new populations offer us a tremendous opportunity to fill all the jobs left vacant by retirees and that these new populations offer us a whole new group of consumers. Unlike states that shun these populations, we will recognize them as a great opportunity.

“In the year 2030, our K-12 system will be using the latest in technology so that every school child, regardless of where they are from, will receive the same high quality education as every other child in the state. In the year 2030, our regents system will excel. We’ll spend our time talking not just about whether our basketball or football programs are in the top 25. We’ll spend time talking about whether our medical schools, engineering schools, and undergraduate programs are in the top 25.

“All of these things can happen. You can make them happen. If we set aside the petty politics that permeates this country, and instead pull together, this vision of the future isn’t just the musings of an aging politician. This vision of prosperity that I’ve laid before you is our destiny.

“I close with a quote from Winston Churchill. During the worst of WWII a reporter asked Churchill if he was worried about how history would be treated. Again, he took no time and quickly responded.

“ ‘History will be kind to me, because I intend to write it.’

“Churchill said, ‘History will be kind to me because I intend to write it.’

“Tonight, we open the next great chapter in our state’s history. Be certain: the title of that chapter, like so many great ones before it will be *Ad Astra Per Aspera*.

“Decades from now, our children and grandchildren and their children will look back and ask how we responded to the greatest crisis in 70 years. Did we panic or lead? Did we retreat to partisan interests or embrace shared sacrifice? Did we bicker or did we set aside party politics to work together as Kansans? I know the answer to each of those questions because I have confidence in each of you. I know that despite our differences, we share love for Kansas.

“So, let’s not just name this chapter with our great state motto, let’s get to work writing a history that all future generations can be proud of. God Bless each of you, this State and our great Country.”

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