

Madam Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Speaker, Madam and Mr. Leader, Mr. Chief Justice, justices and judges, legislators, elected officials, distinguished guests, relatives and friends.

Senator Danielson, thank you for that introduction.

Even though Governor Culver is not with us today, I want to thank him on behalf of all Iowans for his service.

Leader Upmeyer, let me congratulate you on being the first woman to be elected as a majority leader in the history of our state. We are all proud of you. Your dad, Del, I'm sure is smiling down on us today, proud as can be.

Lieutenant Governor Reynolds, thank you for those inspirational remarks. In you, I think I've finally met my match in energy and passion for Iowa.

I look forward to the day when we can witness the swearing in of our first woman Governor. It is about time.

For the past 15 months, I have traveled our state, from river to river, border to border, from farm to factory, from cafe to office building.

It has been the experience of a lifetime. To reconnect with Iowans at their jobs, schools, places of worship and play. To have a conversation with them about our state, where we are and where we, as a people, want to go.

And what I would like to do today, on this, the occasion of my fifth inaugural as your Governor, is tell you what I learned. To make my humble attempt to distill our collective wisdom into a statement of principles, a new covenant between a state and its people.

This new covenant must have as its polestar the fact that Iowa is an exceptional place.

We are blessed with the richest resources of soil and water, which are the envy of the world. Populated by hard working, honest and caring people, this land feeds and powers the world.

And, ignited by our ingenuity, we have only scratched the surface of our potential. Iowa stands at the precipice of opportunity greater than at any time since our ancestors crossed the Mississippi to view an expanse of prairie as far as the eye could see. With the advent of open markets, a growing world middle class, and a need for sustainable solutions to the world's problems, Iowa sits in the catbird seat of history. The world is hungry for our food and biomass, envious of our technology, pining for our productivity. The economic winds, which for a century or more blew in our face, are now firmly at our back.

Iowa is exceptional and these are exceptional times. Our challenge: to seize the day. To those who say that our goals of 200,000 new jobs and 25% increase in family incomes are too high, I say, you ain't seen nothing yet. Only wrong-headed policy choices can prevent us from entering a golden era in Iowa history.

And, we must start with government. It must change, lest it dampen our opportunity and squelch the individual initiative which is our engine for growth.

Our old ways of doing the government's business must be radically altered to do the people's business. We must be rid of the yoke of government which taxes us too much, spends too much and regulates us too much. Government must, as Abraham Lincoln once said, do only that which the people cannot do for themselves.

That is new covenant principle number one: we have too much government – state, county, city, school, local – and it must be reduced. For too long, we have papered over the fact that our appetite for government exceeds our pocket book to pay for it. As my 86 year old dad, Edward, who is with us today would say “our eyes are bigger than our wallet.”

Our auditor tells us that at least 15% must be permanently eliminated from government to make our books balance once and for all. And I aim to make sure we do it and do it now.

We will all share in the sacrifice, while protecting those who need our help. But we will remove the lead boots of excess government from our economy. And without that burden, we will be able to run like the wind in the race to prosperity.

Second, government must serve the people. And not vice versa. Leadership is about service, not power. I stand here, again, as your Governor, with my wife, kids and

grandkids at my side, because I yearn to serve. And I ask each government employee, from the clerks to the supervisors, to the department heads, to never forget: it is the people who are our bosses.

And we must serve each other, without the compulsion of government. In 1835, as Alexis de Tocqueville toured the United States, he noticed that Americans were different from Europeans. He said, “wherever at the head of some new undertaking you see the government in France, or . . . England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association.”

That is still true today. Every day Iowa’s volunteers make our state the wonderful place it is to live, work and raise a family.

The Boone Hope Foundation is a great example. Kids were coming to school without a warm coat, or hungry, tired, sick or worried about their family. Teachers, like many others throughout Iowa, used their own funds to help those kids, knowing that students can’t learn when their basic needs are not met.

Those caring teachers helped start the Boone Hope Foundation, which since 2005 has raised over \$129,000 from community donations to help students and their families in times of crisis. Groceries, medical bills, eyeglasses, snow boots and mittens have all been provided to children in need because a community cares. Let us all renew our commitment to get involved: help the homeless, feed the hungry, minister to the sick, pray for the wayward. To make each of our communities better by stepping up and stepping out. And to those who are most fortunate, we bear a special responsibility to extend the ladder of opportunity to those in need.

We need look no further than the record number of Iowans who are currently deployed in the armed forces. From Salvatore Giunta to Anthony Sellers, our service men and women protect us every day with their valor and sacrifice. We all know the story of Salvatore Giunta, our most recent recipient of the Medal of Honor. And all Iowans are “busting their buttons” proud of him for his bravery, courage, and steely resolve.

