



# COLORADO

## Governor Jared Polis

Good morning everyone.

One traditionally begins a State of the State address by acknowledging dignitaries here in the chamber, but this morning calls for something a little different. I want to first acknowledge the people who couldn't be here.

Please join me in a moment of silence for Coloradans who have lost their lives: to COVID, to violence, and to natural disasters including the recent Boulder County fires.

Now,

To the legislative leadership in both parties  
Members of the General Assembly,  
Lieutenant Governor Primavera,  
Treasurer Young  
Attorney General Weiser,  
Our dedicated First Gentleman Reis,  
Mayor Hancock  
Mayor Coffman  
Members of the State Board of Education,  
Justices of the Colorado Supreme Court,  
Members of the Cabinet,

Welcome. I appreciate and value your presence here today, and I look forward to all the good work we will do in the days and weeks ahead on behalf of the people of Colorado. We are so privileged to represent you.

My Fellow Coloradans,

I want to begin today with gratitude. Gratitude for the people of Colorado, who have shown-up, day after day, in the face of trauma and under the most difficult circumstances, to help one another, to help *OUR Colorado*. Gratitude for the individuals who set aside their own personal challenges to support the needs of our community. Gratitude for my colleagues in this chamber who have put Coloradans first, no matter what. And gratitude, of course, for my family. Marlon, I want to thank you for being here today and everyday for me and our family. Gratitude for my staff, who continue working in service to our great state through thick and thin.

While this pandemic has made even the most mundane activities risky, we have not endured the virus alone. Evil acts against innocent people in the places where we once ran errands or recreated have also made us feel less safe. We have feared the ever changing nature of the

virus, wondering if what protected us yesterday will protect us today. We learned that the words 'fire season' don't apply when the most destructive fire in Colorado history happens on December 30th. And we were reminded, once more, that our lives, and everything we hold dear, can go up in flames in an instant.

**Yet, hope shines through. Hope.**

I know how easy it is to get lost in the pain and sadness of what we've all endured together. But no matter how tough this year has been, I know for a fact that Coloradans are fundamentally good, we care for one another and we are tougher than anything thrown our way. I've seen it myself.

I've seen it in the students of Central High School in Mesa County, who, with the help of school staff, stood up a series of vaccination clinics before many of them were even eligible to get vaccinated, working 10 to 11 hour days to get more than 1,300 community members vaccinated. Mesa County Valley District 51 Assistant Superintendent Brian Hill, and school staff Kim Flynn and Trey Downey are here with us today. Please stand. You are remarkable role models for the students you help educate.

I've seen it in the men and women on the frontlines of this pandemic who have helped us achieve one of the shortest shutdowns and one of the lowest death rates in the country. Thank you to Colorado's COVID Response Team led by Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Director Jill Ryan; Public Safety Director Stan Hilkey; and, COVID-19 Incident Commander, Scott Bookman; our team of experts and scientists, our local public health officials working on the ground in their communities; national guard members who have spent the last 672 consecutive days supporting Colorado's pandemic response by staffing our testing sites and helping distribute vaccines, critical workers and staff in Colorado's 24/7 facilities, and of course the heroic nurses, doctors, and health care providers who have never stopped putting their patients first. Politicians talk about improving lives. You actually save lives. Please stand and let us recognize you.

I've seen it in the individuals and businesses who collectively donated more than \$20 Million to support their fellow Coloradans who had homes damaged or destroyed by the Boulder County fire.

I've seen it in Boulder Sheriff Joe Pelle and his team, and the firefighters and emergency responders, who sprung into action to save the lives and homes of their neighbors, even when they didn't know whether their own homes were still standing. We're joined by Sheriff Pelle, who, for the last 18 years, has led my hometown community of Boulder County through countless natural disasters and emergencies. Sheriff Pelle, firefighters, and emergency responders, please stand so we can thank you for the lifesaving work that you do every day.

I saw it in Lakewood Police Officer Ashley Ferris, who was injured in crossfire with the perpetrator of the heinous attacks across Denver and Lakewood. Still, she found the strength to

take down the shooter, ending his violent killing spree and saving many precious lives. She couldn't join us today, but we wish Officer Ferris a speedy recovery. Please join me in thanking her.

And I saw it in Boulder Officer Eric Talley and Arvada Officer Gordon Beesley, who both braved active shooter situations to save the lives of their fellow community members, even though it meant ultimately losing their own. They have our everlasting gratitude.

