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2022 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

MINNESOTA GOVERNOR TIM WALZ

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2022

6:00 P.M.

Reported By: Lori Morrow, RDR, RMR, RPR, CRR, CBC

1 SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: You may be seated.
2 Members of the Joint Convention and guests, I present to
3 you the Governor of the State of Minnesota, the
4 Honorable Tim Walz.

5 GOVERNOR WALZ: Thank you. Good evening.

6 Madam Speaker, and Members of the
7 Minnesota House of Representatives, Mr. President, and
8 Members of the Minnesota Senate. Madam Chief Justice,
9 Distinguished Members of the Minnesota Supreme Court,
10 Chief Judge Segal. My fellow Constitutional Officers.
11 Governor and Mrs. Dayton, welcome back. You are welcome
12 any time these last two years. Distinguished Tribal
13 Leaders, Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin of the Mille
14 Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and President Johnny Johnson of the
15 Prairie Island Indian Community. To the Escorts in the
16 Minnesota State Patrol and the Minnesota National Guard.
17 Father Ivan, blessed Easter and know that the State of
18 Minnesota stands united with the people of Ukraine.
19 Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, and Minnesota's
20 Second Gentleman Tom Weber. Hi, Siobhan; I did not
21 forget, and Siobhan. Minnesota's First Lady, Gwen Walz.

22 To the many guests and my fellow
23 Minnesotans, this is my fourth State of the State
24 address but only the second one in this important
25 chamber. And I think and I hope all of you felt as you

1 walked in here tonight, and I know I did, the sense of
2 history that goes with this and the sense that we're in
3 this together, you can feel strongly. So I'm incredibly
4 grateful.

5 It's, I think, what Minnesotans are
6 feeling, the sense of once again gathering together with
7 friends and relatives and co-workers and doing the
8 important things of life, whether it's proms or
9 graduations, sporting events, or important business.
10 The last two years have been incredibly challenging, so
11 not being in here for those two years, I know that many
12 of you are deeply disappointed you did not get to come
13 on a Sunday night and listen to me talk, but I promise
14 you over the next three to four hours I'll make it up to
15 you.

16 They think I'm kidding. No.

17 I will have to say, we know the State of
18 the State speech is an opportunity to reflect, but it's
19 also an opportunity of where we're going in the future.
20 I don't need to say it. Every euphemism has been made.
21 The last two years have been incredibly challenging.
22 But in those challenges, both the people of Minnesota
23 and these two bodies figured out a way in some of the
24 most challenging circumstances the state has ever faced.
25 As one of only, for a long time the only one, one of

1 only two divided legislatures, we figured out how to get
2 good things done for Minnesota together, not
3 individually. Very difficult to do that, and it's not
4 supposed to be that way. It's supposed to be getting
5 them done together. So I think it's important, if we're
6 reflecting, we should reflect on our successes together,
7 too; our budget reserves have hit record highs, and our
8 COVID infections and hospitalizations have hit record
9 lows, together.

10 Nationally, we have the fifth lowest
11 unemployment rate among states, the third highest job
12 growth, and one of the highest labor participation
13 rates. The leadership that's in front of me tonight,
14 working together, reduced the price of insulin to save
15 lives, increased education funding for every student,
16 and passed the largest jobs bill in state history. You
17 did it together. We picked the energy up over here, and
18 we did it by cutting taxes for the middle class all at
19 the same time. We were able to pass the first middle
20 class tax cut in 20 years all while delivering for
21 Minnesota. We've proven that compromises can work,
22 we've proven that we can balance budgets, and we've
23 proven that we can invest in the future. And because of
24 that, I'm here tonight to tell you the state of our
25 state is strong and moving forward.

1 And to be clear, moving forward doesn't
2 mean giving up on the tough issues. It doesn't mean
3 glossing over things that we need to take care of. What
4 it means is working together like we have so many times
5 to solve those problems. It's not enough to point out a
6 problem. It's not enough to come up with a cute slogan.
7 We need to come up with solutions, and then we need to
8 get results for the people of Minnesota. That's what
9 moving forward looks like.

10 You all do the same things that I do. You
11 have countless conversations, whether it's this morning
12 in church or whether it's at a coffee shop or whether
13 it's someone stopping you on the streets. And
14 Minnesotans are hopeful and resilient people. They are
15 also pretty innovative. We know that the solutions are
16 out there. We know that people are talking about these
17 things. And the one thing that Minnesotans know, that
18 if we invest in our people, we can't get it wrong.
19 That's the opportunity that we have in front of us, so I
20 would ask all of us let's make that commitment to try
21 and do the things that we're hearing from our
22 constituents. We're hearing ideas from them, and we
23 have the capacity to make that happen. I want to be
24 clear. We may not agree on everything. And if we're
25 being totally honest, some of us won't agree on

