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START OF SESSION

The first session of the 90th General Assembly began today, with new and returning legislators. Much of the day was spent in procedural matters, such as canvassing the votes for Governor and selecting seat assignments, but the Senate introduced 23 bills late in the day. The House introduced organizational resolutions today, but no bills. Much of the rest of the week will deal with Inaugural matters and the traditional speeches on the Condition of the State, Judiciary and Iowa National Guard.

REMARKS FROM HOUSE REPUBLICANS

Speaker Grassley said that the new members of the House should expect to hit “the ground running right from the start” this session. Grassley said Iowans were very clear about what the 2023 agenda should be and that Iowans can expect measures to grow the economy, make families safe and protect freedoms.

Grassley said that Republicans will continue with responsible budgets in contrast to Washington DC. said that Republicans will dig deep to work on complicated issues, such as worker shortages and property taxes reforms. Grassley said that Republicans will “push back against the radical social agenda being forced upon us and our children by the left.” He said that the new Education Reform Committee, which he chairs, will look at broader reforms than just than approving a voucher/scholarship proposal.

Representative Windschitl, the House Majority leader, said that the reason that Republicans won 63 seats in the last election is because they have an agenda that Iowans approve. He said that that Iowans want their rights and freedoms, especially gun rights, protected and that the Legislature will work on those issues this session.

Windschitl said that legislators are “tasked with working together” and that he appreciates working with Speaker Grassley and Representative Konfrst but said that Republicans need to make sure that they “get the job done.”

Representative Wills, the President Pro Tempore, said that legislators have to make sacrifices in order to get elected and that they have a duty to bring what they learn on the campaign trail to the session. Wills said that Republicans will pursue an agenda that advances freedom and is pro-life. He said that the House must continue with responsible budgeting by “wisely spending taxpayer dollars” and making sure that government services are performed efficiently.

REMARKS FROM SENATE REPUBLICANS

Senator Whitver, the Senate Majority leader, said that he is proud to be the leader of the first super-majority in the Senate in half a century and said it happened because “we delivered common sense solutions to the most important issues facing Iowans.”

Whitver said that since 2017, Republicans have “repaired the budget” and passed tax relief to help working families and small businesses. Whitver said that there has been no “backlash to our agenda” and that Senate Republicans have been able to increase their majority in the elections since 2016. He said in that time, Republicans have reformed the judicial nominating process and collective bargaining and passed protections for gun rights and for life.

Whitver said that Iowans pay “some of the highest property taxes in the country.” Whitver said that finding a solution will take time but that “Senate Republicans are up to the challenge on the best long-term strategy for Iowa taxpayers.” He said that Republicans will also continue education improvements and said that “school choice should no longer be an option only for wealthy families.” Whitver said Republicans will work to get more Iowans into the workforce and making sure that “public assistance programs focus on those Iowans most in need.” Whitver said the Legislature is on “the path to implement more historic reforms” and that the Senate will continue “to make Iowa a place with great schools, great opportunities, and great people.”

Senator Sinclair, the new Senate president, said that it is a huge honor to return to Des Moines and be selected as the Senate President. She said that since gaining control of the Iowa Senate in 2017, Republicans have increased education spending and approved budgets that show the Republican commitment to education. Sinclair said that Republicans are committed to creating productive learning environments for students, protecting teachers and students from violence and empowering parents to make decisions about education.

Sinclair said that the income level of a family should not determine whether a family can send their children to private schools. She said that less than 10% of families send their children to private schools now but that almost 50% of Iowa parents would do so if costs were not a factor. Sinclair said that the state already subsidizes private pre-school providers and private colleges and should do so to allow students to attend private K-12 schools.

Senator Sinclair said that Republicans have stabilized state finances by prioritizing “responsible budgeting” while still being able to pass “three historic tax cuts.” She said it is time to reduce the property tax burden for businesses and families. Sinclair said that the goal of the Legislature should be to make Iowa the place to raise your family, invest in your education, start and grow your business, live a meaningful life and retire with financial stability.

REMARKS FROM DEMOCRATS

Senator Wahls, the Senate Democratic Leader, said that legislative sessions are a “fresh opportunity to make Iowa better.” Wahls said that the movement of Iowans out of the state threatens the future of Iowa. He said legislators can look at their own family and friends and see that young Iowans don’t return to the state after leaving to serve in the military or go to college. Wahls said that Republicans and Democrats must work together to make Iowa a destination state and reverse the “Iowa Exodus.”

Wahls said that the state faces challenges in making sure Iowa has enough childcare providers, enough teachers and enough people to fill manufacturing jobs. He said that 1/4 of the state is a “childcare desert” because of the lack of employees and that hurts both the children who miss out on early education opportunities and parents who cannot rejoin the labor force due to childcare provider shortages. He said that the state also has a shortage of teachers and more than 5,000 open education positions and that the unfilled manufacturing jobs in the state are up more than 200% when compared to pre-COVID figures. He said that this is “simply unacceptable” and that the inability to fill these positions is why the economic foundation is crumbling.”

Wahls said that the voucher/scholarship plan is unpopular with Iowans and sends public money to private schools without accountability and will hurt rural schools the most. He said that Senate Democrats support property tax reform but that tax reform much “ease property tax burdens on middle-class families and those with fixed incomes.” He said that tax cuts by Republicans in past session have been a “giveaway to the ultra-rich” and that Democrats are opposed to such measures. Wahls said that the Legislature must use this session to address real problems rather than fight about “about banning abortion and defunding public school” and other bills he called part of the cultural war.

