

The Governors Speak — 2006

A Report on the State-of-the-State Addresses of the Nation's Governors

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For the National Governors Association*

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Introduction and Executive Summary

AS MOST STATES continue to face improved economic and budget conditions in 2006, governors are taking the opportunity to press forward in advancing their priorities for state development and investment. According to their 2006 state-of-the-state addresses, governors' priorities this year include education (particularly teacher quality and high school reform), health care (particularly health and wellness issues), economic development and vitality, and the effective management and preservation of natural resources for economic and quality-of-life purposes. Providing tax incentives and tax relief for businesses and residents also emerged as very high on governors' agendas.*

Governors in 2006 described the best economic and budget conditions since this annual review of the state-of-the-state addresses was inaugurated in 2003. The vast majority of governors (84 percent) described economic conditions as good or improving, and nine governors pointed to employment levels at or near historic highs. Likewise, 82 percent of governors described state budgets projected to be in balance or with a surplus.

Education. The most commonly cited proposals to improve education centered around teacher quality and teacher compensation. Most of these focused on increasing teacher pay, including several proposals to institute performance-based compensation systems. In addition, 58 percent of governors described state initiatives to improve high schools, with most focusing on improving student preparation for college.

* Included in this analysis are state-of-the-state or budget addresses delivered and available on-line from January 1, 2006, to March 10, 2006, by the governors of 44 states and one territory (Puerto Rico). See source information at the end of this report for additional details.

Health Care. For the first time in their state-of-the-state addresses, a majority of governors (53 percent) in 2006 proposed wellness and health promotion programs. These proposals included state efforts to promote healthy habits, particularly in areas related to obesity, diet, exercise, and smoking. The National Governors Association (NGA), through the leadership of **Arkansas** Governor and NGA Chairman Mike Huckabee, has adopted an initiative promoting health and wellness during 2006.

Economic Development. To promote business growth, governors this year emphasized the importance of investments in statewide infrastructure, tax incentives and tax cuts for business, public-private partnerships for research, assistance with health insurance for small businesses, and workforce development reforms. As in previous years, governors continued to highlight incentives to assist both knowledge-based and traditional industries.

Energy and the Environment. This year, 69 percent of governors described initiatives to develop energy resources or promote energy efficiency and conservation, a sharp increase from last year. Compared with 2005, there was also more emphasis this year on the increased costs of energy—in the form of heating and gas prices—to the consumer. In addition, 64 percent of governors emphasized the importance of environmental, land, and natural resource planning and management to improve the economic climate and quality-of-life in their state.

Taxes. Eighty-two percent of governors discussed proposals for tax reductions for businesses or individuals.

State Economic and Budget Picture

As in their 2005 state-of-the-state addresses, governors in 2006 continued to describe improved economic conditions in sharp contrast to the troubling economic challenges that states faced in 2003 and 2004. In their 2003 addresses, governors described severe revenue shortfalls that many traced to a persistent downturn in the national economy. In 2004, most governors said economic conditions in their state were improving, yet with state revenues lagging well behind outlays, most states still were struggling with deficits.

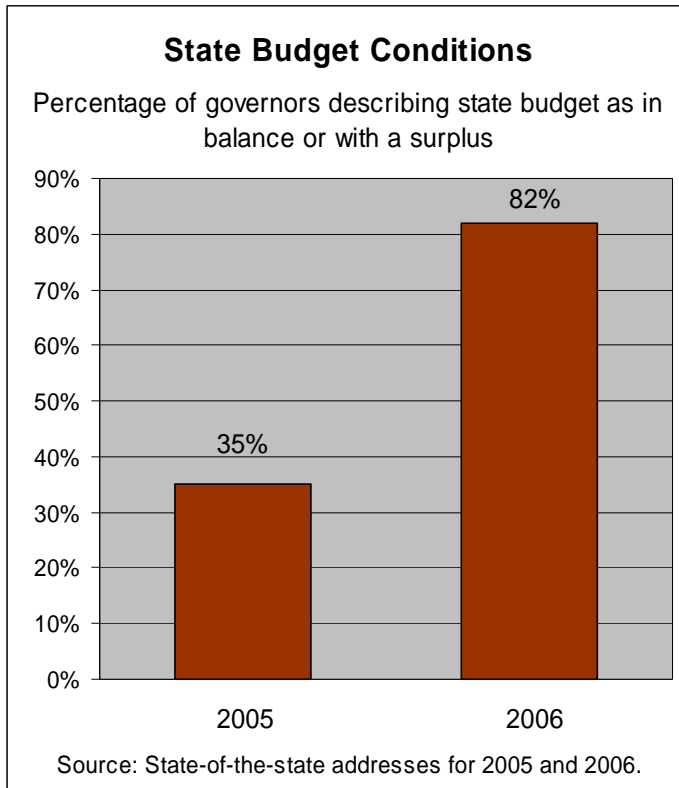
In 2006, however, 84 percent of governors (38 of 45) described their state's economic conditions as good or improving, about the same percentage (82 percent; 42 of 51) as in 2005.* In 2006 in particular, most governors described significant improvements in the business climate, which led to advances in job growth and declines in unemployment.

