

*“Mr. Ambassador and Mrs. Branstad, Mr. Chief Justice, justices and judges, Majority Leader Dix, Speaker Upmeyer, legislative leaders, legislators, elected officials, family, friends and fellow Iowans. I’m incredibly honored to stand before you today as your governor.*

*Ambassador Branstad and Mrs. Branstad, thank you for your unselfish and historic service to this great state. There are really no words to describe the honor I’ve had serving with you these past six years.*

*But, Mr. Ambassador – if you will indulge me for a moment – I’d like to try. First, thanks for having the confidence in me to serve as your Lt. Governor. Every step of the way you’ve inspired me, challenged me, believed in me – sometimes more than I believed in myself.*

*You’re more than a mentor. You’re a friend and someone I look to for advice. Your competitive nature is contagious: 99 counties, Governor’s Steer Show, Iowa leadership in the country and around the world.*

*I’ve watched you time and time again do the right thing regardless of politics or unbelievable pressure. If I can achieve but a fraction of the success you’ve achieved over the past 22 years, I will consider it the greatest accomplishment of my professional life. We worked hard, had fun, and we made a difference.*

*While I have some pretty tough shoes to fill, I’m excited to step into my heels on behalf of the people of Iowa and work hard every single day.*

*While today marks the closing of an important era for Iowa, it also is the beginning of an incredible opportunity for both of you. We’re so proud to see you take our Iowa values to the world stage. I cannot think of a better couple more uniquely qualified to take on this new adventure. Please rise, so we can share our gratitude.*

*To my husband, Kevin, and my three daughters and their families – thank you for your unending encouragement, support and love.*

*To my Mom and Dad – you have always been there for me. Pushing me forward or lifting me up when I needed it most. From school events to my days of playing six-on-six basketball right to today, I can’t even remember a single time when you weren’t there.*

*To my eight and soon to be nine grandchildren – it’s going to be a busy couple of years. But I want you to know that there is nothing more important to me than all of you and my family.*

*You know, I love this state and what it represents. I’m a rural Iowa girl who grew up in a small community, was able to run for county office, to serve as a state senator and your lieutenant governor. And now, to serve as the governor of our state.*

*It’s reflective of what can happen when you have a passion, you want to make a difference and you’re not afraid to go out there and work for it. I’m a fifth-generation Iowan, born and raised in St. Charles. It’s a small town, but it had a big impact on my life.*

*Growing up in St. Charles, I learned the importance of community and love of country, of hard work and discipline, of fiscal responsibility and penny pinching. But most importantly, I learned to place my faith in God.*

*There weren’t a lot of jobs for teenagers in St. Charles, so every weekend I would head to Des Moines where I worked as a waitress at Younkers. Waitressing is hard work, but if you knew how to turn tables, you could make good money serving chicken dinners to Iowans after church.*

*After Kevin and I were married, I worked as a check-out clerk at Hy-Vee. If you ever want to see real penny pinching in action, spend a day selling groceries to Iowans.*

*In this state, we grew up learning the value of a dollar and not to waste it – a lesson I intend to apply every day as your governor.*

*I didn't set out to become a politician or elected official. But when the Clarke County treasurer decided to retire in 1994, I saw an opportunity to take my ideas and turn them into action. That meant breaking down barriers – sometimes literally.*

*In the county treasurer's office, there was a wall that split the office in half. It made it difficult to work and to properly serve our residents. It got in the way of what I wanted to accomplish. So within weeks of taking office, I decided that it needed to come down.*

*I floated the idea to the Board of Supervisors. They didn't care if the wall came down. They just couldn't pay for it. So, like many Iowans, I had to think creatively.*

*And in this case, that involved my husband, Kevin, some friends, a sledgehammer and a wheelbarrow.*

*Over the weekend, we tore the wall down, piece by piece. We were covered in dust from head to toe, but the office was open for business.*

*When my team showed up on Monday, they couldn't believe the change. With the wall gone, we could collaborate and exchange ideas like never before. And that meant we could better serve the people of Clarke County and take on additional services like issuing drivers licenses from the treasurer's office.*

*After 14 years in the treasurer's office, I was honored to be elected to the state Senate. When I arrived in the Legislature, I was a freshman member of the minority party. I knew if I wanted to get anything done, I had to reach across the aisle.*

*But that came easy to me. I learned it from my grandfather. He was an FDR Democrat, so we saw the world very differently. As we sat around the kitchen table, we would debate – even disagree – but always with respect for each other's view.*

*Where I come from, party label didn't matter nearly as much as getting the job done. I took that same approach with me to the Legislature, which means bringing people together to work for Iowans.*

*One small example is how I worked across the aisle to enact a law that allowed Iowans to pay their court fines at the treasurer's office. That may sound simple, but it meant that Iowans could restore their suspended driver's licenses, legally drive, go to work and take care of their families.*

*That bill passed with bipartisan support. It was a great example of common-sense legislation that Iowans expect.*

*In the summer of 2010, I received a call that would forever change my life and my family's and led to a whole new level of public service. Never in my wildest dreams did I believe a young girl growing up in St. Charles, Ia., would one day receive a call from Terry Branstad asking her to be his lieutenant governor.*

