

Governor Walz State of the State Remarks as Prepared

April 23, 2025

[ST. PAUL, MN] – Below is a copy of Governor Tim Walz’s State of the State Address as prepared. Language is subject to change.

Over the last six years, Minnesotans have been writing a story about what it means to govern like good neighbors – with decency and common sense, but also with courage and ambition and, above all, an abiding commitment to making life better for the people we all serve.

I like to think we’ve proven the value of a strong Democratic Party – but also the importance of a Republican Party willing to come to the table and contribute their ideas in good faith.

No matter what’s happening in Washington, Republicans and Democrats have a record of working together here in Minnesota.

The result? We can all be proud to live, and serve, in America’s best place to raise a child.

And I’m not the only one who thinks so. The rest of the nation has taken notice of what we’ve done here in Minnesota, and how we’ve done it.

The truth is, no matter where you go in this beautiful country, people tend to want the same basic things out of an American life.

And when I say “basic things,” I mean things like meaningful work. Safe neighborhoods. Good schools. Affordable health care.

But I also mean something more, something a little harder to define or quantify.

People want *security*– they want to feel like their life is built on a solid foundation that won’t fall away if something goes wrong.

People want *opportunity*– they want to feel like they can get ahead instead of having to settle for getting by, and give their kids chances *they* never had.

And, maybe most of all, people want *freedom* to live their own lives the way they want to live them, even if it’s not the way their neighbors would want to live theirs.

Security. Opportunity. Freedom . I hear it everywhere I go. And every time I do, I find myself feeling proud of Minnesota. The truth is, all of America wants what we have.

You talk about security:

- We’ve given parents peace of mind through a child tax credit that’s expected to cut child poverty in our state by a third and a free meals program that’s making sure every kid can go to school with something in their stomach.
- We’ve passed the nation’s most aggressive expansion of labor rights, because a job isn’t just a job, it’s the means to a secure life, and it should come with benefits like earned safe and sick time and the right to bargain for better wages.
- We’ve invested lots of time and hundreds of millions of dollars in fighting crime – and, by the way, violent crime in our state is dropping.

- We've worked together to eliminate Social Security taxes on the vast majority of Minnesota's seniors so that nobody's parents have to choose between prescriptions and groceries.
- And in just a few months, we'll have one of the nation's most generous family and medical leave policies, because no one should worry about losing their income while taking care of a loved one.

You talk about opportunity:

- We've passed unprecedented funding for public education – and worked on a bipartisan basis to make sure our kids are actually getting the benefit of that funding through our literacy programs.
- We've invested hundreds of millions in bringing competitive, high-paying jobs to our state and growing our economy with an eye towards the green energy and innovation jobs of the future.
- And we're not just one of the nation's best states in which to *start* a business – we're proving to be one of America's most popular states in which to *grow* a business. Just look at Philips, or Solventum, or Sofidel, or the Mayo Clinic – investing billions to create thousands of new jobs right here in Minnesota.

And you talk about freedom: Here in Minnesota, that freedom – freedom from hunger and poverty, freedom to worship or not, freedom to be who you are – is everybody's birthright, no matter how much money you make or where your family came from or what you think about the issues of the day.

That's what makes Minnesota great. *That's* why we're the best place in America for kids.

And *that's* why I love serving in this job.

Tonight, with the state of our state as strong as it's ever been, we gather to write the next chapter in our great Minnesota story. But I can't help but point out that we also gather at a moment of great uncertainty for our nation.

And let's be honest: This uncertainty – this *chaos*– is no accident.

The President of the United States has chosen – *chosen!*– to destroy our federal government's ability to help people. He hired the richest man in the world to take a chainsaw to basic services Minnesotans rely on to build better lives.

His plan will leave nobody working to prevent the next pandemic, nobody picking up the phone at Social Security, nobody making sure kids with special needs are able to get an education.

Just a few months ago, Minnesotans who got ripped off by a bank or a credit card company or a health care company could go to their federal government for help. But now that government has switched sides. Under this administration, the federal government exists to help those corporations screw you over.

Next up on the chopping block: Medicaid. And let's be clear about what that means. Forty percent of our children – and more than a million Minnesotans overall – rely on Medicaid for their health care. This administration wants to take that health care away. Meanwhile, rural hospitals would be forced to close.

Everyone's costs would skyrocket. And our budget would be torn to pieces.

Meanwhile, the President of the United States has chosen – *chosen!* – to tear up the values that once made America the shining light of the world.

Now, in the land of the free and the home of the brave, we have university students being swept up and shoved into unmarked vans, and fathers being tossed into Salvadorean gulags without a hint of

due process.

Let's be real clear about something: If you say you love freedom, but you don't believe in freedom for everybody, then the thing you love isn't freedom – it's privilege.

Maybe worst of all, the President of the United States has chosen – *chosen!* – to throw our economy into turmoil. Global markets are teetering on the brink of collapse. Businesses are already laying off employees by the hundreds and thousands. Working people are already paying more for basic goods. And if you haven't checked your 401(k) lately, well, don't look now.

Let's be clear: None of this *had* to happen. When the President took office three months ago, there was no reason for him to throw a wrench into the works.

But if you listen to anything that comes out of the President's mouth, one thing is clear: He's just plain confused about how the world works.

We're talking about a guy who slapped a ten percent tariff on an island populated entirely by *penguins*.

Does anybody here think that makes sense?

This isn't servant leadership. It's not any kind of leadership at all. It's small. It's weak. It's petty. It takes the awesome power of the federal government and turns it into a crude weapon, wielded by a man who wants to be a king.

