

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
104th GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE

10th Legislative Day

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Speaker Tarver: "The House will be in order. Members will be in their chairs. We shall be led today in prayer by Representative Grasse. Members and guests are asked to refrain from starting their laptops, turn off all cell phones, and rise for the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance."

Grasse: "As we gather together, we stand today not in shadows, not in silence, but in the bright and watchful gaze of the people. They have lent us their trust, not as a gift, but as a charge to be honest, to be just, to be stewards of what is right and fair. So, let truth be the language we speak here, let clarity be the path we walk here, let every dollar spent bear the weight of responsibility, and let service be the song that hums beneath our work, for we are not here to take, not here to hoard, not here to rule. We're here to lift, to labor, to leave this place better than we found it. So, let us rise with courage in our chests, with wisdom in our hands, with justice in our bones because the people are watching, the future is waiting, and let us be worthy of both. Amen."

Speaker Tarver: "We shall be led in the Pledge of Allegiance today by Chairwoman Debbie Meyers-Martin."

Meyers-Martin - et al: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Speaker Tarver: "Roll Call for Attendance, please. Leader Gabel is recognized to report any excused absences on the Democratic side of the aisle."

Gabel: "Speaker, let the record show that Representatives Ammons, Andrade, Costa Howard, and Jones are excused today."

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Speaker Tarver: "Thank you. Leader Keicher is recognized to report any excused absences on the Republican side of the aisle."

Keicher: "Thank you, Speaker. Please let the record reflect that Representatives Meier, Stephens, and Wilhour are excused for today."

Speaker Tarver: "Have all recorded themselves who wish? Mr. Clerk, please take the record. There being 111 Members answering the roll call, a quorum is present. Under the Order of Resolutions, we have House Bill 1... House Resolution, excuse me, 150, offered by Representative Buckner."

Buckner: "Thank you... thank you, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, today, as we gather in this chamber, the people's House, we don't just mark Black History Month to recognize history in the past, but a history that's also in the making. This is... this is the body where Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, began his political career in 1832. He was a Member of the Illinois House, where he learned the power of government to shape a nation. But while Lincoln would one day help end slavery in this country, we cannot ignore that this very institution, the Illinois House of Representatives, was not always on the right side of history. Before Illinois became a beacon of progress, it was a place where Black people were restricted, marginalized, and denied their most basic rights under the law. The Illinois Black Codes created a legacy of oppression. The Illinois Black Codes passed by this legislature stripped Black people of political power, barring them from voting, holding office, and serving on juries. Because of these codes, free Black residents were truly not free. They were required to carry certificates of freedom at

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all times to prove that they weren't escaped slaves. Without papers, they could be sold, arrested, fined, or even bought back into slavery. Illinois passed laws to keep free Black people from settling here at all. The 1853 Exclusion Act, approved by our predecessors in this chamber, made it illegal for free Black persons to even enter the state. This House rejected anti-slavery petitions from abolitionists, dismissing them as the work of troublemakers. Instead of standing for freedom in an earlier time, this body passed resolutions condemning abolitionists and seeking to keep Illinois a, quote-unquote, 'white state.' That is why today is so important. Because today, for the first time in our state's 206-year history, this chamber is led by a Black man, Speaker Emanuel 'Chris' Welch. As I previously stated, Illinois did not always make room for Black leadership. It once shut the doors to people who look like Speaker Welch, people who look like me, and people who look like millions of Illinoisans that we serve here today. But today, those doors are not just open, they are being held open by the very people this House once tried to exclude. Mr. Speaker, we recognize you today, not just because you've made history, but because you understand the weight of that history. You stand on the shoulders of John W.E. Thomas, the first Black legislator in 1877, who fought against the very laws this House once passed. You follow in the footsteps of Harold Washington, Carol Moseley Braun, Barack Obama, and so many others who fought to expand justice in the State of Illinois. And now, you carry the torch forward, ensuring that the voices of those once shut out of this chamber are not just heard, but are leading

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the conversation. Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias has honored Black firsts in Illinois with a remarkable display that highlights trailblazers in our state's history throughout the Capitol, and today we proudly add Speaker Welch's name to that list. Mr. Speaker, HR150 is a reminder that your leadership is not symbolic, it is substantive. You have led with integrity, with vision, and with a deep commitment to making Illinois a place where equity is not just a talking point, but a reality. As we celebrate Black History Month, let us not just look back at history, let us honor it by continuing to do the work. Because history isn't just made by those in our past, it's being made right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your leadership, and thank you for making history."

Speaker Tarver: "Speaker Welch."

Speaker Welch: "Mr. Speaker, I don't know whose idea this was, but whoever... whoever did it, I'm going to keep their bills in Rules. It is truly... I'm truly surprised by this. I don't know if you guys can tell. Mika, I'm going to get you when I get back. I was just told to be out here, there was going to be a group picture. Thank you all so much. It truly is an honor of a lifetime to just be in this chamber, let alone to have the opportunity to be the Speaker of the House. It is a role that I... I take seriously. I tell people, I am the only person on inauguration day that took two oaths: one as Rep., with all of you, and then one as Speaker. And I take those oaths seriously. I'm not just Speaker of the... I'm not Speaker of the Democrats. I'm Speaker of the entire House, and I just happen to be a Black man. And... but that does not escape me,

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the significance of that. Particularly in the moment we're in right now, where a lot of folks are trying to erase Black history. So, this is really special. You guys got me good today. I love you all, I love this great state, and I just want what's best for each and every one of us, whether we're in a red district or a blue district. We want what's best for all of Illinois. Thank you all so much."

