

# Governor Walz, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan Inaugural Remarks as Prepared

January 2, 2023

[ST. PAUL, MN] – Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan were sworn in for their second term as Minnesota’s Governor and Lieutenant Governor today along with Attorney General Keith Ellison, Secretary of State Steve Simon, and State Auditor Julie Blaha at the Fitzgerald Theatre in St. Paul. Below are their remarks as prepared for delivery.

## **Governor Tim Walz’s Inaugural Remarks as Prepared**

It’s the honor of my life to be your governor, and I am humbled to have the opportunity to do this important work for another four years. I will do my best to serve you well. At this occasion four years ago as I took my oath of office, we had no idea the extraordinary challenges that lay ahead. I believed in you, and you believed in me. Together, we emerged from those historic challenges a better state – and today, we are faced with historic opportunity.

Let me first say thank you to Judge Jonathan Judd and Mark Rosen. And congratulations Mark and Karin on your recent engagement! To members of the state and federal judicial branches, thank you for being here and for your service to our state and nation. I would like to congratulate my fellow constitutional officers – It’s an honor to work with each of you. To my staff and my cabinet, thank you for your tireless work. I’m forever grateful.

Lieutenant Governor Flanagan — thank you for your guidance, your courage, and your friendship. You are a role model for people across this state, myself included. I know how proud your mom and dad are of you, yet today.

Our U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar is here. Amy, Minnesotans are lucky to have you fighting for them every day in Washington. Thank you for friendship and your partnership the past four years.

Former Governor Jesse Ventura is here. Governor, I’ve enjoyed getting to know you and I appreciate your Independent advice and your guidance as a former governor.

Former Governor Al Quie’s son Joel is here. Joel, your family continues to be an inspiration to Minnesota. Thank you for the recent opportunity to celebrate Governor’s Quie’s 99th birthday with him and your family.

To the leadership of our 11 sovereign nations, thank you for your partnership as we work to advance our government-to-government relations and build better lives for all our people.

Legislators – congratulations on your election. Let’s get to work setting a bold agenda and delivering for the people of Minnesota.

Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman – I could not have asked for a better partner over the last four years. You're compassionate, pragmatic, and tireless. I'm grateful we can continue our work together.

Majority Leader Kari Dziedzic – congratulations on your election. I'm eager to partner with you in the years to come.

Gwen, my wife, and Minnesota's First Lady – we began our journey together with a commitment to service... who would have guessed... Our partnership keeps me honest, grounded, and true to our shared values and vision for the world we want to create for our children, our nieces, and nephews. I'm grateful for your sage advice, your acumen, your proof reading, and your never-ending attention to detail. Thank you for sharing your family—Val, Lynn, your sisters and brothers-in-law—with me. I can't wait to continue building our exciting life together.

Hope and Gus, I'm proud to be your dad. I love you both. It must be difficult to have me as your dad – for so many reasons – especially over the last four years. I respect your maturity, your intellect, your humor, compassion, and generosity. Thank you for sharing our family with the people of Minnesota. I know you both will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of others by defining service in your own way.

And to my mom, Darlene, who is with us today. When dad died, you worked tirelessly to keep us together. My dad — a Korean War era vet, an educator, and a cigarette smoker — died of lung cancer when I was a teenager, and my family struggled enormously to pay his outstanding medical bills. We got by on social security survivor benefits and my mom's job in a nursing home. Mom, your hard work and courage was a powerful example for me.

My mom raised four teachers – and three out of four of us married teachers. Education is in our blood. Gwen and I met teaching high school, and we taught together for many years after we were married. We saw firsthand the challenges our students face. While we were in the classroom, coaching football, organizing dances, and directing plays, Gwen and I got to know our students and the obstacles in their lives. It was my experience as a teacher and my passion for education that led me to run for governor.

Education is the great equalizer. Minnesota has some of the best schools in the country – but there are disparities that we desperately need to address to ensure that every child receives a quality education and is given an equal opportunity to succeed.

Kids carry their whole lives with them into the classroom. They carry their hope, smarts, wisdom, and humor. They also carry the stress of hunger, housing, mental health, and family challenges that stand in the way of success. And we know their future starts taking shape long before they reach the classroom – that starting at birth, their future, and their opportunities, start to unfold. Early childhood education, health, and economic security help set the course of their young lives.

My mission as governor is simple: make Minnesota the best state in the country for kids. This is what I have charged my team to do – to make our state the best place to raise a family, and I'm proud to say we have made historic strides.

Over the last four years, we worked in a bipartisan way to make significant investments in health and health care, early education, and K-12 schools.

We've formed public-private partnerships to address housing and homelessness. We've partnered with our health care systems and philanthropic community to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and improve mental health care. We've bridged the urban/rural divide to rebuild critical infrastructure that benefits all Minnesotans.

