

State of the State Address  
Minnesota Governor Tim Walz  
Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Minnesota State Capitol  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Reported By:

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Job no: 24967

1                   GOVERNOR WALZ: Thank you. Thank  
2 you. Thank you.

3                   Madam Speaker, and Members of the  
4 Minnesota House of Representatives, Mr. President,  
5 and Members of the Minnesota Senate. Madam Chief  
6 Justice, and Distinguished Members of the  
7 Minnesota Supreme Court. My fellow Constitutional  
8 Officers, my Cabinet, staff, Governor Dayton. To  
9 our Sovereign Leadership of our Indigenous  
10 Nations, Lower Sioux Vice President Grace  
11 Goldtooth, Prairie Island Indian Community  
12 President Shelley Buck, and Bois Forte Band of  
13 Chippewa Chairwoman Cathy Chavers. Lieutenant  
14 Governor Flanagan of the White Earth Nation.  
15 Escorts in the Minnesota National Guard, some of  
16 whom are with the Field Artillery, the 1 and the  
17 125. Steel Rain. And to the First Lady, Gwen.  
18 My daughter, Hope. My son, Gus, who is absent as  
19 a 12-year-old with pinkeye. And my fellow  
20 Minnesotans, who serve as the foundation of this  
21 great state and the reason we're here tonight.

22                   Tonight, gathering together, for the  
23 first time all of us together, gives us an  
24 opportunity to reaffirm why we are here. I know  
25 for certain that we're not here to have petty

1 arguments against one another. I'm absolutely  
2 certain we're not here to send out mean tweets  
3 towards one another. And I know, and I think this  
4 is especially true of our new members, we're not  
5 here to be actors in a story that is already  
6 written for us, one that tells us how we're  
7 supposed to act and this is the way it's always  
8 been done and we're supposed to butt heads on  
9 this, and then May 20th will come around and we  
10 will become friends.

11 I am not naive, my friends. I  
12 served in the House of Representatives. I believe  
13 there's one other person in this room who has had  
14 the pleasure of serving both in the United States  
15 Congress and being here with the Attorney General.

16 I will tell you, don't write that  
17 story. Write this story right here. That's why  
18 you came here. That is why you worked so hard to  
19 come and bring your talents and bring your  
20 experience and more importantly, to bring the  
21 stories of your constituents.

22 That's what this is really about.  
23 Those stories that inform who we are. The policy  
24 proposals that we put forward, those are not  
25 something that comes from us as our personal

1 ideology. They are things that come from our  
2 constituents in the stories they tell us about  
3 their lives. Whether they tell us about health  
4 care and what they need or what could be done, or  
5 they talk about education and it's working and  
6 what's not, or they talk about what makes  
7 Minnesota such a special place.

8           Tonight I'm going to tell you a few  
9 of those stories. You'll recognize some of them  
10 because the name might be different, but it will  
11 be the same story you're hearing. Some of them  
12 you won't know.

13           Some come from friends. Some come  
14 from people who told me the story since I have  
15 become Governor, and like so many of you  
16 sometimes, you just step back when you hear the  
17 story and you think, that needs to be retold and  
18 something needs to be done.

19           And tonight I've got a lot of  
20 stories mainly because I spent many, many years  
21 teaching and I taught thousands of students, two  
22 of whom are with us tonight.

23           Will and Ross are here with me  
24 tonight. They're twins, if you can't tell. I  
25 never could tell you apart. It was the dirty

1 shoes. The dirty shoes were the giveaway.

2 Will and Ross were students of mine  
3 at Mankato West, and like tens of thousands across  
4 Minnesota, they came to our schools eager. They  
5 wanted to absorb everything. They took advantage  
6 of every opportunity and every club we had and  
7 they wanted to find out what life could give them.  
8 They went out and furthered their education and  
9 they decided they would pursue the two things that  
10 they were really, really excited about: Athletics  
11 and sport, and eating.

12 And they came together and got three  
13 of their other friends, and since they're very  
14 literal people, they created a little company  
15 called Five Friends, so it made sense. And they  
16 decided that nutrition and granola bars were too  
17 expensive and they weren't made with a lot of  
18 natural ingredients.

19 So the five friends who had  
20 everything from marketing degrees to sports  
21 science degrees came together, crafted, started  
22 cooking granola bars -- and they will admit, the  
23 first ones were terrible; you guys have told me  
24 that -- and stuck with it and finally got a store  
25 to carry them. Then they got the second store.

1 Then they got the 100th store. Then they got the  
2 600th store. That's the dream that Minnesotans  
3 want. An opportunity to get the background and go  
4 forward to create the life you want.

5 When I asked them, what drove that?  
6 What made the difference? And they didn't blink.  
7 They said it was the teachers who had each of us  
8 believing that we could do anything we wanted to.  
9 That experience they had in that classroom and  
10 with those teachers and after school in those  
11 clubs inspired them to be the best they can.  
12 That's what we ask. That's what we want of every  
13 single one of our schools and our teachers. But  
14 unfortunately, it's not true across the state.  
15 All too often that success or that opportunity  
16 might be dictated by a ZIP code or it might be  
17 dictated by race.

18 We've got a teacher here with me  
19 tonight. Amanda Fjeld is here from Floodwood.  
20 Amanda is one of those people that we need in the  
21 classroom. Amanda grew up and went to Floodwood  
22 schools. Some of you are familiar in here. I  
23 know there's some folks here that know Floodwood  
24 and St. Louis County, that they know where it's  
25 at.

1                   Floodwood is a town of about 525.  
2           Amanda and I were who-had-the-smaller-classing  
3           each other before this. She graduated with 38  
4           students in her class. I had 24 in mine, 12 of  
5           whom were cousins. But I would not change that  
6           experience for anything. The ability and the  
7           teachers that I had influenced me in a profound  
8           way. They influenced Amanda enough she went off  
9           and got her teaching degree and went back to  
10          Floodwood to teach.

