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***** 2022 State of the State Address, as prepared for delivery *****

Good afternoon.

Generally, when a Governor delivers a State of the State message, it happens in the Assembly Chamber in Carson City before a Legislative Session.

This year, there is no session, but with the pandemic receding I thought it was important to talk to you about our path forward.

That's why I decided to give a State of the State address here at Allegiant Stadium - a location that represents new jobs, new determination, new pride, and new progress for Nevada.

What you see here — this state-of-the-art building, the thousands of jobs that came with it, the incredible sports and entertainment it hosts - it all came together because people worked together: Republicans and Democrats, business and labor, north and south. And you know what, that's always the best way to get things done.

We got this and a lot of other things accomplished in the middle of a pandemic, because despite dealing with the worst health crisis in a century, we kept going, people persevered, determined to get things done for Nevadans:

Today, our economy is one of the fastest growing in the country. Tourism is up, unemployment is down. Our students are back - with 100% of our classrooms in-person. Gaming revenues are at an all-time high, and, more importantly, wages are up, too.

But it's been hard, we still face challenges every day, and the pain of the pandemic is real. We've lost cherished friends and family. Our healthcare professionals and first responders have worked night and day saving countless lives.

Teachers, administrators and support staff like bus drivers and cafeteria workers went above and beyond to get our kids back in classrooms safely.

Our Nevada National Guard members stepped forward to run testing stations, distribute vaccines, and care for seniors.

Our small businesses had to sharpen their pencils, care for their employees – while finding new ways to keep their doors open.

Families had to adapt: Helping kids study, working from home, trying to keep it all together.

The truth is we never gave up. And while we still have a lot more to do, we refused to let the pandemic stop our progress.

Quite simply, because of you, the state of our state is resilient and getting stronger every day. Nevada is on the move.

I'm so proud of our state, and of our people. Because despite the noise we hear from some in politics, despite the partisanship that can distract and divide, I know that at our core we all care about the same things a paycheck that keeps up with cost of living, schools that teach, streets that are safe, businesses that thrive and create good jobs and a government that lives within its means.

Today, I'm going to talk about how, working together, we can get more done to help make your life better.

Right now, the cost of everything is rising. We all see it. Nevada families are getting squeezed at the pump and at the grocery store. Childcare, housing, and healthcare costs are eating too much of a family's income. It's hard to keep ahead of bills and save for things like college or retirement.

While I can't promise to solve the national inflation problem, I can promise to do everything in my power to help families with the rising cost of living.

That starts with holding the line on taxes. Since I've been governor, we haven't raised one penny of new taxes on the people of Nevada, not one penny, and that's also true of every proposal I'm offering tonight – no new taxes, no new taxes.

These issues are important to me because I've been there.

I raised two incredible daughters by myself, cooking dinners they didn't like, going to the grocery store, trying to figure out childcare.

Raising kids isn't easy or cheap -- and that was over 20 years ago. Things have only gotten more expensive.

So, we're starting by investing in childcare - because Nevadans deserve the opportunity to go to work knowing their children are safe and have every opportunity to succeed.

In the last two years we strengthened Nevada Ready!, the State's Pre-K program, to get high-quality childcare and early education to more kids. We invested over \$200 million in childcare centers, to keep staff working and facilities open.

And today, I'm announcing a further investment of \$160 million to help lower costs for parents and keep childcare workers on the job. This investment will double the number of families we support because I believe every family from West Wendover to North Las Vegas should have access to great childcare.

Another big concern is the rising cost of housing. Right now, we have too little supply for a booming demand. In the last decade more than 400,000 people have moved into Nevada.

They know what a great state this is, but we have renters and buyers at all levels who are being squeezed out of the market.

That's why we've taken steps to remedy our housing shortage. We provided rental assistance that helped over 43,000 Nevada families remain in their homes. We helped build over 2,300 new affordable apartments last year alone.

For those thousands of families what really matters is keeping a roof over their head or building equity in a home. But there's more to be done.

That's why today, I'm announcing the "Home Means Nevada" initiative – a \$500 million dollar commitment to lower the cost of housing, help people stay in their homes, and create good-paying jobs.

The plan boosts housing construction and homeownership opportunities. It will help seniors retrofit their homes, to lower their costs, improve their property, and stay where they want to be.

And we are developing a new partnership with the AFL-CIO through our state infrastructure bank, to help fund new housing developments.

This announcement marks the single largest investment in housing in our state's history.

Like housing, I know the rising costs of healthcare also pose a serious strain on many Nevada families. I have been working with Democrats and Republicans to help solve that problem.

We went after insurance companies and made it illegal to deny coverage for pre-existing conditions. We were one of the first states to crack down on "surprise billing" by hospitals and medical providers. We took on medical debt collectors who were preying on struggling families.

We helped over 100,000 Nevadans purchase affordable health insurance through the Silver State Health Exchange. And our new public health insurance option will make quality care affordable for even more Nevadans.