Representative Konfrst, the House Democratic leader, said that she hopes legislators can restore a spirit of cooperation and to work together on the priorities of Iowans. Konfrst said that Iowans want the Legislature to “lower their costs, invest in public schools, legalize marijuana and protect reproductive freedom.”

She said that Iowans need to be better paid so that they do not need to worry about paying bills and meeting other ordinary expenses. She said that they need to live their lives without our interference and make their “own decisions about their own bodies.” Konfrst said that good public schools are the basis for the success of most Iowans. She said legislators need to keep schools strong and well-funded.

Konfrst said that an Iowa House member “eats, sleeps, and breathes the work of the Iowa Legislature” during the session. She said that the top priority this year must be for Republicans and Democrats to work together to do the work of Iowans during the session.

TODAY IN THE LEGISLATURE

House Files: none

House Study Bills: none

Resolutions INTRODUCED by the House: (2)

HR 1 CLERK (Siegrist)

Allows every representative to hire a clerk and for the pay of clerks.

HR 2 OPENING PRAYER (Siegrist)

Appoints a committee to arrange the opening prayers for the session days.

Resolutions INTRODUCED by the House and ADOPTED by the House and Senate: (6)

HCR 1 VOTE CANVAS (Grassley & Konfrst)

Calls for a joint convention of the Legislature at 2 PM on Monday, January 9 to canvas the vote for Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

HCR 2 CONDITION OF THE STATE (Grassley & Konfrst)

Sets Tuesday, January 10, for the Condition of the State speech by the Governor Reynolds at 6 PM.

HCR 3 INAUGURATION (Grassley & Konfrst)

Appoints a joint committee to arrange the inauguration of Governor Reynolds and Lieutenant Governor Gregg.

HCR 4 CONDITION OF THE JUDICIARY (Grassley & Konfrst)

Sets Wednesday, January 11, for the Condition of the Judiciary speech by the Chief Justice Christensen at 10 AM.

HCR 5 CONDITION OF THE GUARD (Grassley & Konfrst)

Sets Thursday, January 13, for the Condition of the Guard speech by the Adjutant General Corell at 10 AM.

HCR 6 INAUGURATION CONVENTION (Grassley & Konfrst)

Sets Friday, January 13 for the joint convention for the inauguration of Governor Reynolds and Lieutenant Governor Gregg at Veterans Memorial Center in Des Moines at 9 AM.

Senate Files: 22 (SF 1 - SF 23)

Senate Study Bills: none

Resolutions INTRODUCED by the Senate: (3)

SCR 1 STUDENT LOANS (Zaun)

Urges the US Congress to enact legislation to limit the interest rates on student loans.

SCR 2 SUPREME COURT (Zaun)

Requires the US Congress to propose a constitutional amendment to set the number of justices on the Supreme Court at nine.

SJR 1 FEDERAL AMENDMENTS (Zaun)

Proposes a resolution for an Article V convention to propose amendments to the US Constitution for term limits and to impose fiscal restraints and jurisdictional limits on the federal government.

HOUSE & SENATE AGENDA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2023

7-9 AM	<i>Convention of States Legislative Breakfast</i>	<i>Legislative Dining Room 15</i>
	<i>Des Moines Waterworks Legislative Breakfast</i>	<i>Rotunda, East & North Wings</i>
8:30 AM	HOUSE CONVENES	<i>House Chamber</i>
9 AM	SENATE CONVENES	<i>Senate Chamber</i>
	<i>All-GA Member Photo</i>	<i>House Chamber</i>
9:30-11 AM	<i>Progress Iowa</i>	<i>Rotunda</i>
9:30 AM	House Republican Caucus HR Training	<i>Room 103</i>
10 AM	Senate Agriculture Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
10:30 AM	Senate Government Oversight Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
11 AM	House Democrat Caucus HR Training	<i>Room 19</i>
	Senate Veterans Affairs Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
12:30-3:30 PM	<i>Iowa Family Development Alliance (IFDA) Legislative Reception</i>	<i>Rotunda</i>
1 PM	House Agriculture Committee	<i>Room 102</i>
	House Health & Human Services Committee	<i>Room 103</i>
	House Local Government Committee	<i>Room 19</i>
	Senate Commerce Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
1:30 PM	House Commerce Committee	<i>Room 103</i>
	House Education Committee	<i>Room 102</i>
	Senate Ways & Means Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
2 PM	House Economic Growth & Technology Committee	<i>Room 102</i>
	House Public Safety Committee	<i>Room 19</i>
	House State Government Committee	<i>Room 103</i>
	Senate Judiciary Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
2:30 PM	Senate Appropriations Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
3 PM	Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee	<i>Room 116</i>
3:30-5:30 PM	<i>2023 REC Welcome Back Reception - Iowa Association of Electric Co-ops, FUEL Iowa, Iowa Institute of Co-ops, Iowa Biotechnology Association and Iowa Communications Alliance.</i>	<i>Embassy Suites 101 East Locust St.</i>
6 PM	JOINT SESSION: GOVERNOR REYNOLDS' CONDITION OF THE STATE ADDRESS	<i>House Chamber</i>
7-10 PM	<i>23rd Annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception Benefitting the 3rd House Memorial Scholarships</i>	<i>Wooly's 504 East Locust St.</i>

SENATE FILES (SF 1 – SF 12)

SF 1 ELIMINATING CERTIFICATE OF NEED (Zaun)(Health & Human Service)

Eliminates the Certificate of Need process for institutional health care services and makes conforming changes.

