

# Governor Vilsack's Condition of the State Remarks as Delivered

DES MOINES – Governor Vilsack delivered his eighth and final Condition of the State Address earlier this morning. Below is the text of his speech as delivered to a joint session of the Iowa General Assembly.

1

1            *GOVERNOR VILSACK: Thank you very much.*

2            *Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.*

3            *(Applause.)*

4            *Thank you very much, thank you. Thank*

5            *you.*

6            *(Applause.)*

7            *Thank you. Thank you, folks. Thank you*

8            *very much. Thank you very much.*

9            *(Applause.)*

10           *Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very*

11           *much. Thank you.*

12           *Mr. President, thank you very much and*

13           *Mr. Speaker, thanks to you as well. And I want to*

14           *thank all the members of the General Assembly for*

15           *the opportunity to visit with you as governor for*

16 *the last time to speak about the condition of our*  
17 *great state.*

18 *For the past eight years, I've considered*  
19 *this special moment, a moment of honor and*  
20 *privilege, to be able to speak directly to the*  
21 *people of our great state about the challenges, the*  
22 *choices and chances we collectively face.*

23 *Today I feel particularly honored by the*  
24 *fact that the Governor-Elect, Chet Culver, and the*  
25 *Lieutenant Governor-Elect, Patty Judge, have found*

2

1 *time in their busy schedule to join us today.*

2 *Thank you for being here today.*

3 *(Applause.)*

4 *And I believe I speak for all of us here*  
5 *that we are looking forward to your special day on*  
6 *Friday when you will be sworn in as our next*  
7 *governor and lieutenant governor.*

8 *And speaking of lieutenant governors, no*

9 governor in the country has ever had a stronger or  
10 better relationship and the one that I have had  
11 with Lieutenant Governor Sally Pederson.

12 Lieutenant Governor Pederson has added  
13 her voice to those who have little voice and she  
14 has stirred us to action. Mental health parity, a  
15 redesign of the mental health system, affordable  
16 housing for people with disabilities, a tour of the  
17 state to promote art and the important role it  
18 plays in all of our lives.

19 Greater diversity in boards and  
20 commission and staff appointments and comparable  
21 worth for the first time for women working in state  
22 government occurred with her leadership and reflect  
23 and represent her conscience and her commitment.

24 I want to take this opportunity to thank  
25 my partner for eight great years and I'd ask you to

1 *join me in doing so as well.*

2 *(Applause.)*

3 *I might get in a little trouble at home*

4 *if I didn't also say a few words about Iowa's first*

5 *volunteer and our first lady, Christie Vilsack.*

6 *From the day I took the oath of office, no Iowan*

7 *has worked longer and harder to make Iowa a great*

8 *place to live, work and raise families.*

9 *I've watched Christie, I've watched her*

10 *as kindergarteners clutched the book that she gave*

11 *them, their first book, clutching it as if it was*

12 *the most precious thing on earth. And indeed, a*

13 *love of books and reading is precious. Christie*

14 *through her foundation blessed over 200,000 of our*

15 *children with that special moment.*

16 *I've watched as she's left Terrace Hill*

17 *very early in the morning and didn't come back*

18 *until very late at night so she could visit every*

19 *possible library. She has visited over 500*  
20 *libraries, the souls of our communities she calls*  
21 *them. And she also encouraged all of us to provide*  
22 *for the first time direct financial assistance to*  
23 *our libraries through the Enrich Iowa program.*

24 *(Applause.)*

25 *I watched as she invited certified*

4

1 *teacher librarians back into our Code and into our*  
2 *schools and thousands of Iowans to Terrace Hill for*  
3 *the Spring Fling, her monthly teas and receptions*  
4 *to Iowans who never thought they would have the*  
5 *opportunity to see the inside of the governor's*  
6 *mansion much less than the private quarters.*