In fact, nine governors—of **Alabama**, **Colorado**, **Florida**, **Idaho**, **Iowa**, **Kansas**, **Maine**, **Rhode Island**, and **Utah**—said their state was at or near historic highs for employment or historic lows for unemployment. For example, **Alabama** Gov. Bob Riley said, “Our unemployment rate is the lowest in recorded history.” **Colorado** Gov. Bill Owens said, “We’ve seen retail sales grow six percent, while employment this year is expected to set a Colorado record.” **Florida** Gov. Jeb Bush said, “After 40 consecutive months of job growth, we now have the lowest unemployment rate in the recorded history of our state.” And **Idaho** Gov. Dirk Kempthorne said, “No matter how you measure it, Idaho is

* Numbers in parentheses refer to state-of-the-state speeches. See source information for the number of governors who delivered addresses each year. Since the number of state-of-the-state addresses varies annually, the percentages reflect the percent of total speeches delivered that year.

thriving.” An additional six governors said their unemployment rates were among the lowest in the nation or well below the national average.

In one significant break from last year’s state-of-the-state addresses, governors in 2006 described state budget conditions sharply better than those they faced in 2005. Last year, 35 percent of governors (18 of 51) said they were working within a budget projected to be either in balance or with a surplus—a sharp increase from 2004. In 2006, more than twice as many governors (82 percent; 37 of 45) described state budgets projected to be in balance or with a surplus. As **Missouri** Gov. Matt Blunt said, “We have moved from a massive budget shortfall to the first surplus in five years.”



Several states, however, still face difficult economic conditions and budget choices. **Louisiana** in particular faces significant challenges in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. **Indiana, Michigan** and **Ohio** are working to transform and stabilize their industrial base. **California** Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said, “Although a strong economy has produced billions of dollars of unexpected revenues, we still face a structural deficit that will soon resurface.” Several other governors also expressed concerns about the long-term budget outlook for their state, due in particular to rising Medicaid expenses and increases in the costs of state pension and health plans.

Perhaps in light of this long-term perspective, governors emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility in their 2006 addresses, cautioning against excessive spending they

said helped lead to record deficits in previous years. In line with this approach, many governors described the importance of setting priorities for their state. For example, **Nebraska** Gov. Dave Heineman said, “We must separate what we would like to do from what we need to do.” **Tennessee** Gov. Phil Bredesen said, “I believe that the way to success in any endeavor...is to find those two or three big things, that if you get them right, everything works.”

Education

In this year’s state-of-the-state addresses, every governor stressed the overall importance of education to their state. As in past years, governors emphasized the role of education in advancing economic development (particularly in attracting research-based businesses to the state), improving workforce training, and helping residents succeed in finding high-paying and fulfilling work. Compared with previous years, the educational issue that stands out is teacher salaries. Perhaps in light of the improved economic conditions in 2006, a higher percentage of governors spoke in favor of increasing teacher salaries than in any year since these statistics began to be gathered in 2003. Other prominent issues include high school reforms and early childhood education.