Speaker Tarver: "Representative Buckner moves for the adoption of House Resolution 150. All those in favor say 'aye'; all of those opposed say 'nay.' In the opinion of the chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the resolution is adopted. Representative Reick, for what do you seek recognition?"

Reick: "Point of personal privilege, Mr. Speaker, please."

Speaker Tarver: "Please proceed."

Reick: "You know, yesterday we stood here, or sat here, and listened to the governor give his State of the State and budget address. And I didn't say anything afterwards because I wanted to chew on it a little while and... and make some... give some thought to it. He started off his speech by talking about past governors making statements that fit the times in which they were serving, Edward Coles being one of them, talking about the Constitutional Convention of 1832 and the issue of slavery here in... in Illinois, which was the big issue in that constitutional convention. He's right, we have to speak... the governor has to speak according to the times in which he or she is serving. And yesterday, the times in which we are serving was not really fully addressed in a sense that work toward describing what the issues were facing Illinois. He gave his budget address, and he totally overlooked the

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issue of how we're going to pay down the ever-increasing debt on our pension plans. He didn't speak about the looming deficit and fiscal cliff in mass transit and how we're going to approach that in this district... or in this... in this General Assembly. He didn't address, except through wishful thinking, as to how we're going to obtain the revenue figures that he says he seemed so comfortable to say that we're going to obtain. And he also talked about making cuts in expenditures and things like that, which deserve close look, and I'm not going to say anything about those until we have a better chance to see how it's going to affect everything else. The one thing that completely, I think he went off the rails, let's just put it that way, is when he started talking about history and autocracy and things like that. He spent a disproportionate amount of time talking about things that did not affect Illinois, and he said it in a way that I was personally offended by. He started talking about his involvement with the Holocaust museum, something for which he deserves great credit. And had he stopped in his speech, talking about his involvement with the... with the Holocaust community in Illinois and the 1978 march and all those things, I'd have stood up and applauded him because that is... that was something worth applauding. But he went further than that. By implication, and as about as direct as he could say it without actually saying it directly, he accused those of us on this side of the aisle of being Nazis. I want to point out a few things. There is no caucus in this House that has been more supportive of Israel, through resolution and comments on the floor, than the House Republican Caucus. We've issued

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resolutions, we've proposed resolutions supporting the nation of Israel. To put not too fine a point on it, we are part of Team Jew. We support Israel. We don't see any Democrat cosponsors on those resolutions. And for him to imply that just because there is a... there... there's a sitting president that ran on the same side of the ballot that we did, somehow we're painted with the same autocratic and absolutely fascistic type of attitudes that led to what happened in Europe in 1940s. This is ridiculous. It did us no service. It was small. It was very small of him to say that. I, for one... I've been around a long time. I'm sure you all know that. I've been to Dachau. I spent a day in Dachau once a couple... many years ago. When I was in college in Illinois, I worked in a store where I befriended a family, a couple, that had spent several years in a Nazi concentration camp in Europe during World War II. The stories they told me raised... just were hair raising. He does not have a monopoly on understanding what happened in Europe in 1940s with the Holocaust. We all have to remember that, and we can never forget. But for him to yesterday stand up and by implication say that autocrats are taking advantage... are taking over this country, and putting us in that same boat is wrong. And this is a guy who should know because, what was it during COVID, 40-some consecutive disaster declarations, ruling by executive order for 1170-some days of his first 1552 days in office? Today, in the blog of record, there was a statement, somebody asked him, 'What was your intention for saying that?' And he said, 'I want to spread the word that autocracy is on the loose in this country.' He should know. His actions during

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COVID were nothing short of autocratic. And for him to say that, in the face of what we have been exposed to or were exposed to during that time, is an insult to me, it's an insult to the people in my caucus, and it's an insult to everybody who listened to this speech yesterday. I think the governor should... should apologize to us on many levels. But to accuse us of antisemitism by being implied Nazis is absolutely out of line, and he deserves... he deserves complete scorn for what he said. And he... I, for one, will demand an apology."

Speaker Tarver: "Representative Didech, for what do you seek recognition?"

Didech: "Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Tarver: "Please proceed."

Didech: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a Jewish American, as a Jewish Member of the General Assembly who represents one of the largest Jewish communities in the entire State of Illinois, I have spent the last year and a half with my life dominated by the rise of antisemitism. Among the most pernicious forms of antisemitism is conflating the actions of the Government of Israel with Jewish Americans. Jewish Americans are diverse. We have a range of opinions about the State of Israel. I count myself as a supporter of a State of Israel. But when you say on the floor you support Israel and that makes you Team Jew, you are engaging in among the most pernicious forms of antisemitism that exists. Yes, you are. You don't know what you're talking about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker."

