



January 17, 2020

It truly is a great time to be an Iowan

The first week of the 2020 Legislative Session is in the books. It was an exciting first week as we returned to the Capitol on Monday and spent much of the first four days in meetings, organizing committees and starting the legislative process. The very first day I was honored to deliver opening day remarks in the Iowa Senate. I am including them below:

Good morning Mister President, Minority Leader Petersen, and my colleagues in the Senate.

It is exciting to be back and ready to work for another legislative session. This will be my second full session as the majority leader in this chamber, and I can't tell you how proud I am of the members we have here and what we have accomplished so far, with more exciting changes to come. It truly is a great time to be an Iowan.



Iowa has more job openings right now than unemployed people to fill them. One of our challenges as legislators is to help people get the right skills to fill those jobs, with the education and training they need to succeed. We want people to be able to work and be productive members of our society, changing both their own lives and the lives of their family forever. We've seen more dollars in the

classroom for schools, reliable, sustainable spending each of the last three years. Every funding promise we have made to K-12 education, we have fully funded. Those promises are yielding results. Iowa has the highest high school graduation rate, highest average ACT score, and the highest rate of concurrent enrollment in the country.

The state budget, when we took the majority, had a deficit over \$100 million, but now it has a surplus of hundreds of millions of dollars. According to Forbes, Iowa is one of only a few states in America with a truly balanced budget, a budget surplus, instead of deficit. Iowa has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, and it is rated one of the top states for opportunity.

All these positive results did not happen by accident. They happened with the methodical and purposeful implementation of pro-growth policies: Policies to conservatively manage the state budget. Policies to make it easier to do business in Iowa. Policies to fully fund our commitments to education. And policies to reduce the tax burden, so Iowans can keep more of what they earn.

But we still have a long way to go in our race to be the best state in the country. We passed the largest tax cut in Iowa's history. It was a huge reform package, and now that we are a few years into that plan, we are starting to see some of the results and benefits. And more needs to be done. We want to continue to reduce those rates to bring our state from the back of the pack to one of the states with the lowest rates. We can continue to do more to simplify and make taxes lower, fairer, and more efficient. But the ultimate goal is to ensure the people who work hard for their money are getting to keep more of it.

We implemented Future Ready Iowa last year to help address the skills gap, but work remains to be done to encourage those able-bodied Iowans on public assistance programs to join the workforce. A workforce that needs them to fill some of the 50,000 open jobs in our state.

At the end of the day, our goal is to implement policies that provide an opportunity for success for every human being who has chosen to call our state home, while cultivating an environment here to attract people outside Iowa to call our state home. We should be fixing the broken systems that hinder a person's chance of being successful.

An old Latin proverb reads, "fortune favors the bold." I want to urge my colleagues to continue to seek out bold solutions to improving this state. We have pursued a bold agenda and the results speak for themselves. If we don't take this chance to make big changes to how our state runs, should we even be here? Bold change is the legacy I want to leave and if we continue to pursue those reforms, it will be how we are remembered.

As we continue to build that legacy here, we want to make sure we are focused on policy we believe is right and will move our state forward. We will continue to challenge the status quo and implement bold reforms.

What I like most about my colleagues and this chamber is that we work from the ground up. We work on the issues important to our constituents, their families, and our communities. And the most important part of this is, we want our time here to be meaningful. We want to make changes that aren't just going to fix a problem for a year or two. We want the laws we pass to make positive changes for generations to come. We have the opportunity here to really change people's lives for the better and improve the environment for them to succeed.

Now, let's get to work

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