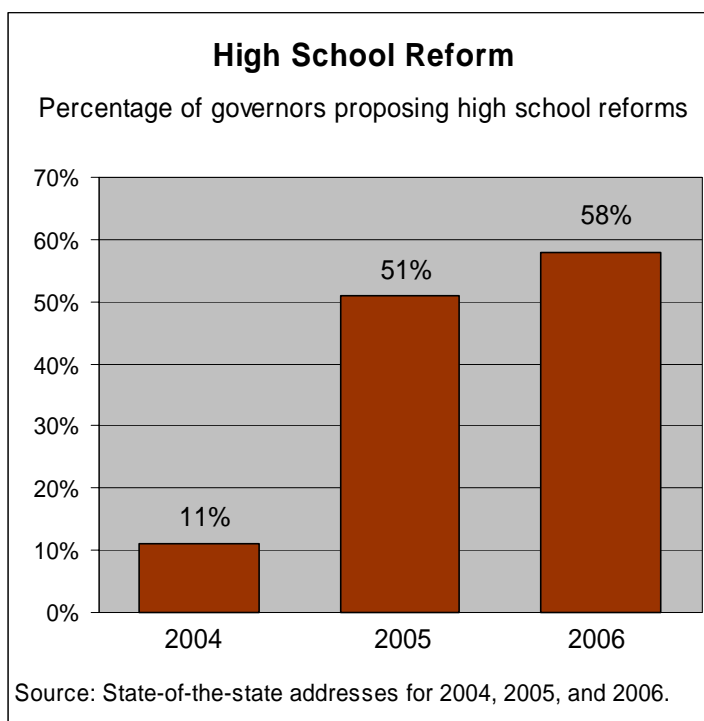
K-12 Teachers. For the past three years, the most commonly cited proposals in education have sought to improve teacher quality and revise teacher compensation. In 2006, 64 percent of governors (29 of 45) described efforts in these areas—about the same percentage as last year. This year, the primary area of focus was on salary increases for teachers.

- **Teacher Compensation:** In 2006, 40 percent of governors (18 of 45) discussed the need to increase teacher salaries—a large increase from the 27 percent of governors (14 of 51) who did so in 2005.
- **Teacher Training:** This year, 29 percent of governors (13 of 45) addressed issues relating to teacher training and development, a decrease from the 35 percent (18 of 51) that did so last year. Efforts this year included, for example,

several mentoring programs for new teachers, a proposal to link teacher compensation to classroom-related professional development (**Kentucky**), and a proposal to require colleges of education to incorporate newly adopted state standards into their teacher preparation programs (**Ohio**).

- **Merit Pay or Pay for Performance:** This year, 24 percent of governors (11 of 45) called for plans to develop merit-based compensation systems for teachers, or incentives to attract teachers to high-need fields or low-achieving schools. This is a slight drop from the 29 percent (15 of 51) who discussed these kinds of plans last year.

High School Reform: In their 2006 addresses, 58 percent of governors (26 of 45) described education initiatives focused on high schools—an increase from the 51 percent (26 of 51) who did so last year and the 11 percent (5 of 45) who did so in 2004. The most common proposals centered around improving student preparation for college, with 36 percent of governors (16) discussing efforts in this area. Many of these proposals seek to ensure students complete more advanced coursework while in high school. Other reforms included efforts to increase high school graduation rates and implement small schools.



Early Childhood Education: In 2006, 51 percent of governors (23 of 45) supported or proposed programs to enhance early childhood education, up from the 43 percent (22 of

51) that did so in 2005. Several governors proposed expanding access to pre-school or full day kindergarten.

Governors also addressed the following issues regarding K-12 schools:

- **School Finance:** Sixty-two percent of governors (28) discussed school finance issues. This year, 33 percent (15) called for increases in funding for schools. This was a departure from the prominent theme last year, which focused on the need for broad reforms in the financing of schools. This year, several governors also emphasized the need to ensure the increased funding is spent “in the classroom,” for expenses such as textbooks, teacher training, technology, and programs proven to get results.
- **Educational Accountability:** This year, 42 percent (19) discussed accountability. As with last year, more governors highlighted the results of accountability structures (that is, improvements on test scores that the state’s students had made) than called for greater accountability of the schools.
- **School Choice and Charter Schools:** Thirty-three percent (15) supported efforts to promote and expand charter schools or pursue other options for increasing school choice—about the same percentage as last year.
- **Math/Science and Reading/Literacy:** Thirty-one percent (14) described programs to improve math or science skills, and 20 percent (9) described initiatives to improve reading skills.
- **Technology:** Twenty-seven percent (12) discussed programs to expand or improve technology for instructional purposes.