SF 2 WIND ENERGY SITING (Zaun)(Commerce)

Establishes siting requirements for wind energy facilities with more than 100 KW of nameplate capacity. States that the intent is not to discourage renewable energy. Requires decommissioning plans for facilities. Allows local governments to adopt stricter regulations.

SF 3 ADOPTIVE PARENTS (Zaun)(Workforce)

Requires employers to treat adoptive parents in the same manner as biological parents for family leave purposes. Makes definitions and exceptions. Establishes penalties.

SF 4 BREAST IMPLANTS (Zaun)(Health & Human Service)

Requires informed consent on the risks of breast implants and for the consent to be in writing. Requires the BOM to convene a workgroup to adopt consent standards. Makes doctors subject to license discipline for violations.

SF 5 HEALTH CARE EMPLOYMENT REPORTING (Zaun)(Health & Human Service)

Eliminates certain wage reporting requirements in reports made by health care agencies to the DIA related to Medicaid/Medicare contracts.

SF 6 BUILDING MATERIAL EXEMPTION (Lofgren) (Ways & Means)

Exempts the sale of building materials and other products, and certain specified digital products, to a non-profit that works with prisoners to build homes for qualified persons in areas with housing needs from the sale tax.

SF 7 DISABLED TAX EXEMPTION (Zaun) (Ways & Means)

Exempts the income of a person who is paid by a non-profit for services to disabled persons from the income tax.

SF 8 CORE CURRICULUM (Zaun) (Education)

Eliminates references to the Iowa Core Curriculum. Directs the State BOE to adopt standards on HS graduation, academics and related matters. Makes corresponding changes.

SF 9 SUPPLEMENTAL SCHOOL AID (Zaun) (Education)

Allows the School Budget Review Committee to approve supplemental aid to schools if 35% of the students in the district are open enrolled. Excludes on-line open enrollment. Includes other requirements.

SF 10 LAND REDEVELOPMENT TRUSTS (Lofgren, Dawson, Webster)

Allows a city or cities to establish a land redevelopment trust to rehabilitate blighted/tax delinquent and other similar properties. Includes procedures for the sale of such property. Makes conforming changes.

SF 11 STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (Lofgren) (Transportation)

Divides the state into seven regions for the State Transportation Commission and requires each region to have a member on the commission. Deems a seat vacated if the member moves.

SF 12 SCHOOL BUDGET (Zaun) (Education)

Limits the administration costs for schools to 5% of the budget.

SENATE FILES (SF 13 – SF 23)

SF 13 PROPERTY TAX PROTESTS (Lofgren) (Ways & Means)

Limits certain property tax protests by commercial businesses if the business has protested in the three previous years. Contains other provisions.

SF 14 DEATH PENALTY (Zaun) (Judiciary)

Establishes a capital crime for murders that include certain specified kidnapping or sexual abuse offenses. Allows the death penalty for offenders over the age of 18. Requires a separate penalty phase. Requires two attorneys be appointed to represent indigent offenders. Includes other related provisions.

SF 15 MILITARY HOME OWNERSHIP (Lofgren) (Veterans Affairs)

Appropriates \$500,000 to IFA for the Home ownership assistance program for eligible military members,

SF 16 CRIMES AGAINST BICYCLISTS (Lofgren) (Transportation)

Adds certain traffic offenses by drivers against bicyclists to the offenses with enhanced penalties for causing death or serious injury.

SF 17 COLLEGE SUPPORT ORDERS (Green) (Judiciary)

Prohibits courts from ordering support payments for post-secondary education in divorce cases.

SF 18 COUNTY COMPENSATION BOARDS (Zaun) (Local Government)

Abolishes county compensation boards and gives the decision-making authority over salaries to county supervisors.

SF 19 DONATED STATE LEAVE (Zaun) (Workforce)

Allows state employees to donate vacation and sick leave to another eligible state employee (spouse or child). Limits the use of donated leave to a year. Makes the donation irrevocable.

SF 20 ELDERLY HOME CREDIT (Zaun) (Ways & Means)

Caps the value of a home under the elderly home property tax credit at \$500,000. Strikes the income limit. Makes the calculation of the credit for seniors 65-70 the same as for older taxpayers.

SF 21 MOVEABLE SALONS (Zaun) (State Government)

Expands the definition of salon to include locations that are readily mobile.

SF 22 FREE VETERANS LICENSES (Zaun) (Veterans Affairs)

Allows a disabled veteran to receive a free lifetime hunting and fishing license.

SF 23 SCHOOL & CITY PRIMARY ELECTIONS (Zaun) (State Government)

Requires primary elections for city and school elections. Requires parties to hold conventions to nominate candidates.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE PAT GRASSLEY (FULL TEXT)

Good morning. Welcome legislators, both new and returning to the first day of the 90th General Assembly.

First – a special thank you to my family that’s here with me today. Grandpa, thanks for taking the time away from the craziness of DC to swear me in as Speaker of the Iowa House, where you began your career in public service. Indeed, Reagan and Chance – I’m blessed to have you three as my children, and I know you’ll never let me forget it. Thanks for being here with me today. These moments are all the more meaningful when you’re here with me. And to my parents – who help with the kids and farm so that I can be here to serve the people of Iowa in this capacity. I’m still amazed the farm can even run without me. None of it would be possible without you.