1 anything. That is the reality. That is a democracy.
2 That's the way some of this is. But we owe it to the
3 people of Minnesota to try and find common ground, to
4 try and put some of those differences aside to move at
5 least some things forward. I know it's frustrating.
6 The fierce sense of urgency on big issues means that you
7 want to go big, but I think in a divided legislature
8 like this and the expertise we have in this room, there
9 is a wide variety of solutions that can be implemented
10 to solving that problem. And the way I see it, we could
11 focus our energy in three areas. We could start
12 thinking right now about investing in the future, what
13 we need, that future workforce, what future generations
14 are going to need to make Minnesota the best state in
15 the nation to live, start a business, and enjoy the
16 things that we have. But we also know coming out of the
17 pandemic, nationally, globally, and here in Minnesota,
18 there's urgent issues that we can't put off and need to
19 address now. And then we've got unfinished business,
20 things that we need to solve right now. And I want to
21 discuss that, this issue of unfinished business. We
22 know where people are at. We know that globally we're
23 seeing higher prices, inflationary prices, but we know
24 it's impacting families. I've made the suggestion, and
25 I want to work with you on this. We should use some of

1 this historic surplus, a big piece of it, to put money
2 back in the pockets of working Minnesotans and those
3 that are trying to make the bills work for them.

4 And I'll note, in the spirit of
5 compromise, I believe one of the quickest, surest, and
6 most fiscally responsible ways is to return that money
7 right now if I'll do that. But I've said it many times,
8 and I'll say in this body, we can cut taxes for middle
9 class folks and folks trying to get into this middle
10 class, too, at the same time. But I want to be clear
11 about this. We can cut taxes for the middle class
12 without cutting taxes for massive corporations and the
13 wealthiest people in Minnesota. They don't need a tax
14 cut. We've signed a tax cut together. We've made it
15 work, but I think we should be very clear on this.
16 Cutting taxes for the wealthiest amongst us will not
17 guarantee opportunities in Minnesota for the wider
18 variety of folks, and it certainly won't grow our
19 economy from the middle out. So I ask us on this
20 pressing issue, folks need a little extra in their
21 pocket right now. We're sitting on this surplus. Let's
22 come together in a compromise and see if we can maybe
23 get some immediate relief and talk about this issue of
24 tax cuts for the middle class. We can do this. We can
25 do this. This unites a lot of us around an issue.

1 So I want to say before, though, we do
2 that, there are two issues, and I know it is the
3 elephant in the room and the donkey in the room, if you
4 will. We've been waiting since last May where we made a
5 determination that there were countless frontline
6 workers who put more on the line than anyone else. They
7 were out there during the pandemic doing the things to
8 keep our state running and keeping us safe, and we made
9 a joint effort together, passed and signed into law
10 relief to send them hero checks. We need to get that
11 done right now. We need to get that done. And we feel
12 strongly about this. We need to help Minnesotans
13 economically. But this issue of frontline workers,
14 there's people behind this. There are people behind
15 every decision we do. We are joined tonight by someone
16 I think many of you know, Mary Turner. She's an RN
17 nurse. In fact, she worked the night shift last night
18 in the emergency room. Mary and her colleagues have
19 spent the last two years, the early part of the pandemic
20 not only with no vaccines but without adequate personal
21 protective equipment. They went to work every single
22 day to ensure that us and our loved ones had the very
23 best care possible. And the results of what they did
24 was Minnesota's death rates that came from this when
25 someone is admitted to the hospital is one of the lowest

1 in the nation. Those are the folks that we said let's
2 give them a little extra help. It's not winning the
3 lottery. It's not a bonus. It's a thank you on behalf
4 of the people of Minnesota that they serve. And we need
5 to get this done.

6 Mary, thank you.

7 I also want to add, though, there are an
8 awful lot of small business owners who put their
9 livelihoods on the line, created jobs in our
10 communities, and grew our economy who suffered during
11 the pandemic. And I can tell you this. The
12 unemployment insurance trust fund is one of the best
13 anti-poverty programs that we had, and it was paid for
14 by those businesses to support those workers at a time
15 of need. It kept the rent paid. It kept food on the
16 table. And we have a responsibility and the capacity to
17 replenish the unemployment insurance trust fund both for
18 those small businesses and for those workers who made it
19 into the future. I ask us, let's do this now. Let's do
20 this now.

21 Once again, I would add, it's a debate.
22 It's a fair debate. That's how a democracy is supposed
23 to work. It's a little bit messy, and there are
24 different ideas. But behind us debating are real
25 people. With the hero checks, it was Mary. With the

1 unemployment fund, it's in restaurants like Sammy's in
2 North Minneapolis or Jules' in St. Cloud. I have two
3 small business owners here tonight, Sammy McDowell and
4 Donella Westphal. They went out of their way. They
5 created jobs. They created their restaurants. They
6 hired people. They took care of their workers. They
7 kept the public safe. And they are doing everything
8 they can to rebuild. They are simply asking us let's
9 get a compromise, let's get this fixed. Now is not the
10 time for Sammy or Donella to have a tax increase, and we
11 can make sure today that that doesn't happen.