This is the Colorado spirit. These men and women define who we are as a people, and represent the very best of us. There are so many other stories like theirs, of everyday people doing their best and giving everything to protect our Colorado.

It feels like every time we turn on the news, all we see is partisanship, polarization and division. Division across the country. Division in Congress. But not here; not in Colorado, where we set aside our differences, and come together to do what is right. It's just who we are.

No one political party has a monopoly on good ideas or love of country. I am proud to be joined today by my friend and former Treasurer, Walker Stapleton, who I recently appointed to the Economic Development Commission. I appointed Walker because I know how much he loves this state, and Colorado will benefit from his talent and business savvy, just as the General Assembly will benefit from Speaker Garnett's appointment of Representative Marc Catlin as vice chair of the House Agriculture Committee.

This isn't my Colorado or your Colorado, ***this is our Colorado*** – which is why we respond together, we heal together, we move forward together, and we succeed together. It's why, in spite of all we have faced this last year, I count it the greatest honor of my life to serve as your Governor, and am hopeful as ever about the promise of our Colorado.

It's up to us here in this chamber to continue doing everything in our power to protect the way of life we cherish in our state, and build on our accomplishments of the last year.

When I stood before you all last February, I described a vision for the future of our state.

A future where every child can get the education they deserve.

A future where a dynamic, multi-modal transportation system meets the needs of our growing population.

A future where access to affordable and quality health care is a given, not an aspiration.

A future where we protect and invest in the public lands and parks that make Colorado beautiful by building a clean energy economy.

A future where our people and our communities aren't just getting by, but thriving.

That future was more than just a dream; it was a call to action -- a challenge for us all to live up to this shared vision of our state. I'm proud that in spite of the many difficulties we have weathered, that vision is within reach, thanks to the hard work of this legislative body and our shared commitment to deliver for Coloradans.

I want to take a moment to recognize the best partners a Governor could ask for in the two gentlemen sitting behind me. In these unprecedented times, we may not agree on everything, but our unwavering, mutual commitment to the success of all Coloradans and our beautiful state is the rock solid foundation upon which we've built a lasting partnership rooted in trust. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to Speaker Alec Garnett and President Leroy Garcia in their last legislative session for their service to the people of our state.

And to House Majority Leader Esgar, who is also starting her last session, thank you for your partnership, and tireless advocacy on behalf of Pueblo and all our hard working state employees.

To Senator Holbert, thank you for the dialogue and bipartisan collaboration, and for your steady leadership for Douglas County.

Finally, to Senator Fenberg and Representative McKean, if you want a shout-out like this, you'd better stay put for another couple more years.

Just as we've stepped up to meet what has often felt like a never-ending onslaught of disasters and challenges, we have the opportunity to respond with that same resolve and urgency to the day-to-day crises Coloradans are facing.

Because of this pandemic, the cost of living in our fair state continues to escalate, and Coloradans are desperate for relief. So let's deliver.

We must double down on our promise to help every business and family succeed. That means taking less of your hard-earned money in fees and taxes, and putting more in your pockets and paychecks.

Inflation has accelerated during the pandemic. Supply chains have been disrupted. Spending habits have changed. The cost of housing has spiked. Farmers and ranchers face unprecedented losses, and many Coloradans have left the workforce. Too many people are struggling to make ends meet.

As your Governor, I want you to know: we hear you and we are here to do something about it. While all of these complex problems can't be solved overnight, we promise to use every single tool at our disposal to save hardworking Coloradans the money you need to live the life you want.

In one of his most popular songs, legendary songwriter Paul Simon sings of 50 ways.

*You just slip out the back, Jack  
Make a new plan, Stan  
You don't need to be coy, Roy  
Just get yourself free*

Now, I'm no Paul Simon, or even Vice President Selina Meyer, but in the year ahead, I'll be pushing for MORE than 50 ways to save Coloradans money. I don't have a knack for rhyming or a voice to sing, what I CAN promise is that the work we do here will save Coloradans money.

My version of Simon's lyrics goes a little something like this:

*"Just cut the tax, Max;  
lower the rate, Nate;  
you don't need to pay more, Thor;  
just send your kids for free (to preschool and kindergarten)*

This isn't a new idea for my administration, in fact it's been hard-wired into our DNA from day one.

In my first weeks in office, we created the Office of Saving People Money on Health Care, which—in collaboration with legislators and healthcare providers--has resulted in nation- leading efforts to reduce health care costs.

