

Governor Sununu's Inaugural Address – Unedited transcript

(Note: this unedited transcript was machine generated. Listen to the audio of the speech for the Governor's full remarks.)

[00:00:00] Well good morning. Good morning. It is great to see everybody here.

[00:00:03] Thank you. President Susi and speaker Shurtleff I remembered your name going to throw something in there but you know what the Honorable Members of the House and Senate who have joined us here today you know this is one of those rare times you have so many folks in this audience to really think who really make a lot of New Hampshire what it is. We have the members of the Supreme Court the justices the Federal Court. We have our esteemed executive council here which obviously I'm quite partial to all the members of our commissioners and our directors that represent the state that manage the ins and outs of the business. Obviously there's a lot of friends and family here. It is great to see them and it goes without saying the one who really makes us all happen.

[00:00:50] My amazing wife Valerie it isn't.

[00:01:17] It's an absolute honor.

[00:01:18] When one group of folks one point three five million people put their faith in you and the trust to be governor. It's an honor to stand up here it's very humbling in many many different ways.

[00:01:31] I also want to take a moment to really acknowledge you never Kate you never can say enough when you talk about having the National Guard in here and our military families and the facts we have.

[00:01:40] We have folks serving from New Hampshire serving abroad and here in country maybe not in the state with us today. The sacrifices that they make the sacrifices their family makes veterans that obligation that we carry with us making sure that we're standing by them for them providing the services they need while they stand up for us. So to everyone who has or is currently wearing a uniform. Thank you.

[00:02:02] Thank you very much.

[00:02:24] As you know I do not normally write speeches so writing speeches is always a bit of a challenge and I'm going to do my best to stick to it. I'll try my best not to ramble on. I see they have sat Ruth Griffin and Ray Zorich next to each other. Someone gets it. So if I see them nodding off I know I've gone too long.

[00:02:47] I love you guys.

[00:02:49] Well Ray's like Valerie's boyfriend Ruth is like my girlfriend it all works out in November.

[00:02:55] You know the voters in this state not just for governor but as they came out whether it was for the county seat at the state seats of the House or the Senate. They really set us on a path and it does require that we have state leaders come together truly embrace a spirit of cooperation work together to get things done for the state of New Hampshire. And we have to remember that there are one point forty five million people counting on that and they truly deserve nothing less.

[00:03:19] We were sent to Concord to fix problems create opportunities and to embrace the power of the individual. I talk about that a lot. Make no mistake we've made great progress in the past two years. But there are surely a lot of work to be done in just the last two years. We've established things like full day kindergarten. We signed the most comprehensive child welfare bill in the state's history. We provided tax relief for small businesses.

[00:03:45] And with the implementation of our new hub and spoke model now known as the doorway this very weak opening their doors across the state in New Hampshire we've created opportunities for us to truly tackle one of the state's biggest crises the opioid epidemic. We worked together bipartisan in a way that frankly was a moment of real pride I think for all of us in the last session when we decided that we wouldn't let partisanship come in the way and would make sure that 50000 Granite Staters low income Granite Staters those who are out there doing everything they can to make a living to provide for their families.

[00:04:20] We made sure that they will have health care through our expanded Medicaid program and we have to remember it's not just what we've done.

[00:04:43] It's really how we did it. We did it in our own way in an innovative way. We did it putting forth a strong work requirement which gives people the dignity of work we've saved hundreds of million dollars from the system. We've become a model frankly for other states to emulate when it comes to managing and simply providing the best services to our citizens.

[00:05:02] We but when we look back at what we've accomplished we can't lose sight of why we're here.

[00:05:19] As I said in public service is just as important as how you get there as the goals that you achieve. And New Hampshire we know we're best when we work together and that's obviously what we must do. And whether you're a Republican or a Democrat or an independent or a libertarian we all share a passion for making our communities the strongest they can be a commitment to making sure that New Hampshire simply remains the best place to live work and raise a family. I've often said that we do not let the dysfunction of WashingtonD.C. define the successes here in our great street. And it is true that politics does not and should not dictate policy.

[00:05:55] We treat each other with respect civility not like some of the circus tricks we see about 800 miles south of us I did travel to Washington recently though I spent some moments honoring one of America's true heroes someone who really understood what public service was about and to be down there following President Bush's passion. I think for everyone not just myself but I think I can speak. It was truly a reminder across the country what good public service was really about what giving of yourself really was getting out of your comfort sometimes and in doing the right thing. It's not always easy but in terms of leadership and whether you're a House member whether you're a governor or whatever it might be it's really incumbent upon us to lead by example. And when you look at what President Bush did how we treated people how we truly treated people. It's kind of like as we say he did at the New Hampshire way he talk you as an individual. He listened to your issues and he let people drive the policy needs of the country. And again that four or five days where it was sad to be sure but I think everyone was able to take a deep breath pause and remember what real good public service was all about. It isn't always about going after funding. It isn't about picketing and protests. It's truly about bringing people together. A very smart man once said It is our choices that show what we truly are far more than our abilities. And that quote brings with me that wise man. I'm not going to lie to you was doubled or from the Harry Potter series.

[00:07:33] It's true.

[00:07:36] But it is true. It is our choices and that's what good public service is all about.

[00:07:44] I also recently saw an interview about a month ago with another great New Hampshire native. I'm a big fan of Adam Sandler and it was interesting to hear him reflect a little bit on his life and his career.