11                   But here's the problem. As  
12          Floodwood's demographics changed a little bit, the  
13          property tax base isn't big enough. And as  
14          Minnesota started to shift away from funding in  
15          the state formula to property taxes, it left  
16          communities like Floodwood -- they'll go to a  
17          ballot next Tuesday, and they've made it very  
18          clear, if their referendum fails, they will  
19          consolidate classes, close programs, and lay off a  
20          quarter of their teachers. They have no other  
21          option. Those are where we were putting people  
22          into those positions.

23                   What that does, it stops the  
24          opportunity that Will and Ross were given. It  
25          makes a difference based on geography for the

1 outcomes we're going to get. It weakens our  
2 economic strength across the state. And we have  
3 the capacity to do something about it. That's the  
4 reason when we talk about education funding, it's  
5 not a game. It's not numbers. Local school  
6 boards have informed us about the decisions they  
7 need.

8 I'm asking, and when we put a budget  
9 together, yes, it's a fiscal document, but it's a  
10 moral document. And what these schools have said  
11 is they need to get 3 and 2 percent on their  
12 funding formula. We can debate that, and we will.  
13 Healthy. But keep in mind, behind every one of  
14 the debates we have here are real people being  
15 impacted by them. Real people.

16 Now, I want to be clear. We need to  
17 be smart on how we do this. We need to be  
18 creative on how we do it. And we need to stop  
19 seeing, as the Lieutenant Governor so often says,  
20 and my next guest who's with me -- Dr. Nathan  
21 Chomilo is with us in the audience tonight.

22 Dr. Chomilo is a pediatrician and an  
23 internist and he has the same saying that the  
24 Lieutenant Governor always says to me: Children  
25 do not come in pieces.



1                   He has spent his lifetime providing  
2                   care as a pediatrician, preventive care for those  
3                   students -- for those patients. But he didn't see  
4                   them just as patients. He also has a program  
5                   where he gives a book to every single one of his  
6                   patients because what he understands is that whole  
7                   child, if they get to a good start where they have  
8                   their opportunities to get their checkups but  
9                   they're there in a place with someone and a  
10                  professional that ties everything together, if  
11                  that child is healthy physically and mentally, if  
12                  that child is ready for kindergarten, if that  
13                  child has a home, a safe home to put their head on  
14                  the pillow at night, the chances of success in  
15                  that classroom and going on and accomplishing what  
16                  students do across this state increase greatly.

17                  Dr. Chomilo knows most of the  
18                  children he sees in his practice are dependent on  
19                  the Health Care Access Fund. So I come to you not  
20                  with I think -- it's not my idea. I would like to  
21                  claim credit for what Minnesota did. Nearly three  
22                  decades ago we said it makes sense to get our  
23                  children care before they get sick. It makes  
24                  sense to put them into that place. And it is not  
25                  by chance that because of what they did, and that

1 was Republican and DFL and Reform Party Governor,  
2 and everyone in this room, some of you sitting  
3 here remember this, they crafted a system that not  
4 only provided and insured more people than any  
5 other state, our health outcomes rocketed to the  
6 top. What that does is provides the opportunity  
7 for that child for a good start, it saves us  
8 money, and it makes the sense that we know we can  
9 start moving in a direction where every single  
10 person, not just every child, has those same  
11 opportunities.

12 So when I come to you and ask you,  
13 it's not to pick a fight. It's not because I  
14 believe that I have cornered the market on the  
15 Health Care Access Fund. I believe that it is the  
16 best solution that was out there and it gives us a  
17 foundation to work from there.

18 And the reason -- and let me be  
19 clear, the respect I have, and I want to be  
20 absolutely clear about this, I know that every  
21 single person in this chamber wants every child to  
22 get that care. They want the outcome that  
23 Dr. Chomilo is getting to happen for every child.  
24 The difference might be in the approach that we go  
25 about it.

1                   What I am asking you, though, is,  
2     let us have this open debate about a 27-year-old  
3     program that is foundational to the health care of  
4     this state. It has survived countless  
5     administrations, countless members who have sat  
6     where you've sat come and gone and has still  
7     continued to deliver. And if we can get to that,  
8     then we can move forward about how do we talk  
9     about retaining and making sure that we keep costs  
10    down, we make sure that care is available in all  
11    of our communities, and we move forward to a  
12    better system. Because I am here to tell you,  
13    don't wait for a minute with a partner who is  
14    unreliable. The federal government has added more  
15    certainty and we were told today that there will  
16    be no movement on health care until after the 2020  
17    election. And the reason that that is a problem,  
18    as my next guest will tell you, we don't have  
19    until 2021.

20                   Deborah Mills is with me tonight up  
21    in the audience. And Deborah I just recently met.  
22    Deborah is a dairy farmer from Lake City. I don't  
23    think she would have ever imagined being in this  
24    space or being thrust into this debate.

25                   Her family is the quintessential

1 American and Minnesota dairy farmers. Three  
2 generations on the farm. They have about 280 head  
3 they milk. They raise corn for silage. Their  
4 daughter, Maggie, was a finalist for Princess Kay  
5 of the Milky Way. This is just what Minnesota --  
6 yeah. It's just what people do.

7                   And this is not about ascribing  
8 blame. This is about outcomes that matter.  
9 Because of the way the system worked, and  
10 Deborah's playing by the rules, she does not have  
11 access to health care, so she has the stress of  
12 going without health care. Couple that with  
13 historically low milk prices. Couple that with  
14 catastrophic weather events that had Deborah to a  
15 point -- and those of you in here, I know many of  
16 you grew up on farms, you work on farms, you know  
17 agriculture, you come in different parts of --  
18 different walks of life. But the one thing is  
19 this is a proud family who works hard and prides  
20 themselves not just on working hard but being  
21 tough.

