

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

16th Legislative Day

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Speaker Stuart: "The House will be in order. Members will be in their chairs. We shall be led in prayer today 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 the Pledge of Allegiance."

Grasse: "As we gather together here this day, may we take pause before we speak and be guided by the acronym THINK to best communicate with each other. T is for truthful. May our words be truthful, grounded in honesty, not in whispers of deceit or the haze of half-truths. H is for helpful. May our speech be helpful building bridges and not walls, guiding our people toward justice, not division. I is for inspiring. May our voices be inspiring, lifting the weary, stirring courage, and calling forth the best in one another. And N is for necessary. May our words be necessary, not noise, but wisdom spoken with purpose, mindful of the weight our words carry. And K is for kind. May we choose to be kind, for strength is not in sharp tongues, but in hearts and minds that seek the common good. So, with these principles, let us serve each other and our people with integrity, speak with wisdom, and lead with honor. Amen."

Speaker Stuart: "We will be led in the Pledge of Allegiance today by Representative Costa Howard."

Costa Howard - 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."

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Speaker Stuart: "Roll Call for Attendance. Leader Ann Williams is recognized to report any excused absences on the Democratic side of the aisle."

Williams, A.: "Madam Speaker, let the record reflect that Representative Ammons is excused today."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Windhorst is recognized to report any excused absences of the Republican side of the aisle."

Windhorst: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would you please excuse Representatives Cabello, Stephens, and Wilhour today?"

Speaker Stuart: "Have all recorded themselves who wish? Mr. Clerk, please take the record. There being 114 Members answering the roll call, a quorum is present. Mr. Clerk, Committee Reports."

Clerk Hollman: "Committee Reports. Representative Scherer, Chairperson from the Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter Schools reports the following committee action taken on March 5, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1869; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 1368. Representative Hirschauer, Chairperson from the Committee on Gun Violence Prevention reports the following committee action taken on March 5, 2025: do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 1373. Representative Barbara Hernandez, Chairperson from the Committee on Immigration & Human Rights reports the following committee action taken on March 5, 2025: do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 2436. Representative Blair-Sherlock, Chairperson from the Committee on State Government Administration reports the following committee action taken on March 5, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 22, House Bill 1075, House Bill 1437, House Bill 1927, House Bill 1928,

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House Bill 2333, House Bill 2363; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 1225. Representative Crespo, Chairperson from the Committee on Appropriations-General Services reports the following committee action taken on March 5, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1704. Representative Stuart, Chairperson from the Committee on Higher Education reports the following committee action taken on March 5, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1375, House Bill 1859; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 1149. Representative Kelly, Chairperson from the Committee on Police & Fire reports the following committee action taken on March 6, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 2350, House Bill 2409; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 1697. Representative Cassidy, Chairperson from the Committee on Restorative Justice & Public Safety reports the following committee action taken on March 6, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 2397. Representative Stava-Murray, Chairperson from the Committee on Public Health reports the following committee action taken on March 6, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 2346. Representative Mason, Chairperson from the Committee on Child Care Accessibility & Early Childhood Education reports the following committee action taken on March 6, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1168 and House Bill 1838. Representative Ortíz, Chairperson from the Committee on Counties & Townships reports the following committee action taken on March 6, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1711, House Bill 1878, House Bill 1911, House Bill 1938; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 32; recommends be adopted is Floor Amendment(s) 1 to House Bill

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1615. Representative LaPointe, Chairperson from the Committee on Mental Health & Addiction reports following committee action taken on March 6, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 57; and do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 1085. Representative Yang Rohr, Chairperson from the Committee on Personnel & Pensions reports the following committee action taken on March 6, 2025: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 79, House Bill 1736, and House Bill 1871. Introduction of Resolutions. House Resolution 169, offered by Representative Weaver; House Resolution 170, offered by Representative Canty; House Resolution 171, offered by Representative Ford; House Joint Resolution 20, offered by Representative Weaver; and House Joint Resolution... House Joint Resolution 21, offered by Representative Hammond, are referred to the Rules Committee."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Johnson, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Johnson: "Point of personal privilege, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Please... please proceed."