To my fellow lawmakers. Minority Leader Konfrst – I’ve enjoyed working with you in our roles as leaders of our respective caucuses. And I look forward to another session working together for the people of Iowa. And Majority Leader Windschitl – While our personalities may be a little different, we’ve come to make a good team and I think we get better every year. I’m looking forward to delivering on Iowans’ priorities with you for another Legislative Session.

The start of every general assembly means there is a class of freshman legislators newly sworn in for their first-ever legislative session. This year, that freshman class includes over a third of the House chamber. Oftentimes, our freshman legislators can spend their first session sitting back, listening and learning from the more experienced members. For this freshman class . . . not so much. You’ll be hitting the ground running right from the start. But I know you are up to the task.

Whether it’s your first session, or your 17th like mine, take a moment to appreciate where you are. You are here in the people’s Capitol in this magnificent House Chamber. 17 years after my first session here and I’ve never lost my appreciation for this impressive building and the responsibility that comes with it. Before we get into the contentious debates and the long nights, let’s take a moment to acknowledge that we’re all here for the same reason: to make Iowa the best place to work, live and raise a family.

Fresh off an election cycle, I know we’re all feeling very in touch with our districts. Iowans turned out in droves yet again this election to make their voices heard with more than 1.2 million Iowans casting their ballot. Iowans were loud and clear in helping us set our agenda for the 2023 legislative session. I’m surprised I’ve made it this far into the speech without saying my favorite fact about this House Republican caucus. We now represent part or all of all 99 of Iowa’s 99 counties and are in a better position than ever to listen to Iowans all across the state and legislate accordingly. Iowans continue to grow our majority because we have proven session after session that our caucus delivers on the promises we make.

Iowans have come to know House Republicans as a common-sense conservative caucus. We aim to grow the economy, keep families safe, and protect your freedoms. This session, Iowans can expect no different. We’ll craft another responsible state budget. We’ve been so consistent in passing a balanced, responsible budget that it often gets overlooked now. But if you look at Washington DC or even our neighbors in Illinois, you see that it’s not always the case. So, it is no small thing that we will yet again this year pass a balanced budget that respects the taxpayers and funds Iowans’ priorities.

Last session, we passed a historic tax cut. We lowered income taxes for all Iowans and eliminated taxes on retirement income. Now, the tax we hear about the most is property taxes. We need reforms that put the taxpayer first. Oftentimes we’ve focused too much on providing certainty for the government and not enough on providing certainty for the Iowan paying the taxes. This session, that will change as we work to provide true relief and reform.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE PAT GRASSLEY (FULL TEXT)(CONTINUED)

We need more common-sense accountability for Iowans' tax dollars. We can pass simple reforms to ensure that the dollars we allocate in the state budget are actually making it to where they are intended to go. Our entitlement programs can only be sustainable if we ensure those who receive them are those who actually need it.

With the creation of the Education Reform Committee, House Republicans made clear that reform will be a top priority this session. While ESA's are an important part of that discussion, we believe it's just a part of much broader reform. With a variety of policy ideas - some of which will look familiar - we can provide greater choice to Iowa parents AND keep our public school system strong.

This session, our agenda is bold. We're crafting creative solutions to the issues that have plagued our state for years like workforce shortages. We're digging deep into the issues that are often times deemed too complicated to address like property taxes. And we're acting on the concerns we hear consistently from our constituents and are pushing back against the radical social agenda being forced upon us and our children by the left.

We've spent the time leading up to session hard at work, crafting legislative solutions to the problems Iowans brought to us over the election cycle. And we're ready to hit the ground running. You'll see us get straight to work on some of the issues we've heard about the most. Iowans sent us here to do an important job. And it's time to get to work.

SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE JOHN WILLS (FULL TEXT)

Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of the House, good morning.

I want to thank you for your willingness to serve your fellow Iowans as we have each made sacrifices to be here and it is an honor to serve with you in this Chamber. It is an even greater honor to serve you as the Speaker Pro Tempore. Furthermore, I would be remiss if I didn't also thank my constituents back home in House District 10 who have provided me with the opportunity to represent them these past 8 years, I am grateful for their faith in me to be able to represent their values. As long as I am thanking everyone, I must thank my wife, Cami, and our three adult kids, Seth, Wes, and Mariah. I have missed events, been gone when something has broken down, and forgotten more than I should because of the commitment to be a legislator. As we know in this chamber the legislator isn't the only one to serve because my family has made tremendous sacrifice as well and they deserve a huge thank you from me.

With the campaign of 2022 behind us it is our duty to bring together what we learned as Iowans on the campaign trail and set aside our differences to do what is right for Iowan's. Each of us in this chamber have different priorities and desires that both we and our constituents feel are important. I look forward to working with each one of you to accomplish these priorities in a way that makes Iowan's and each of our constituents be the priority. In the end, there will be areas where we disagree with one another, and we will be zealous in the defense of our values, but we also will find that we will agree with each other 90 percent of the time. My goals as a legislator are to wisely spend the taxpayer's dollar, provide efficiency of government services, advance our freedoms and liberties from the bill of rights to life and everything in between, and ensure our government works for the people, and not the other way around.

May God bless each of you and the Great State of Iowa! Now, let's get to work and let's get on with a great and productive legislative session to ensure Iowa becomes stronger in all ways and Iowa's citizens become freer with their God-given liberties and freedoms.

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER JENNIFER KONFRST (FULL TEXT)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader, ladies and gentlemen of the House. Welcome to the 90th General Assembly. Like you, I'm honored to be here, and honored to serve.