22                   And then a day came a short time ago  
23 where Deborah knew she needed to make a really  
24 tough decision, and I can tell you the decision  
25 she made took courage beyond what you could only

1        imagine. She picked up the phone and she called a  
2        mental health counselor and said, I am at wits  
3        end. What do I do?

4                    And the good news is there was  
5        somebody to pick up the phone. The good news was  
6        there was a plan to put in place. And Deborah  
7        started to come back from that.

8                    Now, again, I will leave it to this  
9        body and for us to debate where we're going to get  
10       to, but I think we could stand in agreement that  
11       all of our citizens should have the basic safety  
12       net, the basic security that comes with having  
13       access to health care so you don't get into a  
14       mental health crisis. We can agree on that.

15                   I promise you I've got a story that  
16       will get you on your feet by the end of this.  
17       I've got enough of them here. I'll keep arming  
18       them. I've got number of them.

19                   But I do want to be clear. I do not  
20       take that in any way as a judgment to the care and  
21       the empathy that you show and everyone in here  
22       shows to Deborah's family because we can get this  
23       right. We have to.

24                   And I have to tell you, I believe it  
25       will be in this body, the story that we are

1       telling here, we need to tell it differently  
2       because if we go down the road and write the same  
3       story that's been written in Washington, we will  
4       get the same results.

5               Everybody has talked about one state  
6       with divided government. Can one state rise up?  
7       I don't know about any of you. I told you you did  
8       not come here to be an actor in someone else's  
9       script. Let's write the new script. Let's write  
10      the new way this ends. Let's respect one another  
11      where it comes from. Because if you're sitting  
12      here and you're so cynical that it will end in the  
13      same place, look at what that does. Where do we  
14      go from there?

15             And that includes me to ask the  
16      questions of what am I willing to do to try and  
17      find that? And the answer is to try and use our  
18      best ability and the facts available and the  
19      empathy that is central to this decision-making  
20      you make in here to ensure that that child gets  
21      off to a good start, that those students have the  
22      opportunity to learn, and that that family has the  
23      opportunity to make it on the land where they've  
24      been for over 100 years. That's what we know.

25             But here's the good news. None of

1 us are in it alone together. There's community  
2 leaders all across this state. There's great  
3 ideas out there. I think most of us come here  
4 with the sense of humility. Not all the best  
5 ideas are going to come out of this place and  
6 they're not going to come out down on Summit  
7 Avenue. They're going to come out of Minnesotans.  
8 That's why the stories that matter. We've seen  
9 this leadership out there.

10 And I've got one that I've really  
11 come to depend on, and I know many of you as  
12 legislators come to depend on, and that's our  
13 local elected officials. I've got Mayor Ben  
14 Schierer of Fergus Falls here tonight with me  
15 right up here.

16 And Mayor Schierer, first of all,  
17 he's the owner of a brew pub and a wood fire pizza  
18 place in Fergus Falls, right on Main Street. Yes.  
19 I recommend the Thai peanut. The pizza, not the  
20 beer. The pizza one, so -- you know where it's  
21 at.

22 But Mayor Schierer understands, he  
23 can't debate these things. These are real issues  
24 that impact that. The streetlights have to be  
25 kept on. They need to be plowed. You need to

1 have decisions about the pool. You need to talk  
2 about how do we keep businesses and how do we  
3 partner together.

4 These mayors come with a very  
5 nonpartisan approach because they have to get  
6 results. They do not have the luxury of holding  
7 on to a tight ideological position and say I'm one  
8 of many. They are the mayor of their community,  
9 and the prosperity of that community depends upon  
10 them.

11 So having a mayor, and I know many  
12 of you know this, funny how so many of them are so  
13 actively engaged in their community before they  
14 took that job. The first thing Mayor Schierer had  
15 me do after I was elected is come out to Fergus  
16 Falls on a cold November night last year and sit  
17 in a town hall that went about two and a half  
18 hours and hear the hopes and dreams and fears and  
19 critiques of the people in Fergus Falls and said,  
20 listen to this, listen to them, listen to their  
21 stories.

22 And after I was done, a gentleman  
23 came up and he said, Tim, I did not vote for you  
24 and I do not agree with many, if any, of your  
25 positions, but it is apparent to me that just like



1 me -- this is what he said -- that you love  
2 Minnesota just as much and we are going to have to  
3 find a way forward. I do not want you to fail  
4 because Minnesota will fail.

5 Here's what I'm telling all of you:  
6 I do not want a single one of us in this building  
7 to fail because that means Minnesota fails, and  
8 that gentleman knew it.

9 Thank you.

10 And this is a place, and you can  
11 feel it. This is the sense of pride we come here  
12 to make a difference. So when we're putting out  
13 proposals, and I say this about community  
14 prosperity very clearly, the community prosperity  
15 piece that I'm putting out is to talk about local  
16 government aid, to talk about some of the things  
17 we can do on broadband, of working together, to  
18 put the tools back in the hands of Mayor Ben, or  
19 Mayor Roy in Waseca, or Mayor Peterson in Winona,  
20 across there, to allow local decisions to make a  
21 difference in people's lives because we know that  
22 leadership and those ideas are out there, but we  
23 have to be good partners.

24 And that holds true with leaders who  
25 don't hold elected position. And my next guest

1       tonight some of you may be familiar with because  
2       this is what leadership and community activity  
3       starts to look like.

4                   My next guest is Houston White.  
5       Those of you who don't know Houston -- and,  
6       Houston, in this moment, I share my deepest  
7       sympathies on your loss of Donise, and you and I  
8       have not spoken much since then.

9                   But one thing I can tell you,  
10       Houston owns a barbershop in North Minneapolis.  
11       He's a renowned clothing designer with his own  
12       retail store there, got a small restaurant/coffee  
13       shop. I'm convinced if I bring my car there, he  
14       can repair it. And that's -- but he's got a  
15       vision and he's got an enthusiasm and an  
16       entrepreneur spirit that is contagious, and he  
17       talks about ways that we can revitalize our  
18       communities.