12 So thank you, both.

13 And in this debate, and I will name it,
14 too, I said there's an elephant and a donkey in the
15 room, and there's us in the room as the executive
16 branch. I understand that today progress is being made
17 on this very issue. And if that is the case, what I
18 would ask is, we're here, we have the opportunity.
19 Speaker Hortman, republican leadership in the Senate, we
20 should get together. We're prepared. Let's work
21 tonight. Let's finish this thing. We have a couple
22 things that fit together, a couple things that serve
23 Minnesotans. We have the resources to do it, and we
24 could move Minnesota forward in a bipartisan manner. So
25 I would ask if we're getting close to a compromise on

1 this, let's finish this deal, and let's finish it now.
2 So let's take care of that. We have the opportunity to
3 get some money back in people's pockets. We can
4 compromise on how we do that. We can take care of that
5 frontline hero pay and show Minnesotans and make sure
6 we're retaining and attracting those really talented
7 healthcare workers. We can do that, and we can take
8 care of the trust fund issue. And that still leaves us
9 about \$6 billion to move on with the issues that we need
10 to deal with. That's just this biennium. So I ask, we
11 know that we were left with issues coming out of the
12 pandemic that need to be addressed. I don't think, as I
13 hear some people say, we can just put it off. We can't
14 put some of these things off. We can't put off things
15 that Minnesotans need that are important.

16 And I want to just be clear. The pandemic
17 did not impact all of us equally. It impacted
18 communities differently, and it left us challenges that
19 we know we have to come together on. Every single
20 Minnesotan has a story to tell in this. Lieutenant
21 Governor lost a beloved older brother, a marine, seemed
22 invincible, strong, one of the first people to die in
23 this. This body lost a beloved member. All of us have
24 stories. All of us have the impacts of this. And I
25 know this. The pandemic has caused rifts between all of

1 us. It has caused rifts that seem almost
2 insurmountable.

3 My pledge to you is to try and listen, to
4 try and work together and try and heal those rifts,
5 because the goal of everyone in this body and the goal
6 of everyone who is a public servant is the health and
7 safety of our fellow Minnesotans. Now, we might not
8 have the same idea how to get there, but we have to
9 continue to follow the science and follow what we know
10 can get us there to make those differences. And I'm
11 going to point out, I know it's hard. I want to
12 acknowledge.

13 My friend Sheletta Brundidge is here
14 tonight. Some of you know Sheletta. She served as a
15 role model in her community. She's a well-known media
16 personality. She is someone that people listen to
17 because she's earned that right. And I want to say
18 Sheletta spent the first year on the radio telling
19 people not to get a COVID-19 vaccine. She had read and
20 heard things that worried her. And as a black woman,
21 she's got a valid historical concern when it comes to
22 this. On his 15th birthday, Sheletta's son, Andrew,
23 said all he wanted for his birthday was for his mom to
24 be safe and asked her to do a little more work. And she
25 went and talked to her doctor. She went and talked to

1 folks at different institutions, and she decided to get
2 the COVID-19 vaccine.

3 I want to acknowledge to folks that things
4 that have divided us and these very difficult issues
5 about people's personal health decisions and how they do
6 things going forward are a challenge, but I think we can
7 work through them with grace and dignity and try and get
8 as much good information out as we can. Sheletta has
9 since gone on her radio show and talked to people about
10 the importance of getting the COVID-19 vaccine and save
11 lives. And I say thank you.

12 And for all of us, and I include myself in
13 every one of these discussions, trying to listen and
14 learn, and to try and be patient with one another as we
15 understand what it looks like going forward. I
16 especially ask us to be patient and supportive of those
17 who continue to be the caregivers of this state. The
18 pandemic made it very clear that we cannot function in
19 this state without amazing people who care for our
20 children, who care for our seniors, and who care for our
21 most vulnerable, and those that keep us safe in our
22 communities. I think we all will agree on how important
23 they were, but we need to acknowledge that even prior to
24 the pandemic but especially during the pandemic, the
25 workforce issues around these jobs have been

1 exacerbated. And we have the capacity, the private
2 sector has the capacity, our non-profits have the
3 capacity, and our budget shows that we can address these
4 very issues.

5 I want to talk, first of all, just a
6 little bit about child care. Now, many of us are a
7 little bit older, but it doesn't take that long to
8 remember. One of the most important decisions you make
9 as a parent is trying to get into that quality child
10 care or trying to figure out what's best for your child
11 or trying to make it work with your schedule. Maybe
12 you're on a swing shift and how to make that work as a
13 family. Child care in this country, in this state was
14 in crisis long before the pandemic. But during the
15 pandemic, it was those child care workers were the first
16 ones on the front lines to ensure that our children had
17 a safe place to go, and their parents, if you remember,
18 early on when we kept those open to make sure that
19 police and firefighters and nurses and doctors had a
20 place to take their children safely so that they could
21 do the work to keep the rest of us going.

22 Now, I want to thank all of you,
23 Minnesota, clearly protecting our child care industry
24 better than any other state in the nation, but both
25 parents and the number of especially women who had to

1 leave the workforce over this issue and the number of
2 providers who can't make the economic numbers work
3 behind this. We have a responsibility. Business is
4 asking us to work on this. And we have a lot of
5 bipartisan support to build the workforce behind the
6 workforce that makes things go. When people are
7 thinking about where they're going to have a business or
8 thinking about where they are going to live, to have
9 Minnesota be known as we were during the pandemic and
10 come out of it, a state that is committed to child care
11 and early education, is a hiring bonus to get people
12 here and to create lives that they want to live.