[00:07:55] And he said something he said I was a kid growing up thinking that one day I'll get an Oscar and stand on a stage and make speeches that just wasn't who I was. And I thought about that a little bit. And for me it kind of rang very similarly. To be honest you know growing up I think a lot of you know I'm number 7 of eight kids and I'm proud to be here with a lot of my brothers and sisters and my parents are here today. And public service isn't something just in our families to have. You're right. You're all here. We're all public servants it's what we do it's in our blood it's in our communities right whether you're a teacher whether you volunteer at a nonprofit or it's about giving of ourselves. Now in the public I guess the political sphere if you will.

[00:08:36] There was something that resonated with me when I heard that quote This is where I'm going to tell a story and probably embarrass myself more than my family. But I think it was 1980 it was the U.S. Senate race. My father was running for U.S. Senate. No he didn't win.

[00:08:52] And of all things will get pulled around to a lot of different events here and there.

[00:08:56] And one of the events I never liked I was incredibly shy. Believe it or not I was really incredibly shy. My mother can attest to the kid holding on to my mother's leg praying I didn't have to go out on a public stage or anything. And one day we were taken to an event and I was probably 6 years old at the time and I wasn't really paying attention and we got there no one is really telling me what we're doing I was just kind of hanging around in the back and I quickly realized this was a fashion show whose brilliant idea this was to parade kids out in a fashion show I don't know.

[00:09:25] But when they pulled out the blue plaid suit and said This is what you're going to wear. Get on out there and no matter how much I cried and protested I was forced out there.

[00:09:34] People were laughing too I don't know. I it was pretty cruel frankly.

[00:09:39] But I remember thinking I was 6 years old and I promise you I remember thinking if this is what politics is about I don't want any part of it.

[00:09:48] And that trust me that has stayed with me. You think I forgot it stayed with me all those years. It's traumatizing.

[00:09:59] But it was in any way in many ways. I think it was part of the lesson of being in New Hampshire. My parents knew it wasn't easy for us to go and do all that stuff and I know it's not easy for my kids and your kids. For those who are elected officials in the public sphere especially now more than ever whether it's social media or the negativity of the partisanship it's not easy on families as tough as this one right here. She'll tell you she could write a book on how hard it is sometimes on families but it's what we do. It's giving of yourself it's getting out of that comfort zone because at the end of the day we have to remember the job is bigger than ourselves. It's not about our individual issues are individual priorities. It is truly bigger than ourselves and we have to get out of that comfort zone get out of the walls of the statehouse engage with individuals right get into communities find out what is truly happening out there and again let those individuals those individuals with their stories drive better policy.

[00:10:57] So when we talk about policy when we talk about good public service I go back to two

of the foremost crux is the axioms that I fall into our management and customer service. Good management quality customer service. The goal should be create to truly create an inclusive all and welcoming environment for our citizens. So that we can walk out there as public officials as commissioners whoever it might be and say this is who we are and how can we truly help. Therefore our obligation often is to push the limits to really get out of our outside the box outside those comfort zones. It's one of the reasons you see I've been known to partake in various experiences. Right. Last week I was jumping in the Atlantic Ocean but Chucky roasted to bring awareness to the opioid crisis and that's not even in the middle of December. Trust me or this past summer I did the death defying feat with Senator Ayotte who's joining us today to repel down a 24 story building and for a guy who deathly afraid of heights. We tell you it's not easy but it helps bring awareness we're raising money for granite United Way last last year I joined my commissioners. Join me George capacitive 3 it's about fifteen thousand dollars himself God bless it and we all slept out on the streets of Manchester to raise money and awareness for homelessness. And it gets people involved. It gets people noticing it gets people understanding how they can become more involved in their communities in a variety of different ways. So there's one story I want to tell you as well. Another organization Valerie and I are very passionate about is best buddies. It's a great organization. It builds friendships and social bonds for kids with disabilities. And you know Valerie has really led the charge here in the state with Sarah Dennehy and some amazing stuff. But I decided I have decided I was convinced by Valerie that I was going to write a 50 mile bike ride to race again to raise money and awareness for best buddies. It's just a great organization. And God bless it. A bunch of people joined my team and two of the individuals that joined my team. There are some folks from the state that joined Nicole from the Liquor Commission joined in. Two of our newest members of state government Christine Tapin who is the I'm going to get the title run now associate commissioner at the Department of Health and Human Services and Christine Brennan who's our deputy commissioner of education neither of us had ever really ridden bikes for any appreciable time any appreciable length. And so we do these practices and one day we're out there practicing them or riding and I'm just trying to I think all of us were just trying to not like fall into a pothole or hit dirt and flip over and the whole thing. And at one point I don't think I told Moses until the story but I don't care. CHRIS So Chris Tappin is here and Chris Brennan is there and I'm in the middle would like the three Chris is going down the road. And again I'm just trying to keep it all together. And they're chatting back and forth. And they had this amazing conversation and it was about what was happening at Health and Human Services with child welfare with some of the exciting things how we're transforming D.C. why the programs that are there. And Chris Brennan is talking about the things that education and how a lot of those programs are similar and how. Sometimes you get an e-mail or they'll get a phone call between departments. But there were actually individuals in those departments that had never met the other individuals in the other departments but they were working on very similar things and it was this amazing moment and within weeks Valerie heard the story and she opened up the bridges house and they brought their teams together for the first time in a long time and really brought them together to share ideas within government. And I think a lot of folks a lot of times we take it for granted but you got to make sure the left hand those with the writing is doing right. So there's not duplicative of France's conflicting efforts frankly. So there's a sharing of ideas and really opening the opening up of possibilities. And when when that happened that was one of the things I said well I got to keep doing this stuff because you never know what the next adventure might bring. But it really was. We didn't fall by the way. I was a little paranoid that I didn't know if there was going to be some sort of human resources issue because I had pressed them into service if they had fallen and gotten hurt.

