

Traditional Values

An Interview with
The Honorable Gary R. Herbert, Governor of Utah

EDITORS' NOTE Gary Richard Herbert is Utah's 17th Governor, having taken the Oath of Office in August of 2009. Following high school graduation, Herbert served a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Eastern Atlantic States Mission. After attending Brigham Young University, the Governor joined the Utah National Guard and served for six years. He began his career in the real estate industry, founding Herbert & Associates Realtors, an Orem-based brokerage firm. He and his wife also began a child care service, The Kids Connection, which they operated for 23 years. In 1990, he was appointed to the Utah County Commission. Soon thereafter, he was elected to that body, which he served for 14 years. During his time as County Commissioner, he served as President of the Utah Association of Counties and the Utah Association of Realtors, and as a board member of the Provo-Orem Chamber of Commerce and Utah Water Conservancy District. Prior to becoming governor, he served as Lieutenant Governor for nearly five years.



The Hon. Gary R. Herbert

Utah has fared well despite the economic crisis. How have you been so successful?

It's a combination of things we're doing correctly.

The first is that we're fiscally prudent – we build on a foundation of fiscal responsibility. Utah lives within its means. We don't use one-time money for ongoing government programs. We have no structural imbalance; we don't borrow a lot of money; and we save for a rainy day – our rainy day fund is at \$278 million.

Second, we've created an atmosphere that is friendly to entrepreneurs who, as they create wealth also create jobs. We still daresay the word "capitalism" in Utah and we applaud it. People from all over the country have their businesses here as Utah is the most business friendly environment in America. We have cut our tax rates to make sure they're competitive and we also went through regulation reform. We now have a regulatory marketplace that is sensible and not oppressive.

Third, we believe that the marketplace wants labor that has the skills that line up with the demands of the marketplace. The marketplace wants more employees with skills in science, technology, engineering, and math so we're emphasizing education and raising the bar on achievement levels. I put in place a goal of "66 by 2020," meaning

two-thirds of our adult population will have a post-high school degree or certification by the year 2020, helping them to line up to the demands of the marketplace.

Our labor force now is young with a median age of 29.2. We're also technologically advanced: we have more home computer use in Utah than anywhere in America. We are also productive; we have a strong work ethic as part of our culture that comes from our pioneer heritage.

Fourth, we are multilingual, which is a significant advantage. We have the highest number of people learning Chinese – this includes first, second, and third grade students learning to speak it fluently. Additionally, we are learning French, Spanish, German, and other languages. This is coupled with the Mormon Missionary program that sends young men and women around the world, and they come back with a love of culture and language which helps to grow our international businesses.

Finally, we have low-cost energy. To sustain our energy infrastructure, I put together an energy plan two years ago. We have great potential in Utah to responsibly develop energy resources that will keep Utah energy independent and business costs stable. Energy is an area we can utilize as a cornerstone of economic expansion. Not only does it give us better quality of life because we have an abundance of low-cost energy, but it allows us to be competitive when it comes to attracting manufacturers. We're about the fifth or sixth most diversified economy in America now.

Forbes named us the number one place in America for business and careers for the second year in a row in 2011. They said one of the reasons is because energy costs in Utah are 31 percent below the national average.

The unemployment rate I inherited of 8.3 percent is now down to 5.4. At one point, it ticked up to 6, but only because people were optimistic that more jobs were available, so we had more people who had been disengaged getting back into the market for work. Our job growth is averaging 2.5 percent and even exceeding 3 percent in some months.

The people of Utah are thriving.

How critical has it been to attract foreign investment to Utah?

We need to look outside of our borders – and not just to our next-door neighbors. There are



more customers out there, be it in China, Europe, Canada, or Mexico. There are opportunities here for foreign entrepreneurs and we want to make sure we have good communication and trade relations.

Two years ago, I challenged the business community to increase exports; I wanted them to double over the next five years. We increased our exports 41 percent in one year and we're just scratching the surface. We're involved in agriculture, energy, life sciences, and medical devices – things the world needs.

We're going to try to expand into Brazil, which has great potential. We're going to take a trade mission to Israel this December, we've gone to China multiple times, and we're working with educational energy exchanges in Canada. Every time we do these trade missions, we bring more business back to Utah.

Will the U.S. attract the talent we need to political office in the future?

I believe so. I urge people to be proud: this is America – we're the greatest country that has ever been created in the history of the world. We stumble occasionally, but that shouldn't dissuade young people from getting involved. They have to understand the cause of the problems so they can be fixed.

There is dysfunction in D.C., led by the fact that the government is fiscally irresponsible. I tell young people that if they don't get involved, their kids and grandkids will be paying off this debt, if they can even pay it off. They should be concerned and they should get involved. It's not a lost cause.

What do you believe is an ideal solution?

I think the governors of America are the best hope we have to turn this country around. We are collegial. We work across the aisle and we have to actually get things done because we're generally in office for just a few terms. We can't just kick the can down the road and blame it on everyone else – that is the problem with Congress.

The governors of this country have to step up.

To what do you attribute your achievements?

I'm the governor of the greatest state in America. We have strong families and traditional values of honesty, integrity, and hard work. People in Utah don't rely on government programs because they take care of themselves. But we also take care of each other. We're the number one state in America for volunteerism. We are the most charitable state in America. I'm the privileged leader of the great people in Utah. ●