Higher Education. Continuing a trend from previous years, governors in 2006 emphasized the importance of higher education in improving economic opportunities for their states, communities, and residents. In 2006, 84 percent of governors (38 of 45) described plans to support or improve higher education—up from 80 percent (41 of 51) in 2005 and 71 percent (32 of 45) in 2004.

This year, 53 percent of governors (24) discussed efforts to improve access and affordability of higher education for state residents, primarily through increasing student financial aid but also through implementing tax credits for students and tuition caps for institutions. In addition, 38 percent of governors (17) called for increased funding for community colleges or colleges and universities.

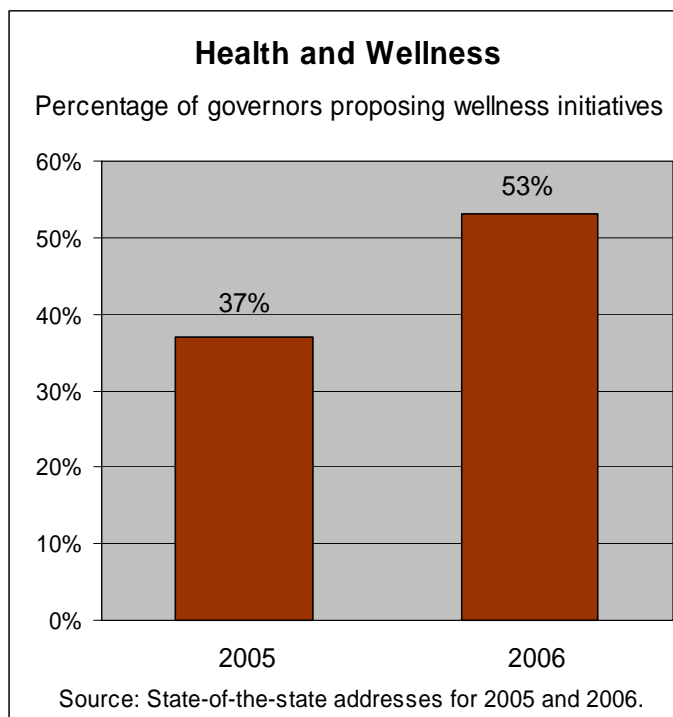
Health Care

Health care continues to be a high-priority issue—and a high-cost item—for states. Ninety-six percent of governors (43 of 45) discussed health care challenges in their 2006 state-of-the-state addresses, with the most pressing issues being health and wellness promotion, the rising costs of health care, prescription drugs, health coverage for children, and health coverage for the uninsured. In addition, more governors discussed health-technology issues compared with last year.

Wellness and Health Promotion.

A majority of governors in 2006 adopted wellness and health

promotion as a key health priority for their state.* This year, 53 percent of governors (24 of 45) emphasized state efforts to promote healthy habits, particularly in areas related to obesity, diet, exercise, and smoking—an increase from 37 percent (19 of 51) in 2005. The



* Immunization programs, childhood health programs, and drug and alcohol prevention programs are not included in these wellness counts. Tobacco prevention programs are included except for proposals simply to raise taxes on cigarettes.

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- **Obesity and Inactivity:** The most frequently cited wellness programs sought to combat obesity and inactivity. Eleven governors described programs in these areas, including eight focusing on physical education in the schools and six promoting healthy activities among adults and children outside the schools.
- **Health Screenings:** Health screenings for school-aged children, newborns, and others also were mentioned frequently. Ten governors discussed proposals in this area, including three focusing on the schools and eight focusing on community centers and other locations.
- **Programs Targeting Schools:** Thirty-one percent of governors (14) described initiatives in the schools. These proposals, for example, included physical education programs during and after school (5), the banning of the sale of junk food in school (3), and health screenings (3).
- **Programs Outside the Schools:** Forty-two percent of governors (19) described wellness initiatives outside the schools. For example, these proposals included health screenings (8), incentives for healthy lifestyles (4), and tobacco prevention programs.
- **Comprehensive Initiatives.** A few governors discussed comprehensive statewide initiatives on wellness promotion. For example, **New Mexico** Gov. Bill Richardson described his state's efforts to develop a broad health initiative for children that includes physical fitness programs, banning junk food in school, requiring healthy snacks in middle and high schools, and ensuring every elementary student has a healthy breakfast. **Kentucky** Gov. Ernie Fletcher described a "Get Healthy Kentucky" initiative that includes health screenings for newborns, fitness programs to reduce rates of obesity

and promote physical activities among adults and children, and incentives to encourage healthy lifestyles.