Thanks to the efforts of Representatives McCluskie, Representative Rich, Senator Donovan, and Senator Rankin, we created a reinsurance program which has reduced health care premiums on the individual market by 24%, saving hardworking Coloradans an average of \$1,400 this year statewide, and an average of \$2,450 per year in Western Colorado, one of the highest cost markets.

With the tireless commitment of Senator Donovan, Representative Jodeh, and Representative Roberts, we created a first-in-the-country insurance model that will save money for everyone who buys insurance on the individual or small group markets.

And thanks to the leadership of Representative Roberts, we are capping the skyrocketing cost of insulin at \$100 per month.

After years of advocacy by members of this body, including former Representative Wilson, current Representative McLachlan and Senators Bridges and Fields, the General Assembly passed free, full-day kindergarten, saving families up to \$4,800 – and giving our youngest Coloradans a fantastic start in life.

With Speaker Garnett, Representative Sirota, Senate Majority Leader Fenberg, and Senator Buckner leading the way, we're focused on implementing free, universal preschool by 2023, saving even more money for young families with an average \$4,300 in savings per family.

Health care and education are where Coloradans face some of the highest costs, but we know they aren't the only pain points. That's why we've also implemented historic tax relief, helping Coloradans keep more of what they earn.

We funded the Colorado Child Tax Credit for the first time in history, giving families with children under age six up to \$1,080 per year per child. We also doubled the state Earned Income Tax Credit, giving workers up to \$1,495 per year. We cut taxes for retirees by exempting social security earnings from the state income tax, saving seniors up to \$654 per year.

Voters also approved reductions to the Colorado income tax rate, which is saving families about \$100 per year on average, while helping businesses hire more and pay more. And because we in this chamber are not only committed to saving Coloradans money, but to doing it in a way that ensures continued access to critical state services, we fully paid for the tax cuts by reducing lobbyist loopholes and special interest tax giveaways for the wealthy and well-connected.

And I want to thank Senator Dominic Moreno, Senator Chris Hansen, and Representatives Sirota and Weissman for their leadership on this bold tax reform package that is already saving people money.

Because our revenues are strong, families will also receive a tax refund of \$74 on average this year, and about \$440 on average next year, along with another income tax rate cut of 1.1%.

We also cut property taxes for farms, ranches, renewable energy projects, and homes, and next year, we will start letting every homeowner defer increases on their property taxes, ensuring they won't ever have to pay a tax bill they can't afford. Thank you Treasurer Young for your leadership in protecting families from rising property tax bills.

My administration will work with both parties to continue cutting taxes and fees wherever we can, but never at the expense of teachers and law enforcement

We took bipartisan action in 2020 and again in 2021, allowing restaurants and bars to keep their sales taxes during the pandemic! Thank you to Representatives Van Winkle, Valdez, and Mullica, and Senators Bridges, Pettersen, Woodward, and former Senator Tate.

In our commitment to help support our local economies, our tax reform package permanently exempted small businesses from the business personal property tax, meaning real savings in time and money for nearly every main street business.

Businesses like The Smiling Pig restaurant in Park County, owned by Tim Gregg, will save more than \$1,000 a year thanks to these policies. We're joined today by Tim, and Park County Assessor Monica Jones. Please join me in welcoming them.

To keep costs down for entrepreneurs like Tim and so many others, I'm proposing that we further reduce fees like the unemployment insurance premium and the Paid Family and Medical Leave premium, resulting in hundreds of millions in savings for the businesses and workers that power our economy.

And while we're at it, to foster our entrepreneurial spirit, we should make it free for Coloradans to start their own business. I look forward to working with Secretary of State Jena Griswold, Representatives Cutter and Sullivan, and Senators Pettersen and Kolker on this effort.

Last year, Majority Leader Fenberg, Senator Donovan and Representatives Will and Tipper brought us the innovative Keep Colorado Wild Pass, cutting the cost of an annual pass to state parks by more than half, saving the average family more than \$40. With this pass, everyone can enjoy our treasured public lands for less – including our newest state parks at Fishers Peak and Sweetwater Lake, while increasing the resources to care for these lands.

Thanks to CDOT Director Shoshana Lew, a bipartisan coalition of legislators, and local leaders, including Mayor Suthers and Mayor Coffman, we passed historic transportation reform.

Spearheaded by Senator Faith Winter, Senate Majority Leader Fenberg, Speaker Garnett and Representative Matt Gray, we cut vehicle registration fees, saving people money, while making record investments in our rural roads, and new ways to transport people, goods, and services that will save Coloradans time and money, and put our state on a pathway to a cleaner, more sustainable transportation system. We are finally going to fix the darn roads.