[00:14:56] But but it really was was was quite an amazing amazing moment and it set a tone and a lesson for a lot of our other commissioners to challenge ourselves within the department. I mean we have 10000 state employees out there. It's a lot of folks doing good hard work. But you got a challenge. You got a challenge to the directors you've got to challenge the division heads. Right. What are you doing how are you doing it. Have you talked to these folks. Can we get together can

we build relationships. And again this is not meant as a criticism for any individual department or division or anything but it's the natural order of things. If you let government just go. It tends to fall into silos. It's very easy for folks to keep processing in bureaucracies and fiefdoms but it's very easy to just keep processing what they need to process without stretching a little bit without making that extra phone call. And that's really where the efficiency of government can come into play and ultimately that truly leads to better customer service better service for those individuals for those citizens. And you have to notice that again there's nothing political in any of them. There's nothing Republican or Democrat here is trying to instill some good management practices and we have some tremendous tremendous commissioners working for the state right now.

[00:16:10] It's an absolute honor. Every time we get together there's a good sharing of ideas they're talking to each other. They're talking to their departments. All right there's a great check and balance within that.

[00:16:20] And again whether you're a qualified nominee to be brought before the executive council as a judge or on the board of dietitians or maybe some we're going to hire to work in the opioid crisis. It's all about building those personal relationships and making sure that politics doesn't get in the way of simply folks that want to get up and have the qualifications to serve the best the best they can. I traveled to Washington a lot.

[00:16:47] Again I don't know if folks know this but a lot of states hire lobbyists. Governors will hire lobbyists to represent them in Washington D.C. I didn't know that before he became governor. I don't believe in that. I don't do that. I get on a plane and I fly down there. Right. Yeah it saves you a few bucks don't worry.

[00:17:03] But again it is also it simply gets better.

[00:17:05] The Republicans love that but it really gets better results.

[00:17:12] You know I'll fly down and we'll sit with individuals and you build a relationship so you can not. So when you do have to pick up the phone and a moment's notice they know who you are that can picture your face they know what you're about they know what the issues of New Hampshire are really are being driven here and that's allowed us to get a lot of opportunity and I never understand a lot of the criticism frankly that we get oh he spends too much time in Washington. Well let me tell you something I'm very proud of what we've accomplished. When the Manchester VA had a crisis into our secretary Shokin was on the phone with us sending his team up here because he knew us he knew the need what the need was and we've started to really turn things around up there. When there was an issue we'll go with Voke broke rehab. There was frankly a big mismanagement of funds and the VOC rehab program a program that provides job training skills to kids with disabilities was going to disappear. It was going to be gone because a million and a half dollars all of a sudden had disappeared. So I flew down and I sat with Betsy Davis and I explained to her the issue and they provided a grant to make sure we had that bridge so that again we didn't lose those services when there was talk about drilling for oil off the coast line of New Hampshire. I didn't write or just write a letter. I got on the plane I flew down I sat with secretary's thinking assurance that is not going to happen. But that happens again because you build the relationships hub and spoke. Let me tell you something. I annoyed the heck out of the White House. I ignored the heck out of the administration with what I believed we could do with our hub and spoke model and I gave them the memos and we had our teams go down there and sit with the drug czar. Time and time we sat with the president his administration and we convinced them not only do we know what we were doing but we had a model and a plan not just for New Hampshire but something that could be emulated across the country. We received the biggest increase and so our money the biggest grant across the country.

[00:18:55] And they said we believe in New Hampshire you're at the tip of the spear and if we're going to rebuild an infrastructure this is where it starts right here in New Hampshire and today those doors are open and not just myself it's my it's the commission is the all the folks across the executive branch getting on those airplanes traveling down with us.

[00:19:19] Building those relationships and getting stuff done and the moral of the story is really this especially in this world you've got to be careful do not burn bridges. Right. You know you never know how many times you're going to have to cross that same river. Right. And it's a lesson again. We talk about partisanship we talk about working together bipartisanship. That's a very fine line between those two but is truly important. And in New Hampshire we've done it right. But let's not lose focus. Let's not lose the priority too in terms of truly getting stuff done. So one of the key issues that we are dealing with in a very positive way right now is the economy. Our economy is absolutely booming. There is no doubt we are better off today than we were just two years ago the lowest poverty rate in the nation. Business taxes are at the lowest in decades. And more people are truly working than ever before but again don't make the mistake and take that success for granted. It wasn't luck it wasn't happenstance. It was hard work instilling sound economic principles focusing on creating strong economic opportunities for individuals providing employers and the state flexibility and financial opportunity that flows down to the employees and their families in New Hampshire. We've made a choice. We don't want business investing in government. We want business to retain their revenues and invest in their employees and they do.

[00:20:44] And it works.

[00:20:58] This is exactly why look at the results.

[00:21:04] The model works. Young families businesses they're all flocking to New Hampshire not by accident because they are choosing to be here they are choosing to be part of the business friendly environment that we've created. That's why we've already seen some of the highest household incomes in the country. Our model of success is working tax relief is working and lowering the cost of doing business. Do tax relief has allowed businesses to truly reinvest in that workforce. It's a key factor in the wage growth we see when a business can retain its revenue. Invest in those employees. And again it's about that opportunity not just for the businesses but it flows to families. It flows to a little more discretionary income and folks pockets it flows to a stronger economy for all of us and that creates opportunity here in the state of New Hampshire. We cut taxes and we've seen more revenue than almost ever before here in the state of New Hampshire.