Thirty years ago this month, I started an internship with the Iowa House of Representatives. I was a freshman at Drake University and was honored to intern in the Iowa House Minority Leader's office. My career has taken a lot of turns since then - much of it not political - but realizing that it all started here 30 years ago has given me a lot of reason to reflect and look back. We've come a long way since then, as a state and as a chamber.

Some things have stayed the same, and others have changed quite a bit since then. One of the things I hope we're able to bring back this session is a spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship. After all, that's what the people sent us here to do. More than 1/3 of our chamber is new. We can each remember the hope, anticipation, nervousness, and excitement we felt when we were sitting here for the first time - and it wasn't just about seat selection this afternoon.

We each made the decision to run for office - which is a scary proposition - because we love Iowa and want to help make it better. What a great place to start - putting our Iowa values into action for people. My charge to you - and to us - is to use this new House of Representatives as an opportunity to set politics aside and do the work for the people. We knocked on a lot of doors last summer and fall, and we each talked to our constituents about what they wanted. Let's remember what they told us when we're drafting legislation. Let's remember what their priorities are. Let's remember to put people over politics.

That's what Iowa House Democrats are committed to doing each and every day. We've been listening to Iowans, and we've learned that Iowans want us to prioritize the issues they care about. They want us to: lower their costs, invest in public schools, legalize marijuana, and protect reproductive freedom. Let's make sure what we heard on the doors matches what happens here, on the floor. Let's make sure the special interests don't drown out the voices of the people.

This session let's remember working Iowans, who just want fair wages without constantly worrying about how to pay their bills and keep their families healthy. Let's remember families who want to be able to live their lives without our interference - no matter what they look like, who they love, or how they live. Let's remember that freedom includes the ability of people to make their own decisions about their own bodies. And let's remember that our foundation of strong public schools is what got most of us here today. It's those same public schools that will educate the majority of Iowans and build the next generation of leaders like us. Let's give all students the best start possible.

Iowans are tired and exhausted by politics as usual. Let's do things differently this year. They want us to work together to get things done. Things they'll see in their everyday lives. Impacts that will make their lives better.

Each of us eats, sleeps, and breathes the work of the Iowa Legislature. Thank goodness, everyday Iowans don't. They trust us to do their work. Not the work of special interests. Not the work of the extreme flanks of our parties. We work for them. Let's listen. Let's act on their behalf. Let's work together to keep their priorities top of mind this session. Let's get to work.

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER JACK WHITVER (FULL TEXT)

Madam President, Minority Leader Wahls, colleagues, friends and family, Welcome to the 2023 legislative session.

Six years ago, I was proud to address this body as a member of the new majority party and the President of the Senate for the first time. In those comments, I talked about the optimism of this chamber and its goals, to bring bold solutions and create new opportunities in our state. I said, "When this session ends and people remember the 2017 session, let them say that this was the year that positively changed our state forever. Let them say this was the year an economic revival began in Iowa. Let them say that 2017 was the year the legislature dared to dream big."

And we did. In that year alone, we started repairing a budget that overspent and passed an overhaul of Iowa's laws regarding the Second Amendment. The legislature also implemented common sense voter ID requirements, giving Iowans more confidence in our elections. We passed legislation to put taxpayers back at the bargaining table and allow school boards and administrators to reward good teachers and get rid of bad teachers. And we passed legislation to protect the sanctity of life.

The following year, in my opening day comments, I said, "It is our job to ensure our kids and our grandkids inherit an even better state from us. We must work diligently on behalf of the next generation, so they have opportunities and experiences even greater than our own."

And we did. This body passed, what was at the time, a historic tax relief package to prioritize Iowa's working families and reduce rates, reduced the number of tax brackets, and most importantly reduced the amount of taxes small business owners, farmers and families were paying. We passed a bill to address water quality in Iowa, expanded online education, and recognized life at the sound of heartbeat.

Despite claims of voter backlash to our agenda, in 2018 we were the only Republican caucus in the country to add seats. I was proud to welcome three more members to our caucus, expanding our caucus to 32 Republicans in the Iowa Senate. In my opening day address in 2019, I said, "Our mission is simple: Improve the lives of Iowans through challenging the status quo and reforming Iowa for the next generation."

And we did. We reformed the judicial nominating process by lessening the influence of a small group of lawyers and instead expanded Iowans' voices in that process through their governor. We also moved forward bills to bring more people into our workforce, created a children's mental health system, and brought more transparency and accountability to the property tax process.

In 2020, our state and our policies were tested in ways we had never dreamed, but we were ready, and Iowa was recognized as one of the most fiscally resilient states in the country throughout the pandemic. Iowa was also named the fastest state in the country to recover economically from the pandemic.

Voters again endorsed our agenda in 2020 by returning the largest partisan majority in the Iowa Senate since the 1970s. In 2021, I said, "This year we are focused on putting our state back on a path of success and prosperity after all these challenges."

And we did. We increased funding for mental health services, increased funding for broadband, and ensured Iowa students had the option to be in the classroom full-time. We passed more broad tax relief for farmers, small businesses, and property taxpayers. We delivered more free speech protections for Iowa students, and protections for our brave law enforcement officers.

Finally, last year, I said "When Republicans collect too much of your hard-earned dollars, we will keep our promise to give it back."

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER JACK WHITVER (FULL TEXT)(CONTINUED)

And we did. We passed a historic tax cut package, eliminating the tax on retirement income, which went into effect one week ago. We set a path for rates to be reduced from close to 9% to less than 4% and we reduced the highest tax rate in the country on Iowa employers. According to the Tax Foundation, when our reforms are fully implemented Iowa's tax ranking would move from 46th to 15th. The improvement of 31 spots is tied with North Carolina for the biggest improvement in the history of their rankings. All of those reforms led us to today.