7 *Yes, I've watched her raise the profile*  
8 *of all of our first ladies and the contribution*  
9 *that they have made to our collective history with*  
10 *the first lady's exhibit in Terrace Hill.*

11 *Yes, I've watched and I've wondered at*

12 *her energy, her passion and her commitment.*

13 *Honey, I want you to know I love you and*

14 *I care deeply for you and I am so appreciative of*

15 *the eight years that you have given to me, to the*

16 *people of Iowa and especially to our children.*

17 *(Applause.)*

18 *I'm certainly glad to have my son and his*

19 *fiance Kate with us today as well. And before I*

20 *acknowledge the other dignitaries who are with us,*

21 *I would like to say a word about state workers and*

22 *the staff, the loyal staff who has served us and my*

23 *administration for the last eight years.*

24 *You know, we have weathered war, an*

25 *attack on our country and some of the tough fiscal*

5

1 *conditions any state government has ever seen.*

2 *Through it all these individuals who work for us*

3 *have also suffered personal tragedy and celebrated*

4 *personal triumph.*

5           *Despite all of that they gave us*  
6 *countless hours of their effort and energy and*  
7 *passion to make this state a better place to live,*  
8 *work and raise families.*

9           *The same can be said for those who are*  
10 *our directors and those who serve on boards and*  
11 *commissions throughout this great state. I want*  
12 *you all to know that I owe them a debt of gratitude*  
13 *that I will never ever be able to repay. We are a*  
14 *great state because we have people willing to make*  
15 *sacrifices for us.*

16           *I'd like to acknowledge the dignitaries*  
17 *who are with us and I'd like to begin with this*  
18 *historic moment to acknowledge Iowa's first woman*  
19 *chief justice of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice*  
20 *Marsha Ternus and members of the Iowa Supreme*  
21 *Court.*

22           *(Applause.)*

23           *I'd also like to welcome members of our*  
24 *Court of Appeals. It's an awkward moment for*

25 *judges in this circumstance because they're not*

6

1 *supposed to acknowledge any applause. It's part of*  
2 *our judiciary and we're proud of it.*

3 *Let me say, Madam Chief Justice, that I*  
4 *am excited about the opportunity that I'll witness*  
5 *tomorrow, a historic opportunity, as you give your*  
6 *inaugural Condition of the Judiciary speech. And*  
7 *as a proud member of the Iowa Bar Association, let*  
8 *me also say that we as Iowans are fortunate to have*  
9 *competent and independent judges throughout this*  
10 *great state.*

11 *Let me take this opportunity to*  
12 *acknowledge these distinguished public servants and*  
13 *all of our judges for their public service and most*  
14 *specifically for the work that they do that*  
15 *guarantees to us justice and equality under the law*  
16 *every day in our state.*

17 *As Iowans we are equally blessed by the*

18 *dedication and commitment shown to us by our*  
19 *statewide elected officials. I've traveled to all*  
20 *four corners of the country and I can tell you that*  
21 *no state has ever been better served by an attorney*  
22 *general than we have been served by Tom Miller*  
23 *through his distinguished career.*

24 *And the same can also be said for our*  
25 *state treasurer. No state has been better served*

7

1 *by our state treasurer than Mike Fitzgerald.*

2 *I want to thank these two gentlemen for*  
3 *their service and I want to tell you that they are*  
4 *acknowledged by their colleagues to be the best in*  
5 *the business and we are fortunate to have them.*

6 *(Applause.)*

7 *They are also joined by our auditor,*  
8 *David Vaudt. Let me tell you that the auditor has*  
9 *continued the strong and proud tradition of the*  
10 *auditor's office as Richard Johnson was as the*

11 *independent watchdog over the activities of state*  
12 *government and local government for the people of*  
13 *our state.*

14 *Mr. Auditor, I appreciate your hard work,*  
15 *I appreciate what you have done for us to make sure*  
16 *that we are doing the right thing for the people*  
17 *every day.*