[00:22:03] And we're using those surplus funds for smart one time investments. Now I implore this legislature please learn from some of the mistakes of the past.

[00:22:14] The last thing we should be doing is raising taxes or pushing a budget that doesn't live with our in our means and it goes without saying there will be no sales or income tax.

[00:22:24] Under my watch.

[00:22:41] So stay tuned next month on Valentine's Day of all days because I love the state.

[00:22:47] I will submit a state budget that keeps our commitment to protecting our thriving economy. It will continue the current schedule of business tax reductions that will use practical revenue estimates to ensure that we continue to make investments to improve the lives of every citizen in the state.

[00:23:02] That without jeopardizing our financial solvency. Now before I jump into the real priorities of the state when it comes to the program to invest in what we want to really focus on let me take a moment and just talk a little bit about what we mean by priorities. If one talks about that Wordle law everyone has kind of a different interpretation I think. And whenever I think about priorities I do think back there was a point exactly 20 years ago frankly I was out hiking the Appalachian Trail. And when you are living in the woods for five months walking 2000 miles from Maine to Georgia let me tell you you focus on the priorities.

[00:23:38] It's water it shelter it's food in that order. That's really it right.

[00:23:44] That's survival and it taught me a lot of lessons and it is really kind of shaped how I deal with a lot of the challenges that come before me in my life. Serves as a true reminder that in public service especially frankly in public service it is important to take time here and there when convenient to step back and really re-evaluate one's goals and stay focused on results that truly make a difference.

[00:24:14] We're going to have our differences in this chamber and the governor's office within the Executive Council. Of course we're going to have differences that's OK. And sometimes you're going to passionately disagree. But it's important to work hard and truly keep a rational perspective on what the priorities of the state are. Now one of the priorities of the state that I think we can all agree on is our workforce needs. When you have more available jobs than ever before and more people working than ever before we know there are workforce shortages in the state in various areas. And while New Hampshire is clearly becoming a destination for young workers one of the immediate challenges is how to retain and grow a true thriving workforce for today and the next generation. And many of you have heard me say this before but those of us that were born here were lucky and those of us that moved here were smart. And recently we saw a new study a couple of weeks ago that came out of the Carsi school that nature was released that shows an increase in young families moving to New Hampshire.

[00:25:11] It's a very very positive.

[00:25:13] Just and again it isn't a fluke it isn't by happenstance it's because we're creating economic opportunities where we're taking notice we're pushing the envelope. We have a new Department of Business and Economic Affairs led by Taylor Caswell and his team which will and Mike Bergeron doing a tremendous job picking up the phone going after businesses showing them the very positive regulatory environment very positive tax environment that we're creating here and people are taking notice all across New England and again whether it's Titchener in Milford or Lawn's in Portsmouth BHB in Merrimack Madeira in Guilford Allegro in Manchester Oxland over in Colebrook Hubbert farms in Walpole the list goes on. These are businesses that are moving here that are growing here that are expanding here that are investing their dollars in our communities and in our families.

[00:26:08] Now what more can we do. What is the role of government here.

[00:26:11] When we talk about workforce I think that in part that we can create it starts obviously with education and we've made some great investments in education where there are career schools opening up opportunities at the high school level all the way up into the graduate level and next month. I'm very proud that we will be proposing the single largest economic investment into workforce the state has ever seen specifically and our health care workforce and our nurses which we know is going to be the single greatest need of the state over the next 10 years.

[00:26:42] We're going to invest 24 million dollars and we're going to double the number of graduates in all of these areas for our state.

[00:27:03] Now another key component of growing our workforce is New Hampshire's work requirement for able bodied individuals who are part of a Medicaid expansion program. The provisions of Medicaid help lift people out of poverty by empowering them with the dignity of work and self reliability to help people gain skills necessary for long term independence and success and entrance into the long term workforce. We have designed in New Hampshire solution that was the result of a strong bipartisan agreement and this Legislature needs to be sure not to obstruct its implementation.

[00:27:41] I know that leaders in both parties both parties stand united in ensuring that we are committed to the compromise reached last year to help ensure health care for 50000 individuals in our state.

[00:27:58] And let's remember in approving the work requirement it was actually the administration in Washington that insisted on more flexibility for our citizens insisting on flexibility that would include volunteerism or job training or part time work or simply going to school. All of these now count toward the work requirement and it's more flexible now than the bill we even passed last year.

[00:28:19] And that is a win for New Hampshire citizens.