Johnson: "Thank you. So, we... we're... we've seen reports this morning that there will be some serious cuts to the VA deriving from Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. I represent communities with a proud tradition of service. My district includes Arsenal Island and Hero Street in Silvis, a small city block where six young men gave their lives in World War II, and where two more were killed in service in Korea, and where young men and women have continued to serve in every conflict since. And I follow in the footsteps of Lane Evans, a Marine Corps veteran who fought

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for decades for veterans' health care in Western Illinois. There's a VA health center named for Lane in Galesburg, and it breaks my heart to know that the care our heroes receive there is now in the hands someone like Elon Musk, who has no idea what it means to serve and apparently no concern for the well-being of our veterans. I don't know how I tell people on Hero Street that a billionaire tech bro and a draft dodger think that their health and their safety are too expensive. For that matter, I don't know how anyone can... can tell VA patients in Danville, in McHenry, or in Bourbonnais that preventing infection just isn't a priority. I don't know how anyone here can tell the people serving at Scott Air Force Base in O'Fallon that we need to cut VA health care to pay for tax cuts that will only benefit the extremely wealthy. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the Trump tax cuts are focused on people who make more than \$950,000 a year. I don't know anyone on Hero Street is going to benefit from that. And I'd imagine that there aren't a whole lot of people in Danville, or in Bourbonnais, or in McHenry, or in O'Fallon who are in that group either. But they will pay the price for it, and that's why I can't be silent. That's why I'm not going to sit here and listen to cheerleading for some fantasy version of the Trump agenda when the real agenda is hurting the people I swore to serve. And that's why I won't turn my back on our veterans and walk off this floor when their care is at stake. Thank you, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Kifowit, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

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Kifowit: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Kifowit: "I want to thank my colleague for bringing up the important subject of veterans' care. As the ranking veteran in the Illinois House, the only female veteran in the Illinois General Assembly, a Marine Corps veteran, with my son serving in the Navy, my son-in-law serving in the Army, of course, this is... and myself being a disabled veteran for the body to know. This is, of course, very important subject matter in which we are engaging in, in an area that is very concerning for our veterans. So, I just want to bring attention to the body that I realize that there are many sources of information out there. News, questionable news. What I am going to talk about today comes from sources that I rely on. I rely on our local news, 2, 5, 7, 9. I also rely on the militarytimes.com and starsandstripes.com. These news outlets were part of my military experience, and I trust their reporting with all my heart. So, nobody can call out these news sources, and I wanted to put that on the record. First, I want to talk about how one person's example is another example of an excessive... essential service. And what I've been seeing on the national level are individuals that don't have the knowledge nor the experience to evaluate services or benefits for our veterans. I'm referring to the action, as was mentioned by my colleague, by Elon Musk and DOGE, and this was codified in a memo from the secretary of the VA, dated February 11, and was enacted yesterday, March 5. To note, we have 18 million veterans nationwide, over 600,000 veterans here in the State of Illinois. So, in my remarks, I want to focus on the veterans

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who have served our country, the men and women who have worn the uniform and are now receiving the benefits that they were promised from a grateful nation. Ladies and gentlemen, I do wish that you pay attention 'cause this is an important subject and this is important for our veterans who serve our community. This has been verified, according to the new secretary of the VA, a desire by DOGE, as we have heard, Elon Musk's department, somebody that has zero military experience, embraced by the secretary of the VA to return to 2019 staffing levels. Now, my colleague talked about this in brevity. I'm going to talk about this in specificity because it is important to note these facts for our veterans. The Secretary of the VA is going to return to 2019 staffing levels, and this a reduction of roughly 80,000 employees, most of which who are veterans. So, when we want to the discussion about veteran homelessness and veteran services, we are now unemploying 80,000 veterans. I want to put on the record, on August 10, 2022, Congress passed the PACT Act. What is the PACT Act? It is the promise to address comprehensive toxins, the toxins that my friends endured in the burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan that took them over 10 years or more, 20 years, to get recognized by Congress of the cancers, of the... of the... the pain to their... they can't breathe, they can't live without constant pain. 2022. So, tell me how returning to 2019 levels can service the over 1 million families and veterans who are now being serviced by the PACT Act. This is not politics for me. I'm not going to call names. I'm not going to be derogatory. I am a factual individual. Logically, it makes zero sense that in 2022, we