18 *(Applause.)*

19 *Now, that trio is joined by two*  
20 *newcomers, two newly elected statewide elected*  
21 *officials: Our Secretary of Agriculture and Land*  
22 *Stewardship Bill Northey and our Secretary of State*  
23 *Michael Mauro. These gentlemen have only been on*  
24 *the job for a week but I suspect they already know*  
25 *that they have fairly large shoes to fill.*

8

1 *But both of them bring compassion and*  
2 *passion, commitment and energy to the job. And I'm*  
3 *sure that they're going to succeed for themselves*

4 *but more importantly they're going to succeed for*  
5 *all of us. Welcome.*

6 *(Applause.)*

7 *I started my service 14 years ago walking*  
8 *into this state capitol and taking the oath of*  
9 *office as a state senator so I fully appreciate how*  
10 *busy members of the General Assembly are when a*  
11 *General Assembly first begins and so I do*  
12 *appreciate the opportunity that you have given me*  
13 *today to spend a few minutes of your time as you*  
14 *begin your work and as I finish mine.*

15 *I know because I've worked with most of*  
16 *you that all of the members of this General*  
17 *Assembly are dedicated and caring Iowans. I know*  
18 *that you hold in your heart what is best for the*  
19 *state of Iowa and that you're committed to making*  
20 *sure that you do good work.*

21 *Let me take this opportunity on behalf of*  
22 *all of the people of Iowa to thank you for your*  
23 *service, for your dedication and your commitment.*

24           *Now, during the course of my time here*  
25 *I've had the opportunity to deal primarily with the*

9

1 *leadership and let me say a few words about*  
2 *leadership on both sides of the aisle. On the*  
3 *Republican side, I've had the opportunity to work*  
4 *with Speakers Corbett, Siegrist and Rants, Leaders*  
5 *Iverson, Lundby and Gipp and Presidents Lamberti*  
6 *and Kramer. I want to thank each of them for their*  
7 *understanding, for their willingness to work*  
8 *through good faith disagreements to a point where*  
9 *we could reach consensus and conclusion for the*  
10 *people of Iowa.*

11           *We are well served by a strong two-party*  
12 *system and their party has been well led throughout*  
13 *the eight years I have been governor. I've also*  
14 *been fortunate to work with leaders on my side,*  
15 *Leaders Schrader and Meyers and now speaker Pat*  
16 *Murphy. On the senate side President Jack Kibbe*

17 *and Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal.*

18 *This is going to be tough because these*  
19 *are my friends. No governor has ever had a closer*  
20 *friendship, a closer relationship and better*  
21 *advisers than I have had from these leaders.*

22 *My party is fortunate and the caucuses*  
23 *are fortunate to have this leadership. I will miss*  
24 *working with them and miss working with you, but I*  
25 *know that both caucuses are well led and that both*

10

1 *caucuses are geared towards a session that will be*  
2 *historic, that will move this state forward and so*  
3 *I wish you all the very best of luck in your*  
4 *dealings with one another.*

5 *Now, during the recent holiday I took my*  
6 *family in on tour of this great Capitol. I figured*  
7 *it was the fitting thing to do to appreciate the*  
8 *magnitude of this beautiful building as I was*  
9 *prepared to leave it.*

10           *The highlight of the tour was a trip to*  
11 *the top of our Capitol, to the very top of the*  
12 *dome. I had never been there before. I climbed*  
13 *all 298 steps from this floor to the top and I can*  
14 *tell you that every step was worth it for the view.*

15           *At first my view focused on the gold*  
16 *detail of our beautiful Capitol. As I walked*  
17 *outside and looked at the walkway that surrendered*  
18 *our dome, I began to reflect on the work that had*  
19 *been done in the last eight years and the people*  
20 *who made it happen.*

21           *I realized at that point that more than*  
22 *the landscape of our great state had changed. We*  
23 *as a people had changed. We are more hopeful and*  
24 *optimistic as our state leads an energy revolution*  
25 *not just for Iowa but for the entire nation.*