We've championed child care and early learning programs, lowered the cost of insulin and prescription drugs, and cut taxes for small business and the middle class. We were recently ranked among the very top in overall well-being, and we've achieved the lowest unemployment numbers of any state – ever. Indeed, we are making Minnesota the best state to raise a family.

But let's be clear: we have more work to do. Across the country, the pandemic disrupted the lives of our students. And despite the heroic efforts of teachers, students, and parents, many of our kids have fallen behind. We've re-doubled our efforts with summer catchup programs but we have more work to do.

And to be clear: the burden is not on our children, or even our teachers – it's on all of us. That's why in this coming legislative session, we will make the largest investment in public education the state has ever seen. We will pass universal meals to ensure every student is given something to eat and no child has to worry about the color of their lunch ticket. We will fund special education and make sure every young person in Minnesota has the resources they need to succeed. We will put mental health front and center. We'll work together to stop the stigma and allow young people access to the help they need to reach their full potential. We will ban conversion therapy to ensure that every LGBTQ student knows they are perfect just the way they are. And we will fund programs to recruit and train the next generation of teachers – so a diverse generation of students has an equally diverse generation of teachers.

But Investing in our classrooms is only the beginning. Building the best schools in the nation is a good start, but to make Minnesota the best state for kids we need to make sure that kids are thriving in and OUT of the classroom. Children can't learn if they're hungry or without a home. We have the opportunity to ensure every child has a safe place to call home and that no child goes hungry. I am committed to ending child poverty in Minnesota.

In the coming weeks, I will announce a bold new proposal to lift up children, youth, and families in Minnesota and put them at the center of our state budget.

While success in the classroom is paramount, we have more work to do to ensure every family has access to affordable health care, child care, early education, economic security, and paid family and medical leave. We have to invest in every child and family, to give our young people

opportunity in and out of school. These critical resources shape the lives of the next generation and ensure that families want to call Minnesota home.

I want to make sure that families continue to move here – and that all families have the opportunity to succeed here. I think about my mom, my dad, and our family growing up – and I think about all the people who bet on us. We made it because people invested in us. My commitment is that I will invest in you and your family – no matter where you live in Minnesota.

Let's continue to lower the cost of health care and prescription drugs so families—like my mom and dad—don't go broke when someone gets sick. Let's give workers and families the influx of cash they need to cover rising costs by sending checks directly to Minnesotans.

Let's grow our workforce—starting in high school—with career and technical education, and let's attract a workforce by making Minnesota a destination state for teachers, nurses, entrepreneurs, small business owners, and skilled workers.

Let's invest in clean energy jobs and grow our economy by manufacturing solar panels and building the infrastructure necessary to support electric vehicles. And let's protect the right to collectively bargain so highly skilled union workers move here to build it! Let's make Minnesota's electricity carbon free by 2040.

Let's improve public safety – and pass commonsense gun safety measures to curb the epidemic of gun violence. Let's make sure our farmers and rural communities have equal access to things like health care, child care, and high-speed internet. Let's finish our work to end veterans' homelessness and make sure our veterans have the resources they need to live full and successful lives when they return home.

Let's ensure that Minnesota continues to have the safest and most secure elections in the country, and let's strengthen the freedom to vote by ensuring every Minnesotan has a voice in our democracy – starting with automatic voter registration. Let's protect the right to choose when to start a family by codifying access to abortion – once and for all. And whether it's inside or outside the classroom, let's make sure every child has the basic resources they need to thrive.

Now is the time to be bold and build a bright future for all Minnesotans. Now is the time to deliver.

We can lead the nation in ending child poverty and making sure every child receives a world-class education. And in doing so, we will continue to make Minnesota the best place to raise a family.

I have a positive vision for the future of our state and it's rooted in my belief that we're in this together. I still believe that we're One Minnesota – not that we are all the same or that we all the agree, but that we can work together across lines of difference to do what's right, what's fair, and make our state a better place for all.

As I look into this room and see so many newly elected leaders—including the promising faces of our new majorities in both the House and the Senate—I can't help but feel optimistic. I'm looking at a state legislature—on both sides of the aisle—that looks more like the people of Minnesota than any time in history. This gives me hope. It inspires me. And I look forward to working together – Republicans and Democrats alike.

I'll work with anyone who's willing to work with me to get things done – because Minnesotans spoke clearly this last election, and they expect all of us to do just that: get things done. The era of gridlock is over. Minnesotans have chosen hope over fear, fact over fiction, and action over excuses. Our path is clear. It's time to lead.

We have been given an historic opportunity, which comes with the responsibility not to miss it. Our mandate and our mission are this: Be bold, and deliver.

To all who have been elected to serve: Be the decent, dedicated, and diverse leaders you were elected to be. Be the ally, and the role model, and the change maker your constituents need you to be.

Work pragmatically. Work with someone you never thought you could to accomplish something you never thought possible.