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expanded the benefits for the men and women that suffered so much and then we're returning to staffing levels of 2019. Let that sink in. How is that going to happen? How is it going to happen? It simply is not going to happen. And... and that benefit... and to be quite honest, I know veterans that has taken six years to get their appeal approved by the VA because there are so much need out there. Six years veterans are waiting for the benefits that they deserve. And now, we are cutting 80,000 individuals that are processing the claims that are making sure that our benefits... that our veterans and our benefits are being properly educated. I want to give you a quote, again, from Stars and Stripes. Not any kind of cable network news, but Stars and Stripes. The quote is: '"Everybody who served honorably met [their] end of this agreement. We demand our leaders to do the same and ensure VA has the staff and resources so veterans can receive their full earned benefits. This is not an ask. Honor the contract with our veterans," said Al Lipphardt, the VFW's National Commander.' This is not me. This is not a statement from a political person. This is the national VFW. And for those that don't know, they might not know, Veterans of Foreign Wars national commander. 'There is nothing more sacred than taking care of those who served this nation, and this got to be fixed. We have 1.4 million members of the VFW, and, again, they represent the 18 million veterans nationwide. They all need to be treated with respect.' Stars and Stripes continue to report the contracts that are being canceled, waste, fraud, and abuse. We all want to get rid of waste, fraud, and abuse. We all do. But it is somebody who has no knowledge of the VA

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and looking at canceling contracts that the VA has. And... and this is, again, Stars and Stripes. And this is actually collaborated with Channel 5 NBC News, contracts that cover having sterile... sterile certifications for VA hospital pharmacy operations, air quality control, safety testing for the infectious diseases, in addition to cancelation of services. And I'll pause. I'll pause for you all to hear this. I'm still pausing. Reported in Stars and Stripes, verified by Channel 5 NBC News, cancelation of the contract that supports the National Center for PTSD, the VA entity that is the world's leading research and educational center on post-traumatic stress disorder. And it also terminated the contract that would continue the long-established technology upgrade for the Veterans Health Administration. That's important. Radiation monitoring for X-rays, certification, accreditation for stroke centers, cancer care, the list goes on and on. That's our veterans. I... I finally want to address... and I appreciate the body giving me this time. I want to address concerns regarding our service members serving today. My family, individual's family, Leader Jehan Gordon's family. In... in response to Trump's executive order on diversity, equity, and inclusion, again, verified, the military has halted all, all training on military sexual assault, in addition to access to services provided to victims of military sexual assault. Now, I realize by the chatter, military sexual assault may not be important to some. Their side conversations are more important, understand that. I understand that. Some folks have never been exposed to military sexual assault, so why would it be important to them? Chatter away, duly noted.

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Chatter, chatter, chatter. However, verified by Stars and Stripes, this was reported. Now, I'm going to tell you this was also confirmed to me in angst from a current member of our Army National Guard who called me because she was trying to make an appointment for her mental health needs that was related to military sexual assault. And she was told there are going to be no further appointments for her. In addition, she was told that there are no reporting procedures anymore in place. In short, there is nobody to investigate anymore because of this executive order for victims of individuals currently serving who have suffered military sexual assault and trauma. In addition, there's been a recent recommendation of John Phelan to be the secretary of the Navy. Recommendations come... they come before the Senate, along with Stephen Feinberg to be deputy secretary of the defense. What is their qualifications to hold these esteemed titles for our service members, the Department of the Navy, where my son is serving? What is their credentials? The credentials is they have zero military experience. Zero military experience of the person that's going to be in charge of the secretary of Navy of my son's ship. What do they have in common? And, again, militarytimes.com, folks. This is not any cable news network. What... what are their qualifications? Namely their qualifications is that they are founders of private equity firms with net worth of billions. Militarytimes.com, folks. Look it up. That's a disservice to our service members. So, while I understand these are national issues, but I understand these have huge impacts to our families and the services rendered to our veterans today. I am not the chair of