That's real progress. But we can't let up.

For instance, the cost of insulin has tripled over the last decade to nearly \$300 per vial. Lifesaving cancer drugs can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per year.

That's why today, I'm announcing that Nevada will join the Northwest Prescription Drug Consortium, along with Oregon and Washington State. By negotiating with drug companies together, we can start holding them accountable and get costs down.

But we all know healthcare isn't just about costs, it's about people and it's about jobs. In the coming weeks, I'll be creating a Healthcare Workforce Committee to build on the lessons learned over the last two years. We must ensure we have the nurses, technicians, and doctors we need so Nevadans can get the care they deserve.

Now I want to talk about one of my very top priorities. As someone who went to public school and as the dad of two daughters who did the same, I know how important a great education is.

That's why I've been so passionate about getting our kids back in the classroom. During the pandemic we deployed \$1.5 billion in federal funds for masks, testing, mental health support and more - so we could reopen schools safely.

I am so grateful for our hardworking teachers, support staff, our exhausted parents, and our amazing students. We would not be where we are today without you.

When I took office. I promised to do everything in my power to make sure every child in every classroom gets a great education.

That's why we gave teachers their first directly funded raise in a decade.

Why we asked educators what they needed and directly funded 11,000 projects to make schoolrooms buzz. And why we raised average per pupil funding to a new high.

And when I said I would do everything in my power to help our schools, I meant everything. That's why I've donated every penny of my salary as governor directly to our public schools.

Almost \$300,000 donated to more than 100 different schools across our state -- from Southside Elementary School in Elko to Basic High School in Henderson.

And I want to take a moment to speak directly to parents and caregivers. Your voices, your involvement, your thoughts are an important part of great schools. I will always support strong parent participation in making our education system the best it can be.

I really believe that the future of our state is directly tied to the quality of our schools.

Last year, I worked with the legislature to commit \$200 million to get our students caught up after the pandemic. This investment is going to summer schools, tutors, and other efforts to make sure our kids are back on track and ready to get ahead.

We're also going to invest in teacher recruitment by providing nearly 4,000 future educators with stipends and tuition assistance to help address the teacher shortage.

Finally, we all know that you can't learn on an empty stomach. So, I'm announcing that we're investing federal dollars to ensure that our schools can provide free lunch for all students across the state for the next school year.

While we want to make sure our kids are cared for at school... we all deserve to be safe at home, at work and in our neighborhoods.

No exceptions.

That's why next I want to talk about something every Nevadan is concerned about.

We've seen crime rates rise across the country and here at home. Whether it's a 44% increase in homicides last year in Clark County, or an increase in robberies in Reno - it is unacceptable.

Here are some of things we are doing to turn things around. We banned bump stocks, closed the gun show loophole and now require common-sense background checks on all gun sales. We secured nearly \$12 million in federal funding to recruit more officers, prevent youth crime, and more. And under my administration, the percentage of our state budget devoted to law enforcement is #1 in the country.

But there are still some big holes we need to fill. For example, our state police make less than most municipal officers and as a result we have a shortage of State Police.

If you're someone who is interested in a law enforcement career, go to DPS.NV.GOV because we need you.

And here's my promise back -- when the legislature returns to Carson City, I will be proposing a salary increase, so we guarantee that Nevada state police are well-trained and well-paid.

And as we work at the state level, we need our local law enforcement agencies to evaluate the crime-fighting programs they have, while our courts and prosecutors help determine the best ways to reduce crime in their communities.

I have always supported increases in funding for our police to make sure they have the resources and training to protect and respect the communities they serve.

As Governor, I will continue to partner with anyone and everyone -- Democrat, Republican, or Independent -- to make our communities safe and to make sure our police have the support they need.

I've talked about a lot of issues today: safety in our community, the cost of living, healthcare, and education.

But the truth is, a vibrant, growing economy with good paying jobs goes a long way towards solving many of these challenges. That's why I've been working to build a stronger and more diverse economic foundation for Nevada -- to help create an economy that works for you and Nevada families.

This stadium is an example of just that. It's created thousands of new jobs -- from construction to transportation, from small business suppliers to technical staff, from the tax dollars it generates, to the hotel rooms it fills.

This building represents one part of a more diversified economic future. And we're building it together.

Last year alone, Nevada added over 94,000 jobs to our economy. We've been rated the state with the best economic momentum in the country. Over 100 startups launched in Reno in the last two years alone.

And, yes, tourism is back. Hotel room revenue is up and our newly expanded Las Vegas Convention Center is getting booked.

That means jobs for our workers and tax revenue for our state.

This didn't happen by accident. During the pandemic we did everything we could to keep small businesses open, attract new companies to the state, and support our workers.

In December, I hosted the JobFest, which was attended by 2,100 Nevadans. One hundred and eighty-two employers hired 251 attendees, all in just one day.