Rising Health Costs. Sixty-four percent of governors (29) discussed the rising costs of health care and the need for health care reform—about the same percentage as last year. Many governors described health care as a national problem that states are not fully equipped to solve. For example, as **Wisconsin** Gov. Jim Doyle said, “Let’s be honest. No state can solve the national health care crisis by itself.” Nonetheless, 33 percent of governors (15) outlined plans to reform various aspects of the health care system, particularly efforts to reduce duplication and waste through streamlining services.

The following health care issues were also prominent in this year’s state-of-the-state addresses:

- **Uninsured:** Fifty-one percent of governors (23 of 45) addressed the need to expand health insurance coverage for the uninsured, up from 35 percent (18 of 51) last year. Governors discussed a wide range of proposals, including the expansion of lower-cost basic coverage, tax incentives for businesses that provide health insurance coverage, tax incentives for individuals who pay for their own coverage, group plans for small businesses, and programs targeting children and teens.
- **Children’s Health:** Forty-seven percent (21 of 45) proposed or supported initiatives related to children’s health, about the same percentage as last year. In this area, many governors focused on expanding health coverage for children and providing immunizations.
- **Prescription Drugs:** Forty-four percent (20) discussed state efforts to improve the availability or lower the costs of prescription drugs. In past years, governors focused on state purchasing programs, discount cards for seniors and similar projects. This year, however, most governors discussed their efforts to help seniors understand and access the federal government’s confusing prescription drug benefit program. Several governors also proposed

facilitating the importation of drugs from other industrialized countries, such as Canada.

- **Health IT:** Twenty-four percent (11) described proposals to improve the use of information technologies in the health field. These proposals included the creation of statewide health information networks to promote the conversion to electronic health records, the development of telemedicine opportunities to promote medical access in rural areas, and the creation of a statewide integrated claims database to improve the claims process.
- **Medicaid:** Twenty-four percent (11) discussed issues related to Medicaid coverage, including unsustainable costs, increases and decreases in benefits, and efforts to lower costs.
- **Targeted Health Conditions:** Twenty-four percent (11) described efforts to address specific health conditions, including mental health, substance abuse, diabetes, and cancer.
- **Pandemics:** Thirteen percent (6) described state efforts to improve monitoring and preparation for pandemics such as the Avian Flu.

Economic Development

Now that many states are facing better economic conditions, governors across the country are taking the opportunity to develop an infrastructure that can help to increase and broaden business growth in their state for the long-term. As in previous years, governors in 2006 continued to emphasize the need to develop knowledge-based and traditional industries. But whereas in previous years governors focused on job growth, many governors this year—perhaps in light of increased employment rates—emphasized the development of statewide infrastructure, tax incentives and tax cuts for business, public-private partnerships to invest in research, assistance with health insurance for small businesses, and workforce development proposals. In addition, many governors described

quality-of-life issues as important for the economic development of their state, continuing a trend from last year.

Industries. In 2006, 93 percent of governors (42 of 45) described proposals and incentives to spur the development of particular industries:

- **Research and High-Tech:** Eighty-two percent (37) described initiatives focusing on promoting “new economy” business advancements related to research and high-tech fields. These often include partnerships between business and universities, and included the development of high-tech ventures, biotechnology, biomedicine, nanotechnology, ethanol and biodiesel production, and medical or life sciences research (including stem cell research).
- **Traditional Industries and Infrastructure:** Sixty percent (27) described efforts to revitalize traditional industries and infrastructure. These efforts include development of advanced manufacturing capabilities and industrial parks, investment in agriculture and rural areas, development of financial services, and development of tourism.
- **Small Business:** Fifty-six percent (25) discussed their efforts to stimulate and expand small business development.
- **Manufacturing:** Fifty-one percent (23) described efforts to develop or broaden their state’s manufacturing base.

Business Incentives. Ninety-three percent of governors (42) discussed incentives to spur economic development, including the following:

- **Infrastructure Development:** Sixty-nine percent of governors (31) described efforts to develop or modernize the state’s infrastructure in order to provide a stable environment for business. These include efforts to develop transportation corridors, expand clean water resources, stimulate new

construction, increase and improve port facilities, broaden Internet access, and develop centers for research.