[00:28:28] You know I also believe it's time that we look at reforming a lot of our various public assistance programs. We have to ensure that there are a ladder out of poverty and not a roadblock to those who want to work hard and simply get out of the system. A common hurdle for both businesses and workers is what we call the cliff effect. Last year I had the opportunity to spend a little bit of time at various shelters across the state. If you've had a chance to visit some of the shelters are all a little bit different. It's amazing opportunity. You hear a lot of different stories not just from the managers of the shelters but from the individual in about a month ago Valerie had invited a group of the shelter managers to come and visit at the bridges House. Valerie has done this amazing thing where building bridges with the bridges I think is what she calls it where she brings in groups I think is a great name. You know we bring in groups nonprofits organizations individuals and we use the bridges as kind of a gathering place to share ideas to hear real firsthand stories from stakeholders and those individuals and in this group we brought in some of the folks that manage a lot of the shelters across the state. And when we asked them you know what is the single biggest issue the single biggest challenge facing in this case a lot of the women in the shelters a lot of them are single moms. A lot of them are in tough situations. Maybe they are in recovery maybe they were in abusive relationships right there getting some public assistance now in various ways. But they said the number one issue was that fiscal cliff that these individuals again often young single moms some in trouble some in tough domestic violence situations who rely on government assistance in their time of need. They want to work their way off those programs. They want independence they want an escape but they find themselves trapped or discouraged from accepting better job opportunities because their increased incomes will cut them off completely from assistance in a moment's notice. The results are that those individuals have declined promotions they've declined better jobs they work fewer hours and unfortunately. Believe it or not they've actually remained in abusive relationships or tried to hide their incomes so they could maintain eligibility for programs instead of encouraging employment investment. Our system right now incentivizes people to remain remain on state support. And yes this might make some sense in the short term but the long term we end up harming the people who often need the most help. And frankly the dynamic simply makes no sense. And working together I believe we can create revenue neutral reforms to end the cliff effect in our state. We can't provide more reasonable offramps we can provide more reasonable offramps for these individuals a way to that encourages the dignity of work a way that saves rather than cost taxpayers and gives those receiving benefits the greatest gift of economic stability a good job that allows them the independence to support their family.

[00:31:21] It won't be easy but I do believe the pass pathways there and I'm challenging the legislature to work with us and simply find better results for these individuals.

[00:31:37] I want to take a moment and discuss a very specific I see and I think a lot of us would agree is a very serious public health need in the state of New Hampshire and that's pediatric cancer according to the Center of Disease Control New Hampshire had the highest rate of pediatric cancer.

[00:31:56] Between 2003 and 2014 unacceptable.

[00:32:00] It's alarming. And we can't allow the trend to continue. I think we can all agree on that. We have to work together to find answers create solutions and lead the way out of the crisis. So in my budget next month I will use our surplus funds to commission a study once and for all to do just term to determine both the extent of the crisis and provide real solutions for the citizens and family of our state. The study will have no partisan agenda and frankly no preconceived notions. The mission is simple. Figure out the truth and use the tidbit the data available develop sound policies that simply help these kids. Answers are not going to come overnight but we will make it a top priority of the administration. Now another significant public health crisis as we all know unfortunately is the opiate crisis. And last year as we saw if you heard the news the overdoses across this country are going up unfortunately.

[00:33:15] God bless it here in the state of New Hampshire. We've actually seen a decrease in overdoses are actually bucking that trend.

[00:33:28] It is a good sign. It is a great sign. But we know there's a lot more work to do. And as we mentioned this week there's a few days ago 2 1 1 took their first calls to triage individuals just after New Year's. The hub and spoke model went live nine locations across the state opened the doors we're calling it the doorway. It's just getting off the ground. It's exciting working together really seeing what the needs are across the state. The idea that you finally don't have to travel 200 miles out of Pittsburgh New Hampshire down to Manchester to get the type of care the type of treatment the type of recovery that is going to work for you to have these hubs across the state working folks individual communities. So they don't have to worry about being separated from their job or their family. It's an incredibly exciting time. It's a New Hampshire model and someone I think we should all be proud of. And when you combine that with what we're doing with our recovery friendly workplace initiative which had a very exciting crest a very exciting milestone the fact that we have for the first time in a long time a fully funded alcohol fund with over ten million dollars sitting available and flexible to provide a lot of these spokes to provide a lot of the services in the individual communities and both the Southern Tier and across whether you are in Monadnock whether you're in CAUCE the funds or are available the tools are available. We have more tools. We've created more tools frankly than we've ever had at her disposal before. The trend is going in the right way we're creating an infrastructure not just for the next two years but truly for the long term. And that's very exciting and the recovery friendly work place I want to I want to brag about it a little bit. And Governor I get to brag every once in a while it's working. It's exciting and we crossed our 14000 employ 40000 employees now work in a business that proudly calls them selves recovery friendly in just a few months.

[00:35:25] It's wonderful.

[00:35:44] So again I just want to reemphasize whether it's a public sector solution or private sector solution working with nonprofits working in the government agencies whatever it might be. It's all there on the table for us. Still a lot of work to do. But again we'll keep working to build the system and win the war on drugs. Now just two short years ago we had another very significant crisis when

we took office. And that's the one we all know about over at the time of the Division of Children Youth and Families. why it was in crisis we needed new management we needed more caseworkers we needed more funding. At the end of the day it all just meant that children were at risk. So what do we do. I believe that turning around in Operation Boat begins with leadership. And so first what we did is we brought in a world class team. And I tell the story a little bit. But it's so true of all places we looked we went to New Jersey.

[00:36:39] Now you can laugh. We don't do that very often. But New Jersey had a model that had turned themselves around they had gone from one of the worst to one of the best child welfare systems in the country and they didn't just do it with pouring more money at it. They did it with again good management focusing on case workers focusing on individual needs regulatory reform. And we went we plucked Joe Ripp some who had was really key and instrumental in transforming New Jersey program and we brought him to New Hampshire to a breakfast happening right. We brought Tom Prosto in from Ohio. Folks it had real experience with these issues and we've built a world class team over there. And then we said we're going to put in 30 more funding for 30 more caseworkers. We're going to put the funding where it needs to go not just bloat more bloated management not the same old thing but in those caseworkers those that are spending the time one on one that at one time had thousands of backlogs of cases.

[00:37:32] We think about that with thousands of cases that hadn't been attended to.