13 So I thank all of you for the work you
14 did.

15 There's a lot of experts in here on this
16 issue. And I would like to talk about home healthcare
17 workers a little bit just because I think this is one of
18 the hardest and most important jobs in the state. These
19 personal care assistants, as many in this body know, are
20 the folks that help our family, our friends, our
21 neighbors with disabilities live fulfilling and
22 independent lives. I've had the privilege of seeing
23 that firsthand, how important, how fulfilling, and just
24 how caring this profession is. A couple years ago, I
25 had the opportunity to spend a day with Deb Howze, a

1 personal care attendant. She cared for my friend Jay,
2 who is a veteran and has MS. And I spent that day
3 watching the care, the hard work, the labor that goes
4 into making this happen, all of that to give Jay the
5 highest quality of life with independent living and
6 respect. These are the heroes that make Minnesota a
7 caring state, and we have a responsibility to make sure
8 we take care of them.

9 So, Deb, thank you.

10 And there's a whole lot of folks sitting
11 out here that I hope Minnesota knows, understand this
12 very clearly, and you need to get credit for what you
13 did. Last year, we finally gave Deb and other personal
14 care assistants a raise. This year, we're giving
15 another one. This budget surplus gives us an
16 opportunity to help correct that profession to make sure
17 not only people like Deb can stay in it but that we're
18 attracting the best and brightest into it where they can
19 make a living wage.

20 So I congratulate all of you.

21 I think these are the stories maybe
22 Minnesotans don't hear. You all did this. You're the
23 experts in this. You worked on it. There are folks in
24 here who spent decades working on this issue. There are
25 folks that know the regulations inside and out. And

1 what we know is if we make some of these changes, we
2 strengthen that healthcare workforce. I would argue we
3 need to start thinking about that broadly. We know that
4 there's professions, and all businesses are experiencing
5 a workforce shortage. We can't afford to leave anyone
6 on the sidelines. And here in Minnesota, we know how to
7 do that. We saw wonderful public/private partnerships,
8 and our universities and community colleges came
9 together around this issue. When we saw the latest
10 Omicron and Delta surge this last November until March,
11 we had the severe shortage across the spectrum of care
12 providers. But one of the ways we could move more
13 people in quicker that were qualified was changing and
14 going about recruiting for the Certified Nursing
15 Assistant Program. And we created a program here in
16 Minnesota with a goal to train, certify, and place 1,000
17 CNAs. These are the people that are in our long-term
18 care facilities, they are in our veterans' homes caring
19 for our heroes, and they are the ones keeping the
20 hospitals functioning. And we set that goal for 90 days
21 to try and get 1,000 of them in. We went out and
22 recruited people. You all helped. And the money that
23 we used from the Recovery Act was able to do some
24 inventive things, getting just bus fare for some folks
25 who got off the sidelines, got their training, got their

1 certificate, and are now in a new profession making a
2 living and caring for Minnesotans. We not only got that
3 1,000, we got about 1,400. That program worked. Now,
4 the funding is coming to an end. I would ask us all, I
5 think this is one of those areas, we have a budget in
6 front of us, let's fund that program, and then let's use
7 your creativity to continue to figure out how we build
8 that broader workforce. That's what Minnesotans are
9 expecting us to do. Now we have those folks in those
10 facilities doing the work that we know they need to do.

11 So thank you all for that.

12 And as we start talking about tackling
13 these problems that the pandemic created, I do think
14 it's important to pause to acknowledge, and we've talked
15 about it, we've learned, we've listened. We got some
16 right; we get some wrong. But through it all, there are
17 people that were asked to do this work day in and day
18 out. And when we had shortages of those people in
19 long-term care facilities, we had to set up a, Minnesota
20 is the only one, Critical Care Coordinating Center, the
21 C4. When I go to meet with other states, and many of
22 you do the same thing, too, it seems like it would be a
23 really common thing that would happen, a one-stop place
24 that you could find and place a hospital bed anywhere in
25 the state and that we can move people where we needed

1 them, and we could do the same thing with staff. We had
2 many, many nights, sometimes dozens of long-term care
3 facilities that COVID outbreaks decimated the entire
4 staff and there was going to be no one there in the
5 morning to care for those residents. It was at that
6 time that we asked the folks at the Minnesota Department
7 of Health under Commissioner Jan Malcolm's leadership to
8 step up and create a plan. And I want to say as we sit
9 here tonight, still around the clock these employees are
10 looking, working, and trying to figure out where will
11 COVID come from next, and how do we make sure we're
12 ahead of it before it happens. So I want to give a
13 heartfelt thank you to all of those folks, especially
14 those state employees, who made that coordinating care,
15 bringing the hospitals together, and bringing a unified
16 approach to how we did this. I want to say thank you to
17 them.

18 And while they coordinated it though,
19 somebody had to do the work. And in that case, it was
20 the women and men of the Minnesota National Guard. I
21 want to say thank you to General Shawn Manke and the
22 entire Minnesota National Guards. These last two years
23 you've stepped up in ways that we could have never
24 imagined. You've gone into long-term care facilities.
25 You've gone into our veterans' homes. You've been at

1 testing and vaccination sites. And throughout that
2 pandemic, you were there every step of the way to help
3 Minnesotans in their time of need. Just today, under
4 Chapter 12 authority, I've authorized 100 National Guard
5 to provide emergency support for flooding operations in
6 Northwestern Minnesota. They will leave their homes,
7 they'll pack up their gear, they'll go to the armory,
8 they'll receive their mission, and they will protect
9 homes; they will protect lives. And they will do it in
10 the most professional manner. And then they will return
11 back, and they will get their guard training, and they
12 might be asked by the United States Government to
13 provide security for this nation. No one does this
14 better, and the people of Minnesota owe an incredible
15 debt of gratitude to the people of the Minnesota
16 National Guard.