- **Tax Reductions/Credits:** Sixty-seven percent (30) described efforts to reduce tax burdens on businesses through tax reductions, incentives, or credits. (For further information, see section on taxes, page 14.)
- **Public-Private Partnerships and Investing in Industries:** Fifty-six percent (25) discussed proposals to develop public-private partnerships and other state investments to encourage the growth of industries, particularly in research and development.
- **Workforce Development:** Thirty-one percent (14) described business sector workforce training programs.

In addition, 53 percent of governors (24) discussed the importance of maintaining or improving the quality of life in their state in order to attract high-paying businesses or improve the overall business climate.

Energy and the Environment

The development and cost of energy were prevalent themes in the 2006 state-of-the-state addresses. This year, 69 percent of governors (31 of 45) described initiatives to develop energy resources or promote recycling/conservation, an increase from the 45 percent (23 of 51) who did so last year. As in 2005, governors discussed traditional energy development such as power plants and clean coal technology; alternative energy development such as wind and solar power, biofuels, and related joint research ventures; and conservation and energy-saving efforts. For example, **Arizona** Gov. Janet Napolitano proposed a decrease in the automobile license fee proportional to the gas mileage the car or truck gets.

Compared with 2005, there was more emphasis this year on the increased costs of energy to the consumer. For example, 36 percent of governors (16) highlighted their efforts to lower the price of home heating fuel for low-income residents.

As in 2005, governors this year continued to discuss the importance of environmental, land, and natural resource planning and management for economic and aesthetic purposes. Sixty-four percent of governors (29) discussed proposals in land use planning, including protection of open space, identifying and protecting agricultural lands, creating sustainable plans for growth and the environment, and forestry planning. The majority of these governors discussed such issues in relation to promoting long-term economic stability and growth.

In addition, the following areas were emphasized by governors in relation to energy and the environment:

- **Environmental Cleanup:** In 2006, 47 percent of governors (21 of 45) highlighted proposals to maintain a clean environment, including initiatives to reduce emissions, protect waterways, and adopt tougher standards—an increase from the 35 percent (18 of 51) who did so last year.
- **Natural Disaster Mitigation:** Thirty-one percent of governors (14) discussed planning and preparations to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, including floods, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tsunamis.
- **Eminent Domain:** Twenty percent (9) discussed their opposition to using eminent domain for economic development, in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that this is not prohibited by the United States Constitution.

Taxes

As in previous years, the vast majority of governors spoke out against any increase in taxes in 2006. In addition:

- **Tax Reductions:** Eighty-two percent of governors (37) discussed proposals for tax reductions for businesses or individuals.
- **Tax Increases:** Three governors proposed increases in taxes. **Indiana** Gov. Mitch Daniels and **Oregon** Gov. Ted Kulongoski proposed to increase sales taxes on cigarettes. **South Carolina** Gov. Mark Sanford proposed to increase sales taxes while providing property tax relief.

Of the 37 governors who identified tax reductions, 30 favored some form of business tax reduction to spur economic activity and 33 favored some form of individual tax reduction.

The tax reductions/credits for businesses included tax incentives to spur small business development, the elimination of the surcharge on corporate income taxes, exemption of the sales tax on machinery and equipment used for manufacturing, elimination of the property tax on business machinery, elimination of the property tax on new business investments, technology tax credits, and tax credits targeted to particular businesses or industries.

Of the 33 governors who discussed tax relief for individuals, 17 outlined property tax relief, 16 discussed income tax reductions, 13 discussed sales tax reductions, and 10 discussed tax reductions or credits related to energy use (including home heating costs, the purchase of fuel-efficient cars, etc.)

Homeland Security

As in previous years, the vast majority of governors paused in their speeches to honor the sacrifices of members of the National Guard, the armed forces, and their families. Many introduced and recognized state National Guardsmen or their families in the audience. In addition, several governors this year introduced residents who had survived natural disasters.