11

1           *We take pride in knowing that we are the*  
2 *best at producing ethanol and soy diesel and*

3 *renewable fuel and that the rest of the nation is*  
4 *looking for us for leadership.*

5 *We are more tolerant and welcoming as*  
6 *witnessed by the fact that we created New Iowan*  
7 *Centers and we expanded their number to welcome*  
8 *people from all over the world to our great state,*  
9 *to make them feel part of our community.*

10 *And we are more cognizant of our*  
11 *environment as we begin the process of reversing*  
12 *decades of decline on our water resources. All of*  
13 *that and much more bodes very well for the future*  
14 *but only, only if we accept the challenge and the*  
15 *opportunity that change presents.*

16 *From the top of the Capitol looking east*  
17 *I looked at the Grimes office building and*  
18 *recognized that that's where our department of*  
19 *education worked and just beyond that is an*  
20 *elementary school, the Capitol View school. It's*  
21 *part of the Des Moines school district. It is an*  
22 *elementary school that the governor's office has a*

23 *special relationship with. It represents the*

24 *growing diversity of our state.*

25 *It is there that I met a very precocious*

12

1 *fourth grader by the name of Chrystal Martin. You*

2 *know, over the last seven years we in this great*

3 *Capitol have worked hard to create over 200 million*

4 *dollars of assistance to views class sizes in the*

5 *elementary grades.*

6 *Iowans, all of us, were concerned and*

7 *worried about an erosion of the skills, the reading*

8 *skills of our young children by virtue of the fact*

9 *that we had seen eight consecutive years of*

10 *declining test scores.*

11 *Well, Chrystal was part of a generation*

12 *of learners that we were concerned about and was*

13 *not fairing as well as we had hoped until we*

14 *collectively decided to take action and change*

15 *things for the better.*

16           *Well, when Chrystal saw me she walked up*  
17 *and she said, "Are you the governor?" And I said,*  
18 *"Yes, I am." She stood up straight and tall and*  
19 *she said, "Well, I'm Chrystal Martin and they told*  
20 *me that I couldn't read at grade level but I just*  
21 *got my test scores back and I'm reading at grade*  
22 *level."*

23           *Well, ladies and gentlemen, I looked into*  
24 *the eyes of that child and I saw more than I needed*  
25 *to see about the importance of class size reduction*

13

1 *and focusing on reading skills. More than the six*  
2 *consecutive years of improved test scores we've*  
3 *seen recently. I saw power in the eyes of that*  
4 *child, the power to read, the power to learn and*  
5 *most importantly of all the power to achieve*  
6 *dreams.*

7           *We need to continue our class size*  
8 *reduction efforts and build on that and build we*

9 *did when we began the process of strong start, our*  
10 *early childhood initiative. It focused on children*  
11 *zero to six years of age. We wanted them to have*  
12 *their parents be their first and best teacher, we*  
13 *wanted to improve quality childcare, we wanted to*  
14 *expand access to preschool.*

15 *Well, every child in our state deserves a*  
16 *better future but our work to ensure that better*  
17 *future is not finished. Indeed, while thousands of*  
18 *children have been helped by Strong Start,*  
19 *thousands more remain in need of help and that is*  
20 *the challenge that the change we started presents.*

21 *Do we continue to work for those who have*  
22 *no powerful lobby but represent 100 percent of our*  
23 *future. That is the opportunity that change*  
24 *presents. We'll be able to expand Strong Start to*  
25 *a point where every child has access to preschool.*

1 *Let universal preschool in this state be the change*  
2 *that allows and enables every child in our state a*  
3 *chance, the opportunity to start school ready to*  
4 *learn, able to learn and excited about learning.*

5 *Let us be the first state in the union to*  
6 *make that unqualified guarantee to every single*  
7 *child in our state.*