We are not here to score political points. We are not here for victory laps. We are here to improve lives. We have a moment – and it's not about which party won or which party is in control; this moment is about our opportunity to work collaboratively and get things done for Minnesotans.

This is our opportunity to model what public service and public servants look like. This is our opportunity to make change, to make what was previously impossible possible, and to strengthen faith in government as a force for good. This is our opportunity to restore civility, transparency, and accessibility to the decision-making table for Minnesotans of all ages, races, genders, and zip codes. This is our opportunity to build One Minnesota, and to make our state the best place in the country to live, to work, and to raise a family. This is our opportunity. Let's get to work.

May god bless you. And may god bless the great state of Minnesota.

### **Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan's Inaugural Remarks as Prepared**

Thank you, Mark. I'm very excited to have a fellow St. Louis Park native here.

Thank you, Judge Wheelock, for swearing me in.

And thank you to the family of the late Reverend Marlene Whiterabbit Helgemo for loaning me Marlene's Bible on which I just took the oath of office.

And thank you, Minnesota. Chi miigwech.

It is an extraordinary honor to continue serving as your Lieutenant Governor.

When Governor Walz and I took this stage four years ago, none of us could have imagined what was before us. It's been a time of tremendous opportunity and tremendous loss, of hard work and sacrifice, and of recognition and reconnection, and hopefully, of reconciliation.

But as Minnesotans, we have endured hard winters before. To quote one particularly notable Minnesotan: "It's so cold, it keeps the bad people out." When the temperatures drop and the snowdrifts pile up, Minnesotans dig in – literally and figuratively. We deliver hot dishes... not casseroles... and plow driveways. We care for one another.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we protected each other. Frontline workers showed up every day. We sewed masks and ordered takeout and stayed apart so we could keep each other safe. And despite these challenges, over the past four years, we increased cash assistance for working families for first time in 33 years, invested in capital projects led by and for communities of color and Native communities for the first time, worked in partnership with tribes and the Legislature to codify tribal consultation, and so much more.

When times are hard, again and again, we turn to one another. We turn to our values. We turn to the future we want to build for ourselves and our children.

We're missing two people today. Four years ago, when I first took the oath of office, I was joined on this same stage by my dad Marvin Manypenny and my mom Pat Flanagan. I told you how my story is a One Minnesota story – about building a pathway for a little Anishinaabe girl from St. Louis Park, who ate free and reduced lunch and whose life was saved by Medicaid... to grow up and become the first Native American to hold statewide office in Minnesota.

I am who I am – a lifelong advocate for children and families, the highest-ranking Native woman elected to executive office in the country, the Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota — because of the people who believed most in me – my parents.

My mom and dad both died during our first term. But I can feel them. They're here today in a different way, and the values and lessons they instilled in me will be a part of their legacy. Because that's also part of One Minnesota: the pathways we build and the legacies we leave.

I am joined today by my daughter Siobhan – a fiery advocate in her own right, who will soon be ten years old. It is for her – and kids like her – that I do this work.

We have a responsibility to those who came before us and to those who will come after us to leave a better world than the one we found. As we enter our second term, I find myself reflecting on the legacies we create and continue.

We have an opportunity to continue shaping a government that works across lines of difference to better address the needs of the people we serve.

A government that includes people with lived experience at the decision-making table, to tell us what they need... from the young women and gender-expansive youth who partner with us through the Young Women's Initiative... to hiring consultants with lived experience of homelessness to guide the work of the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness.

We can build a government that invests in the things that matter most: education, economic opportunity, housing, caring for our earth and water, health and safety, and children and families. A government that believes that Minnesotans can make their own decisions about how and when and if to start their family. A government that looks more and more like Minnesota with every passing election.

And while it shouldn't take an Ojibwe woman in office to do better by the eleven sovereign tribal nations that share geography with Minnesota, I am incredibly proud that a significant part of mine and the Governor's legacy is building a lasting infrastructure to keep doing it right... long after we leave office.

It matters that we are here.

I am here because of people like Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, and Nellie Stone Johnson... because of the late Senator Paul Wellstone... because of former Lieutenant Governor and now Senator Tina Smith... because of Mr. Redmond, my speech teacher in 9th grade, who is here with me this morning... because of everyone who has hired me and taught me and believed in me... because of my parents.

But more importantly, I am here for young people like my daughter. I am here for the children who are counting on us to build their future. I am here for everyone who has felt like they were not seen or heard or valued or believed.

We see you. We hear you. We value you. And we believe in you. This is your Minnesota. And I am here to hold the door wide open for those who come after me.

It is the honor of a lifetime to serve the people of Minnesota with my friend and favorite coworker, Governor Tim Walz.

The Governor asked me last year, if I knew everything that we know now – would I have signed up?

My answer was, and is, absolutely.

Let's get back to work.

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