17 With that, General, I salute you.

18 And right alongside those Minnesota
19 warriors and our patriots, right alongside them every
20 step of the way was the women and men of the Minnesota
21 State Patrol under the leadership of Colonel Matt
22 Langer. Along with our DNR conservation officers,
23 you've worked across this state to keep our communities
24 safe, and you've taken on unprecedented challenges.
25 Also Minnesota is incredibly indebted to you.

1 Thank you, Colonel.

2 All of you came here to make a difference
3 in your communities, and you bring a wealth of life
4 experiences. And I think we all know these issues are
5 tough, and they are tough nationally; they are tough in
6 Minnesota. Public safety is a complex, evolving issue
7 in 2022. It's been exacerbated by the workforce
8 challenge and the pandemic. And whether it's traffic
9 deaths, crime, wildfires, severe weather, our law
10 enforcement agencies across the state have stepped up to
11 keep us safe in some of the most difficult conditions.
12 Our top priority and my top priority is always the
13 health and safety of Minnesotans. And I've been
14 traveling across the state. And no community is exactly
15 the same. But listening to local mayors, elected
16 officials, listening to public safety officials,
17 listening to community leaders, and I'm talking about
18 it, and we all make the debates here. I'm proposing in
19 the budget that we have in front of you \$300 million
20 investment in these communities. In some of those
21 communities, it's going to make sure that they can hire
22 the law enforcement officers they need. In other
23 communities, it's going to be to modernize their 9-1-1
24 system, which is not just a phone system. It's a way of
25 making sure that those trained professionals who operate

1 that send out the right responses, if it's a mental
2 health crisis, if it's a fire, or if it's a situation
3 that requires law enforcement. Some communities are
4 talking about buying unmarked vehicles to transport
5 domestic violence survivors and children so they are not
6 in the back of a police car as they move from that
7 dangerous situation. And some are talking about getting
8 new equipment and new ways of doing things.

9 Our local officials know we have a surplus
10 that allows them to do that, and we also have the
11 capacity to work with those community groups that are
12 showing a huge reduction not just in those crimes, but a
13 reduction in the number of youth that are going in wrong
14 directions. So this has a capacity. Public safety can
15 be there. We can make this happen. But we need to
16 agree that we can define the problem, we can set up some
17 goals, we can work together to get there. This is not
18 one of those issues that it's enough to point out the
19 problem. We need concrete solutions with measurable
20 results that keep Minnesotans safe and make sure that
21 justice is served. We can do that. We can do that.

22 And I'll note, if we really are serious
23 about getting tough on crime, then we need to get tough
24 on the causes of crime, because that's where it begins.
25 That means moving back upstream, tackling economic

1 inequality issues, talking about housing, talking about
2 gun violence, and then talking about issues like mental
3 health and addiction. This issue of addiction,
4 especially around opioids and fentanyl, is devastating
5 our country and our state. There are few families that
6 don't know of or been touched by this. In this very
7 body, we have two individuals, Senator Eaton and
8 Representative Baker, who turned personal tragedy that
9 is almost unimaginable into becoming national leaders
10 with real solutions that are making a difference in
11 saving lives. We should be listening to them. We
12 should be investing in those things that make a
13 difference. And Minnesotans are crying out that we
14 tackle this issue. The solutions are in this room.
15 They're in Minnesota. And it unites us all together.
16 Not only are we going to reduce tragedies in families,
17 we are going to reduce crime, because these sales are
18 driving the crime. They are driving the things that are
19 happening. That is a common goal that all of us have in
20 here. We have the resources to help make that happen,
21 and we can start impacting lives in a real way. So I
22 ask us -- we listen to you. We are trying to learn from
23 you. At the state level, we're getting ready to hire a
24 director of the work that will be done here, but it's
25 going to be these bodies that create the systemic

1 changes. It's going to be these bodies that come up
2 with the real long-term solutions. If we do that, we
3 will save lives, reduce crime, and make Minnesota the
4 state we know it can be. And the leadership is here.
5 This is one of the most bipartisan and hopeful things we
6 can do together, and I would argue no state has the
7 expertise. This was led, the idea of mental health
8 parity, of being a part of this issue, was with Paul
9 Wellstone and Jim Ramstad. It has never known
10 partisanship. But Minnesota was the state that pushed
11 on this issue. Minnesota was the state that set up some
12 of the earliest treatment courts. Minnesota was the
13 state that knows we must do better around this issue.
14 So I ask all of you, whether it's taking care of the
15 people who take care of our kids, whether it's taking
16 care of the people who take care of our seniors, our
17 most vulnerable, whether it's taking care of public
18 safety and the folks who do this work, and reducing
19 crime, we can do all those things. We can do that this
20 session, and then we can do what many of you came here
21 to do. Think about that brighter future. It's
22 Minnesota, for goodness sakes. Let's get to where the
23 puck is going to be, not where it is. That's what we
24 can do next. That's what all of you came here to do.
25 And the big ideas are out there.