[00:37:37] These were potentially kids in terrible situations in their home and we didn't have the staff to get to it. That was unacceptable. And I commend the legislature. They came together in a bipartisan way. Jeb Bradley the Democrats everyone came together we'd simply put the best people in the room found solutions from stakeholders. They told their stories and we drove what became one of the most comprehensive pieces of child welfare reform the state has ever seen.

[00:38:02] And I just can't thank the legislature for making the surely more challenges.

[00:38:22] There are nothing is completely fixed. That's a world where we say one is too many nothing is ever truly fixed.

[00:38:29] So we have to stay attentive to no one where I do want to put a lot of attention along those same lines. I truly believe we need to reform our foster care system. We have to ensure that the welfare and safety of children is free and that we must be their advocates will continue to stand up for them. This is exactly who we were sent to Concord to fight for is the vulnerable. It's the forgotten the kids in tough situations that are of absolutely no fault of their own. They're counting on us to have a system that can provide protections when needed that can restore voluntary services into the home to make sure that a child or a family with a problem doesn't become a child or a family in crisis. We know that good foundations are the foundation.

[00:39:19] I'm sorry good families are the foundation of healthy communities and therefore we must ensure that our system is one that attracts and retains those caring families who extend their homes and hearts to foster children and once we retain them.

[00:39:32] Let's get government bureaucracy out of the way so they can simply focus on the kids they shouldn't be worried about paperwork. They should be worried about the minutiae they've given of themselves. They've sacrificed their family sacrificed their time. They want to focus on those kids and provide them with a better path. So whatever we can do administratively legislatively at the local level at the state level simply cutting that bureaucracy getting out of their way and making sure these kids are on a better path again has to be preeminent.

[00:40:03] But the state of New Hampshire I also want to recognize the legislature in another area where we have made meaningful sustained progress in addressing our state's Mental Health Crisis again.

[00:40:32] For a while I think it was the unspoken crisis in this state. But we've brought the issues to the forefront we're addressing them regularly we've addressed them with funding we're making sure that we're moving that ball forward. But we know that there is a lot of work to do. And I always saw mental health when I brought the stakeholders in. That was one of those areas where you know when something's not working it doesn't mean you just keep throwing money at it that's just pushing harder in the same direction. Right. You got to sometimes have the courage and the will to go in a completely new direction and by bringing the stakeholders in by convincing ourselves we were just going to do with the same old way and hope for the best. We've really made some meaningful changes within mental health. We started engaging those on the front lines the stakeholders the providers. And today in New Hampshire as a result of their direct feedback we're rebuilding and reengineering that entire mental health system. And today we are in greater compliance with the community mental health agreement than ever before. We've had a mobile crisis teams which helped diverted individuals away from emergency rooms in their communities. It allows them to get stabilized in their communities without having to run to New Hampshire hospital. We've added 40 more community transitional beds with wraparound services that help support individuals coming out of New Hampshire hospital. And while we've made made great strides in the past two years to rebuild that system we know there's more work to do in the coming weeks we will be releasing the state's new 10 year mental health plan which is a practical roadmap to quality mental health care. This year will end this year. I'm very excited about this one. We're going to accomplish something that has been talked about for decades but for whatever reason we quite haven't gotten around to. We will move the state psychiatric unit out of the state prison and treat those patients with the dignity and respect they deserve.

[00:42:42] Now you cannot discuss reforms within the mental health system without acknowledging the issue of suicide in our state.

[00:42:50] We know that suicide affects far too many of our communities and too many lives are taken from us too soon. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people in our state. And while there's no single answer there's obviously more that we can do and we will do talking about it can be difficult it can be very heartbreaking. Hearing the stories asking individuals families to come in and share their stories. But I think a lot of us know that sometimes it is simply one conversation that can save a life. Family in Boston the Dickeys they know the pain of suicide more than anyone should ever have to. In just over a year ago Paul and Martha Dickey's son Jason took his own life. I first met the Dickeys at our first robotics competition actually and the story they told me was one where they are truly channeling their pain into hope not just for themselves but for all of us. And today I'm very proud to announce my support for legislation that Martha and Paul brought to me. It's called the Jason Flatman act named after yet another individual Jason flack who took his life about 20 years ago under the Jason Flatt Act teachers in New Hampshire will complete two hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training each year to the support of the Jason Foundation. The training can be provided at no cost to local districts at no cost to the taxpayer. We finally have to understand that suicide is preventable. We all have a role to play and it truly starts with us.

[00:44:22] Today 20 states 20 states have passed this law. I asked the legislature to get this done.

[00:44:44] You know it goes without saying that you know students are experiencing new and more intense kinds of stresses both inside and outside the classroom helping students with the skills needed to successfully manage that stress and how to understand and manage their emotions to

cultivate empathy to develop positive relationships.

[00:45:03] It's critical it's absolutely critical in helping keep students out of a crisis or a mental health challenge. Scarlett Lewis who works nationally to promote social and emotional learning cooking I think like.

[00:45:22] But you're right.

[00:45:24] Remember how we say you're right but Scarlett Lewis who works nationally to promote social emotional learning what we call ECL in schools throughout her choose love enrichment program. It provides educators with free learning tools all the way up to the 12th grade. Scala is the mother of Jessie who was killed in his classroom during the tragedy of Sandy Hook in 2012. She's another wonderful example of someone who's using the power of the individual to make a positive change and we put an emphasis on learning across the state last year. My administration has been going to schools all around our state explaining why the program is important. Several schools have stepped up to be leaders by example. One such school district which really caught my eye was interlinks and they've taken this program not just within the school district but communitywide to the public community. It's really quite exciting. Parents teachers counselors resource officers school administrators they've all welcomed this program and I'm proud to say that as of today in just a few short months over 200 schools have now downloaded and are utilizing this program.