19                   This is a man who went to school at  
20       North High School and he remembers walking down  
21       the street with his backpack and someone stopped  
22       him and said, what's in your backpack? He said,  
23       I've got a business in my backpack, sir. And he  
24       did. He was out selling and working and an  
25       entrepreneur that went into it.

1                   And he has a vision of making that  
2 Camden town area of where he's at a vibrant  
3 community, where people can come to live and  
4 create their job. And that's why we partnered  
5 together. Houston knows that's the strength of  
6 community prosperity. The mayors of these  
7 communities know that there. They're looking for  
8 a reliable partner in us.

9                   And I would ask us: Let's be that  
10 reliable partner. Let's don't model and wait on  
11 the unreliable partner we have in the federal  
12 government.

13                   But what Houston knows is, the  
14 community he's trying to make, we must make sure  
15 that the employees coming to him and the people  
16 there are able to bring their best selves. That  
17 means that this state needs to and has to tackle  
18 issues of inequity, whether they be geographic  
19 inequities or racial inequities. We have got to  
20 tackle the idea that people need affordable  
21 housing, that people need child care so that they  
22 can go to work. Those are things that are  
23 universal amongst us, and if we partner and lay  
24 the foundation, the mayors and the entrepreneurs  
25 like Ben and Houston will take it and run.

1           Now, the stories we're telling are  
2     the story of us, the story of Minnesota, and  
3     they're the stories of communities. It's not by  
4     mistake that the proposals and the policy  
5     proposals and the budget proposals that I put in  
6     front of you center around some pretty clear  
7     themes because that's what came to me from people.  
8     We want to have health care, we want good  
9     education, and we want our communities to prosper.  
10    And the stories behind the people.

11           And I say this because I have been  
12    blessed. My wife and I have our first house that  
13    we ever bought in Mankato, on the west side of  
14    Mankato. And like so many of you, my dearest  
15    friends that became family were my neighbors,  
16    where they butt up against them. Either they  
17    become your best friends or you build a fence.  
18    And in our case, we were best friends.

19           And this is my neighbors, the  
20    Ingmans. Mary Ingman, her two sons, Ben and Jake  
21    are here tonight, their wonderful sister, Katie --  
22    we'll get her back from Washington State -- are  
23    with me tonight. We have shared countless Fourth  
24    of Julys, birthdays, refinishing my floors in my  
25    house when I would recruit the boys, the same

1        thing all neighbors do. That this is how  
2        communities are built.

3                    And I had the privilege of not only  
4        teaching Mary's children, I had the privilege of  
5        coaching Ben. And I remember it very clearly. It  
6        was a Friday in December, headed towards the  
7        holidays back in 1996, and I had -- and was  
8        coaching middle school basketball. And I was  
9        downtown at the old Mankato Armory and we were in  
10       that floor and it was after school and it was  
11       right before Christmas break and it's a bunch of  
12       12- and 13-year-old boys and we had a tournament  
13       coming up. And it's the excitement. It's the  
14       fun. It's life. Life is potential.

15                    And in walked in two state troopers  
16        with Mary, and she'd obviously been crying. And  
17        it was at that point that Ben found out and we  
18        found out that her husband, Charlie, had been hit  
19        head on on Highway 14 and killed, with three young  
20        children. That same highway has killed 145 people  
21        in the last three decades. It is the most  
22        dangerous in Minnesota.

23                    And so I say this with candid and  
24        bearing my heart to you because each and every one  
25        of you, whether you live in Delano or whether you

1 live in Mankato, you know stories of this  
2 happening. So my passion is not to pick a fight  
3 with you about transportation. My passion is to  
4 make sure what the results say when we've got  
5 D-rated roads, that we do something together. And  
6 I will gladly have the debate with you and a  
7 compromise to find how we do that, but here's what  
8 I'm telling you: In the 23 years since Charlie  
9 has died, that is still a two-lane dangerous road  
10 and the time has passed to fix them. We can do  
11 that. So we can do that.

12 So I know amongst the challenges,  
13 and again, I remind many of you this, yes, I am a  
14 hopeless optimist, but as I tell many of you, I'm  
15 also a realist. I supervised the lunchroom for 20  
16 years. I am not naive. I do not expect -- and as  
17 my wife, Gwen, says, and we believe so strongly in  
18 this, hope is the most powerful word in the  
19 universe. We named our daughter Hope. But as my  
20 wife says, and I know is true, hope is not a plan.  
21 You have to plan, not just hope that things get  
22 better. And all of us in here have to plan if we  
23 want to write a different story. The outcome will  
24 remain the same if we do not.

25 And I say this to you because I take

1 very, very seriously, and I think all of us see  
2 this, the incredible privilege it is to  
3 self-govern as free men and women. Literally  
4 billions of people around the world can only  
5 imagine of sitting where you are and making  
6 decisions and your constituents being able to come  
7 here.

8 But let's all be very, very clear.  
9 That privilege was paid for with the blood of  
10 patriots. It was paid for in sacrifice to get  
11 there. Tonight we have one of them amongst us.  
12 World War II Veteran Gordy Kirk is with us  
13 tonight.

14 Gordy served with the 3rd Army, the  
15 4th Armor Division, Patton's Vanguard. He landed  
16 at Normandy, and he fought across Europe from '43  
17 to '45. He did that while knowing that when he  
18 returned home, he could not sit at the same  
19 counter and eat the same food as someone next to  
20 him.

21 But what Gordy did was come back to  
22 his community and say, I'm going to be the change,  
23 because what he knew was on those beaches of  
24 Normandy, that was the purest form of democracy.  
25 No one in there questioned where someone came

1 from. No one questioned the color of skin. No  
2 one questioned their religion. They only knew  
3 they stood together in the face of tyranny.

4 So Gordy came back, became the state  
5 commander of the VFW, changed how we deliver  
6 veterans benefits across this state, and continued  
7 to build in his community. He gave us the gift  
8 and modeled it for the way we need to treat each  
9 other.