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Veterans' Affairs. I'm not. However, I do want to implore on the other side of the aisle that these issues are important to our veterans. It is not a nonpartisan issue. I don't project it as a nonpartisan issue. I project it as factual evidence that we need to do more. We need to make sure that the State of Illinois is taking care of our veterans. It's taking care of the individuals that are going to be laid off from our VA facilities, and that we are leading the nation in making sure that our service members and our veterans are respected and are honored for the service in which they have given our country, and given our state, and continue to give our community. So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I know I was long... or, Madam Speaker, I know I was long, but this is so important and I wanted to bring it to the body's attention that our veterans, they are currently... they are frustrated with the VA system. But we are looking at the front window of a tragedy that's going to happen that's going to make life more difficult for our veterans, including the victims of military sexual assault and trauma 'cause now they have nowhere to go. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the indulgence and the attention of the individuals of this body that care. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Halbrook, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Halbrook: "Thank you, Madam Chair, and a points... point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Halbrook: "Thank you, Madam Chair, and appreciate the order that you have been maintaining and will continue to maintain in

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this chamber today. Thank you. Today, I rise to celebrate Women's History Month. This week, you've already heard from a few points from significant... about significant women that we celebrate, some remarkable things about some remarkable women. Today, I want to recognize three remarkable women, biological women, who have been forced or have faced incredible adversity and have persevered and continue to fight for what is right. Payton McNabb, who you saw this week at President Trump's Tuesday night address. Payton, a successful female athlete, was permanently injured by a man who was allowed to play on a woman's volleyball team. Her athletic career was terminated by this biological male pretending to be a woman. She fought ever since for the effort to keep men out of women's sports. She is a woman worth celebrating. Abbigail Wheeler. Abbigail is an 18-year-old from just outside of Springfield, who, when she was 16 years old, was forced off of a girls' youth swim team and out of the YMCA for standing up against an intact biological male in her locker room. Her and her sister, Kaitlynn Wheeler, have been fighting ever since the summer of 2023 to get men out of women's private spaces and off the girl sports teams. Kaitlynn, a former University of Kentucky swimmer, has become a strong voice with the Riley Gaines movement. She is a woman worth celebrating. Coach Kim Russell, who joined my colleagues in the Illinois Freedom Caucus here in Springfield last summer for a press conference, was terminated from her coaching position for speaking out against men in women's sports. She knew that even with her job on the line, defending women's sports was the right thing to do. Today, we celebrate

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her history of defending women's sports. Ladies and gentlemen, the list goes on and on. There are thousands of women, high school, college, and beyond, who have been forced by a woke leftist government to share private spaces with biological males, compete against them in sports, and in many cases, be physically injured by men. Under President Trump, women's sports and women's spaces will be for women again. Not for men with mental health issues playing dress up, but for women. That's something worth celebrating this month as we continue Women's History Month. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Mason, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Mason: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Mason: "Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, you may have noticed that I have had somebody hanging out with me this week, and it is absolutely my privilege to introduce Caitlyn Galloway. Caitlyn has joined my district office as my district director. She recently graduated from the University of Illinois with majors in political science and environmental studies. She's done some amazing internships, including with Representative Carol Ammons during her school time. And she brings so much brightness and light, and I am so excited to be working with her. And I hope that you can all give her a warm Springfield welcome."

Speaker Stuart: "Welcome to Springfield. Representative Niemerg, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Niemerg: "Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. A point of personal privilege."

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Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Niemerg: "Folks, the people have spoken. I rise today to acknowledge the resounding voice of the people of Illinois who have made their preference unmistakably clear. They want to keep our current state flag. The existing flag garnered over 165,000 votes, accounting for approximately 43% of the total vote. Notably, it received more votes than the next five flag designs combined, a testament to the strong support for preserving this symbol of our state. When given a choice, the people overwhelmingly supported keeping the flag we know and respect, with far more votes cast in favor of tradition than of change. This wasn't a close call. It was a strong and unmistakable message that Illinoisans value history, heritage, and symbolism imbedded in our flag. The people have had their say, and their voices could not have been louder. Illinoisans stood up, engaged in the process, and made it clear that our flag represents who we are, past, present, and future. I want to thank every person who participated, who took the time to vote. Our flag remains a proud symbol of our state, and today we celebrate the will of the people. Thank you, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader McCombie, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

McCombie: "Thank you, Speaker. Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

McCombie: "I would like to introduce my page for the day today. Courtney Funkhouser is here. She is an 11th grader from Yorkville High School. She has a deep appreciation for

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history. She may look familiar because she has been here before. When she's not studying or reading about the past, she stays active by wrestling for her high school, enjoying the physical and mental challenges that it brings. Courtney is considering joining the military after graduation, possibly the Air Force or the Army. Being an Army brat, I hope she goes that way. She didn't have a favorite famous politician, but I'm sure that her favorite politician is her own Representative Jed Davis. In her free time, she loves reading fiction and mystery books and listening to pop music from the 2010 era, of which I had to Google. Probably not my favorite, but certainly respect hers. Her father, Chris, is in the gallery. If you want to stand up, Chris. And her mom, Stephanie, and her sister, Lexi, could not join us today. So, please give her a warm welcome to Springfield."

