

Senator Ron Wyden – 4th Annual Leadership Summit

With Oregonians fighting today in Iraq and Afghanistan, putting themselves in harm's way for all of us, let's begin by giving a big round of applause to all those service men and women who honor us with their courage.

Today, you are participating in an economy-growing effort that has no equal. No other state has done anything like this. By involving all our key industries, and bringing together business and political leaders from every corner of Oregon, the people in this room have pulled off another Oregon first.

The Oregon Business Plan was conceived four years ago as a recession was setting in. Now, as our economy picks up a bit, we want to begin by emphasizing our founding principle: the Oregon Business Plan is not about a quick-fix that boosts our economy in the short term; it's about making Oregon more competitive in a global economy for decades to come.

Here's what else it's about.

It's about accountability, a feature I called for at our very first Summit. Now any Oregonian can go online and see if what business leaders and politicians have promised to do has actually gotten done.

It's about listening to our key industries, the places where our citizens know you go to get a good-paying job.

This Plan is also about staking out big goals, like making Oregon the green energy capital of the world. Industries have rolled up their sleeves and they deserve enormous credit for coming up with ideas that we'll be discussing today, ideas that policymakers need to move on now.

We said four years ago we weren't interested in party ideology, because as Senator Smith correctly puts it, there aren't Democrat roads and Republican roads; there are just roads and infrastructure that need to be built so our citizens can prosper.

We know that private investment follows well-targeted public investments. Over the last several years, Gordon and I have championed federal investments in promising fields such as nanotechnology, the biosciences,

metals, defense, and fiber optic technology in communities like The Dalles. Now we're growing existing businesses in Oregon and premier American companies — like Google — are now saying “we're heading for Oregon – it's a place where we can prosper.”

When I called on business leaders in 2002 to join me in the unprecedented undertaking, they offered their ideas and pitched in to find ways we could work together. Senator Smith, who is always willing to meet me half way, did the same, as did my friend of three decades, Gov. Ted Kulongoski. State Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Karen Minnis were also very constructive, knowing how important it is to intertwine state and federal policies to improve the Oregon economy.

Let me share with you for a moment what Sen. Smith and I, and your entire Congressional delegation, have been able to achieve on a federal level.

The Oregon Business Plan calls for strengthening economic innovation in this state. As I mentioned, Senator Smith and I have worked to bring federal dollars to critical areas such as nanotechnology and biotech research.

The Oregon Business Plan calls for “enhancing forest resource benefits to the economy and the environment.” Two years ago, the Oregon delegation helped write legislation to protect communities from catastrophic fires, improve the health of our forests, protect old growth, and put people back to work in rural communities across Oregon. The legislation was signed into law and we continue to push for full funding for the Healthy Forests Act.

Senator Larry Craig and I were the original authors of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act to provide county payments for lost timber receipts, and we couldn't have gotten it passed without Senator Smith's leadership and support. In Oregon, this legislation has provided \$1.6 billion over 6 years, and \$273 million in 2005 alone, for schools, roads, and collaborative forestry projects across Oregon. These are critical federal dollars and Sen. Smith and I

will fight for reauthorization of this important Act before it expires this year.

I don't want to even contemplate what public instruction will look like in Oregon without those dollars. You can't redesign the education system, as the Oregon Business Plan recommends, without these federal dollars.

The Oregon Business Plan calls for "enhancing Oregon's transportation infrastructure." Senator Smith and I, as well as Congressman DeFazio and the rest of the congressional delegation, secured \$2.7 BILLION over the next five years for critical highway and transit projects. These projects will create over 127,000 jobs in Oregon over the next 5 years and create over \$16.5 billion in economic stimulus.

The Oregon Business Plan launched a new initiative last year to "improve health care and control its costs." I'm supporting efforts to improve Health Information Technology, including electronic medical records, to help doctors and nurses get more timely and comprehensive information for their patients, and help target precious health care resources. Senator Smith and I are also working on a health care proposal to assure that everyone has protection against catastrophic health care costs.

I have taken a look at many of the new cluster initiatives you are going to be discussing today at the breakout sessions, and I look forward to going to work on many of them.

For example, we have the opportunity to help Oregon's timber industry, generate renewable energy, and reduce carbon emissions by creating bio-fuels from woody biomass. I will work on a bipartisan basis to target second growth, over crowded unhealthy trees on federal forests to provide increased supply. I will also continue our support for adequate funding for thinning to reduce wild fire fuels that can also provide woody biomass, and I will continue to pursue full funding of federal biomass credits. Biomass can be a big win for Oregon business and for our environment.

I also want to salute the work of the Manufacturing 21 Coalition and your commitment to successful high performance manufacturing in Oregon. I support your efforts to create a Center for Manufacturing and Infrastructure Engineering to enhance the region's workforce-training and skills-development capacity and I look forward to working with you on this priority.

Senator Smith and I just returned from a 9-day trip to China, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In meetings with prominent leaders across these four countries we had a common message: Oregon is a place to do business – our companies and great people create innovative products and services. When you look for a trading partner, look to Oregon.

Now it is my privilege to introduce someone who has worked tirelessly on the Oregon Business Plan agenda, my friend and colleague, United States Senator Gordon Smith.