

## Peggy Flanagan Sworn in as Minnesota's Lieutenant Governor

January 7, 2019

[ST. PAUL, MN] – On January 7, 2019, Peggy Flanagan was sworn in as Minnesota's Lieutenant Governor. Below are her remarks as prepared for delivery.

Thank you, Minnesota. Chi miigwech. When I ran for the state legislature, I fell in love with my district. When I ran for Lieutenant Governor, traveling across our state, I fell deeper in love with Minnesota.

This is an indescribable and humbling honor, and I will serve you every day to the best of my ability.

Thank you, to my Anishinaabe sister, Justice McKeig. You made history as the first Native Woman appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court. I'm honored to have you swear me in today as the highest-ranking Native woman ever elected to Executive Office in the country.

I never imagined I would say that.

My story is a One Minnesota story. It's about community.

My mom lives in Plymouth, my dad lives on the White Earth Reservation. They, along with my incredible partner, Tom, are here with me today.

My mom moved us to St. Louis Park so that I would have access to good schools, stable neighborhoods and the opportunity to thrive.

We didn't have much growing up. What little we had, she used to make sure we got ahead. Thank you for that, Mama.

But it didn't always add up. We needed help.

I was the kid with the different colored lunch ticket. We needed those free meals at school.

Medicaid saved my life. As a kid with asthma, it's the reason I'm alive today.

Growing up wasn't always easy, but it made me strong. I stand before you today because of a loving family, a supportive community and a great state.

My vocation is to create community across Minnesota—a community like mine that lifts people up and provides them a little help when they need it.

My story is a One Minnesota story. It's about pathways.

I am where I am today because of people who believed in me—my parents, my teachers, my speech coach, my college professors. And, I'm here because of the late Senator Paul Wellstone, whose last campaign was my first. Their belief in me made it possible for me to believe in myself.

Their support created pathways. Pathways paved by Minnesota values that allowed me to get a high-quality education, seize opportunities, attend a public university, be elected to the state legislature, and now become the lieutenant governor of Minnesota.

My mission is to help create pathways for every Minnesotan—whether they live with a single mom in Section 8 housing, they are a farm kid struggling to figure out whether they can stay on the land they

love, or an Iron Ranger who lost her job in the mine and is desperately searching for another way to support her family.

As your lieutenant governor, I will never lose touch of how it felt to reach into my sneaker in the lunch line to take out that ticket. And I promise you I will do everything I can do ensure every Minnesotan sees a path to a brighter future.

My story is a One Minnesota story. It's about trying new things.

Governor Walz and I did something different. We ran as a team from early on.

If you haven't already gathered, we are and have been sincere good friends with a profound respect for one another.

We will build on the legacy forged by Lieutenant Governor Tina Smith.

We will reshape the role of Lieutenant Governor in Minnesota and will govern in true partnership.

By elevating the role's significance, we will bring diverse perspectives to the Governor's Office.

Tim Walz chose me as a governing partner, because he believes in creating space for new voices.

I'm proud to open the door.

And, now my job is to hold that door wide open for others.

My story is a One Minnesota story. It's filled with contradictions.

A few moments ago, I was sworn in on a Bible from 1854. It's written in the Ojibwe language. My thanks to the Minnesota Historical Society for making it available today.

I chose this Bible because it has deep spiritual meaning to me as a Catholic—but this bible also was a tool used to erase Native people's culture and traditions.

These contradictions are present throughout our history. I stand before you now as a leader of the executive office of Minnesota—an office that oversaw horrific treatment of my ancestors. An office whose Governor once declared that our Dakota brothers and sisters - and I quote - "must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of Minnesota."

And yet this is the same office... thanks to Governor Mark Dayton's actions in 2012... that repudiated those hateful words and actions of a previous administration. Thank you, Governor Dayton.

I'm happy the Dakota people are still here.

My people talk about walking in two worlds. But one of my most treasured mentors encouraged me to reject that idea. I am an Ojibwe woman, and I am an Ojibwe woman all the time.

I have a responsibility, especially because of those who came before me and cleared a path, to do good for my people. All the time.

I am an Ojibwe woman. I am a mother. I am a Minnesotan. This is the lens through which I see the world, and the lens through which I will do my work as Lieutenant Governor.

That Ojibwe Bible is complicated. Our history is complicated. Our state is complicated. The issues facing us are complicated. Try as we might, they can't be whittled down to a hashtag. They need nuance.

They need to be faced with the experiences of all Minnesotans, especially those who aren't usually present when decisions are made that affect them. That is how Governor Walz and I will greet those complicated and nuanced challenges.

Our past informs who we are, but we build our future together.

My story is a One Minnesota story. It looks to the future.

I have a five-year-old daughter. She is here today. Her name is Siobhan. She is a funny, energetic, opinionated little Anishinaabkwe... who recently lost her first tooth and attended her first Native American Affinity Group meeting at her school.

My job is to show young people like her what is possible.

To all young Indigenous people, young people of color, and young people in rural communities who feel forgotten... you deserve to be seen, heard, and valued. There is a place for you in this work. Your own story and experiences are valid. You deserve to have a voice within your own community and your own future.

Our future is bright. One Minnesota is grounded in the fact that people directly affected by decisions have a seat at the table. The future of our state depends on people being engaged in their government.

One Minnesota does not mean we are all the same. One Minnesota means we work together across lines of differences to find our shared values and improve people's lives.

Let's get to work. Chi miigwech. Thank you.