[00:46:34] And we welcome now Scarlette here with us today.

[00:47:00] I swear this is 20 minutes when I read it to myself last night. It's not hot in here or anything.

[00:47:10] You know we talk about the class and we talk about all the possibility and the potential that we have within the classrooms of our state. New Hampshire's exceptional public education system can simply proudly boast some of the best teachers some of the best administrators and some of the best school districts in the country.

[00:47:25] It's a great source of pride that we should all have getting education right.

[00:47:46] We'll truly go a long way to help maintaining our state's prosperity. It simply means more jobs for Granite Staters less reliance on federal and state services higher incomes healthier citizens. There's no reason New Hampshire should not be the model for the rest of the nation when it comes to education and over the past biennium we have increased education grant programs in New Hampshire by over 50 million dollars and I fully expect the legislature will have a rigorous and thorough discussion regarding the funding for education and I will be there with you for that discussion. I think it's something we can all agree on when it comes to the formulas the amounts.

[00:48:25] It's something that has to be discussed and we have to get right but let's be careful let's not be so shortsighted as to think that funding is the only thing that must be addressed.

[00:48:54] We have big opportunities to expand students access to educational choices and we must provide additional pathways for students to simply harness their ability as an individual to learn last year I advocated for and I signed legislation to expand the number of outside the classroom experiences and activities that can satisfy a graduation requirement. Learn everywhere initiative. It's a recognition that 21st century education system is not found only within the four walls of the classroom and consider the program. Consider an individual student that loves performing arts and maybe they're taking performing arts classes and programs at the local boys and girls club. Well that local boys and girls club can now apply for accreditation so that student is getting the credit and

the after school program that allows them and opens up their time to take other classes or other other educational opportunities in the school day. It really is a big win for the students of the state and in keeping with that principle I'm proud to announce today the creation of what we are calling New Hampshire Career Academies working with our community college systems existing funds. Our students can now take advantage of an optional fifth year of high school that will enable them to receive a high school diploma and a certificate and a college associate's degree free of cost to the student it comes with a guaranteed job interview with a manufacturer of choice. The revolutionary idea for the New Hampshire Career Academy is the result of the good work of Dean Graziano over at the Rochester School District Dean put together a program with the Great Bay Community College for Rochester high school seniors. It has put interested students on a career pathway with one of Rochester's premier employers. Albany saffron and it has a possibility across the state now of achieving what so far has eluded so many a model that does not cost the taxpayer or the educational system any additional money but makes free college degree available to our new hampshire students.

[00:51:39] This and I have to give credit where credit is really due this innovative program was something that was brought to me by Commissioner blue.

[00:51:52] It's hard work putting it together.

[00:51:54] He's done an absolute exceptional job. Thank you Frank both initiatives that I've just discussed underscore an important principle.

[00:52:16] Government is not the solution to every problem but government can help ensure that the doors of opportunity are open at every level.

[00:52:24] When I took office it was my firm belief that government should be about empowering individuals not just institutions.

[00:52:30] And just two years ago I stood before you and proposed what I called the governor scholarship program the governor's scholarship did exactly that. It provided opportunity for students that wasn't there before we invested in students directly so they could choose the best path suited for them whether it was the community college or the university system or public school or private school or for goodness sakes you can use it to get your nursing degree with the Red Cross. These funds are now available and in its first year approximately 600 students across the state took advantage and with the program scheduled to increase about another 20 percent next year. Frankly I really think the opportunities are endless.

[00:53:08] Thank you for making that so I'm going to take a moment again and brag about Valerie a little bit.

[00:53:31] So because I digress all the time I was dry when we were driving in this morning in the snow storm.

[00:53:38] Not only was I am always proud of my wife and thinking about the amazing things and I'm not going to embarrass her too much.

[00:53:43] But I'm listening to the radio to Greg in the morning buzz when I hear Greg Greg here. Where are you. He's back there. I hear Greg and Scotty battling over who likes to poop like trevallion more.

[00:53:55] Who can blame them.

[00:53:58] But I talked a little bit about what she did with the bridges house building using the bridges house using bridges to build bridges. And one of the programs that we brought in veterans groups we brought in a lot of focus on early childhood education bringing a lot of folks together doing really amazing things folks from outside the state sharing their experiences. Again folks Thurley childhood education what was really interesting because you had folks that are here part of New Hampshire. Most a lot of nonprofits a lot of folks from school districts and it was amazing they hadn't met. It was really one of those things where I think we take it for granted a little bit but to bring them together share their ideas and really talk about the path that not just the government should be providing but local communities can provide those opportunities right those doorways that we can open for these kids it was great. But another area where there was a lot of fun she brought in a group called Project Green Schools to the Friends of the bridges house. And it's a national program and it awards grants to student driven environmental and community service projects. And one afternoon a group of students came in from various schools various environmental projects if they had taken the initiative on and it was like a shark tank. There was a panel of judges. We sat there they presented their environmental projects one little girl wanted to produce paper in the classroom and she was looking for some money to invest in better modems and Wi-Fi in her school. One group of kids wanted to do an outdoor classroom. They were building a pretty significant structure. High school is really impressive. One group was doing something with mobile apps I mean cutting edge stuff and it wasn't just here's my idea. Give us some money. It was really impressive you saw these kids. They thought about the House and the whys and what the true end result was what the cost benefit analysis of these projects were and whether they were in fourth fifth sixth grade or all the way up to high school answering some pretty tough questions it was it was quite inspiring quite empowering. And that was funded really through corporate partners. We were able to provide those grants and some of those.

