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Oklahomans Always Overcome

April 13, 2020 | Weekly Columns

It is an extraordinarily somber time for Oklahomans when we remember the despicable act of domestic terror that took place in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995 – and doubly so this year as the anniversary of that day occurs amid a global pandemic. But the tragic event that took place 25 years ago ought to both guide us and build confidence that Oklahomans can and will face down this current crisis as well. For although the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was one of the darkest days our state has ever experienced, Oklahoma shone as a triumphant beacon of hope across the nation and around the world in the days and weeks that followed.

Like others who remember the tragedy, I will never forget where I was and what I was doing on April 19, 1995. For as long as I live, the memory of that fateful day will be permanently burned in my memory. At the time of the Oklahoma City bombing, I was serving as Secretary of State to Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating and was

arriving at the state capitol building just at nine o'clock. I felt the tremble and wondered what it was as I walked toward my office. I learned in the following hours that something terrible had happened in downtown Oklahoma City – something that would change our lives and communities forever.

From that moment forward, I watched Oklahomans and Americans come together to mourn the 168 innocent lives lost and lend support where they could. I remember the bravery and strength displayed by first responders and the exceptional leadership of Governor Frank Keating, First Lady Cathy Keating, Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norick and Congressman Frank Lucas. It was the start of the Oklahoma Standard that still guides the compassionate attitude and swift action of our communities in times of great crisis.

The scale of the coronavirus crisis is much bigger. We will face a loss of life many times greater than the Oklahoma City bombing. Moreover, we are dealing with a pandemic many times more disruptive than September 11, 2001. However, when confronted with a crisis, Oklahomans are remarkably adaptive, compassionate and capable. Not only do we mourn with each other, but we immediately mobilize to help. And together, we learn how to better prepare for future challenges, disasters and crises.

As we pause to remember those we lost and honor those who responded so nobly, we ought to draw courage and strength from that first clear glimpse of the Oklahoma Standard that was on display 25 years ago. Even in our most dire and destructive hour, we ultimately overcame. While there are still difficult and uncertain days ahead with the spread of COVID-19, I know that Oklahomans will triumphantly and compassionately overcome this crisis, too.

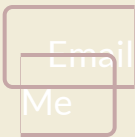
If you are looking for ways to volunteer your time or donate resources toward coronavirus response efforts, FEMA has national guidance for getting involved and connected at [fema.gov/coronavirus/how-to-help](https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/how-to-help). To help safely mobilize statewide volunteers for response

and recovery efforts in our numerous communities, the State of Oklahoma also recently launched Be A Neighbor's **ReadyHelpGo.org**.

As we fight the COVID-19 pandemic together, know that my office is here to help you get answers and keep you informed. Check my website for resources and updates: **[cole.house.gov/coronavirus](https://cole.house.gov/coronavirus)**.

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