Looking to the year ahead, I am excited that, with the leadership of Representatives Ortiz and Young, and Senators Fields and Kolker, we are doubling down on our efforts to cut costs for Coloradans by preventing increases in drivers' license fees, and I look forward to efforts to reduce vehicle registration fees.

We've lowered housing costs by funding more than 14,000 units of affordable housing in the last year, saving families more than \$72 million annually. And we are ready to do more.

Rising housing costs are pricing people out of neighborhoods they've lived in for years. To create even more housing opportunities, to improve affordability, we should capitalize on the once in a lifetime funding from President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act.

I look forward to building on the incredible work of the bi-partisan Affordable Housing Transformational Task Force, under the leadership of former Representative Dominique Jackson, Chairman Roberts, and Vice Chairwoman Senator Julie Gonzales, to create stronger, healthier, and more affordable communities.

And because we want to lead by example, we are saving Coloradans money by making your State Government more efficient and effective. We are on track to reduce our state's office space footprint by 1 million square feet over the next three years, cutting costs and improving employee retention and morale. We're implementing best practices from the private sector to save millions in contract negotiations. And by improving our digital services, we are becoming leaner, less bureaucratic, and more convenient for the people of Colorado.

In the coming weeks and months, we must continue these efforts and find new and innovative ways to save Coloradans money.

These policies matter to Coloradans. It isn't just dollars and cents back in our pockets, it's peace of mind for our families, and that's priceless!

*So yes, there must be at least 50 ways to Save Coloradans Money, 50 ways to Save Coloradans Money.*

If it isn't clear, saving Coloradans money and keeping our state affordable is my top priority during this legislative session. And one of the biggest areas to save people money is healthcare.

Thanks to Lt. Governor Dianne Primavera, who leads our Office of Saving People Money on Health Care, and our legislative champions, we have delivered on our promises to cut costs, even in the midst of the pandemic, cutting premiums and capping out of pocket drug costs. And we're not done yet.

Here in Colorado and across the nation, the pandemic has worsened what was already a horrifying trend of young children, teens, and adults suffering increased feelings of anxiety, isolation, depression, and other mental health issues. Colorado needs to take bold action now.

We want to partner with local governments and school districts to multiply the impact of historic funding to create a responsible, effective approach to addressing behavioral health needs from the mountains to the plains. Getting there means offering more integrated physical and mental health services, bolstering our often overworked behavioral health workforce, and most importantly, getting Colorado children the support they need to be happy – **to just be kids.**

Thanks to the leadership of Representative Michaelson Jenet, we now have the I Matter Program, which connects our kids with critical mental health support. We're joined today by Melyssa Mead and her wonderful son Grady. When Grady - **like so many kids across our state** - needed mental health support this last year, Melyssa ran up against the harsh reality of an expensive and bureaucratic behavioral health system. She had first struggled to find the support her family needed, until she found the free I Matter Program. Within minutes of reaching out through **imattercolorado.org**, Melyssa and Grady were on their way. And a few days later, they were scheduled for their first appointment.



Grady, your future is bright! Know that everyone in this room is rooting for you, and you are never alone.

Let's build on this success. Good work is already being done, and we have the opportunity to make it available for all Coloradans, especially our youth.

I want to thank the members of the Behavioral Health Transformational Task Force under the capable leadership of Committee Chairwoman Pettersen and Vice-chair Gonzales-Gutierrez. We have confidence that your many excellent recommendations will lead to tremendous strides in looking after the mental health of our fellow Coloradans.

As we pursue the improved health and wellbeing of Coloradans, especially our children, we shouldn't overlook the power of a strong education.

Helping kids get a great education is the cornerstone and passion of my life's work. I'm so proud that over the last few years, we have done what generations before believed impossible: we established free, full-day kindergarten and universal preschool. We're joined today by Alexis Ramirez and her son Benjamin, who know full well the importance of free kindergarten. Benjamin is attending kindergarten for free, along with more than 60,000 other Colorado five year olds thanks to the work we've done here. Please join me in welcoming Alexis and Benjamin.

But despite our progress, the pandemic has dealt an especially hard blow to our students, and made our educators go far beyond what any of us could have expected.

My administration worked tirelessly with school superintendents and local public health leaders to successfully bring Colorado children back to the classroom last year. We are providing free medical grade masks – with more than two million distributed to date – testing supplies for all students and staff, and are hosting on-site vaccine clinics to ensure that every eligible student and staff member gets the protection they deserve.

