

Oklahoma Senate Honors Oral Roberts

✖ **May 19, 2009** – The Oklahoma State Senate unanimously adopted a concurrent resolution May 7 honoring the life of veteran healing evangelist Oral Roberts.

“I’m almost overwhelmed at this great honor that you chose me to come here today to honor my life,” Roberts told state lawmakers May 7. “I’m 91 years of age, and I’ll soon be going home to my heavenly Father. I look forward to that with great peace and joy leaving behind my legacy to bless people. God bless you for this honor.”

Republican Sen. Dan Newberry of Tulsa said he sponsored the resolution to recognize the impact Roberts has had on Oklahoma as a leader in religion and education. He also estimates that Oral Roberts University (ORU), the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the City of Faith Medical and Research Center have brought “hundreds of millions of dollars” into the state.

“My hope in honoring his life is that people will understand and see the good things that God has done through one man,” Newberry told *Charisma*, noting that a similar measure passed in the House. “He can do that through any of us. As we strive for excellence, which is what Oral has stood for all these years, we can all do great things.”

Healed of tuberculosis at age 17, Roberts has preached before millions through more than 60 years of ministry. In the 1950s he pioneered what has become known as televangelism, and he has written more than 120 books, including his best-selling *Miracle of Seed Faith*.

"I've laid hand on more than 1.5 million people, individually, for their healing," Roberts told the lawmakers. "Some have been healed; some have not. But I marked a path for other ministries."

In 1963, Roberts founded ORU, which currently has more than 3,000 students from 61 nations.

"I was very happy the Oklahoma State Senate honored the life of Oral Roberts," said interim ORU President Ralph Fagin. "This giant of the Christian faith has done so much for Tulsa, Okla., and the world by being obedient to God. I am thankful for his faithfulness to build Oral Roberts University and provide over 23,000 graduates a whole-person education, so they can go into 'every person's world.'"

In recent years, ORU had been embroiled in financial scandal. In October 2007, three professors filed a wrongful termination lawsuit that also alleged Roberts' son, former ORU President Richard Roberts, used university resources to fund a lavish lifestyle while the school's debt exceeded \$50 million.

Richard Roberts stepped down as president in November 2007 but has denied any wrongdoing.

Oral Roberts said that because of a \$70 million gift from the Green family of Christian entrepreneurs, ORU has rebounded financially. "I could not ask for a greater legacy than knowing that great leaders have come back to take over the university," Roberts said.

Mart Green, founder of the Christian supply-store chain Mardel, is chairman of the ORU board of trustees. His father, David Green, founded the Hobby Lobby chain of craft stores. Roberts lives in California but remains chancellor of the

university.

In January, Southeastern University President Mark Rutland was tapped to lead ORU and is to begin his tenure in July.

The Senate resolution honoring Roberts came less than a week before a former ORU student dropped the last of several lawsuits that had been filed against the university since 2007. The student, David Brown, claimed he couldn't finish his degree after one of his professors was fired.

His attorney, Diane Hinkle, told the *Tulsa World* her client decided to drop the suit because he was training for the Army National Guard and would soon be stationed outside Oklahoma. But she admitted that District Judge Michael Gassett's previous rulings also factored into his decision. Gassett dismissed part of Brown's suit in March and said he was inclined to dismiss the rest of it, Hinkle told the Tulsa newspaper.

ORU reached settlements with the three professors who filed suit in 2007, and a judge dismissed a former accountant's lawsuit alleging money laundering earlier this year. The accountant, Trent Huddleston, is appealing his case to the state Supreme Court.