8 *(Applause.)*

9 *Great learning requires great teaching*  
10 *and teachers deserve our respect and they deserve*  
11 *to be well paid. No athlete, no CEO, no governor*  
12 *on their best day performs as much magic as a*  
13 *classroom teacher performs every day. Yet teaching*  
14 *salaries lag behind the salaries of those who*  
15 *entertain us, those who operate our companies and*  
16 *those who govern us.*

17 *I applaud the Governor-Elect and*  
18 *legislative leaders for their intention to expand*

19 *and accelerate the work we started to improve*  
20 *teaching salaries by raising them to the national*  
21 *average, but this General Assembly could use this*  
22 *opportunity to look for more innovative ways to*  
23 *reward stellar performance in our schools by*  
24 *creating a new and improved compensation system.*  
25 *The current compensation system was*

15

1 *modeled after activities 90 years ago and during*  
2 *that period of time little has changed. I believe*  
3 *the legacy of this General Assembly and our new*  
4 *leaders will not be a preservation of the old but*  
5 *an acceptance and embracement of the new.*  
6 *I believe you can blaze a new trail*  
7 *waiting for no state, no city, no school district.*  
8 *Let Iowa be the leader that delivers a new and*  
9 *improved compensation system. Let Iowa be the*  
10 *leader that says to every single teacher you are*  
11 *respected and you will be compensated accordingly.*

12 *Let Iowa do that for our teachers and most*  
13 *importantly of all for our children.*

14 *(Applause.)*

15 *One final word about education. I know*  
16 *that it's appropriate and necessary for us to*  
17 *continue to talk about the rising cost of college*  
18 *and university tuitions and plans to help reduce*  
19 *the heavy load that our youngsters are currently*  
20 *having to carry, but I hope that we extend that*  
21 *conversation a bit to recognize that there are some*  
22 *who do not go to college not because they can't*  
23 *afford it but because they've not graduated from*  
24 *high school.*

25 *Now, our state is one of the best states*

16

1 *in terms of high school graduation rates and we can*  
2 *take pride in that but the drop out rate among*  
3 *minority students while it is approved still*  
4 *conditions to lag behind. We need help. We need*

5 *help for those students who need extra help.*  
6 *Additional investments in the Iowa Jobs for*  
7 *America's Graduate program that we started several*  
8 *years ago, a high school dropout prevention*  
9 *program, will guarantee continued success.*

10 *Nine out of ten Iowa seniors graduate*  
11 *from high school but only seven out of ten are*  
12 *minority students. It's not enough in our state*  
13 *for every white child to graduate from high school*  
14 *to have a shot at college and a better future.*

15 *It's necessary and important for us to*  
16 *continue to work until every child regardless of*  
17 *color graduates from high school and has a shot at*  
18 *college and a brighter and better future.*

19 *(Applause.)*

20 *That is a challenge that change presents*  
21 *to us and for our future and our children's future*  
22 *we must meet and accept that challenge for if we do*  
23 *not all of us will share in the consequence of*  
24 *failure. As I looked to the north from the top of*

25 *the Capitol I looked at the Mercy Hospital clinic*

17

1 *and I thought of my good friend Doctor Steve*  
2 *Gleason. Doctor Steve worked at Mercy and he also*  
3 *worked at this Capitol. He was a passion at*  
4 *advocate for healthcare reform. It was his belief*  
5 *that every Iowa and and every American deserved*  
6 *access to quality healthcare and that that access*  
7 *should never be denied or delayed.*

8 *If he were with us today, I think he*  
9 *would be happy with the fact that Iowa is only one*  
10 *of two states that reduced the number of uninsured*  
11 *last year and we ranked second in the nation in*  
12 *overall healthcare coverage. Almost 92 percent of*  
13 *our citizens are covered.*

14 *But I don't think Steve would be*  
15 *satisfied with that. I think he would remind us*  
16 *that every Iowan, every Iowan deserves coverage,*  
17 *every Iowa and deserves to get the care they need*