*Since that time, we partnered toward a common purpose with a sincere belief that Iowa's best days were ahead. As lieutenant governor, I've traveled the world representing Iowa, working to expand our markets, while bringing investment and jobs to our state.*

*I've worked on policy that attracts, retains and expands high-tech firms and fosters growth across Iowa. We've seen over \$14 billion of capital investment in our state, which represents a choice companies made to invest in Iowa, to grow in Iowa and to join our community of leaders.*

*We created pathways for Iowans to find careers that will keep them in Iowa. We focused on apprenticeships, skilled worker training and actively supported statewide economic development.*

*We gave hard-working taxpayers a seat at the table, made it more affordable to own and operate a business, restored liberties, protected life and made it more attractive for doctors to be in Iowa.*

*We've modernized our education system and while our graduation rate is No. 1 in the nation, we must not let up.*

*There's something else you should know about me. I'm never satisfied with status quo, and a desire to make a difference is what drives me. Part of being a successful leader is listening and looking for opportunities to bring people together.*

*While we've had many successes, our job is not done. Know that each day my team and I will ask ourselves what can we do to build a better Iowa. Let's move toward this shared goal together.*

*Let's make Iowa more competitive, bringing quality jobs to our families, neighbors and communities, building a fair economy where if you work hard, you get rewarded.*

*My vision for our great state embraces our past, builds a better, brighter future. As governor, I will focus every day on four key priorities: reforming Iowa's tax structure, innovating our energy policy, educating our kids and training for adults.*

*So let's talk about my first priority: reforming Iowa's tax structure. There is no doubt that we can do better. Our tax rates are some of the highest in the nation, and our code books are filled with a patchwork of exemptions, deductions and credits. That's not how it should be.*

*Our tax code should be simple. It should be fair. And it should inspire – not inhibit – growth. Because the bottom line is this: a simple, more competitive tax code makes it easier for businesses to grow and expand and creates lasting careers for middle-class Iowans.*

*While we are blessed to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation, there are still more than 50,000 people looking for work today. These are mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, looking for a better life.*

*As governor, I will wake up every day thinking about what we can do to help these Iowans gain the meaning and purpose that comes with earning a paycheck.*

*My second priority is: innovating Iowa's energy policy. We must view our rich, renewable resources in ways never thought possible. For years, our fields have fed the world. Now, they energize it. They produce products that fuel cars and they host wind turbines that power our communities and businesses.*

*And yet, those fields are filled with untapped potential. Our energy plan will help us continue to lead the way in wind energy and renewable fuels. Working together, we can have the most innovative energy policy in the country.*

*My third priority is: educating our children. Our children need and deserve an education that meets the demands of the 21st century - focusing on STEM, ensuring our best teachers stay in the classroom and renewing Iowa's emphasis on literacy.*

*Students and parents want educators and employers working together providing real-world learning experiences. We've already see innovative classrooms and schools spreading across the state – from Iowa Big North to the Pella Career Academy to the elementary coding school in Sioux City.*

*That's just the beginning. Let's take these pockets of innovation statewide!*

*My fourth priority is: training Iowans with the skills they need for the jobs of the future. Future Ready Iowa will connect Iowa's efforts in education, workforce training and economic development.*

*Our goal is that by 2025, 70% of our workforce will have an education or training beyond high school. We're going to build an Iowa where hard-working, middle-class families can live anywhere in our state and have the skills they need to find successful careers. This is about opportunity for more Iowans.*

*Building a better Iowa also means connecting Iowa to the world by expanding high-speed internet access, regardless of the size and location of the town. A connected community means better jobs, safer communities, better education and better quality of life. And, it's the expectation of our young people.*

*As your governor, I won't stop working until every Iowan, no matter where they live, has the same opportunity to succeed, have a satisfying career, raise a family and have a great quality of life. It won't be easy, but I know I won't be doing it alone. 5*

*I'm grateful for my faith, my family, an incredible team, friends, neighbors and Iowans in all 99 counties standing beside me. I'm especially grateful to the people of Clarke County for giving me a second chance when I needed it most. I'm a better person because of their ongoing encouragement, prayers and support. I'm not perfect. I'm not infallible. But I am an Iowan, through and through.*

*Lastly, I will leave to the historians to write what they will about the meaning of this day in the story of Iowa.*

*Becoming Iowa's first woman governor is both humbling and exciting. I will do my best to serve as a role model for others to follow and hope to emulate the finest qualities of those who led before me.*

*However, it is my responsibility, my challenge, to do my best. To give them the opportunity to write much more than "she was Iowa's first woman governor."*

*While I am extremely proud of that fact, there needs to be more to it. I am confident that with your help and support, we can build on the good things accomplished over the past six years.*

*We can pursue a bold vision of innovation, ingenuity, and growth such that our chapter in the history of Iowa will be filled with great accomplishments, with page upon page about how we made Iowa an even better place to live, work, innovate, create and raise a family.*

*And then – if they must – they can add at the end of the chapter "and, oh by the way, she was also Iowa's first woman governor."*

*Today, I stand before you as your humble servant and governor.*

*Thank you, and may God bless you, and God bless this great state of Iowa and our nation."*