[00:55:55] I don't know if it was Wal-Mart at the time I don't Carol to say Wal-Mart God bless them. They put up some great money for these kids right to invest in these kids invest in these projects. And again hopefully get people thinking and students thinking across the state for the next generation of projects. And you all know how passionate about energy and environmental policy I was and a lot of you know I was an environmental engineer I spent a lot of time in the field working with chlorinated solvents and PC and TCE.

[00:56:22] Fast wasn't even an issue just 15 years ago was amazing we didn't have the technology.

[00:56:26] Now we know and we know the facts issue here in this day. Yes. I think doing a great job working on it finding it finding out what we can do. We just released new standards yesterday over it. Yes which I think is going to again provide that pathway where we're going to go with some of these issues. But environmental policy and energy policy really go together.

[00:56:47] It's just it's just kind of the way it is. And when you have some of the highest rates of electricity in the country the issue. I firmly believe and I think most people agree does have to be at the forefront as it really affects every citizen that's stuck paying a bill. That's why we need to consider can continue supporting on all of the above strategy which is included in our 10 year energy plan. And I've always said you need to view your energy policy through the lens of the rate payer and I'll be honest I hear a lot of talk from legislators and folks running for office as they say yes we're going to support issues and we are going to lower electricity rates and then they vote for legislation that raises electricity rates. You cannot have it both ways. That's all we as if you want to talk about lowering rates then I implore you to support legislation that does just that. It's the most vulnerable among us remember seniors individuals on fixed incomes those are at the greatest risk of high electric rates. And I think it's time.

[00:57:49] My proposal is that we refocus our efforts on them. I'm advocating today that renewable energy initiatives should benefit low income ratepayers first and foremost. And whether it's solar or wind or battery or biomass whatever it is going to be we need to ensure that the benefits of these well-intentioned environmentally valuable programs deliver results to the people who are struggling to pay the bill each month.

[00:58:16] While other states have unfortunately decided to put developers interests ahead of ratepayers in New Hampshire we simply have to put citizens first.

[00:58:44] We do not need to further raise electricity rates or raise taxes to be good environmental stewards. We just need to be smarter about how we spend the money and when talking about climate policy. I've always said we have to take that three pronged approach. You have to look at the environmental the social the economic impacts to the communities and to the individuals that bear the burden and the benefits of these programs. The Office of Strategic Initiatives and the public utility commission are currently working out a plan for the multimillion dollar clean energy fund which is being made available this year. I want to see renewable energy projects for low income families and communities to be a priority for these investment dollars.

[00:59:27] Make sure that those that bear the brunt of the costs of renewable energy are the first in line to receive the economic benefits while New Hampshire has truly sent us to Concord Concord to deliver results and there will be times when we disagree without a doubt.

[00:59:59] But again to be sure we do so in a way that's free from personal attack or unnecessary political rhetoric. We're here for a greater purpose to represent the needs of our constituents. We can disagree respectfully we can focus on moving forward in areas where we can find common ground. And it is not always easy. It takes constant vigilance to see some of the tougher issues all the way to the end.

[01:00:21] But we truly have to be up to the task. And I'm going to end by telling you another personal family story of ours one that has become almost lore in our family.

[01:00:32] So let me take you back wasn't 6 but it was back to 1985.

[01:00:37] I was in the fifth grade and my father who was governor at the time we weren't we were a big family where we weren't prone to taking money family vacations. But that summer the National Governors Conference was being held in Boise Idaho.

[01:00:52] And we all went. We all went out to Boise and following the conference my father had the brilliant idea to pilot into a station wagon and drive across Idaho to see Yellowstone National Park. Tremendous opportunity. And so we piled into this Wally wagon looking thing and we drive and we see the geysers and you know we have a schedule to keep. So we're moving. It's a it's a long trip. And on the way back he says hey I'm looking at the map and there's this place called craters of the Moon National Monument.

[01:01:27] It's only 200 miles out of the way what do you say and as beautiful as the trip was as grateful as we were to have the opportunity after five days being crammed in the station wagon. We all know. Thank you. It's great. We're wonderful but let's get to Boise.

[01:01:45] We just we're ready to go home we've kind of had enough. So my father said OK and you know he was always at the wheel and he was driving through the night. And around 6:00a.m. the sun starts to come up as we're pulling into Boise and we look around and we quickly realize we're not in Boise.

[01:02:07] It literally looks like we're on the moon and we were stunned were stunned.

[01:02:13] I mean we're crammed in the back of this thing we're now 200 miles off course and we said What are you doing. What is this Lunatik done to us.

[01:02:22] And he just smiled and said You'll thank me ten years from now believe it or not there's a moral to the story.

[01:02:31] And this is all very much so for a lot of the newer legislators that are that are here with us people are I'm going to let visitors this session. A lot of folks that have good ideas and propose good bills and they'll get them through committee and they'll take a victory lap.

[01:02:44] He got to see it to the end. When your mind is on something when your heart is in it. Don't fall asleep.

[01:02:52] The big decisions are often made right at the very end before something becomes law.

[01:02:56] Before we initiate right. Don't fall asleep in the car because you trust me you don't want to wake up. Craters of the moon.

[01:03:14] Thank you so very much.

[01:03:16] It is an absolute honor to serve as your gunner and I can't tell you how humbling it is. It's an honor to work with the legislature and honor work with our esteemed Executive Council with our commissioners with the directors with the citizens of the state that walk in our doors every single day. Thank you so very much. God bless this great state. God bless all of you. Thank you.