Speaker Stuart: "Welcome to the Capitol. Leader West, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

West: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

West: "Madam Speaker, if you don't mind, I just wanted to speak my mind. I had something on my mind that I just... I'm just trying to understand. There are two scriptures I want to put on the record in the book of Matthew. The first one says, 'Come unto me, all who are weary and burdened'... Madam Speaker, it says weary and burdened... 'and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon me, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest for your souls.' Madam Speaker, I bring that scripture up because this past month or so, under the current administration, we... the weary and the burdened

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has been on the chopping block, in spite of the fact that scripture tells us we need to be there for them. I bring that up because I've been in office for six years, Madam Speaker, and for these past six years, as a preaching politician, you can only imagine people coming at me saying I'm a hypocrite, even though the laws that I support are mainly focused on the weary and the burdened, such as what scripture tells us. And here we are now, those of us who have... you have... we have already heard it from today, veterans, those from the LGBTQ community. There are many people who say on their Twitter, or their X, or whatever you want to call that social media feed that they are Christlike, Christ-focused, and then we celebrate funding leaving our veterans. We celebrate opportunities being taken away from those who are transgender. We celebrate the opportunities of saving money on the backs of the poor. The least of these is which scripture tells us as well. It says, 'the King will reply.' And those of you who read scripture, you know that when the letters are in red, you know who is saying it. 'Truly till I tell you, whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did unto me.' We are told through our Declaration of Independence that we have unalienable rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That means that even when the pursuit does not look like your own, that individual has that unalienable right. And when we're taking away opportunities, when we're taking away resources, we're taking away their unalienable right to pursue happiness because we're putting them back in the box of being burdened and being weary. I just want to put

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on the record, Madam Speaker, 'cause the lot of people are celebrating what's going on right now and then they're celebrating that their Christlike. I just want to share one quote that resonates with me. 'Beware of the lollipop of hypocrisy; one lick and you suck forever.' Don't let it be you, friends. Let's stand up for the weary and the burdened, and the one way we can do it in the here and now is to ensure that they got the same opportunity of... to pursue the happiness just like everyone us do as well. Thank you, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Scherer, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Scherer: "Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Scherer: "In responding to Representative West's pursuit of happiness and piggybacking off of Representative Kifowit, I would just like to take a moment to say thank you to our veterans. I'm not a veteran. I have a lot of family members that are, but I know that's not the same. I just want to say, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you to the veterans who are going through PTSD today from what happened to them in the '60s and '70s. I want to say thank you to the families who never faced frontline combat but lived with the fear of that every day. As a family member involved in that, I know what that part's like. It's very nerve-racking, and it scares you every day. And then when they came home, we weren't even here to thank them. It's apprehensible, but I'm here today to say, and I'm sure speaking on the behalf of everyone here, do everything you can to thank every veteran, whether they served in frontline combat, especially them, and also, the people

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who worried every day that tomorrow they would face frontline combat. I can't even imagine what their lives were like. Thank you to all of our veterans."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Friess, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Friess: "Point of... point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Friess: "Ladies and gentlemen, a new personal finance report from WalletHub has been released outlining the states with the highest and lowest tax rates. Unfortunately, the results are not good for Illinois. Overall, Illinois placed last in the country for taxation, coming in 51st for overall effective tax and local tax rates, 50th for real estate taxes, and 47th for income taxes. Illinois also pays the second highest gas taxes in the country. About the only thing that we have going for us here in Illinois is that we have no vehicle property tax. Although, I hesitate to say that knowing nothing is safe in this state as desperate... as we're desperate for revenue in this... in Illinois. Illinoisans pays the second highest property taxes in the country behind only New Jersey. Illinois' real estate taxes rate is nearly 8%. That is compared to with... Hawaii at just 1%. The study found that the percentage difference between Illinois taxes and U.S. average is an astonishing 51.8%. The next closest is New York at 34.9%. At the end of the spectrum is Alaska at 37.9%. According to the study, behind Illinois, the highest taxes states are New York and Connecticut. The study found that red states with Republican majorities impose lower taxes than blue states with Democrat majorities. The average rank for