10 So I hold myself to that standard  
11 tonight. And if I fall down, I expect to be  
12 called on it. Of treating our differences with  
13 respect and treating these debates with respect,  
14 but with an understanding. We cannot allow  
15 ideology to get in the way of educating our  
16 children, for Will, for Ross, and for Amanda  
17 teaching. We cannot let ideology get in the way  
18 of stopping this state from providing basic health  
19 care to all of its citizens. We cannot let  
20 ideology get in the way of holding back our mayors  
21 and our entrepreneurs of getting things done. And  
22 we cannot let ideology get in the way of making  
23 sure that no one else has to go through what the  
24 Ingman family did. And when I look out my back  
25 window and I see those grandkids, my heart breaks



1 for thinking that Charlie didn't get to see that.

2 So here we go. What are we going to  
3 do now? There's already people that have written  
4 us off. You've seen the stories. Are we headed  
5 for gridlock? Are we headed for shutdown? Is it  
6 all just a fake? Are they getting along? Those  
7 are the people that want to see that. They're  
8 reporting some of them, but trust me on this, it's  
9 easier to cover the plane that crashes than the  
10 one that lands.

11 But I'll tell you right now, I'll  
12 tell you right now the story that can be told, and  
13 the story that not just Minnesota needs but the  
14 country needs is a bipartisan and a split  
15 government that came together in the good of the  
16 people and moved things forward for Minnesota.  
17 That's what we can do.

18 So I say to you, Minnesota, the  
19 state of our State is strong.

20 And we are at a crossroads. We can  
21 choose to follow the same story that was written  
22 ahead of time, we can choose to decide who belongs  
23 and who doesn't, we can choose to let ideology  
24 drive us before people, or we can do what  
25 Minnesota has always done: Rise up and create a

1 better way of life; lead the nation in how things  
2 could get done, making sure that all of our  
3 children -- black, white, brown, indigenous,  
4 rural, urban, suburban -- gets the opportunity to  
5 live what is truly a unique and incredible  
6 lifestyle of Minnesota.

7                   So here's my charge to you, and I  
8 walk hand in hand with you. Let's write our own  
9 story. Let's write a new story how this can end.  
10 Let's do this in a way that others can look at and  
11 say, that's the way out of this.

12                   And let's do it because Minnesotans,  
13 we've always done it before. We've never feared  
14 the future. We create the future.

15                   Let's go write the story. Thank  
16 you.

17                   (The proceedings were adjourned at  
18 7:39 p.m.)

19  
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25

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF MINNESOTA     )  
   ) ss.  
 COUNTY OF RAMSEY        )

I hereby certify that I reported the STATE  
 OF THE STATE ADDRESS OF MINNESOTA GOVERNOR TIM WALZ  
 on April 3, 2019, in St. Paul, Minnesota;

That the proceeding was transcribed by me  
 and is a true record of the proceeding;

That I am not a relative or employee of any  
 of the parties;

That I am not financially interested in the  
 action and have no contract with the parties,  
 attorneys, or persons with an interest in the action  
 that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect  
 my impartiality;

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 3rd day of  
 April, 2019.

---

Paula K. Richter, RMR, CRR, CRC  
 Notary Public, Ramsey County, Minnesota  
 My Commission Expires January 31, 2021

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Remarks of Governor Tim Walz as Delivered: State of the State Address

April 4, 2019

*[ST. PAUL, MN] – On April 3, 2019, Governor Tim Walz delivered his State of the State Address with a focus on One Minnesota Stories, elevating the human impact of policy debates and highlighting the work that remains to be done this legislative session. Below and attached are his remarks as delivered:*

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, and Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives, Mr. President, and Members of the Minnesota Senate.

Madam Chief Justice, and Distinguished Members of the Minnesota Supreme Court.

My fellow Constitutional Officers, my Cabinet, staff, Governor Dayton.

To our Sovereign Leadership of our Indigenous Nations, Lower Sioux Vice President Grace Goldtooth, Prairie Island Indian Community President Shelley Buck, and Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Chairwoman Cathy Chavers. Lieutenant Governor Flanagan of the White Earth Nation.

Escorts in the Minnesota National Guard, some of whom are with the Field Artillery, the 1 and the 125. Steel Rain.

And to the First Lady, Gwen. My daughter, Hope. My son, Gus, who is absent as a 12-year-old with pinkeye.

And my fellow Minnesotans, who serve as the foundation of this great state and the reason we're here tonight.

Tonight, gathering together, for the first time all of us together, gives us an opportunity to reaffirm why we are here. I know for certain that we're not here to have petty arguments against one another. I'm absolutely certain we're not here to send out mean tweets towards one another. And I know, and I think this is especially true of our new members, we're not here to be actors in a story that is already written for us, one that tells us how we're supposed to act and this is the way it's always been done and we're supposed to butt heads on this, and then May 20th will come around and we will become friends.

I am not naive, my friends. I served in the House of Representatives. I believe there's one other person in this room who has had the pleasure of serving both in the United States Congress and being here with the Attorney General.

I will tell you, don't write that story. Write this story right here. That's why you came here. That is why you worked so hard to come and bring your talents and bring your experience and more importantly, to bring the stories of your constituents.

That's what this is really about. Those stories that inform who we are. The policy proposals that we put forward, those are not something that comes from us as our personal ideology. They are things that come from our constituents in the stories they tell us about their lives. Whether they tell us about health care and what they need or what could be done, or they talk about education and it's working and what's not, or they talk about what makes Minnesota such a special place.

Tonight I'm going to tell you a few of those stories. You'll recognize some of them because the name might be different, but it will be the same story you're hearing. Some of them you won't know.

Some come from friends. Some come from people who told me the story since I have become Governor, and like so many of you sometimes, you just step back when you hear the story and you think, that needs to be retold and something needs to be done.

