

Gov. Evers: Excerpts from 2021 State of the State address

Posted on Tuesday, Jan 12, 2021

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MADISON — Below are excerpts from Gov. Tony Evers' 2021 State of the State Address as prepared for delivery. As [previously announced](#), the governor's address will be virtual this year and the stream will be available at 7 p.m. on his Facebook page [here](#) and YouTube [here](#).

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[N]ot with us tonight are the more than 5,000 Wisconsinites who have died due to COVID-19. They were firefighters, healthcare workers, nuns, educators, entrepreneurs, community pillars, students, veterans, volunteers, bird watchers, card players, and Packers, Brewers, and Bucks fans. They were moms and dads, brothers and sisters, friends, and coworkers, and they are loved and missed by many.

So, tonight, I'd like to dedicate this address to those who we've lost this year and the families—the sons and daughters, moms and dads, grandparents and grandkids, friends, and neighbors left behind—who, on top of everything else this past year, have had to mourn the loss of someone they love.

And I'd ask you to join me briefly in a moment of silence to honor the lives of these Wisconsinites we lost to COVID-19.

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As I stood before you and delivered my second state of the state address last year, the world and our state looked much different than it does now.

We were coming off a successful year making a down payment on our priorities like fully funding our public schools, fixing our crumbling roads and bridges, and making healthcare

more accessible and affordable. We put \$330 million in general school aids—the largest in more than a decade—and funded a \$97-million increase for special education—the largest ever. We provided more than \$465 million in new funding for our local roads, highways, and transit aids. And even though my efforts to expand healthcare were rejected by Republicans in the Legislature, we made critical investments in improving mental health treatment, supporting our direct care workforce, and increasing funding for our rural healthcare providers.

So, we began 2020 with our sights set high.

We were announcing a three-pronged plan to address our dairy crisis and support rural communities across our state. We were looking ahead to redistricting on the horizon, creating the People's Maps Commission to draw our state's next maps after the 2020 Census and ensure that people choose their elected officials, not the other way around. We were pushing to return to our state's commitment to two-thirds funding for our kids and our schools, and we were going to increase aid to our most rural school districts while providing \$130 million toward reducing property taxes through equalization aid.

Then things changed overnight.

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When I delivered my last state of the state address, no one could have predicted the rest of the year would go quite like it did. What we now know about 2020 is that it was among the most unrelenting years many of us have ever experienced.

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I said then that the year would challenge the depth of our empathy and the strength of our selflessness—and it did, but in more and different ways than we could have ever imagined.

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We were grateful to be able to invest nearly \$2 billion in our state's response. We distributed more than 26 million pieces of PPE and sanitizing supplies to hospitals, long-term care facilities, veteran's homes, and frontline workers. We provided more than \$379.1 million to help stabilize our economy and support nearly 53,000 of our small businesses, more than 15,000 farms, and our lodging, hospitality, and tourism industries. We invested more than \$200 million in helping communities across Wisconsin recover, but we know we have a long way to go to get our economy back on track.

And unfortunately, many of the challenges of 2020 will no doubt carry into this new year.

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Now, make no mistake: I do not underestimate the challenges that this new year may bring, or the grief we're still grappling with, the ramifications we've yet to fully realize, the new problems that may arise still this year.

But as sure as we will face struggles, we will take them on together.

We've made it through a difficult year, folks. While it was discouraging, we aren't defeated. While it was trying, we're tough. Wisconsin, we've never been known for being timid, and we're sure not going to start today. Our people, our state, and our democracy have withstood tests before, and we will again answer the call to go forward unphased.

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