1 So I would say for most of us, what those
2 big ideas look like starts with education. Education is
3 what brought many of us here to Minnesota, myself
4 included. I know it's a disappointment to some of you,
5 but it did bring me here. My wife, Gwen, and I, we've
6 devoted a lifetime to this. We taught together for many
7 years. We taught at Mankato West. And Gwen is still
8 involved in education. And I know many of you have done
9 that, but all of us are touched by it, our own
10 education, our children's education. We all want to
11 have the best opportunities, the best resources, and the
12 best outcomes for our students. And I can tell you we
13 have the capacity now. We've done it. We passed one of
14 the largest increases in spending in the last budget
15 cycle in Minnesota history. And you did it in a
16 bipartisan manner to make a difference for our students.
17 We've got more to be done.

18 Now I'm going to have to tell you. I am
19 here tonight with two teachers who inspire me. Val and
20 Lin Whipple are here. They happen to also be my
21 in-laws. Lifelong teachers and coaches.

22 So I want to say thank you.

23 As Lin knows, behind every governor is an
24 astonished mother-in-law, so. You know in this room,
25 the experts are in this room, too; education begins at

1 birth, and it goes through lifetimes.

2 Minnesota should be the best state in the
3 country to raise a family. And we're working to make
4 that a reality. We're making sure that our early
5 childhood education is the best in the country by
6 investing in everything from quality child care to pre-K
7 and early education scholarships. We're making sure
8 that every child has that quality start and every parent
9 has a safe place and knows that their child is being
10 taken care of. We put a budget in front of you that
11 continues to focus on that workforce, that continues to
12 focus on those early starts. And with the capacity
13 we're in, I remind everyone, without raising taxes, we
14 have the capacity right now to expand pre-K to 23,000
15 more children, which is going to change lives for
16 generations to come. It's children, and once we get
17 them on that healthy start, once we get them on that
18 path for success, we need to make sure that we're
19 continuing to do our best. I'm proud of what we did
20 last year in our education budget, but there's more to
21 do. We have an opportunity with this budget, fiscally,
22 responsibly to finally for the first time fully fund our
23 schools the way we need to.

24 And while I talked about the teachers,
25 every one of us knows there are so many things that make

1 for a healthy school. There are so many things that
2 give that child that start as we talked about it,
3 whether it's stable housing or, in the case of what
4 we're knowing now, mental health care. Minnesota does
5 so many things right, but we're on the sidelines on this
6 issue of our counselors and our mental health
7 professionals in our schools. We have the capacity to
8 finally start to get there. We shouldn't be 49th or
9 50th for the number of those professionals that are in
10 there. We should be near the top, because the return on
11 the investment of tackling the issues that our children
12 are facing moves us so far ahead. So we have the
13 capacity to make sure every child gets that.

14 And what I want to ask you is let's also
15 think about this, and many of you have worked hard on
16 this. Outside of school, let's make sure there's enough
17 children's in-patient beds for children in crisis so
18 that they're not in an emergency room or they're not
19 being shipped to Iowa to try and care for this. Let's
20 create that infrastructure, people.

21 And I'll just say, as we're thinking about
22 all those things, I put a proposal in front of you. And
23 all of us in this chamber are incredibly proud. We feed
24 the world. We're the home of Norman Borlaug in the
25 Green Revolution. Our producers do an incredible job,

1 and because of that, we have the most abundant, safest,
2 and affordable food supply in the world. But we still
3 have people go to bed hungry, and we still have children
4 do that. One of the ways that we can tackle this is,
5 and we have the capacity to do that, every child who
6 walks through the door of that school deserves to have a
7 breakfast and a lunch. And I can tell you this. It is
8 long past time. Let's get rid of the different-colored
9 lunch tickets and the shaming around this, and let's
10 just provide meals for our children. We can do that.
11 We can do that so we get them off to a healthy start.
12 We get our kids in a safe place. We provide the
13 resources necessary. We demand results and outcomes
14 because we all know the statistics. We rank us first in
15 the nation until we start desegregating the data to our
16 children of color. We have a moral responsibility to
17 fix that, the same way we do in healthcare disparities,
18 the same way we do in home ownership disparities. But
19 the real reason, too, that goes along with that, we're
20 going to have to create that workforce of the future,
21 and no one can be left on the sidelines. So as we start
22 thinking about paths to that future workforce, we need
23 to prepare it today, and that path looks different for
24 all children. Some may go with a four-year degree.
25 Some may go in that direction. Others, we know now, and

1 there are schools out there and legislators on both
2 sides of the aisle advocating for this career training
3 that makes a difference and an impact in students'
4 lives. There's no reason that we should be the state
5 that manufactures the microchips that's in short supply.
6 It started here. We still are one of this country's
7 major manufacturers of microchips. We have the
8 opportunity to have modern manufacturing, modern
9 opportunity, and use our skilled trade professionals who
10 are here to make a difference. That's how we have to
11 start thinking about it. Get them on a good start. You
12 know that. Invest what we can, demand outcomes, and
13 then create pathways to the future. That makes us
14 competitive. That creates lives of joy.