And tonight I've got a lot of stories mainly because I spent many, many years teaching and I taught thousands of students, two of whom are with us tonight.

Will and Ross are here with me tonight. They're twins, if you can't tell. I never could tell you apart. It was the dirty shoes. The dirty shoes were the giveaway.

Will and Ross were students of mine at Mankato West, and like tens of thousands across Minnesota, they came to our schools eager. They wanted to absorb everything. They took advantage of every opportunity and every club we had and they wanted to find out what life could give them. They went out and furthered their education and they decided they would pursue the two things that they were really, really excited about: Athletics and sport, and eating.

And they came together and got three of their other friends, and since they're very literal people, they created a little company called Five Friends, so it made sense. And they decided that nutrition and granola bars were too expensive and they weren't made with a lot of natural ingredients.

So the five friends who had everything from marketing degrees to sports science degrees came together, crafted, started cooking granola bars -- and they will admit, the first ones were terrible; you guys have told me that -- and stuck with it and finally got a store to carry them. Then they got the second store. Then they got the 100th store. Then they got the 600th store. That's the dream that Minnesotans want. An opportunity to get the background and go forward to create the life you want.

When I asked them, what drove that? What made the difference? And they didn't blink. They said it was the teachers who had each of us believing that we could do anything we wanted to. That experience they had in that classroom and with those teachers and after school in those clubs inspired them to be the best they can. That's what we ask. That's what we want of every single one of our schools and our teachers. But unfortunately, it's not true across the state. All too often that success or that opportunity might be dictated by a ZIP code or it might be dictated by race.

We've got a teacher here with me tonight. Amanda Fjeld is here from Floodwood. Amanda is one of those people that we need in the classroom. Amanda grew up and went to Floodwood schools. Some of you are familiar in here. I know there's some folks here that know Floodwood and St. Louis County, that they know where it's at.

Floodwood is a town of about 525. Amanda and I were who-had-the-smaller-classing each other before this. She graduated with 38 students in her class. I had 24 in mine, 12 of whom were cousins. But I would not change that experience for anything. The ability and the teachers that I had influenced me in a profound way. They influenced Amanda enough she went off and got her teaching degree and went back to Floodwood to teach.

But here's the problem. As Floodwood's demographics changed a little bit, the property tax base isn't big enough. And as Minnesota started to shift away from funding in the state formula to property taxes,

it left communities like Floodwood -- they'll go to a ballot next Tuesday, and they've made it very clear, if their referendum fails, they will consolidate classes, close programs, and lay off a quarter of their teachers. They have no other option. Those are where we were putting people into those positions.

What that does, it stops the opportunity that Will and Ross were given. It makes a difference based on geography for the outcomes we're going to get. It weakens our economic strength across the state. And we have the capacity to do something about it. That's the reason when we talk about education funding, it's not a game. It's not numbers. Local school boards have informed us about the decisions they need.

I'm asking, and when we put a budget together, yes, it's a fiscal document, but it's a moral document. And what these schools have said is they need to get 3 and 2 percent on their funding formula. We can debate that, and we will. Healthy. But keep in mind, behind every one of the debates we have here are real people being impacted by them. Real people.

Now, I want to be clear. We need to be smart on how we do this. We need to be creative on how we do it. And we need to stop seeing, as the Lieutenant Governor so often says, and my next guest who's with me -- Dr. Nathan Chomilo is with us in the audience tonight.

Dr. Chomilo is a pediatrician and an internist and he has the same saying that the Lieutenant Governor always says to me: Children do not come in pieces.

He has spent his lifetime providing care as a pediatrician, preventive care for those students -- for those patients. But he didn't see them just as patients. He also has a program where he gives a book to every single one of his patients because what he understands is that whole child, if they get to a good start where they have their opportunities to get their checkups but they're there in a place with someone and a professional that ties everything together, if that child is healthy physically and mentally, if that child is ready for kindergarten, if that child has a home, a safe home to put their head on the pillow at night, the chances of success in that classroom and going on and accomplishing what students do across this state increase greatly.

Dr. Chomilo knows most of the children he sees in his practice are dependent on the Health Care Access Fund. So I come to you not with I think -- it's not my idea. I would like to claim credit for what Minnesota did. Nearly three decades ago we said it makes sense to get our children care before they get sick. It makes sense to put them into that place. And it is not by chance that because of what they did, and that was Republican and DFL and Reform Party Governor, and everyone in this room, some of you sitting here remember this, they crafted a system that not only provided and insured more people than any other state, our health outcomes rocketed to the top. What that does is provides the opportunity for that child for a good start, it saves us money, and it makes the sense that we know we can start moving in a direction where every single person, not just every child, has those same opportunities.

So when I come to you and ask you, it's not to pick a fight. It's not because I believe that I have cornered the market on the Health Care Access Fund. I believe that it is the best solution that was out there and it gives us a foundation to work from there.

And the reason -- and let me be clear, the respect I have, and I want to be absolutely clear about this, I know that every single person in this chamber wants every child to get that care. They want the outcome that Dr. Chomilo is getting to happen for every child. The difference might be in the approach that we go about it.

What I am asking you, though, is, let us have this open debate about a 27-year-old program that is foundational to the health care of this state. It has survived countless administrations, countless members who have sat where you've sat come and gone and has still continued to deliver. And if we can get to that, then we can move forward about how do we talk about retaining and making sure that we keep costs down, we make sure that care is available in all of our communities, and we move forward to a better system. Because I am here to tell you, don't wait for a minute with a partner who is unreliable. The federal government has added more certainty and we were told today that there will be no movement on health care until after the 2020 election. And the reason that that is a problem, as my next guest will tell you, we don't have until 2021.

Deborah Mills is with me tonight up in the audience. And Deborah I just recently met. Deborah is a dairy farmer from Lake City. I don't think she would have ever imagined being in this space or being thrust into this debate.