Today is a historic day. 34 Republican Senators will take their seats and we will comprise the first supermajority in this chamber in half a century. This historic achievement didn't just happen. It happened because we delivered common sense solutions to the most important issues facing Iowans.

Throughout my time here as the majority leader, I have been proud to hear the word "historic" again and again. From tax relief, to mental health, education reform, the 2nd Amendment and life, the Iowa Senate has set a bold and historic vision and delivered results to meet that vision. Now is the time to set the vision for the next year to deliver on promises made to Iowans to make this the best state in the country. Republicans in the Iowa Senate do not shy away from hard work or hard decisions, and Iowans have rewarded us for it. With the historical successes we have had, I think it is safe to say we are ready for bigger, bolder, and better.

We have spent the last several months talking to Iowans throughout the state – parents, farmers, small business owners, and taxpayers. Some common themes emerged from those discussions. Iowans pay some of the highest property taxes in the country, and the system responsible for that problem wasn't built overnight, and the solution to it won't be either. But I can tell you, Senate Republicans are up to the challenge on the best long-term strategy for Iowa taxpayers.

We have shown over the last several years that it is possible to fund priorities in a responsible manner, budget sustainably, and still pass historic tax reforms. This example should be a model for local governments on how to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and invest in our state and its people.

Not only is reforming property taxes on the minds of many Iowans, but so is reforming education for Iowa students. Senate Republicans are focused on strengthening education in our state for Iowa students, and that begins with empowering parents to make the best decisions for their child.

In previous years, we passed laws giving parents the option to send their children to school in-person and ensuring open enrollment was accessible for every family. Nobody knows a child better than their parents, and parents deserve a say in what is being taught in the classroom, and to use their tax dollars to send their children to a school that best fits their needs. Iowans have a choice in almost everything we do, including most educational settings. If it is good to have a choice in pre-schools, and community colleges, and apprenticeships, and four-year colleges and universities, then Iowa K-12 parents and students should have the choice to choose the school best for their family. School choice should no longer be an option only for wealthy families. Public and private schools both can prepare Iowa's next generation for great careers right here in Iowa.

Finally, Iowa's workforce shortage remains a challenge and we will continue to work on reforms to get more Iowans into the workforce. A tax code that incentivizes work, equipping Iowans with skills they need for those opportunities, and ensuring public assistance programs focus on those Iowans most in need are all policy goals we will continue to pursue. The value and dignity of work is what has made America the greatest country in the world. It is vital we protect that heritage.

Today we start the path to implement more historic reforms in Iowa. We will keep our promises, we will listen, and we will continue to make Iowa a place with great schools, great opportunities, and great people.

Let's get to work.

SENATE PRESIDENT AMY SINCLAIR (FULL TEXT)

Good morning colleagues of the Senate, friends, family, and people of the State of Iowa,

Welcome to the first session of the 90th General Assembly. As I look around, I see many new faces filling the desks of the Senate Chamber, and I want to congratulate the 14 new Senators sworn into office today: Senator De Witt, Senator Evans, Senator Alons, Senator Westrich, Senator Knox, Senator Bousset, Senator Salmon, Senator Donahue, Senator Bennett, Senator Gruenhagen, Senator McClintock, Senator Weiner, Senator Webster and Senator Winkler.

As those of you who are returning already know, and our new colleagues will quickly learn throughout the legislative session, it is a tremendous responsibility, yet a huge honor to serve the people of this state in the Iowa Senate. Our work together over the next 110 days stands to impact the daily lives of millions of Iowa citizens.

Having served as the Chair of the Education Committee, I am proud of the groundwork we laid to ensure Iowa's educational system thrives. Since taking the majority in 2017, we have invested over \$400 million in new funding for Iowa's K-12 schools, which provided responsible and sustainable growth for our local districts and educators, even through uncertain times like the pandemic. As my friend Senator Quirnbach so often reminds me, "Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what your priorities are." Well in Iowa, K-12 school funding makes up 45% of the state's general fund budget. And if you include the full range of educational resources available to Iowans, 56% of the state budget is dedicated to securing the futures for our next generation through our education systems. Our budget makes it clear that Senate Republicans' priorities have been, and will continue to be, solidly on supporting every single student's right to reach their full potential through lifelong learning.

In spite of the pandemic, Iowa has continued to make strides in improving student proficiency. We have already begun to see the benefit of being one of the first states to get our kids back in the classroom during the pandemic. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Iowa ranked in the top third in 4th grade math, 4th grade reading, and 8th grade math and in the top half for 8th grade reading. While many states saw a decrease in proficiency, Iowa did not. Even at the high school level, Iowa students consistently outscored the national average on the ACT by a point or more.

But we can still do better. In 2020, we began work on a bill aimed at keeping our students and teachers safe and providing the most productive learning environment for all students. We passed **SF 2360** creating therapeutic classrooms and requiring reports on incidents of violence in the classroom. Those reports show the importance of this legislation we passed and reminds us that more can be done on the issue. The 2022 report from the Iowa Department of Education on Incidents of Violence shows that the total number of reports from school districts on incidents that resulted in injury, property damage, or assault totaled over 4,000. As legislators, we must prioritize the safety of our students and teachers and ensure teachers can focus on their primary job: helping Iowa's students learn and grow to their full potential.