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Speaker Tarver: "Representative Gong-Gershowitz, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Gong-Gershowitz: "You know, I'm someone who..."

Speaker Tarver: "Did you want a point..."

Gong-Gershowitz: "Point of personal privilege, Speaker."

Speaker Tarver: "Please proceed."

Gong-Gershowitz: "Yeah, I... I try really hard down here not to be reactionary and to choose my words carefully. And so, there's a lot that I could say in this moment, but one thing I just want to make abundantly clear is you have no right to use my pain or the pain of our community to score political points. You have no right. We can have disagreements. We can disagree respectfully. But what you said this morning, Representative, was none of those things. You know, all of us come to this place with our own lived experience. And I have felt the pain of being a Jewish American, an Asian American. Throughout my time here, I have been very careful to listen and to understand the experiences of others. But you don't get to stand up here and claim to know the pain that I feel or the pain of my community, to lecture me about how I should feel about it. Enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker."

Speaker Tarver: "Representative Benton, for what do you seek recognition?"

Benton: "Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Tarver: "Please proceed."

Benton: "Just want to make a quick mention and congratulate my cousin, Joe Langridge. He ended up beating a 20-year.. 28-year record at Augustana for 5K. He ended up running it in 14 minutes, 18.37 seconds. So, I just want to congratulate him,

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and he is actually the Powerade Men's Student Athlete of the Week right now. He's from Des Plaines, where we have good runners and good softball coaches. So, but one thing I will say, it doesn't run in the family. If you see me running, run. Thank you."

Speaker Tarver: "Representative Mussman, for what do you seek recognition?"

Mussman: "Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Tarver: "Please proceed."

Mussman: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Members of our House. Today, I'd like to introduce two very special guests that I have with me. They are down in front of the press box on the Democratic side of the... of the chamber. I have Dr. Johnny D. Jones and Lieutenant Colonel Maria Sanchez. They are here in Springfield today because their Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Career and Exploration Program received a special proclamation from the governor. We are also... as you can see, he is happy to show that off. We have also acknowledged their special services through House Resolution 91 and House Resolution 101 that have already been adopted. I just want to give a little description about some of the things that make them so special. Dr. Jones is here today, again, with the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Career Exploration Program, which is quite a mouthful. They have served as a vital tool for enhancing career exploration and readiness for students across Illinois by empowering students to discover their strengths, aptitudes, and career interests. As an educational services specialist at the Chicago Military Entrance Processing Station, Dr. Johnny Jones has worked

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tirelessly to promote this program in order to expand its outreach and impact in the State of Illinois. Dr. Jones has played a pivotal role in coordinating outreach efforts, building partnerships, and implementing innovative strategies to enhance career exploration opportunities for students of all backgrounds. Lieutenant Colonel Maria Sanchez is the commander of the 6th Battalion and the Chicago Military Entrance Processing Station. Lieutenant Colonel Sanchez enlisted in the U.S. Army at Phoenix MPS and received her commission through the Officer Candidate School in Georgia. Her military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, three Defense Meritorious Service Medals, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, five Army Commendation Medals, and nine Army Achievement Medals. Her hard work and achievements have advanced both the Chicago MPS and the State of Illinois. I would also like to acknowledge that they brought some of their team members with them today up here in the gallery. If they would like to stand to be acknowledged, and if we could all give them a warm Springfield welcome."

Speaker Tarver: "Mr. Clerk, Committee Reports."

Clerk Hollman: "Committee Reports. Representative Evans, Chairperson from the Committee on Labor & Commerce reports the following committee action taken on February 19, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1362. Representative Blair... Blair-Sherlock, Chairperson from the Committee on State Government Administration reports the following committee action taken on February 19, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1062 and House Bill 1224. Introduction of

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Resolutions. House Resolution 145, offered by Representative Mason, is referred to the Rules Committee."

Speaker Tarver: "Mr. Clerk, Agreed Resolutions."

Clerk Hollman: "Agreed Resolutions. House Resolution 146, offered by Representative Smith. House Resolution 147, offered by Representative Gordon-Booth. And House Resolution 148, offered by Representative Meyers-Martin."

Speaker Tarver: "Leader Gabel moves for the adoption of the Agreed Resolution. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay.' In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the Agreed Resolutions are adopted. Mr. Clerk, please read the Adjournment Resolution."

Clerk Hollman: "Senate Joint Resolution #21, offered by Representative Gabel.

RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING HEREIN, that when the Senate adjourns on Thursday, February 20, 2025, it stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 25, 2025, or to the call of the President; and when the House of Representatives adjourns on Thursday, February 20, 2025, it stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 25, 2025, or to the call of the Speaker."

Speaker Tarver: "Leader Gabel moves for the adoption of the Adjournment Resolution. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay.' In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the Adjournment Resolution is adopted. And now, allowing perfunctory time for the clerk, Leader Gabel moves that the House stand adjourned until Tuesday, February 25. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay.'

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In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the House stands adjourned."