Her family is the quintessential American and Minnesota dairy farmers. Three generations on the farm. They have about 280 head they milk. They raise corn for silage. Their daughter, Maggie, was a finalist for Princess Kay of the Milky Way. This is just what Minnesota -- yeah. It's just what people do.

And this is not about ascribing blame. This is about outcomes that matter. Because of the way the system worked, and Deborah's playing by the rules, she does not have access to health care, so she has the stress of going without health care. Couple that with historically low milk prices. Couple that with catastrophic weather events that had Deborah to a point -- and those of you in here, I know many of you grew up on farms, you work on farms, you know agriculture, you come in different parts of -- different walks of life. But the one thing is this is a proud family who works hard and prides themselves not just on working hard but being tough.

And then a day came a short time ago where Deborah knew she needed to make a really tough decision, and I can tell you the decision she made took courage beyond what you could only imagine. She picked up the phone and she called a mental health counselor and said, I am at wits end. What do I do?

And the good news is there was somebody to pick up the phone. The good news was there was a plan to put in place. And Deborah started to come back from that.

Now, again, I will leave it to this body and for us to debate where we're going to get to, but I think we could stand in agreement that all of our citizens should have the basic safety net, the basic security that comes with having access to health care so you don't get into a mental health crisis. We can agree on that.

I promise you I've got a story that will get you on your feet by the end of this. I've got enough of them here. I'll keep arming them. I've got number of them.

But I do want to be clear. I do not take that in any way as a judgment to the care and the empathy that you show and everyone in here shows to Deborah's family because we can get this right. We have to.

And I have to tell you, I believe it will be in this body, the story that we are telling here, we need to tell it differently because if we go down the road and write the same story that's been written in Washington, we will get the same results.

Everybody has talked about one state with divided government. Can one state rise up? I don't know about any of you. I told you you did not come here to be an actor in someone else's script. Let's write the new script. Let's write the new way this ends. Let's respect one another where it comes from. Because if you're sitting here and you're so cynical that it will end in the same place, look at what that does. Where do we go from there?

And that includes me to ask the questions of what am I willing to do to try and find that? And the answer is to try and use our best ability and the facts available and the empathy that is central to this decision-making you make in here to ensure that that child gets off to a good start, that those students have the opportunity to learn, and that that family has the opportunity to make it on the land where they've been for over 100 years. That's what we know.

But here's the good news. None of us are in it alone together. There's community leaders all across this state. There's great ideas out there. I think most of us come here with the sense of humility. Not all the best ideas are going to come out of this place and they're not going to come out down on Summit Avenue. They're going to come out of Minnesotans. That's why the stories that matter. We've seen this leadership out there.

And I've got one that I've really come to depend on, and I know many of you as legislators come to depend on, and that's our local elected officials. I've got Mayor Ben Schierer of Fergus Falls here tonight with me right up here.

And Mayor Schierer, first of all, he's the owner of a brew pub and a wood fire pizza place in Fergus Falls, right on Main Street. Yes. I recommend the Thai peanut. The pizza, not the beer. The pizza one, so -- you know where it's at.

But Mayor Schierer understands, he can't debate these things. These are real issues that impact that. The streetlights have to be kept on. They need to be plowed. You need to have decisions about the pool. You need to talk about how do we keep businesses and how do we partner together.

These mayors come with a very nonpartisan approach because they have to get results. They do not have the luxury of holding on to a tight ideological position and say I'm one of many. They are the mayor of their community, and the prosperity of that community depends upon them.

So having a mayor, and I know many of you know this, funny how so many of them are so actively engaged in their community before they took that job. The first thing Mayor Schierer had me do after I was elected is come out to Fergus Falls on a cold November night last year and sit in a town hall that went about two and a half hours and hear the hopes and dreams and fears and critiques of the people in Fergus Falls and said, listen to this, listen to them, listen to their stories.

And after I was done, a gentleman came up and he said, Tim, I did not vote for you and I do not agree with many, if any, of your positions, but it is apparent to me that just like me -- this is what he said -- that you love Minnesota just as much and we are going to have to find a way forward. I do not want you to fail because Minnesota will fail.

Here's what I'm telling all of you: I do not want a single one of us in this building to fail because that means Minnesota fails, and that gentleman knew it.

Thank you.

And this is a place, and you can feel it. This is the sense of pride we come here to make a difference. So when we're putting out proposals, and I say this about community prosperity very clearly, the community prosperity piece that I'm putting out is to talk about local government aid, to talk about some of the things we can do on broadband, of working together, to put the tools back in the hands of Mayor Ben, or Mayor Roy in Waseca, or Mayor Peterson in Winona, across there, to allow local decisions to make a difference in people's lives because we know that leadership and those ideas are out there, but we have to be good partners.

And that holds true with leaders who don't hold elected position. And my next guest tonight some of you may be familiar with because this is what leadership and community activity starts to look like.

My next guest is Houston White. Those of you who don't know Houston -- and, Houston, in this moment, I share my deepest sympathies on your loss of Donise, and you and I have not spoken much since then.

But one thing I can tell you, Houston owns a barbershop in North Minneapolis. He's a renowned clothing designer with his own retail store there, got a small restaurant/coffee shop. I'm convinced if I bring my car there, he can repair it. And that's -- but he's got a vision and he's got an enthusiasm and an entrepreneur spirit that is contagious, and he talks about ways that we can revitalize our communities.

This is a man who went to school at North High School and he remembers walking down the street with his backpack and someone stopped him and said, what's in your backpack? He said, I've got a business in my backpack, sir. And he did. He was out selling and working and an entrepreneur that went into it.

And he has a vision of making that Camden town area of where he's at a vibrant community, where people can come to live and create their job. And that's why we partnered together. Houston knows that's the strength of community prosperity. The mayors of these communities know that there. They're looking for a reliable partner in us.

And I would ask us: Let's be that reliable partner. Let's don't model and wait on the unreliable partner we have in the federal government.