And as Governor, I'm going to continue to do everything in my power to protect Minnesotans from getting hurt, and provide them shelter from the storm.

But it's not enough to complain about the damage this administration is causing. And it's not even enough to try to clean up as much of the mess as we can.

We need to prove to the people of Minnesota – to the American people – that there's a better way to govern. Because the truth is, this current administration in Washington is not forever. These small, petty men will disappear into the dustbin of history. And when they do, we'll have both an opportunity and an obligation to rebuild our government so it actually works for working people.

If we're going to seize that opportunity, we have to be ready to show that we can be trusted with that obligation.

If we want to earn back the trust of the American people, we have to be honest about the fact that the government hasn't always deserved that trust in the first place.

And if we want the chance to govern *righteously*– if we want the chance to govern *ambitiously*– then we have to do a better job of proving that we can govern *responsibly*.

Which brings me to this year's budget.

Two years ago, we made historic investments in our people and our future. And let me be very clear: We're not walking away from the commitments we've made to our schools and our health care, to green energy and public safety, to feeding our kids and taking care of our seniors.

Just the opposite. This year's budget *protects* those ambitious investments by embracing a spirit of responsibility – and addressing some long-term budget challenges so that future leaders don't have to make impossible choices.

Let me explain.

Years ago, long before many of us were here in St. Paul, members of both parties made a series of choices about human services spending that put us on a path of unsustainable cost growth. In just a few years, the biggest of these human services programs will eat up one in every eight of our dollars.

We could ignore the problem, for now. The wave might not crash this year.

But while the problem may not be our fault, the solution should be our responsibility. So I'm proposing that, this year, we come together, DFLers and Republicans, and address the issues we inherited.

For the economists in the crowd, my budget will be balanced for years to come, and it will cut our structural imbalance by half.

For everyone else, it's really this simple: Right now, we're the most generous state in the nation when it comes to these programs and services – and we should be proud of that.

After my budget is passed, we will *still* be the most generous state in the nation when it comes to these programs and services – and because of the efficiencies I've proposed, we'll be able to *continue* being the most generous state in the nation for years to come.

Bottom line: If we don't govern responsibly, someone else will get a chance to govern irresponsibly. And I refuse to let that happen.

Another way we're protecting our investments is by doing more to prevent, investigate, and punish fraud.

It's easy for my friends across the aisle to demagogue government spending.

The truth, as long as there have been programs aimed at helping people, there have been people looking to steal from those who need them most.

We've made strides in catching those bad actors and stopping their schemes. We've sent a lot of crooks to prison. But there's more we can do.

Minnesota should have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to misuse of taxpayer dollars. And earlier this year, I took action to make that policy a reality.

I issued an executive order to strengthen our state's capacity to investigate fraud by establishing a centralized Fraud and Financial Crimes unit at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. I have a proposal before this chamber to use artificial intelligence to sniff out bad actors before they can get their hands on our money. And a proposal to increase criminal penalties for theft of public funds by 20 percent.

Bottom line: I believe that when criminals try to steal public funding, you don't cut the funding, you stop the criminals. And that's exactly what we're doing.

We're also working to improve efficiency and customer service across state agencies, because it's not enough to spend taxpayer money *responsibly* – we should be spending it *effectively*. And we've already made strides – I just got my tabs renewed for five bucks at Cub, and you can, too.

People deserve more bang for their buck, and that's exactly what this budget will deliver.

Of course, the state's budget isn't the only one undergoing a little extra scrutiny right now. Families are sitting down around the kitchen table and struggling to figure out how they're going to afford the

President's tariff tax. And I can't stop the pointless policies coming from Washington that are making everything more expensive – but we can do something to help make those difficult conversations just a little easier.

This year, I'm proposing an unprecedented tax cut for working people – a reduction in the statewide sales tax. We've never before done this in our state's history, but there's never been a better time to try it than right now.

And make no mistake: Unlike the President's tax cuts for the rich, this one is fully paid for. We're doing it by closing loopholes the wealthy use to avoid paying taxes.

Finally, we're going to ask the big health insurance corporations to finally start paying their fair share, with a reasonable increase in the surcharge we already ask HMOs to pay. Even as the administration in Washington pushes for nearly a trillion dollars in cuts to Medicaid, which would shift costs to states like Minnesota, we're making sure that burden falls on insurance companies, not working families.

We'll have time to go line by line together and hammer out a final proposal that allows us to move forward as One Minnesota.

This budget wasn't written to please everyone. It was written to bring everyone to the table. And when we get there, no doubt we'll have some disagreements. My progressive friends might wish we were cutting a little less. My conservative friends might wish we were cutting a little more. Gwen and the kids might wish I'd take the damn pay raise instead of turning it down again like I have every year as Governor.

But that's how government is supposed to work. It's not supposed to be one old man sitting in the Oval Office sending out middle-of-the-night tweets that shock markets into freefall. It's not supposed to be a bunch of 20-year-olds showing up unannounced at federal agencies and firing everyone. It's not supposed to be chaos and destruction.

It's supposed to be people of differing opinions coming together to negotiate in good faith. Our legislature is narrowly divided, but I believe we can unify around these ideas of security, opportunity, and freedom. I believe we can continue to make Minnesota the best place in America to live, work, and raise a family.

Most of all, I believe we can show our people – and everyone around the nation who's watching – that we can still work together to improve lives.

Let's show the world what servant leadership really looks like.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the great state of Minnesota.

Let's get to work.