18 *when they need it.*

19 *And so my challenge to you and the*  
20 *challenge that change presents is simply this: Let*  
21 *Iowa, let our state be the first, let this General*  
22 *Assembly and this new administration be the first*  
23 *not just to promise universal access to healthcare*  
24 *but to deliver on that promise to every singled*  
25 *child and every single adult and every single*

18

1 *citizen of this state. We can do this.*

2 *(Applause.)*

3 *And for those who may be doubtful, for*  
4 *those who may wonder whether we can afford it, let*  
5 *me simply say I believe we cannot afford not to.*  
6 *This is something that we can do in this state.*  
7 *You have worked hard, you have gotten us to this*  
8 *point, let's finish the job in healthcare.*

9 *(Applause.)*

10 *Now, as important as that job is you*

11 *should not be satisfied with just simply providing*  
12 *universal coverage. As tough and as challenging*  
13 *and as daunting as that task may be. We started*  
14 *down another path in healthcare, an important path,*  
15 *a path of actually reducing the cost of healthcare*  
16 *to Iowa citizens.*

17 *We established the Senior Living Trust to*  
18 *reduce the need for nursing home care and allow*  
19 *people to remain in their homes with greater*  
20 *dignity for longer periods of time. We extended*  
21 *healthcare insurance coverage to a series of mental*  
22 *illness so that folks wouldn't have to get so sick*  
23 *that they finally got attention.*

24 *We also created the Iowa Cares program in*  
25 *an effort to say to those who are uninsured at*

1 *Broadlawns and at the University of Iowa Hospitals*  
2 *and Clinics you don't have to go to an expensive*  
3 *and necessary emergency room visit, you can go to a*  
4 *less expensive doctor's office visit.*

5 *We began this important work and*  
6 *understand how significant it is. We have begun*  
7 *the transformation of our healthcare system from*  
8 *one that simply prevents diseases and treats*  
9 *diseases to one that not only prevents but also*  
10 *occurs the incurable.*

11 *You have three important missions it*  
12 *seems to me in this General Assembly that you ought*  
13 *to give very serious consideration to as you*  
14 *continue this transformation.*

15 *First, we must begin the process of*  
16 *accelerating our efforts to reduce childhood*  
17 *obesity. Our children need to be active, our*  
18 *children need to eat nutritious snacks, our*

19 *children need to be healthy, we owe it to them.*

20 *Second, it's important that we continue*

21 *to expand dramatically our efforts to reduce*

22 *teenage smoking and other drug use.*

23 *And third and finally and this is*

24 *important if we're interested in occurring*

25 *incurable diseases, we must lift the ban on nuclear*

20

1 *cell transplants now.*

2 *(Applause.)*

3 *As I moved to the view of the Capitol*

4 *that looks west I recognized and appreciated our*

5 *work here had changed the landscape of the city of*

6 *Des Moines view is Vision Iowa program and the*

7 *Values Fund and it occurred to me that through*

8 *those program and the communities and attraction*

9 *tourism program we've not just changed the*

10 *landscape of one community, we've changed the*

11 *landscape of hundreds of communities in 90 counties*

12 *in over 500 projects and that number continues to*  
13 *grow.*

14 *Over ten billion dollars of Capitol*  
15 *investment has been committed and will create or*  
16 *retain well over 30,000 jobs and that number will*  
17 *also increase over time. These projects and these*  
18 *programs have allowed us to have one of the fastest*  
19 *growing economies in the country, have enabled us*  
20 *to record a record number of employed Iowans, have*  
21 *improved family incomes above the national median*  
22 *for the first time in some time, helped to reverse*  
23 *the brain drain and perhaps as importantly as*  
24 *anything established Iowa as the undisputed leader*  
25 *in renewable energy production.*

21

1 *But the time is past due, the time is*  
2 *past due to extend economic progress for those who*  
3 *work at minimum wage jobs. Let's bring the*  
4 *progress that we've experienced as a state to*