And those jobs aren't statistics, they're people, like the woman who came up to me after being unemployed for months. She got hired on the spot and on that day her life – and her family's life – changed. When she cried and hugged me, it proved again what a good job means in a person's life.

Another huge economic growth opportunity for us is clean energy. With more sunshine than just about any state in the nation, Nevada is on the way to becoming the leading clean-energy economy in America.

Last year alone, we saw the launch of five new solar plants - increasing our state's solar capacity by 36%, and now Nevada is ranked #1 for solar in the country.

Renewable Energy Tax Abatements have created 12,000 construction and 500 operational jobs with an average wage of more than \$40 hour.

We're investing in things like clean-energy school buses, which will be funded, in part, by fines on corporate polluters.

These aren't just good jobs, they're critical tools in the fight against climate change. From the day I took office, I've worked to make sure Nevada is resilient as it tackles this serious threat.

Today, we're monitoring our carbon footprint. We're investing in transportation electrification across Nevada. We're implementing a plan to ensure that 50% of Nevada's energy comes from clean energy by 2030, with net-zero greenhouse gasses by 2050.

But we can and we must do more. Climate change puts us all at risk. Drought, wildfire, Lake Mead's record low, it affects us every day.

Extreme heat is another one. That's why this year, I'll convene members of my Cabinet, scientists, and climate leaders to create a statewide strategy for dealing with extreme heat.

We will continue leading the fight against climate change and creating good jobs in the process. Because a resilient, clean energy economy is a part of a strong, diversified economy.

And let's not forget the essential role that small business plays in our economy.

I know something about this. I was a small business owner myself. And I faced the struggles that come with starting a business, praying that your idea will be successful. It was one of the most terrifying and most exciting periods of my life.

Nevada business owners deserve a government that is invested in their success and stays out of their way.

That's why I stopped any increase in unemployment insurance taxes in 2022. It's why we distributed \$100 million to thousands of organizations and small businesses to keep them going during the pandemic. And why I have worked to reduce unnecessary regulation.

For example, today I'm announcing a bi-partisan task force to further reduce barriers when it comes to occupational licensing. Here in Nevada, we license everyone from barbers to private investigators and the system needs to change.

I'm also creating the first ever Nevada Small Business Accelerator Program -- to help new startups get off the ground and expand, putting Nevada at the forefront of emerging technologies.

And one more thing: To make sure more money drops to the bottom line, I will keep Nevada a low tax state.

The fact is, as we work to grow the economy, we need great roads, bridges, and highways to move materials and create jobs.

The good news is that, today, we're actually ranked number 1 of all states in infrastructure, and we're in the top 10 for our roads and highways.

That's real progress.

But we're about to make another leap forward.

Using dollars from the federal bipartisan infrastructure bill I supported, and our federal delegation delivered, we will invest \$4 billion dollars to upgrade roads, bridges, and water systems. Over five hundred million for new broadband infrastructure, to make sure every Nevadan has access to high-speed internet. Big new improvements to our airports and public transportation systems. And over \$8 million dollars to try and get our hands around wildfire prevention.

These investments -- overwhelmingly supported by Democrats, Republicans and Independents -- will create thousands of new union jobs, the building blocks of an even stronger economy.

And as we continue to move forward, we need to make sure no Nevadan gets left behind.

I've always believed the key to a good job doesn't always have to run through the gates of a four-year college. That's why I've worked to create new career and technical training opportunities for students and those looking for retraining.

We've already expanded STEM education, and apprenticeship programs, with over 30,000 students completing training since I took office.

And we've created new opportunities for over 10,000 high school students to begin earning their associate degree while finishing their high school diploma.

And last, but certainly not least, we know that skills training is essential to our workers and businesses. A high school education isn't enough, and we should recognize that it's no longer "pre-school through grade 12," but at least "pre-school through community college or other post high school training."

For that reason, I'm directing my Workforce Development Committee to explore ways to make community college or other apprentice and training programs free for more Nevadans by 2025. I know we can get it done.

Nevada, I have never been more optimistic about our state or where we are going. Despite two difficult years that have challenged every one of us, again and again I've seen incredible acts of kindness, heroic acts of selflessness and a determination to never stop moving forward.

Family has never been more important – I know that's true for me as I look over at my wife Kathy and my two daughters, Carley and Ashley.

Ultimately this is about making life better for the people we love – I think that's true for all of us – when we get up each day, go to our jobs, provide for our kids, try to make budgets work, or care for a parent.

We're believers -- that problems can be solved, that big things can be accomplished – whether it's a stadium that unites us, a new job that excites us, or a classroom that ignites something special in a young child, we're united in our determination.

As I said in my opening, getting things done always works best when we come together – when we put aside party labels, put down our heads, and get to work.

That's the true Battle Born spirit that has propelled our state forward for the last 157 years. It is what I try to do every day as your governor, and with your help, it's what will build an even stronger Nevada.

Thank you.

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