In 2006, 56 percent of governors (25 of 45) discussed issues related to homeland security, reflecting an increase from 2005 and 2004, when 25 percent and 38 percent did so, respectively. Much of the discussion this year, however, included preparations for and responses to natural disasters and terrorist attacks. In 2006, strategic planning and preparedness was the most commonly discussed topic relating to homeland security, with 36 percent of governors (16) describing their efforts to improve state preparedness for both man-made and natural disasters.

In addition, six governors discussed the responsibility of the federal government versus state government for homeland security and related funding. Five governors discussed border security issues.

Crime and Corrections

Eighty percent of governors (36) described efforts to reduce crime or otherwise improve the criminal justice system. Two major crime-related themes surfaced:

- **Child pornography/sex offenders:** Fifty-one percent of governors (23) described state efforts to reduce child pornography and/or improve the capturing or tracking of sex offenders. Much attention was given to the potential role of new technologies in tracking where sex offenders live.
- **Methamphetamines:** Forty-nine percent (22) discussed initiatives to decrease the production, distribution, and use of methamphetamines. Many governors reported success in enacting new legislation in this area, yet emphasized the need to continue to strengthen and update these laws.

Social Services

Sixty-nine percent of governors (31 of 45) discussed efforts to improve services for children, youth, families, the elderly, and the disabled—an increase from the 41 percent

(21 of 51) who did so last year. In particular, 58 percent of governors (26 of 45) described their work to broaden the social safety net for children and families. This included, for example, the improvement of foster care programs, the expansion of mentoring programs for children, and the expansion of domestic violence shelter programs.

Source Information

This analysis is based on the 2006 state-of-the-state or comparable addresses delivered and available on-line from January 1, 2006, to March 10, 2006, by the governors of 44 states and Puerto Rico. State-of-the-state or comparable addresses were not available on-line for other U.S. territories or for these six states: Arkansas, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Texas. As a result, these states are not included in this analysis.

In this report, references to “state-of-the-state addresses” are often used as shorthand to refer to all addresses being analyzed, whether they are state-of-the-state or other addresses. For each state included in this analysis, a state-of-the-state or similar address was available except for the following states, for which the following comparable addresses were used: Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco delivered a “Special Session of the Legislature” address, Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell delivered an “Executive Budget Address,” and Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine delivered an “Address to the Joint Assembly.”

Comparisons with 2005 were based on the state-of-the-state, state-of-the-commonwealth, inaugural, budget, state-of-the-island, or state-of-the-territory addresses of 51 governors, including the governors of American Samoa and Guam. Of the 50 states, only Louisiana was not included, as Gov. Kathleen Blanco did not deliver a comparable address during the time frame studied.

Comparisons with 2004 were based on 45 addresses: 43 state-of-the-state addresses, the budget address of Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell and the inaugural address for Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco. Since there were no state-of-the-state, budget or inaugural addresses available for Arkansas, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, or Texas, these states were not included in the analysis of 2004 information.

Comparisons with 2003 were based on 49 addresses: the 2003 state-of-the-state addresses of the governors of 45 states, the 2003 budget addresses of the governors of three additional states (Maine, Pennsylvania and Tennessee), and the governor’s budget summary for one state (New Hampshire). Since there was no comparable address available for Louisiana, this state was not included in the analysis of 2003 information.

About the Author

Thad R. Nodine, Ph.D., is Vice President of the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education. His areas of expertise include public priorities for education policy; effective public policies to advance college readiness; evidence-based and performance-driven strategies to achieve better educational outcomes; and improving the ways educational systems use information and knowledge to advance student learning. As well as writing this annual scan of the governors' state-of-the-state addresses for the National Governors Association, he is co-author of, most recently: *Anatomy of School System Improvement: Performance-Driven Practices in Urban School Districts*, "Using External Accountability Mandates to Create Internal Change," in *Planning for Higher Education*; and "What Schools Can Teach the Corporate World: Balancing People, Processes, and Technology in Education," in *KM Review*. He can be reached at thad@iskme.org.

About the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME)

The Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (www.iskme.org) is an independent, nonprofit research organization that conducts studies, develops resources, and facilitates community-building with the goal of helping educational institutions and systems increase capacity to collect and share information, apply it to well-defined problems, and support inquiry and continuous improvement directed toward student success. ISKME partners with a wide range of public and private enterprises and receives support from educational institutions, foundations, businesses and government sources.

Jessica Mindnich and Matthew Powers, research assistants at ISKME, contributed to this report.