5 *everyone. Let's raise the minimum wage and let's*  
6 *do it this year.*

7 *(Applause.)*

8 *As I thought about our work on the*  
9 *economy through these programs, I thought of Terri*  
10 *Goodman from Dubuque, Iowa. For me she represents*  
11 *the spirit of this new Iowa.*

12 *She lives in Dubuque and she was one of*  
13 *the primary movers of the Dubuque Vision Iowa*  
14 *project, the America River Museum. It's a museum*  
15 *that led to a contribution and participation by*  
16 *folks from all over the country in investing tens*  
17 *of millions of dollars along the riverfront in*  
18 *Dubuque. It helped to transform that community.*

19 *It also celebrates the ecology and the*  
20 *important role that the Mississippi River plays.*

21 *Well, after the museum opened I just assumed that*  
22 *that was all there was. But Terri representing*  
23 *this new spirit had more ideas, more opportunities*  
24 *to expand, more opportunities to take a further*

25 *step and that's precisely what we need to continue*

22

1 *to do here in this Capitol.*

2 *We cannot be satisfied with where we*

3 *have, we must be satisfied that we need to get to a*

4 *different place. That's why I hope that this*

5 *General Assembly will continue to fund and expand*

6 *great places. It's the next generation of Vision*

7 *Iowa and I hope that there's a more focused Values*

8 *Fund effort as the Governor-Elect has suggested to*

9 *make sure that our state is indeed the energy*

10 *secure state that it needs to be and can be.*

11 *Let us be as the Governor-Elect has*

12 *suggested the first state in the country to sever*

13 *our relationship with foreign oil and foreign oil*

14 *supplies so that we can provide a growing economy*

15 *for our state.*

16 *(Applause.)*

17 *You know, Governor-Elect, I realize the*

18 *more times I refer to you the more times they stand*  
19 *up.*

20 *You know, Terri Goodman's vision extended*  
21 *beyond bricks and mortar. She understood the*  
22 *economic power of our water resources and we should*  
23 *as well. We now know more about our water after*  
24 *monitoring it for eight years and we know the need*  
25 *for improving it. We have a plan for those*

23

1 *improvements and last year we made a one-year down*  
2 *payment to advance that plan.*

3 *But now I ask the General Assembly to*  
4 *display the courage of your convictions by an*  
5 *aggressive multiyear effort. It's time for us to*  
6 *make a clear statement about our concern for the*  
7 *environment. It's time for us to have a multiyear*  
8 *Vision Iowa-like program to clean up our water, to*  
9 *take full advantage of the potential of our water*  
10 *resources.*

11            *In doing so Iowa cannot only be an energy*  
12 *leader, we can and we must and we should be an*  
13 *environmental leader as well.*

14            *(Applause.)*

15            *Now, I know that there may be some who*  
16 *ask whether or not such an aggressive ambitious*  
17 *agenda would be accomplished. I don't believe*  
18 *there is any question it can be. A growing economy*  
19 *that improved revenues last year and this year*  
20 *makes this agenda possible and more.*

21            *Our reserve accounts are full and we're*  
22 *well on our way to repaying the entire debt we owe*  
23 *to the Senior Living Trust. It's a payoff for all*  
24 *the hard work and sacrifices that previous general*  
25 *assemblies are made.*

24

1            *Finally I looked to the south, to the*  
2 *south of this great Capitol, and I saw the memorial*  
3 *to the fallen and I reflected on the current war*

4 *and calls I've made to family members. I made one*  
5 *just last week.*

6 *You know, war and death and destruction*  
7 *caused from it do not distinguish on color or*  
8 *culture. Just simply read the names on the*  
9 *memorial. They come from all walks of life, all*  
10 *parts of our world. We owe those who serve us a*  
11 *great debt.*

