

Tuesday
January 14, 2003

THE EDMOND SUN

50¢

VOL. 116, No. 11

Edmond's Newspaper Since 1899

► Edmond attorney impressed with bipartisanship

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The Edmond Sun

Edmond residents were not left out of the state's inauguration festivities Monday for the first Democratic governor in eight years.

While Edmond is heavily Republican in its voter registration, Gov. Brad Henry tapped three people with Edmond ties for his transition team.

Andy Lester of the law firm Lester, Loving and Davies was one of those team members who was on hand Monday at the state Capitol for the ceremonies. He took along his 12-year-old daughter, Susan, who got to meet the governor while there.

Lester, who as a Republican served on President Ronald

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INAUGURAL

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Reagan's transition team in 1980, served two functions on Gov. Henry's transition team. He served as team captain of the law enforcement and corrections team and also worked on the budget team with new State Finance Office director Scott Meachum.

On the state's budget, Lester said he expects times to remain lean for state government in the foreseeable future.

"There is no doubt that government spending is simply going to have to be cut," Lester said Monday. "There are certain places that can be cut."

While Lester did not reveal any specifics Monday, he did say he wants the public to know more about the state Corrections Department's budget. It makes up 7 percent of the state budget, but in the last 14 years, the state's prison population has more than doubled. "For each prisoner we keep, there's cost. We need to look both at cutting the fat and looking at new ways to administer the laws on our books."

The most impressive thing about the new governor, Lester said, is his willingness to be bipartisan.

"I'm a Republican and nevertheless, he put me on his transition team," Lester said of Henry. "I expect to see him do what he feels is best for Oklahoma regardless of partisan politics."

As for future work with the governor's office, Lester said he's not expecting it. "I'm looking forward to getting back to work at Lester, Loving and Davies," he said.

Meanwhile, Edmond's Brenda Reneau Wynn was one of six other state elected officials sworn-in Monday at the ceremonies. The other officials included Corporation Commissioner Jeff Cloud, Insurance Commissioner Carroll Fisher, Superintendent of Public Instruction Sandy Garrett, State Treasurer Robert Butkin, Attorney General Drew Edmondson, State Auditor and Inspector Jeff McMahan and Lt. Gov. Mary Fallin.

Reneau Wynn was sworn in for the third time as Oklahoma Labor Commissioner, a seat she retained after a brutal primary and a tough general election against two state legislators. As an Edmond resident, she is the top elected state official living in the city.

"Taking my oath of office (Monday) for the third time was just as moving as it was the first time," Reneau Wynn said Monday afternoon. "It's hard to hold back your emotion. It energizes a person all over again."

The Republican labor commissioner was full of praise and hope for Gov. Henry, noting she got a chance to speak to him at the ceremonies.

"He seems so sincere in his efforts," she said. "I think he will genuinely try to work with everyone fairly."

As for being re-energized, Reneau Wynn already is making her office available to other Oklahoma departments and agencies as they struggle with the state's budget crisis.

"I'm worried about not just Oklahomans' low wages, but also the number of people finding themselves out of work and who are having to leave the state," she said. "Our first thing, and we started this before today, was to contact people in other agencies, including the governor's office, to ask them how we can be of more help in economic development. Right now that's all Oklahoma government ought to be focused on."