I doubt that many of you know Sgt. Anthony Sellers of Burlington but I was privileged to meet him – introduced to me by his proud father Kent. Kent is a veteran himself confined now to a wheelchair, but beaming about his son who has

completed two tours in Iraq and is now in Fort Benning to prepare for another deployment.

Anthony, like the thousands of other Iowans who have answered the call of freedom, embodies the spirit of selfless service that makes our state and country that “shining city on a hill” that Tom Paine wrote about over two centuries ago. Surely, we can use their example as inspiration.

Third, it is time to restore integrity and transparency to our government decision-making processes. In Iowa, we have prided ourselves on limited, but quality, government services. When government said it would do something, it did it, and for the right reasons. Our problems were serious, but manageable, and, as people of good faith, we rolled up our sleeves and solved them.

But we’ve gotten off track. We’ve over-promised and under-delivered, turning solutions into problems. Iowans deserve better. We will get back on track with a slimmer, better managed and sustainable government you can count on when you need it. And it will start by opening up to the people our budgets, briefings and the like. Sunshine remains the best cure for what ails our government.

The fourth principal of our new covenant in Iowa must be a renewed commitment to provide the best education in the world. Providing Iowa’s children with a globally competitive education is key to their future – and the future of this state. Employers say they need a better-prepared, better-trained work force. That means higher expectations for schools.

Sadly, where once Iowa’s educational system was the envy of the world, today it is in the middle of the pack.

Our young people must be able to think critically, solve problems and communicate effectively.

They need a strong background in math, science, English and social studies. The bar is continually being raised in a knowledge-based economy.

It is time to put in place reforms that are hallmarks of high-performing school systems – starting with assuring there is a first-rate teacher in every classroom.

The new year is an opportunity for Iowans to have a conversation about how to accomplish this. How can we attract more top students into the teaching profession? What do good, experienced teachers need to become more effective instructors? And how do we get rid of teachers whose students consistently do not learn enough – even after those teachers have received coaching to improve? I plan to convene an education summit with some of the top education leaders in our nation and state to benchmark Iowa's status and lay out a plan for legislative consideration that will give our kids the best education in the world.

But it is not just schools that must do more. Teaching children the value of a good education is the job of parents. Instilling the importance of lifelong learning not just by words but by example will help families and Iowa prosper. It is time for all of us to get involved.

Finally, we must celebrate success. Our tax system, whether it be property or income taxes punishes those who create the jobs we need. That will change. Both will be reduced and simplified.

The job creators will be rewarded; they are welcome here and it is about time our tax system reflects that fact.

As with our tax system, so must our attitudes toward success, change. While our modesty in the face of success is sometimes charming, it can too often limit our reach.

Alex Haley once said that we should “find the good and praise it.”

In our state and in our communities, we should find success and praise it. We should reward responsible risk-taking, for it is only through the creation of a spirit of entrepreneurship that all parts of our state, rural and urban, will grow. That is the ticket to bringing our sons and daughters home and giving all who live here a chance to share in our bounty. That, then, is what I learned on my travels around our state. Iowans have worked harder, sacrificed more and tightened their belts further as they endured the Greatest Recession since the Great Depression. And now it is time for government to do the same.

It is time for a new covenant between Iowans and their government. It is a covenant that is founded upon principles of limited government, service above self,

transparency and integrity, world class schools and celebrating the success of Iowans.

These are the principles that will guide my days as your Governor. The collective wisdom of Iowans will inspire me every day as I strive to give Iowans a government as good as the people it serves.

I ask all of you, Republican and Democrat, liberal and conservative, old and young, to join me in that effort.

No one of us has all the answers, but together, we cannot fail.

One long day on the campaign trail, I was visiting with some folks in a small town café. One of the farmers, who appeared to be in his 80's asked me what I wanted to accomplish by running for governor again.

Well, I rattled off our goals and then stopped and looked at him and asked him what he felt he had accomplished in his days. He looked at me with a twinkle in his eye, took a long sip of coffee and shifted his feet. "Well," he said, "I left my farm better than I found it."

When our days are done, when our time has come, we will be asked, how do we wish to measure our days?

I, for one, remember that farmer in that café: I hope to leave the state better than I found it. If all of us would approach our days with that same sense of stewardship, we will have fulfilled our mission.

With your help and Godspeed that will be the case. And the remarkable history of an exceptional state will march on, unabated...Thank you, God bless you and God bless the great state of Iowa.