I want to thank every educator and school staff member who has done their part and then some to help keep Colorado schools open. There is nothing more important to the future of our state than educating Colorado children.

That's why I have a plan for historic investment in Kindergarten through 12th grade education, which will reduce the Budget Stabilization Factor to a 13-year low, while increasing per pupil funding by roughly \$12-13 thousand per classroom, supporting smaller class sizes and enhanced pay for teachers. And we must take the RESPONSIBLE approach by setting money aside to keep up with these investments for future years.

With this increase in funding, the Canon City School District will be able to compensate educators better and finally be able to fund full-time mental health professionals and counseling staff to provide the emotional support necessary to help students thrive in each and every one of

its schools. We're joined today by Canon City school counselors Brian Vaniwarden and Stacy Andrews. Please stand and be recognized.

I'm also proposing stronger support for our state's institutions of higher education, including an expansion of available financial aid, and investments to help reduce costs and keep tuition flat.

Just as we are investing in the success of our students, we are also investing in the people and small businesses that power Colorado's economy.

I want to thank the Workforce Task Force, including Representative McCluskie and Senator Zenzinger and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, for your commitment to crafting recommendations that will help create a thriving workforce where everyone in every community, in every corner of the state can "Live long and prosper".

We know this pandemic has been hard on workers across all industries, but perhaps none more than doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals.

I want to thank the Joint Budget Committee for their partnership on raising base wages to \$15 an hour minimum for more than 30,000 Medicaid Home and Community Based Services workers who provide care to aging and disabled Coloradans, and now we are doing the same for similar positions in nursing facilities.

Looking ahead, I am proposing that we waive licensing fees for nurses and mental health care workers, as well as for our nursing homes and assisted living facilities whose residents have been particularly vulnerable throughout the pandemic. Eliminating these fees puts money back into the pockets of our dedicated healthcare workers.

Putting this pandemic behind us means learning to live with the curveballs that COVID-19 may throw, but in order to do that, we need our hospitals to maintain capacity and ensure Coloradans get the care they need, no matter what. That's why I will be proposing in the days ahead, a three year plan to make historic investments to stabilize our healthcare workforce and expand career paths for all Coloradans who heed the noble calling of caring for others. Moving forward, we can't let our society and our economy be impacted by hospital capacity, and I look forward to working with legislators and health care leaders to ensure that no matter where this pandemic takes us, we will be ready.

Just as an earthquake is followed by aftershocks, we know that the overarching crisis of the pandemic has led to many other crises, perhaps lesser seen, but no less important to address. Some Coloradans are most impacted by the health risks of COVID-19, others are most pained by the rising cost of everyday items, disruptions to our children's education, or the increase of crime in the communities we call home.

I want to take a moment to recognize the law enforcement professionals here with us today. In addition to Sheriff Pelle, we're joined by several District Attorneys, Police Chiefs, Sheriffs and

our State Patrol Officers, who spend every day keeping us safe. You always stand up for us, so today, let US stand up for YOU. Thank you.

I've never been one to shy away from ambitious goals, which is why I want to spend the next five years making Colorado one of the top ten safest states in the country. Let's "Make it so!" We've already taken critical steps in fighting crime and promoting public safety, and now we need to continue that work.

I'm proud to put forward a responsible public safety plan that builds on historic legislation of years past, gives much-needed support and funding to local law enforcement while also investing in community-based approaches and organizations that can help prevent violent crime from occurring in the first place. Organizations like GRASP, which stands for Gang Rescue and Support Project, is run by peers who have turned their lives around and want to help others do the same. GRASP focuses on supporting Colorado youth through mental health support, at-risk intervention, job training and mentoring. Please join me in welcoming GRASP's Executive Director Johnnie Williams.

We are going to make our communities safer by focusing on training and recruiting efforts for police, supporting community policing models, increasing access to mental health services, offering early intervention grants, increasing support for domestic violence victims, and making safety improvements in our schools and on our streets.

I want to thank the Senate President Garcia and Senator Buckner who, along with Representatives Tipper and Ricks, are leading a particularly exciting initiative – Safer Streets – which will empower law enforcement to work directly with communities to create stronger, safer communities, with an emphasis on those areas most touched by crime.

We owe it to the people of Colorado to improve safety and make Colorado truly one of the ten safest states in the nation over the next five years.

As Ben Franklin said, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Data and common sense tell us that preventing a crime does more to keep people safe than solving a crime after it was committed.

