

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

65th Legislative Day

1/22/2026

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

Grasse: "Again, I'm grateful to be here with everyone. Let us gather together just in community, giving thanks for all that we are here to do together, for the ways we can make such a difference together. What we are called to do is not just for us, not just for our communities, but for all in our state. And we're grateful for the honor, the responsibility, and the privilege to be able to do this together. May we do this with concern for our most vulnerable, for concern for the future of our state, and may we do this together, gratefully. Amen."

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

Cochran - 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 Stuart: "Roll Call for Attendance. Leader Gabel is recognized to report any excused absences on the Democratic side of the aisle."

Gabel: "Speaker, let the record show that Representatives Cassidy, Evans, Guerrero-Cuellar, Jones, Lilly, Slaughter, Stava, Syed, and Tarver are excused today."

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

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Keicher: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Please let the record reflect that Representatives Tipsword, Stephens, Reick, Weaver, Meier, Sosnowski, Spain, Schweizer, and Friess are excused for today."

Speaker Stuart: "Have all recorded themselves who wish? Mr. Clerk, please take the record. There being 98 Members answering the roll call, a quorum is present. Under the Order of Resolutions, we have House... House Joint Resolution 51, offered by Representative Gabel."

Gabel: "Thank you, Speaker. So, again, what this... it's a simple bill. It just allows the House and Senate... the House to invite the Senate and the governor to our chambers to present his budget address. A question was raised last time about who's rules apply, and it goes through Robert... Robert's Rules of Order. And Rule 98 and 99 provide for the applicability of House Rules and parliamentary procedures."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Windhorst is recognized."

Windhorst: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield?"

Speaker Stuart: "She indicates she will."

Windhorst: "Thank you. Leader, appreciate you getting the answer on what rules will apply. Just so I heard correctly, it will be Robert's Rules of Order, and then Rules 98 and 99 of the House Rules dictate that as well."

Gabel: "Yes."

Windhorst: "Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Gabel moves for the adoption of House Joint Resolution 51. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay.' In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the resolution is adopted. Under the Order

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of Resolutions, we have House Resolution 591, offered by Representative Buckner."

Buckner: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. On Saturday evening the Chicago Bulls will retire the jersey of Derrick Rose, which is why I'm bringing forth HR591 today to recognize that. I rise to honor not just a basketball player but a son of Chicago, Derrick Rose. Derrick is Chicago through and through. He was raised on our streets, shaped by our neighborhoods, our parks, our public schools, and our people. He didn't come from privilege or polish. He came from grit, discipline, and a deep sense of responsibility to where he is from. As an Illinoisan, he carried our name with him everywhere he went, from Simeon, to the University of Memphis, to the NBA, and ultimately to the world stage. Whether wearing his blue and gold high school jersey and NBA jersey or representing the game internationally, Derrick never forgot who he was or where he came from. He became an international superstar, an MVP, one of the most electric players the game has ever seen, and he did it with a humility that is rare at his level. No bravado, no entitlement, just work. And through injuries, adversity, and moments that would have broken others, he showed something even more powerful than athletic excellence: commitment, resilience, and growth. Derrick Rose reminds us, especially the young people watching from every corner of Illinois, that where you start does not have to dictate how you finish, that setbacks are not endings, that greatness is not just about talent but is also about character. He's always said that he was just a kid from Chicago, and that's exactly why this moment matters. Because

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every kid who sees his jersey rise into the rafters at the United Center will know that the distance between a neighborhood gym and global greatness is bridged by belief, discipline, and heart. And now, as he enters his next chapter, we also honor the man that he has become, marked by intelligence, shrewdness, compassion, and a continued commitment to learning, growth, development, and giving back. Derrick Rose didn't just represent Chicago and Illinois. He honored us, he elevated us, and he inspired the world. Today, we salute you, Pooh. Thank you for being the one."

Speaker Stuart: "That resolution was adopted on a previous day. Under the Order of House Resolutions, we have House Resolution 630, offered by Speaker Welch."

