

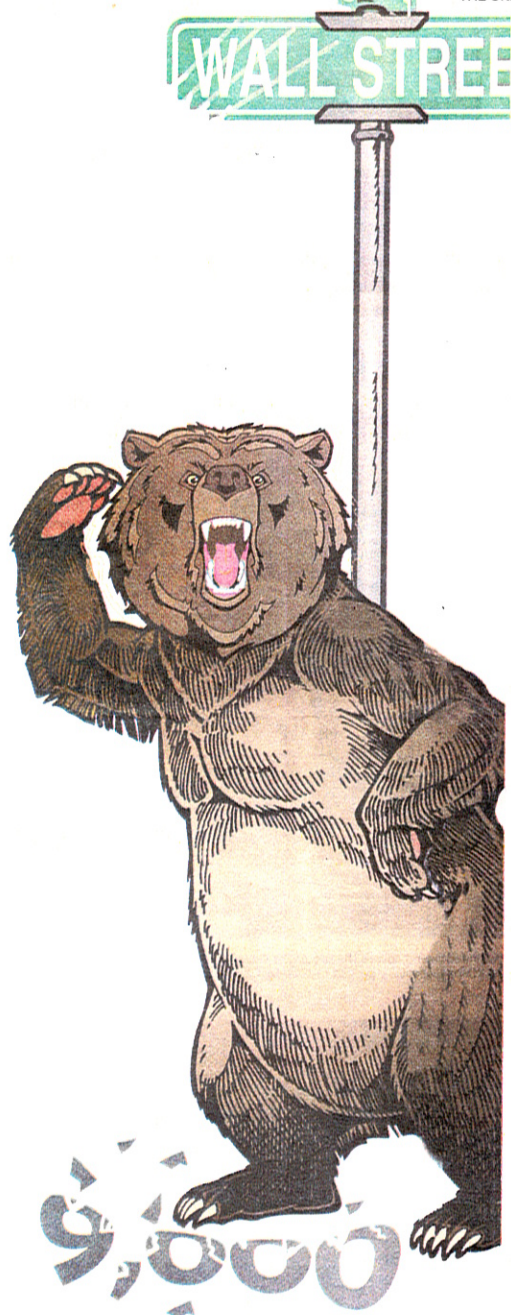


ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE BOALDIN THE OKLAHOMAN GRAPHICS



Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry, right, gestures as he speaks during a news conference in Oklahoma City on Thursday.

AP PHOTO

Leaders promise healthy economy

CAPITOL | HENRY SAYS STATE BANKS REMAIN STRONG

BY MICHAEL MCNUTT
Capitol Bureau
mmcnutt@opubco.com

Gov. Brad Henry assured Oklahomans on Thursday that the state's economy remains strong while Wall Street continues to tumble.

"Our banks are stable and strong," Henry said. "They're well capitalized. They're lending money."

The state's housing market is stable and the state's revenue collections are outpacing last year's, he said.

State Treasurer Scott Meacham, asked Thursday by Henry to review Oklahoma's financial interests, said state revenue collections through August are \$74.2 million above estimates and \$93.5 million above the prior year.

Preliminary September collections, which will be available next week, look good, he said.

Saving for a rainy day

The state's savings account, the Rainy Day Fund, is full, with about \$600 million, which is available in the event of a state funding emergency, Meacham said.

The state had 3,000 new jobs between April and May, he said, which ranked Oklahoma sixth in the nation in job growth, Meacham said. Oklahoma's unemployment rate is 4 percent, compared with a national rate of 6.1 percent.

SEE ECONOMY, BACK PAGE

Economy: Savings are full

FROM PAGE 1B

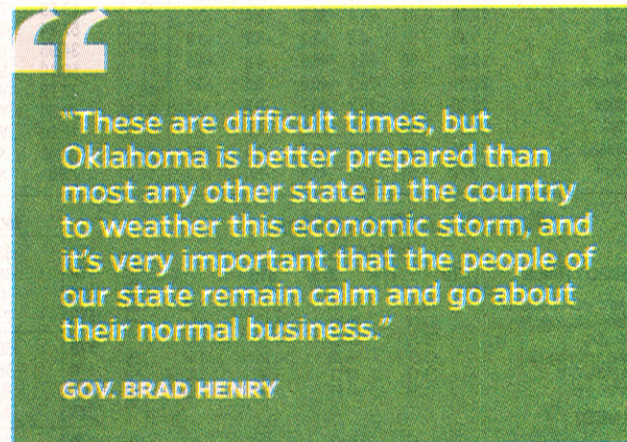
Henry said retired teachers, state workers, police officers and firefighters should realize their pensions are secure.

Their benefits are not directly affected by fluctuations in the stock market, with state retirees receiving a specific annuity payment for their lifetimes.

Impact on retirement

Henry said he wants Meacham, his cabinet secretary of finance and revenue, to check with pension fund leaders and other financial experts to determine short-term and long-term effects of market fluctuations on the retirement system.

Oklahoma's largest



pension and endowment funds could lose up to \$73.4 million on investments related to failed investment banking firm Lehman Brothers.

"These are difficult times, but Oklahoma is better prepared than most

any other state in the country to weather this economic storm, and it's very important that the people of our state remain calm and go about their normal business," the governor said.