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red states is 24.3, while the average for blue states is 28.5. My fellow legislators, I share this report with you to encourage this body to take up serious tax reform. We need to stop maxing out our budgets and scrapping for more taxes and fee revenues. Let's make some responsible cuts and give relief to our taxpayers at the gas pump, property tax office, and in their pocketbooks. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Severin, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Severin: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Severin: "In the gallery today I have some visitors from my district, and they've come up here for one reason, and that is to come and pray for all us and pray for the State of Illinois. So, I'd like to welcome Rita Carlton and her friends that are in the gallery today. They've come to Springfield to pray. So, I appreciate them being here. I appreciate their prayers, and I appreciate your time. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Miller, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Miller: "Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Miller: "Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, it's a great day to be an Illinoisan because the... the place is filled with happy people that are bringing cherry pies to all of our offices. And... and so, we want thank you all for coming to the State Capitol. We're here to celebrate freedom. We're here to

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celebrate the golden age of America that we're all enjoying right now. So, God bless you all, and thank you for coming."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Jacobs, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Jacobs: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I'd like to have a point of personal privilege, but on... on a much lighter note."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Jacobs: "Thank you. Today, as part of Women's History Month, I want to recognize Dr. Patricia E. Bath, an ophthalmologist of all things, right? I am a practicing optometric physician and have practiced for 45 years so far. I have been involved in health, healthy eyes, and protecting eyesight most of my life. When I began practice, cataract surgery was far from a hundred percent successful. It was almost a 50/50 proposition. Surgeons kept looking for the magic method to do surgery more successfully. That's when Dr. Bath came in. Even though Dr. Patricia Bath did not have direct ties to Illinois, her achievements as an ophthalmologist and as a scientist are world-renowned. She received her MD from a very famous Black university, Howard University, in 1968. She went on with three other colleagues in 1977 to found the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness. Their mission is to protect, preserve, and restore the gift of sight. One of the main initiatives is to provide newborns with anti-infective drops and vitamin A supplements essential for vision. Dr. Bath, as a laser scientist, as an inventor and ophthalmologist, did research on eye health, particularly on cataracts. He... her research led to the invention of an instrument, a laser instrument, called a laserphaco emulsifier probe. It was

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conceived in 1981, and after five long years of research, she applied for a patent. Her device is still used worldwide today. Her device, an ultrasound phacoemulsification, allow surgeons to offer a almost perfect cataract surgery every day. There is a difference though in the laser. Everybody thinks laser surgery is what's done. The phaco emulsion is ultrasound. Both of these procedures are done, and they're very successful. She was the... the first... the first... I think that both sides of the aisle would love to hear this. She was the first Black woman to complete ophthalmology residency in the United States of America, and that was in 1973. In 1988, Dr. Bath became the first Black female physician to receive a medical patent. This was one of the... one of five U.S. patents and three international patents in her career. She was born in 1942, passed in 2019. The doctor was inducted posthumously into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2022, and in 2024, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. Her life was more than just this small amount of accomplishments, but I wish that you would join me in honoring the life and accomplishments of Dr. Patricia E. Bath during Women's History Month. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Deering, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Deering: "Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Deering: "Thank you. As all of us, I'm sure, have seen when we entered the chamber today, we have hundreds of homeschool families that have come to the people's House to talk to us

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about the passion they bring for educating their families at home. I know it is a day of travel, but should you have the opportunity to leave the chamber out this door on your way to be able to see families who have come here to ask for your time... I know I personally missed pie delivery to my office earlier, but I did take the opportunity to spend a few minutes talking to a variety of families that are out there. So, I would just ask that my colleagues continue to find time to respect their presence here and hear them out. Thank you very much."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Jed Davis, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Davis, J.: "Point of personal privilege, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Davis, J.: "Yeah, I just wanted to echo Representative Deering's comments on the homeschool front. We filed a petition, or we made a petition available, against the bill that is currently infringing or potentially infringing on their rights to educate children. And, literally, within just a handful of weeks, we've had nearly 3,000 signatures on that petition. So, my message to everyone who traveled here today: Thank you, and we hear you, we see you, and we will absolutely defend your rights as parents to educate your children. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Ann Williams, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Williams, A.: "Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