This job cannot be done without the support of parents. Throughout the pandemic, many parents became more attentive to what is happening in their child's classroom, invested more in the education of their child, and had more visibility than ever before during the period of online learning and students' transition back to the regular classroom. This visibility sparked both a state and a national movement for more transparency and resulted in many parents adjusting their educational choice as they sought to find the right environment for their child to learn. Some parents chose to switch to homeschooling, many continued with their local district school, and others sought opportunities within the non-public school system.

SENATE PRESIDENT AMY SINCLAIR (FULL TEXT)(CONTINUED)

Last session, legislators listened to the concerns of all of these parents. We began work on a Parental Bill of Rights aimed at guaranteeing a parents' involvement in their child's education. In addition, we looked for ways to provide all families with the opportunity to pick the educational setting best suited to their child. The Senate has long supported parental choice in education, which has been upheld as a parent's right by nearly every court decision on the subject. All Iowans family should have the opportunity to send their children to the school of that best meets their needs and reflects their family's values and moral fiber. This should not be exclusive to families with the financial means to pay for tuition or transportation or to those families who can afford to move to a better zip code.

This session's work will seek to maximize educational opportunities for all children and ensure that students whose needs are not being met can find the option that serves them best. Income should not impact children's access to the educational institution that will best fit their needs. In a 2021 survey, 46% of parents said they would send their children to a private school if costs were not a factor. Currently, only 8% of families in our state were able to make that alternative choice. The divide between what is and what parents desire should stand as a wakeup call in this conversation. The fact is Iowa already invests in non-public educational opportunities for Iowa students. Both our statewide preschools for 4-year-olds and the Iowa Tuition Grant and various state loan repayment programs at the post-secondary level utilize non-public providers. It's now time to expand those scholarships so all Iowa families can meet their children's needs with the K-12 opportunities that lie between preschool and college.

As we continue to find ways to support Iowa families, we also need to look at ways to help stabilize finances and Iowa's economy in a time of excessive federal spending. Senate Republicans have always prioritized responsible budgeting, which has put our state in a strong position to make historic tax reforms while fully funding our priorities in education, healthcare, and public safety. We enter this session with our rainy-day funds filled to the statutory maximum, a healthy projected ending balance for FY 2023, and a healthy projected surplus for FY 2024. These numbers can all be credited to responsible and sustainable budgeting while delivering on our promises of tax relief for working Iowans.

Senate Republicans have delivered three historic tax cuts that resulted in Iowans keeping more of their hard-earned dollars to invest in their communities, futures, and families. Last year, we reduced income taxes for working families and eliminated the retirement income tax altogether, so our grandparents aren't forced to leave the state to protect their incomes. We will continue to explore ways to reduce the tax burden on hardworking Iowa families and businesses. With rising assessments, Senate Republicans are listening to the concerns of the taxpayer and now look to reduce the property tax burden in a meaningful way. Keeping residential, agricultural, and commercial property taxes at a low rate will make Iowa more competitive in the nation's economy.

In the end, it should be our goal to make Iowa THE place to raise your family, invest in your education, start and grow your business, live a meaningful life, and retire with financial stability. I look forward to the work that will be done this session to accomplish those goals. It is an honor to serve with all of you as we continue the journey Senate Republicans began six years ago to make Iowa the best state in the nation.

God Bless you, your families, and this great state.

SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER ZACH WALLS (FULL TEXT)

Madam President, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate, staff, members of the press, and my fellow Iowans: welcome to the 2023 legislative session. I'd like to start first by thanking my family, my wife Chloe, my sister Zeb, for all your love and support. Thank you. I also want to welcome all the new members of the Senate, including five new Democratic senators, who bring a rich and diverse range of experiences to the important work we do in this chamber. I also welcome our new Republican senators, and I look forward to getting to know each of you better and working together for our great state. I also want to take a moment to thank our staff of the Democratic caucus. The work that each of you do makes this building work, and I'm grateful to have each and every one of you on our team. Thank you.

And, before I begin, Madam President, I also want to recognize the Iowa workers of UAW Local 807 in Burlington and BCTGM Local 100-G in Cedar Rapids, who are on strike this morning for fair wages and working conditions. From food to heavy machinery and everything in between, Iowa workers produce the goods our society needs to thrive, and they deserve a living wage and livable benefits for doing it.

Every session opens with a fresh opportunity to make Iowa better – more welcoming, vibrant and successful. In 2023, Iowa Senate Democrats are ready to seize that opportunity by taking action on the single biggest challenge facing Iowa. As former Iowa state Senator Tom Vilsack used to say, "We need more Iowans, younger Iowans, and better paid Iowans." It's been called a brain drain and a workforce crisis, but really this challenge is bigger than that. What we face is a people crisis — an exodus from the state of Iowa. Whether it's growing waitlists for childcare, bigger class sizes in our public schools, or the shuttering of labor and delivery units in hospitals across our state, this crisis threatens the future of Iowa and is holding us back every single day.

And so, Madam President, everything we do this session should be focused on this crisis. Iowans see this reality everywhere we go, in every aspect of our daily lives. Over the last few years, we have lost one third of our childcare providers. The state has 350,000 more kids than we have open childcare spots, and nearly one quarter of the state lives in a childcare desert – in large part because providers can't hire enough staff to meet demand. 350,000 kids potentially missing out on safe, fun, enriching, early education that prepares them for a brighter future. One quarter of Iowa parents without the childcare they need to rejoin the labor force, to start a new job, or accept a promotion. And the crisis does not get better once kids get to school. Iowa schools started the current academic year with 5,000 open jobs, including 1,000 full-time teaching positions. The Department of Education website lists 21 separate teaching areas facing shortages, from pre-K to physical education to high-school math, science, and industrial technology. Right now, kids in every corner of our state are missing out on the individual attention they need to become confident readers. They're missing out on STEM opportunities that would inspire great careers. They're missing out on the help they need to learn English and thrive.

