

## **Governor Walker**

Today, I thank God for His grace; for the privilege of living in such a remarkable country; and for growing up in the greatest state in the nation. As the son of a small town pastor and a part-time secretary in Delavan, it is quite an honor to serve as your Governor. Thank you for that cherished opportunity.

I want to thank my family: Tonette—who is my rock and an amazing First Lady; our sons, Matt and Alex—who have done an outstanding job serving as our masters of ceremony here today; my parents, Llew and Pat Walker—who always set a powerful example of how to serve others; my brother, David, sister-in-law, Maria, and their girls, Isabella and Eva; and to all of my other family members—I am grateful for all of your tremendous love and devotion.

Thanks go out to all who are participants in our ceremony today. I am particularly grateful to the members of the 132nd Army Band and all of the other members of the Wisconsin National Guard—not only for your services today, but for the ongoing support of our many brave men and women who are deployed even as we speak. Our prayers go out to each and every one of you.

And a special thank you as well to all of our outstanding veterans who served our country so faithfully. We salute you.

And thank you to all of the people across Wisconsin who have offered your support and prayers to my family. We are so very grateful.

You see, years ago, Tonette and I sat down and prayed about getting in the race for Governor. We knew statewide elections are tough, but we were willing to make the sacrifice to ensure our sons would grow up in a Wisconsin that is as great as the one we grew up in.

Thankfully, because of our reforms, Matt and Alex's generation is growing up in an even better Wisconsin.

They are young people, like my sons, as well as the daughters of our Lt. Governor and of our Attorney General. The Kids from Wisconsin, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the Green Bay Girl Choir, the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Falls Baptist Music School Choirs and Chamber Orchestra, the Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School, and the Bruce Guadalupe Community School Jazz Band—each of them here today represent all of the sons and daughters from across this great state.

Our children are leading this inauguration ceremony as a reminder of our big dreams for them—and for the future of this great state.

The founders of Wisconsin had a grand vision as well. These ideals are laid out in the state Constitution that now rests here in this rotunda.

After the preamble, the start of this treasured document now reads:

“All people are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights; among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; to secure these rights, governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

These are powerful words. A few moments ago, I took an oath to support this constitution and the Constitution of the United States. I take that charge seriously.

Unlike other places around the world, this document says, in Wisconsin, it doesn't matter what class you were born into or what your parents did for a living. Here, our opportunities should be as equal as possible, but the outcomes should still be up to each and every one of us.

In Wisconsin, we understand that true freedom and prosperity do not come from the mighty hand of the government. They come from empowering people to control their own lives and their own destinies through the dignity born from work.

In Wisconsin, we understand people create jobs, not the government. Those who choose to employ—be it one or many—are to be appreciated and encouraged, so as to prosper and increase employment for others in the future.

In Wisconsin, we understand the best way to improve lives and strengthen families, as well as raise wages, is to assist people to get a better education and to acquire more skills. This is how we grow household incomes, while putting people to work.

Since I last stood at this podium, our state has become more free and prosperous. We took the power away from big government special interests and returned it to you—the hard-working taxpayers. More people are working and fewer are unemployed. School scores have improved and more of our students are graduating from high school.

Our retirement system is the only one fully funded in the country. The state's pension and debt ratio is one of the best. And Wisconsin's bond rating is positive.

In contrast to the politicians along the Potomac, we get things done here in the Badger state. There is a clear contrast between Washington and Wisconsin.

We've been good stewards of the taxpayers' money and lowered their tax burden as well. We've shown why the founders of this great nation looked to the states—and not the federal government—as the source of hope for this exceptional country. We will not let them down.

Now, we have a grand vision for the future—a dream of freedom and prosperity for all who live here in the great state of Wisconsin.

We will help our fellow citizens—regardless of mobility or income, station or status in life—to achieve the education and skills needed to succeed in their chosen occupations. This will not only help fill positions open today, but will build confidence in employers that they can create new jobs and find qualified workers to fill them.

We will ensure every child—regardless of background or birthright—has access to a quality education. For many, like my sons and me, it is in a traditional public school. For others, it may be in a charter, a private, a virtual or even a home school environment. Regardless, we will empower families to make the choice that is right for their sons and daughters.

We will reduce the size and scope of government to match the will of the people. State agencies will be merged to make them more effective, more efficient, and more accountable to the public. We will continue to weed out waste, fraud, and abuse. Budgets will be set based on the taxpayers' ability to pay and not on the government's ability to spend.

We will build the needed infrastructure to support a thriving economy. A transportation system to assist major industries, like manufacturing, agriculture, forest products, and tourism is a key part of this infrastructure. So is broadband internet access to connect every part of the state to the global economy and cost effective and reliable sources of power to fuel our growing economy.

Overall, everyone in this state should have an opportunity to live their piece of the American Dream—right here in Wisconsin.

For some, that dream might be succeeding in their chosen career—and maybe even starting their own business someday.

For others, that dream might mean owning their own home.

But for many of us, that dream is as simple as ensuring our children live in a place that it is better than the place we grew up in. As mentioned, Tonette and I decided to run for Governor years ago because we wanted our sons to grow up in a state where they, and future generations, have the opportunity to dream big and work hard to make those dreams a reality.

After traveling this state, I believe that we are not alone. Visiting factories and farms and small businesses on a frequent basis, I find mothers and fathers just like Tonette and me. They work hard each day for more than a paycheck or a title. They work hard, so their children can have a better life than they did.

That's what I want for Wisconsin. Working together, I believe we can create a state that is even better than the Wisconsin we grew up in.

Help us realize that dream of freedom and prosperity for all. For the sake of the children at this ceremony; for all of the others like them across this great state; and for countless generations yet to be born, we cannot let them down. We will not let them down. We will move Wisconsin forward.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the great State of Wisconsin.