Speaker Welch: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Members, I rise today to recognize someone who, in many ways, is literally the reason I'm standing here right now, my executive assistant and scheduler, Mika Baugher. She... she thought she was just escorting me to the floor today 'cause Clayton needed me for something, but it's really about her today. Mika is one who always gets me where I need to be when I need to be there, so today I got her where she needed to be. Almost everyone here has seen Mika at work and benefited from her extreme professionalism, her poise, and her truly extraordinary ability to skillfully and gracefully manage our busiest moments. To many of you, Mika is the person who will go to whatever lengths to get your meeting scheduled and help you meet your goals any day of the week. And she is certainly that, and all of that. And in my neighborhood, they say all of that and a bag of chips. But to me, she's also the person

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who reminds me to take a minute for lunch, to catch my breath, and just sometimes, just say, 'Take some time to reflect for yourself, Speaker.' I think everyone in this room will agree, the most remarkable thing about Mika is not just her work but her kindness. We say to the caucus all the time that clear is kind. Imagine, you know, talking to plants, help them grow. If you're kind to people, what it would do. Mika's kind to people all the time. Anyone who knows her will tell you she lives to make people happy. It's not just her years of service to the House that has made her a go-to person on practically any topic under this dome, it's her kindness, her approachability, and her generosity with her time. After two decades in the House, working skillfully alongside two Speakers with very different styles, Mika is looking ahead to her next opportunity, which is going to be great. And everyone who knows her knows what a blessing she will be to those fortunate enough to have her. I want to take a moment to thank her husband, Chris Baugher, if you're watching this today, and her twin boys, Owen and Peyton, for sharing Mika with us for so many years. And from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank Mika for everything she's done for me, for my family, everything she's done for this House, and everything she has done every day here to make everyone around here better. So, with that, I would ask all of you to join me in supporting this resolution so we can now show Mika what she has meant to this chamber, and it'll be in the history books forevermore. But before we vote, can we all give her another round of applause? Madam... Madam Speaker, certainly I don't want to hog

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the mic if anyone else would like to say a few points before... before we approve the resolution."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Canty is recognized."

Canty: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the resolution. I rise today on behalf of the Democratic Women's Caucus, who want to say thank you to Mika for being an amazing person, an amazing friend, someone that we could count on, someone who guarded, very fiercely, access to the Speaker's Office, for which we are grateful because you always knew how to get us in the room to get what we needed. And I am going to take a quick second to personally thank you for feeding me, for letting me be the House mouse and reminding me when there's food, for finding me or sending someone to find me with a snack when you knew that's what I needed the most, for being there when I needed someone to talk to. Thank you so much. You will be very, very missed. And on behalf of the Women's Caucus, we wish you all the best of luck."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader McCombie is recognized."

McCombie: "Thank you. First, I'd just like the record to reflect on our first week of session that I agree with the Speaker on this issue. Mika, you are going to be so missed. I... I don't know how you all on the other side of the aisle are going to quite do this without you. You have been extremely helpful to me and my team in the transition of when I became the leader and still a... a source for Amanda and my office to just figure out how things are... are done. So, I just want to say thank you. Wherever you're going, whoever is getting you is extremely lucky. And if politics didn't have a play into this,

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I would snag you up in a heartbeat. So, just good luck to you and just really appreciate your service."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Will Davis is recognized."

Davis, W.: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the resolution, and, of course, to Mika. For many of you, you've only seen Mika as the executive assistant to the Speaker when you walk into the Speaker's Office. But for myself and maybe just a couple others, and I know I'm dating myself a little bit, when you first walk into 300, that little desk right there in the corner, that's where I first saw Mika when she was sitting there. And then, of course, she's transitioned to do bigger and better things. So, like many of us, we appreciate the way that you herd the cats, for lack of a better way of putting it. When there's an opportunity to meet with the Speaker, she's on the phone, she's texting us, she's calling us. 'Can you be here at this time? I need you here at this time.' Whatever it is. And we very, very much appreciate it. So, when I got the email that you were moving on, when I saw you yesterday, I didn't have to say anything. I just gave you a big hug. Just gave you an absolute big hug. So, yes, I can appreciate having someone that works in the office that knows how to handle it, that knows what it entails and does always the right thing to make sure that the person, in this case, the Speaker, looks as good as he is supposed to be, and taking care of him for us. Got a young lady like that named Tawny in my office, who's been with me for over 20 years, so I understand how that works. So... but, again, you'll be missed. You said you'll still be kind of around, so I look forward to still seeing you. I appreciate the bell peppers. I think

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you're responsible for the bell peppers in the office. Thank you very much for that. Having a fresh vegetable, you know, is a good thing around here sometimes. So, thank you very much, and I certainly appreciate having worked with you these years and looking forward to that next step. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader West is recognized."