But what Houston knows is, the community he's trying to make, we must make sure that the employees coming to him and the people there are able to bring their best selves. That means that this state needs to and has to tackle issues of inequity, whether they be geographic inequities or racial inequities. We have got to tackle the idea that people need affordable housing, that people need child care so that they can go to work. Those are things that are universal amongst us, and if we partner and lay the foundation, the mayors and the entrepreneurs like Ben and Houston will take it and run.

Now, the stories we're telling are the story of us, the story of Minnesota, and they're the stories of communities. It's not by mistake that the proposals and the policy proposals and the budget proposals that I put in front of you center around some pretty clear themes because that's what came to me from people. We want to have health care, we want good education, and we want our communities to prosper. And the stories behind the people.

And I say this because I have been blessed. My wife and I have our first house that we ever bought in Mankato, on the west side of Mankato. And like so many of you, my dearest friends that became family

were my neighbors, where they butt up against them. Either they become your best friends or you build a fence. And in our case, we were best friends.

And this is my neighbors, the Ingmans. Mary Ingman, her two sons, Ben and Jake are here tonight, their wonderful sister, Katie -- we'll get her back from Washington State -- are with me tonight. We have shared countless Fourth of Julys, birthdays, refinishing my floors in my house when I would recruit the boys, the same thing all neighbors do. That this is how communities are built.

And I had the privilege of not only teaching Mary's children, I had the privilege of coaching Ben. And I remember it very clearly. It was a Friday in December, headed towards the holidays back in 1996, and I had -- and was coaching middle school basketball. And I was downtown at the old Mankato Armory and we were in that floor and it was after school and it was right before Christmas break and it's a bunch of 12- and 13-year-old boys and we had a tournament coming up. And it's the excitement. It's the fun. It's life. Life is potential.

And I walked in two state troopers with Mary, and she'd obviously been crying. And it was at that point that Ben found out and we found out that her husband, Charlie, had been hit head on on Highway 14 and killed, with three young children. That same highway has killed 145 people in the last three decades. It is the most dangerous in Minnesota.

And so I say this with candid and baring my heart to you because each and every one of you, whether you live in Delano or whether you live in Mankato, you know stories of this happening. So my passion is not to pick a fight with you about transportation. My passion is to make sure what the results say when we've got D-rated roads, that we do something together. And I will gladly have the debate with you and a compromise to find how we do that, but here's what I'm telling you: In the 23 years since Charlie has died, that is still a two-lane dangerous road and the time has passed to fix them. We can do that. So we can do that.

So I know amongst the challenges, and again, I remind many of you this, yes, I am a hopeless optimist, but as I tell many of you, I'm also a realist. I supervised the lunchroom for 20 years. I am not naive. I do not expect -- and as my wife, Gwen, says, and we believe so strongly in this, hope is the most powerful word in the universe. We named our daughter Hope. But as my wife says, and I know is true, hope is not a plan. You have to plan, not just hope that things get better. And all of us in here have to plan if we want to write a different story. The outcome will remain the same if we do not.

And I say this to you because I take very, very seriously, and I think all of us see this, the incredible privilege it is to self-govern as free men and women. Literally billions of people around the world can only imagine of sitting where you are and making decisions and your constituents being able to come here.

But let's all be very, very clear. That privilege was paid for with the blood of patriots. It was paid for in sacrifice to get there. Tonight we have one of them amongst us. World War II Veteran Gordy Kirk is with us tonight.

Gordy served with the 3rd Army, the 4th Armor Division, Patton's Vanguard. He landed at Normandy, and he fought across Europe from '43 to '45. He did that while knowing that when he returned home, he could not sit at the same counter and eat the same food as someone next to him.



But what Gordy did was come back to his community and say, I'm going to be the change, because what he knew was on those beaches of Normandy, that was the purest form of democracy. No one in there questioned where someone came from. No one questioned the color of skin. No one questioned their religion. They only knew they stood together in the face of tyranny.

So Gordy came back, became the state commander of the VFW, changed how we deliver veterans benefits across this state, and continued to build in his community. He gave us the gift and modeled it for the way we need to treat each other.

So I hold myself to that standard tonight. And if I fall down, I expect to be called on it. Of treating our differences with respect and treating these debates with respect, but with an understanding. We cannot allow ideology to get in the way of educating our children, for Will, for Ross, and for Amanda teaching. We cannot let ideology get in the way of stopping this state from providing basic health care to all of its citizens. We cannot let ideology get in the way of holding back our mayors and our entrepreneurs of getting things done. And we cannot let ideology get in the way of making sure that no one else has to go through what the Ingman family did. And when I look out my back window and I see those grandkids, my heart breaks for thinking that Charlie didn't get to see that.

So here we go. What are we going to do now? There's already people that have written us off. You've seen the stories. Are we headed for gridlock? Are we headed for shutdown? Is it all just a fake? Are they getting along? Those are the people that want to see that. They're reporting some of them, but trust me on this, it's easier to cover the plane that crashes than the one that lands.

But I'll tell you right now, I'll tell you right now the story that can be told, and the story that not just Minnesota needs but the country needs is a bipartisan and a split government that came together in the good of the people and moved things forward for Minnesota. That's what we can do.

So I say to you, Minnesota, the state of our State is strong.

And we are at a crossroads. We can choose to follow the same story that was written ahead of time, we can choose to decide who belongs and who doesn't, we can choose to let ideology drive us before people, or we can do what Minnesota has always done: Rise up and create a better way of life; lead the nation in how things could get done, making sure that all of our children -- black, white, brown, indigenous, rural, urban, suburban -- gets the opportunity to live what is truly a unique and incredible lifestyle of Minnesota.

So here's my charge to you, and I walk hand in hand with you. Let's write our own story. Let's write a new story how this can end. Let's do this in a way that others can look at and say, that's the way out of this.

And let's do it because Minnesotans, we've always done it before. We've never feared the future. We create the future.

Let's go write the story. Thank you.

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