And it's not just our kids. The business community has been sounding the alarm for years. Unfilled manufacturing jobs were up 227 percent this past August compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic. That is simply unacceptable. Health care providers will tell you about a nursing shortage that has been going on for years. Iowans feel the shortage in understaffed doctor's offices, longer waits for care, and exhausted, overworked critical care providers. Our nursing crisis was worsened by the pandemic, but it was happening before Covid-19, and it will only get worse unless this chamber does something serious to fix it.

Jobs like these – nursing, teaching, and manufacturing – these are the foundation of Iowa's middle-class. They provide stable incomes for families, they anchor communities, and they make our state work. And without the people to fill these jobs, our economic foundation is crumbling, which makes our challenges even worse.

That's why Iowa's economic environment now ranks 32nd in the country – and behind five of our six neighbors. When it comes to economic performance, we currently rank sixth out of nine Midwestern states.

SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER ZACH WALLS (FULL TEXT)(CONTINUED)

Since 2010, 50,000 Iowans in their prime working years have left our state — for better opportunities, more welcoming communities, or because they aged out of the workforce, with no younger generation there to replace them — because the younger generations are leaving, too. We need only think of our own communities, our own circles of friends. How many people do we know who have left? How many people's kids left for a job or to serve in the military or go to college out of state and never came home?

This is a crushing, long-term problem that will only be solved with real, meaningful action, and Iowa Senate Democrats are ready. We want to be part of the solution. We want to make Iowa a destination for hard-working newcomers and young families. We want to make Iowa a lifelong home for the next generation. And the question is whether Republicans are serious about joining us. Every priority announced by Republican leadership today and in the days ahead must pass a simple test: Will it reverse the Iowa Exodus? Will it make Iowa a more appealing place to earn a living and raise a family?

The governor and Republicans in the House and Senate are talking a lot about private school vouchers. This unpopular scheme will send public money — your taxpayer dollars — to unaccountable private schools. But will it help reverse Iowa's people crisis? No. In fact, it stands to make the problem worse. The Republican voucher scheme threatens to defund local schools. It will increase the teacher shortage in public education. It will magnify inequality. And it will hit rural communities the hardest, forcing more school consolidation and driving more families away from our small towns. Private school vouchers are wrong for Iowa students, and wrong for Iowa communities.

Republican politicians are also promising more attacks on Iowans' personal freedom, human dignity, and our God-given, constitutionally protected right to privacy. Republican politicians want to ban abortion — any way they can and no matter what a majority of Iowans actually want. They're continuing their attacks on LGBTQ Iowans, using the power of the state to bully them into hiding — or leaving. This is what happens when Republicans ban books and force more government censorship over what Iowans read and think. Will these tired culture war attacks solve Iowa's people crisis and stop the Iowa Exodus? No.

The answer to slow growth and population decline is not to push Iowans away. To regain the ground we've lost, keep the next generation of Iowans here at home and win the competition for newcomers, we must make Iowa a more welcoming state. And our biggest employers are saying the same thing: this crisis will only be solved by welcoming more folks to build a life here in Iowa and stay here in Iowa.

We're also hearing a lot about property tax reform, and I want to be very clear: Senate Democrats will gladly work with Republicans on a plan to ease property tax burdens on middle-class families and those with fixed incomes to make sure Iowa is a better place to call home. We want to be part of a solution that helps Iowa families and can attract more people to our state. But Republicans need to prove they're serious about helping middle-class Iowans. Iowa can't afford another tax giveaway to the ultra-rich that shortchanges our families and communities. Senate Democrats will work with anyone on common-sense property tax reform, but we are not interested in tax giveaways that overwhelmingly benefit the ultrarich and big corporations.

Every legislative session opens with a fresh opportunity to make Iowa a better place — a thriving state with more Iowans, younger Iowans, and better paid Iowans. In 2023, we must seize this opportunity, because right now, too many people are leaving. Factories, offices, schools, and hospitals can't find enough workers. And every day Republicans spend fighting with each other about banning abortion and defunding public schools, this crisis gets worse, not better.

SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER ZACH WALLS (FULL TEXT)(CONTINUED)

Another rural labor and delivery unit closes. Another small town watches its housing stock crumble. Another kid goes on a waitlist for daycare. Another plant moves out of state. Another family of four moves to Minneapolis or Denver. We've all seen it and we all know it's true. The Iowa Exodus is strangling our state and robbing us of our future.

Madam President, Iowa's people crisis is not only a Democrat or Republican problem. It's not only an urban or rural problem. It's not only a blue-collar or white-collar problem. This crisis is affecting every single Iowan, and we can only fix it by working together. So, let's fix it.

Scripture tells us that when there is no vision, the people perish. Let's come together to create that vision. Let's set aside the culture wars and ideological agendas and give our people hope. Let's skip the special interest giveaways this year. Let's listen to Iowans and listen to each other. Let's get to work on ending our people crisis, the biggest issue threatening our state. Senate Democrats are ready to do our part, and we invite our colleagues to join us.

Thank you, Madam President.