West: "All right. Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the resolution. I've had the honor of knowing you, Mika, for seven years now, and I had the honor of serving under two Speakers. And I remember the times of going to 300, and I wasn't really... my stomach had butterflies. You know, I first started going into 300 under the former Speaker. That's different now. But that... the way I felt in the room that you... that you were in, that... that... where your desk is at, that room, I always felt peace, no matter who the Speaker was, no matter if I was called to the principal's office or just coming to have a conversation with the Speaker. I knew that I can sit right there, and you will help me to calm down, help all of us to calm down so we can have this conversation. Whatever's next for you, I hope it's a soft landing. Whatever's next for you, I hope it puts a smile on your face. You, your husband, and your kids. And I'm wishing blessings for you and the family for years and generations to come. Thank you for all you've done."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Ammons is recognized."

Ammons: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the resolution, and to Mika. I have been here, I'm going into my 12th year, and I've seen Mika in... in the evolutionary positions that she has held in this chamber. She is so critical to me because it seemed like every time I come across 72, something else falls off of me.

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I... I done had some real issues of health, and Mika has always been there. She called the hospital for me. She made sure that not only did they see me and they were prepared when I got there, that when I came back, she made sure my parking was right. She... she takes care of us. We are going to miss you. You have been so amazing. And her smile when you walk into that office, that was it. She welcomed you no matter what your issue was. And I really, really appreciate Mika for all she's done for me. I know you're going to be here. I know you're not leaving. I know that who comes behind you will have really big shoes. But you have been a tremendous, lifesaving friend and partner and an extraordinary executive secretary. Everybody should watch and learn from Mika. We will miss you. But God bless you and your family. I can't wait to see what happens next. God bless you."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Gordon-Booth is recognized."

Gordon-Booth: "To the resolution. There are so many wonderful things that could be said about Mika and the expertise that she brought into this role, but I really want to speak to who you are as a working mom. You know, Mika often... Mika and my daughter, I don't want to tell anybody's business, but Mika and my daughter both deal with chronic illness. And because she is aware of that fact, Mika, when the weather changes and it gets extremely cold, not only would she ask me about my child because she would identify with the fact that when the weather changes, it really can create those flares, but she really would lean into who we are as people, right? We have these titles, but we are so much more than our titles. We are the... the mothers, the daughters, the sons. It is beautiful to

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work in a place where you feel seen by the people that you work with. And Mika made all of us feel seen in this capacity. And I'm so grateful for you being the front door for the Speaker for all of these years and making all of us that come into that room and feel welcome, whether you go into that office and you get what you want or you leave with a 'no.' You made us all feel so welcomed in that space, and that's a really tough job. And you did it with grace. You did it with dignity. And I have to say, you make the best ranch dip this side of the Mississippi. I... and I don't... I don't know if you all know the secret, but it's two packs of Hidden Valley Ranch. She shared that secret with me, and now I'm sharing it with all of you. Thank you, Mika, so much. We love you. Can't wait to see what happens next."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Andrade is recognized."

Andrade: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to say, I want to thank you for giving me the advice that sometimes would say 'You know, Jamie, do you really want to do that?' That one time I was sitting in front of that office at 6 in the morning, and you said, 'Trust me, you really don't want to do it. Just go back.' Yeah, go back. I will get you in, but don't do it that way. And so, you've seen me at my worst, you've seen me at my best. And... and also, I want to thank you because it was you and Jen, and you, when I went up, I said 'You know what? I just don't feel well.' And you said, 'I'm going to tell you, you don't look well, and I know you look different.' And you said, 'I'm going to send you right out to the ER.' And you probably saved my life because I had surgery, you know, the next day. So, I want to say thank you, and I wish

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you the best in everything. And just thank you for watching out for me. You know, so, God bless you. Thank you."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Lisa Hernandez is recognized."

Hernandez, L.: "To the resolution. Mika, I think what has been said today on the floor is undeniable of your skills. That's undeniable. It's that special touch that you have brought to all of us. It's your own, and it's going to be really missed. And I just want to say we love you. That's it."

Speaker Stuart: "Speaker Welch to close."

Speaker Welch: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. I... I think my secret is out, and you all know why I kept you here today on Thursday. Today is officially proclaimed Mika's Day at the Capitol. And with that, I would ask for approval of this resolution."