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Williams, A.: "Thank you. So, today for Women's History Month, I'd like to share how we, the women of the Illinois House Democratic Caucus, made history right here under the Capitol dome not too long ago. In 2018, we established the first-ever House Democratic Women's Caucus. The organizational process started in 2017 with several Democratic women, including former Members Kelly Burke, Deb Conroy, Melissa Conyears-Ervin, Barbara Flynn Currie, Elaine Nekritz, and others, and many of us here in the chamber today. At the first organizational meeting, we elected Deb Conroy and Melissa Conyears-Ervin as cochairs of our caucus. Our mission was to empower, support, and promote the work of women in the caucus and under the dome. The role of the caucus was amplified, however, as the #MeToo movement came to the Illinois Capitol. Our first order of business was to hire an attorney, outside counsel, to do a review of the workplace culture around the Capitol. We brought the Catharsis program to our caucus to help foster an environment of respect within the caucus and promote an inclusive and collaborative workplace. Members of the Women's Caucus conducted a listening tour where we heard from staff and a variety of lobbyists to learn about their experiences as women working in and around the Capitol. I believe real change resulted from these often difficult conversations. We learned so much simply by listening to each other and learning about the unique challenges that all of us faced in the political and governmental space in Illinois. We worked together to professionalize the workplace by implementing training, developing comprehensive personnel policy changes, and passing bipartisan legislation to address

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bullying and harassment overall. The Women's Caucus pushed for more and better roles for women in the caucus and more women on the leadership team and in the Chair during.. during the legislative session. Believe it or not, I served for several years before I saw a woman presiding over the House, and look at us today. Under the leadership of Speaker Welch, women now represent over half of the leadership and caucus chair roles in the Democratic Caucus. This is unprecedented. Representation matters and our diversity is one of our biggest strengths. Tapping into the energy and commitment of so many fabulous women legislators, the House Democratic Women's Caucus has evolved and is stronger today than ever before. After Deb Conroy, Leader Camille Lilly took on the role of chair before turning over the reins to Anne Stava-Murray. Currently, our caucus is led by the newly elected chair, Mary Beth Canty. I want to thank all the women legislators, lobbyists, and staff members who were a part of making history right here in our own House. I look forward to seeing the House Democratic Women's Caucus continue to work collaboratively, grow in strength, and truly thrive. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Fritts, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Fritts: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. A point of personal privilege."

Speaker Stuart: "Please proceed."

Fritts: "Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen of the House, for... I'm sure a lot of you already know, but I was a child cancer.. or a childhood cancer survivor, and cancer is near and dear to my heart, and been in remission for 20-plus years. And I know

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that... so, cancer is very important to me, as it is. I'm sure has touched all of our lives in one way, shape, or form. And it is with... with that, I think remission is something that is incredibly important to be celebrated. And so, I would like to congratulate our good friend and Representative, Charlie Meier, as he has completed his first and, hopefully, last round. So, if everyone could please stand, we give Charlie the recognition. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Meier."

Meier: "I just want to wish everybody a thank you. You know, we still have some side effects, and I apologize. If you see me sleeping, please elbow me to wake me up. They say in a couple months that will better and other side effects should be gone. But I know this week I've managed to fall asleep standing up back here. So, just kind of give me that nudge and know that if you ever need a friend, I'll be there for you. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Thank you, Representative. I know the chamber was very happy to hear the good news, and we're very happy for all of the survivors in our chamber that are survivors. Mr. Clerk, Agreed Resolutions."

Clerk Hollman: "Agreed Resolution. House Resolution 172, offered by Representative Morgan."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Gabel moves for the adoption of the Agreed Resolutions. 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. And now, allowing perfunctory time for the clerk, Leader Gabel moves that the House stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 11, at the hour of noon. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say

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

Clerk Hollman: "House Perfunctory Session will come to order. Introduction and First Reading of House Bills. House Bill 4015, offered by Representative Slaughter, a Bill for an Act concerning public employee benefits. House Bill 4016, offered by Representative Moylan, a Bill for an Act concerning State government. First Reading of these House Bills. There being no further business, the House Perfunctory Session will stand adjourned."