With that being said, we also know that there are times when the swift arm of justice is the best solution, which is why I look forward to legislation to strengthen penalties for drug dealers peddling fentanyl in our communities. Coloradans are sick and tired of seeing this drug ruin lives and kill loved ones.

It's also time that we put forward bigger and bolder solutions to reduce homelessness. We know what works; we just need more of it: affordable and transitional housing, substance use treatment and recovery care, related residential programs, and permanent housing with wrap-around support services, and recipients of funds need to be held accountable for actually reducing homelessness.

We will stop at nothing to keep Coloradans safe. Public safety is a critical component of a strong and healthy community. But it doesn't end there.

Building safer, healthier communities also means improving our air quality and meeting the climate crisis head-on.

Only two weeks ago, our state watched in horror as the fire in Boulder County, fueled by extreme winds and drought conditions, swept through communities like yours and mine. These are our neighbors, our friends, and our family.

Last year, historic mudslides destroyed portions of I-70 through Glenwood Canyon. And in 2020, the three largest wildfires in Colorado history scorched hundreds of thousands of acres, filling our skies with smoke-filled air for months on end.

I'm grateful for the work my administration has done in partnership with Colorado's legislative leaders to move our state toward a cleaner more renewable energy future. We've set Colorado on a path to reducing emissions statewide, while also creating two new state parks and expanding access to our state trust lands. Thanks to our legislative champions, we have invested in the people and technology we need to effectively respond to climate disasters. Tools like the agile FireHawk helicopter can give our firefighters the upper hand on the frontlines. And targeted mitigation efforts can prevent small fires from becoming catastrophes. I'm requesting additional support for the men and women on the ground, including personal protective equipment, training, and other equipment needs for local fire departments.

The fresh mountain air that so many people associate with Colorado isn't a given. We have to fight to protect it. I'm committed to cutting emissions and getting this done by improving air quality. It's not about health alone; it's about seizing the opportunity to reduce costs for Coloradans and save people money, while preserving the Colorado way of life.

We will continue making targeted investments to improve air quality monitoring and enforcement, increase the availability of clean transportation options like electric school buses, accelerate our transition to a cleaner economy, and apply real accountability as we seek and secure environmental justice for those who are most impacted.

And because water is the lifeblood of our state and our critical agriculture industry, we must work together across industries, divides, and state boundaries to secure a sustainable water future for all Coloradans. We will continue to protect and aggressively assert Colorado's water rights under all existing water compacts. And I am also committed to updating Colorado's Water Plan to make it more climate resilient, and ensure that our cities, farms, and streams can thrive for generations to come.

Just like 2021 was the year that Britney reclaimed her freedom and Taylor Swift reclaimed her music, it was also the year we began reclaiming what it means to live happy and healthy lives here in Colorado, even in the midst of tragedy — and this is the year we double down on that. Heck, even the beloved Colorado icon Casa Bonita is making a much-hoped-for comeback thanks to South Park's Trey Parker and Matt Stone. The pandemic has taken so much from us, but no more. As Taylor says, *I don't know about you but I'm feeling 2022, everything will be alright, because we know what we gotta do.*

It's easy for us all to talk about the grand ideas we have for our beloved state, but it's another thing entirely to turn words into actions.

When I was elected Governor, I knew that I would be remembered not for who I was, where I came from, or even what I said at events like this, but for what I did to make a meaningful, measurable, positive impact on the lives of Coloradans. How our efforts helped businesses succeed, put money in people's pockets, made streets safer, air cleaner, and lives healthier.

If there is one thing that you take away from today, let it be my optimism for the days ahead, our commitment to Moving Colorado Forward by saving people money, improving affordability, and making our state a better place for everyone.

Because this is Our Colorado, and I couldn't be more proud to be your Governor.

When I see the staggering beauty of the Rocky Mountains, I'm reminded of what it means to be a Coloradan.

It's true from the Flatirons to Fishers Peak to Pikes Peak to Longs Peak and beyond.

You see, these mountains have withstood millions of years of whipping winds, pounding rains, cutting ice, and blistering fires. Cracks have formed and the rock has eroded, but nevertheless they stand tall, serving as a beacon of hope, a point of great pride and a reflection of who we are.

So when I think about the state of our state, I'm brought back to our purple mountain majesties.

The state of our state, just like the people of Colorado, is strong, it is steadfast, and in spite of everything, we are boldly moving forward.

God bless you all, God bless *our* Colorado, and God bless the United States of America.