15 And I'll tell you this, too. We need to
16 think about this. COVID upset everything around, who
17 can work from home, who can't. The income disparity
18 grew during that time. But the one thing that's clear
19 amongst people, the workforce shortage is demanding
20 folks to think and act differently about what it means
21 to have a career and be a joyful, healthy work
22 environment. So I would make the case to all of you, if
23 we're going to recruit and retain that quality workforce
24 after we've trained them, we'd better make sure that
25 we're able to keep them here. And what I know is no one

1 should have to make a decision between a paycheck and
2 taking a child to the doctor. No one should make a
3 difference.

4 Don't ask me. Ask 190 other nations and
5 every Fortune 500 company. They invest in paid family
6 leave. Large corporations do because it retains a
7 quality workforce and it increases productivity. That's
8 what this is about. The bill we put in front of you
9 offers 12 weeks of paid family leave to care for that
10 child. We know those first months how important they
11 are, and we know that people when they have this return
12 to those employers and stay longer. And we also have
13 the ability to approve 48 hours if you're sick or you
14 need to go to the doctor. These are just not only
15 morally the right thing to do; they are economically the
16 things that's going to grow our economy, keep our
17 workforce here, and make this state a destination of
18 where you want to live. So as we're creating this
19 workforce of the future, let's create that workplace of
20 the future. Let's follow the lead of some of our most
21 successful private partners who are making this happen
22 right now. We can just make sure no small businesses
23 are left behind. We can make sure that employees have
24 the opportunity to go where they want and employers and
25 entrepreneurs can start the businesses they want to.

1 Pass this paid family leave bill, and let's make a
2 difference.

3 Again, we're not going to agree on
4 everything, but I do think at the core of this we are
5 getting close on this. I believe with all my heart
6 everyone in this building loves this state with the same
7 passion as any of the rest of us, and I also believe
8 that everybody in this building wants what's best for
9 our children. We just have a different idea how to do
10 that sometimes. And we also know that that workforce,
11 how do we get there, how do we listen, how do we be
12 creative, how do we go with one another. And I will
13 make the case, if we're going to do that and we're going
14 to build a state where we have the best qualified
15 workforce, we have folks ready to go, we have quality
16 education systems, we need to build that future and move
17 Minnesota forward and also protect our incredible
18 natural resources. What I'm saying is we're going to be
19 challenged, and many of you know we're already
20 challenged. There are many in this room I know feel it
21 may be too late, tackling this issue around climate, the
22 issue about making sure that what is hitting, and it
23 doesn't hit us all equally, the damage being done by
24 climate, the amount of costs that it is to our
25 infrastructure, to our health, and to our people. And

1 if we have this incredible workforce and we have this
2 incredibly healthy state, we will have the folks who can
3 be at the heart of, and in many cases our agricultural
4 producers are leading the way sequestering carbon and
5 moving in new, sustainable manners. So I would ask all
6 of us as we think about this. We are blessed with
7 incredible natural resources, certainly with our people,
8 but certainly on our land. This is not an issue that
9 forces us to choose an ideological position. It is
10 simply happening, and there are solutions out there,
11 free market solutions, it's why many businesses are
12 adapting these, that can start moving us to a
13 sustainable future and can start protecting the
14 environment that we need. That's the Minnesota that we
15 need. Protect our clean air, protect our water, protect
16 our opportunity for our children to live the lives that
17 many of us got to live so that that's there tomorrow.
18 We can do that. We need to do that. And our children
19 are telling us we must do it. Let's get this done.

20 We can do it. Let's prepare the
21 workforce. Let's tackle the issues. Let's try and find
22 common ground. It's not going to be in total. We're
23 not going to be in total alignment. But I do know that
24 those core values are there, and I do know that there's
25 good ideas coming out.

1 So I know this is a pretty ambitious
2 agenda, because Minnesotans are ambitious. And I know
3 this is things that's going to make us talk about things
4 that are uncomfortable. And I know there's a temptation
5 to continue to get into our own corners or to try and
6 demonize. You talk to folks, too. You move just a
7 little further out of your bubble, and Minnesotans just
8 say can't you guys get along and figure out how to fix
9 some of these things? Can't you figure out how to reach
10 a compromise on that? I would make the case that I
11 think this body is better prepared than any other one in
12 the United States. You've proven it. You've made it
13 happen.

14 When I look around, and I look to myself,
15 where can I do better? Where have I not reached out
16 enough? Where have I disrespected the expertise that
17 could have been there? And I take my lesson, be that
18 many of us do, you watch people you admire, you watch
19 how people respond, you watch how people deal with one
20 another, and you try and take the best of that and
21 incorporate it in. And this daunting division that's in
22 front of us doesn't exist all the time everywhere. And
23 you don't have to look very far to find incredible
24 examples of how we want our state to work without the
25 division even in some of the most difficult times.