12 *We've attempted to repay it in small*  
13 *ways. First-time home buyers assistance program*  
14 *for our National Guard men and women, money for*  
15 *injured soldiers and their families, Bobby and*  
16 *Michelle's bill, a veterans trust fund so we*  
17 *continue to make sure that veterans understand that*  
18 *they have earned rights and privileges. Full*  
19 *college tuition assistance and a national cemetery,*  
20 *an appropriate final resting place for those who*  
21 *have sacrificed so much.*

22 *But it is not enough. It is not enough.*  
23 *We can and we must do more. We can honor their*

24 *sacrifice by promoting tolerance, understanding and*  
25 *compassion for those who may be different than us.*

25

1 *The current strife in Iraq stems from a failure to*  
2 *accept diversity of blood and belief. Sunnis,*  
3 *Shias and Kurds do not get along. Their children*  
4 *die, our children die. If we really want to honor*  
5 *those who have given so much for us, we should not*  
6 *depend on the Iraq I say to accept that*  
7 *responsibility. That is our responsibility.*

8 *So let us pledge here and now as*  
9 *Americans, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as*  
10 *Americans, let us dedicate ourselves to making*  
11 *diversity in whatever form it may come a reason to*  
12 *love and not to hate, a reason to accept and not*  
13 *reject, a reason to celebrate and not to fight.*

14 *We can start by making our schools safe*  
15 *for all of our children by passing the antibullying*  
16 *bill. Do it for them, do it for us and do it now.*

17           *(Applause.)*

18           *This war has cost us a lot. It has*  
19 *hollowed out our military, it has in my view*  
20 *weakened our National Guard and it puts our nation*  
21 *at risk. This war has compromised our national*  
22 *government's ability to meet the needs here at*  
23 *home. Better schools, accessible and affordable*  
24 *healthcare and modern infrastructure.*

25           *Now the president and the congress are*

26

1 *poised to make a big mistake even bigger by*  
2 *escalating America's involvement by adding more*  
3 *troops and investing more resources, by failing to*  
4 *recognize that the responsibility for success lies*  
5 *not with us but with the Iraqis and their*  
6 *government.*

7           *Understand that escalation will come at*  
8 *the expense of families and communities here in*  
9 *Iowa and across the nation. We will once again*

10 *send National Guard troops from this state to Iraq*  
11 *for another long-term deployment. Escalation will*  
12 *further erode our nation's ability to adequately*  
13 *fund needs here at home.*

14 *As governor and as the commander in*  
15 *chief, I have an obligation to speak out and to*  
16 *urge the president and congress not to put more*  
17 *Iowans and Americans in harm's way in Iraq.*

18 *(Applause.)*

19 *But I have another obligation. One that*  
20 *extend's beyond my role as governor and commander*  
21 *in chief. It is as an Iowan and as an American.*  
22 *And I use that obligation to ask you, the members*  
23 *of the General Assembly, to speak out as well. I*  
24 *ask you to use your collective voice to pass a*  
25 *resolution urging our president and our congress*

27

1 *not to make this tragic mistake for those who will*  
2 *unnecessarily die.*

3           *This may not be part of the agenda, this*  
4 *may not be part of what you plan to do, but I ask*  
5 *you today and throughout this General Assembly to*  
6 *look down deep inside your heart and ask yourself*  
7 *if you're doing all you can do to make sure we do*  
8 *not make a big mistake even bigger.*

9           *(Applause.)*

10           *Let me end my time with you today where I*  
11 *began, with a thank you. I owe a thank you to the*  
12 *people of Iowa for granting me the privilege that*  
13 *few have ever had, the opportunity to serve them as*  
14 *governor.*

15           *While challenges clearly remain, we have*  
16 *built a state better prepared for what lies ahead.*  
17 *I have given it my all and I have done my best, but*  
18 *as I leave I'm confident. I'm confident that*  
19 *Iowa's best is yet to come starting right here and*  
20 *starting right now. God bless you all.*

21           *(Applause.)*