Speaker Stuart: "Speaker Welch moves for the adoption of House Resolution 630. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay.' In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the resolution is adopted. Under the Order of Resolutions, we have House Resolution 629, offered by Leader Buckner."

Buckner: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. We're going to keep the good times rolling here. Today, we pause to mark five years of leadership by Emanuel 'Chris' Welch. And in doing so, Madam Speaker, we're honoring not just the milestone but a moment of change. When Speaker Welch took the gavel in January of 2021, he promised a new day in the Illinois House. And five years later, it's clear that wasn't just a slogan. It was a commitment, and it's one that he has delivered on. Under his leadership, this chamber has led on the issues that matter most to everyday people: affordability, responsibility,

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opportunity. We stabilized the state's finances. We rebuild trust. We restore Illinois' credit. Once unthinkable, but now a fact. We took on affordability, head on. A child tax credit, cutting the grocery tax, wiping out more than a billion dollars in owed medical debt. Real relief felt in real households, in real communities. We led on health care. Standing up to insurance company games, protecting patients, and cracking down on the middlemen driving up the cost of lifesaving prescriptions. We acted boldly on climate and on jobs. We passed the strongest gun safety laws in the nation. We protected reproductive freedom, voting rights, workers' rights, and due process, especially when those rights were under threat. And we didn't just pass bills, we changed how this House works. Speaker Welch brought collaboration where there was division, transparency where it was opaque, professionalism where it was long overdue. He built a diverse, talented leadership team and then trusted them to lead. And through it all, he reminded us of a simple truth that defines his speakership, say it together, winners do the work. Five years in, Illinois is stronger, fairer, and more prepared for the future because of that work. There's an old story that my father used to tell me, an anecdote about a pot of boiling water, and you throw three things into it, a potato, a egg, and coffee beans. The same heat hits all three but different reactions for all three items. The potato goes in hard and comes out soft. The egg goes in soft and comes out hard. But the coffee beans do something different. They don't just endure the heat; they change the water. That's Speaker Welch. He walked into a building shaped by history, pressure, and

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sometimes cynicism. And instead of being changed by it, he has helped change it. So, today we congratulate Speaker Emanuel 'Chris' Welch on five years of historic leadership. And we look forward to what comes next. Because if the first five years are any indication, the best work is still ahead. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative Wilhour is recognized."

Wilhour: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request a roll call vote."

Speaker Stuart: "Representative... Leader Welch is recognized."

Speaker Welch: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I want to thank each and every one of you. Truly, it has been the honor of a lifetime these last five years, and I wouldn't be in this role without the Members. The accomplishments we've had the last five years are not my accomplishments; they're our accomplishments. And it's been truly the honor of a lifetime to watch us work together. I say... say this all the time, that, you know, diversity is our strength, but our power comes from our unity. We have done this and moved Illinois forward by working together. And I'm excited about what's ahead because we're going to continue in this chamber to work together. And so, thank you, on this Mika Day at the Capitol. Thank all of you. And I know they're going to vote 'no.' That's OK. My door is always open to them like it has been for the last five years. Thank you, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Keicher is recognized."

Keicher: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. If you could please excuse Representatives McLaughlin, Sanalistro, Miller, Halbhook, and La Ha for the remainder of the day, please."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Buckner to close."

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Buckner: "Winners do the work. I urge an 'aye' vote."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Keicher is recognized to repeat his announcement from before. Slowly, please."

Keicher: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. If we could please excuse Representatives McLaughlin, Sanalistro, Miller, Halbbrook, and La Ha for the remainder of the day. And Representative Jacobs."

Speaker Stuart: "Leader Buckner moves for the adoption of House Resolution 629. All in... all in favor vote 'aye'; all opposed vote 'nay.' The voting is open. Have all voted who wish? Have all voted who wish? Have all voted who wish? Mr. Clerk, please take the record. On this question, there are 66 'ayes,' 7 'nays,' none voting 'present.' And this resolution, having received a constitutional majority, is hereby adopted. Mr. Clerk, Agreed Resolutions."

Clerk Hollman: "Agreed Resolutions. House Resolutions 618, offered by Representative Lilly. And House Resolution 625, offered by Representative Buckner."

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, February 17. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say '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 of Resolutions. House Resolution 619, offered by

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Representative Swanson, is referred to the Rules Committee.
There being no further business, the House Perfunctory
Session will stand adjourned."