1 Recently, many of you know the small town
2 of Taopi was struck by a tornado. The newspaper
3 headline the next day across the headline literally
4 said, and it was totally accurate, half the town was
5 gone in those moments. I drove down there, met with a
6 local representative, who was already dirty up to the
7 knees by helping people clean, was there comforting
8 children and moving on. I surveyed that damage, met a
9 couple people. First one I met was Mayor Mary Huntley.
10 Now, like so many mayors who are here, and many of you
11 who were mayors, that's a job of getting stuff done.
12 They literally make things work. And the mayor woke up
13 that morning of the tornado probably thinking about do
14 we need to do the street repair, is the water main still
15 good, how is the water treatment plant doing, how are we
16 going to make this happen, and the things that happen in
17 everyday life. The day ended with Mayor Huntley helping
18 with others, moving the oldest citizen of Taopi, her
19 mother, 94-year-old Ms. Huntley, and making sure that
20 every single one of those citizens had a home to sleep
21 in that was safe that night, had enough food to eat, and
22 had clean water. She was doing all of this from the
23 command post that was set up that drew responders from
24 across the state. Everywhere I looked, Winona County,
25 Dodge County, it didn't matter, they were all there.

1 The Adams American Legion was stuffed to the gills with
2 donations from Minnesotans all across the state. And in
3 that command post, in the mayor's kitchen, with a sense
4 of optimism, she said, "We're down, but we're going to
5 come back better than ever before."

6 Mayor Huntley is with us tonight. I would
7 like to say thank you for that leadership.

8 She also told me there might have been an
9 easier way to get her mother to come live with her, but
10 now she is, so welcome.

11 And I don't know if everything happens by
12 chance on the interconnectedness we all feel. On the
13 way home from that visit, I got a call from my friend
14 Chairman Kevin Jenvold of the Yellow Medicine people of
15 the Upper Sioux, and he called and saw and heard we were
16 down in Taopi, and he asked me if I knew, and he said,
17 Taopi is named after a Dakota leader. The name Taopi
18 means wounded in battle, but the man Taopi was known for
19 his strength and resilience. I think I speak for all of
20 us when I say to the people of our Taopi, while you're
21 wounded, you will certainly heal. Your strength and
22 resilience, Mayor, was on display. The gift that you
23 gave to your people is a great example for all of us,
24 and thank you for allowing me to be there. And there
25 are even in the darkest nights, there's a sunrise the

1 next morning, and you're figuring it out. So thank you
2 for being that example.

3 We're gritty. We're resilient. We're
4 strong and diverse. We may argue, but I think we
5 understand the blessings that have been given to us. No
6 matter how divided it may feel at times, we're still
7 connected. From Chairman Jensvold, people who have been
8 on this land long before any of us, to Mayor Huntley in
9 a small town thriving even in the midst of a disaster,
10 to each of us in a divided legislature during some of
11 the most divisive and hateful times we've seen in our
12 politics, you've all figured out a way to find some
13 solutions to some issues. [Indecipherable] made you
14 happy as no one's bid any of us that. But Minnesotans
15 are seeing the fruits of that. We're tackling some of
16 these issues. And so what I would ask of all of us, my
17 challenge, and I'm saying it to myself to make sure that
18 I continue to do it, and when I don't, I'll publicly try
19 and do the best I can, is let's try and lead by the
20 example of these servant leaders, whether it's Sheletta
21 Brundidge, whether it's Mayor Huntley, whether it's
22 Kevin Jensvold, and the countless stories each and every
23 one of you have and look at every single day. We can
24 show our constituents that we can move together.

25 And I would ask this: Why don't we show

1 the rest of the country at this time that's really just
2 aching for a lack of chaos, a lack of civility [sic], a
3 lack of answers, why don't we show them that we possess
4 that capacity. We're not all going to leave real happy
5 about that because soon we're going to have to
6 compromise on issues we don't think that highly of. But
7 I'm not asking you to compromise on your deepest core
8 values. I'm asking us to tackle the things that we can
9 do right now to help those working families. Let's make
10 sure we've got our small businesses ready. Let's tackle
11 this issue of our workforce issues and our public
12 safety. And then let's try and put in place a 21st
13 Century workforce that solves these problems. I truly
14 believe it, and we've done it, that we can do this as
15 well as any place in the country. But not one of us is
16 going to do it alone. And by the nature of the voters,
17 we're divided. If we try and do the work we know we
18 were sent here to do, I don't believe there's anything
19 we can't conquer.

20 So I want to thank you all for being back
21 in this space. I want to thank each of you for being
22 the servant leaders that you are. And I want to thank
23 you for sitting here so patiently to listen. I know
24 you've missed this over the years, but it matters. It
25 matters, and I feel hopeful.

1 So may God bless each of you, and may God
2 bless Minnesota.

3 (The proceedings were adjourned at 6:58 4 p.m.)

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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

2

3 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

4) ss.

5 COUNTY OF RAMSEY)

6

7 I, Lori Morrow, Stenographic Court

8 Reporter and Notary Public in the State of Minnesota, do

9 hereby certify that I reported the STATE OF THE STATE

10 ADDRESS OF MINNESOTA GOVERNOR TIM WALZ on April 24,

11 2022, in St. Paul, Minnesota and that the foregoing

12 constitutes an accurate verbatim stenographic record

13 taken by me.

14

15 WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 24th day of

16 April, 2022.

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23 Lori Morrow, RDR, RMR, RPR, CRR, CBC

24 Notary Public, Hennepin County, Minnesota

25 My Commission Expires: January 31, 2025