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Gov. Evers: ICYMI – Delivers speech at DPW convention

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MADISON, Wis. — Yesterday, Governor Tony Evers headlined the Democratic Party of Wisconsin 2022 Convention in La Crosse. This year's theme – Doing What's Right For Wisconsin – highlights the work of Gov. Evers and Democrats to grow the middle class, fully fund our neighborhood public schools, rebuild our roads and bridges, and support our Main Street businesses. Wisconsin Democrats are united in re-electing Gov. Evers.

View Gov. Evers' speech here [2:37:35].

Full Text As Prepared for Delivery:

Good evening! Thank you all for being here tonight.

First, I want to thank the Democratic Party of Wisconsin and every county party leader and volunteer in this room. You all do the hard work and you're the reason I'm here today. I want to especially thank our party chair, Ben Wikler, for everything he's done to grow our party into a national model of what's possible.

We're also lucky to have Jason Rae serving as Secretary of the DNC and helping build the progressive infrastructure that is so important across the country.

I'd also like to recognize my friend, Senator Tammy Baldwin. She has one of the toughest jobs in Washington. And, as you all know, our other senator would rather look out for himself instead of advocate for our state. It's time we give Senator Baldwin a real partner in the Senate! And I know we will.

We've also heard from our outstanding members of Congress tonight. Gwen Moore and Mark Pocan have been such valuable partners. We need more people like them

in Congress!

And I have to recognize Ron Kind. Not only because we're here in La Crosse, a city he has done so much for, but because this is his last convention as a member of Congress. Thanks to his leadership, countless small businesses, farmers, and families have a brighter future ahead of them in Western Wisconsin. While his voice in Congress is going to be sorely missed, his legacy as a pragmatic and selfless leader is one to be proud of.

But I'm confident we are going to keep his seat and that the third district will have a member of Congress they can be proud of.

And of course, I have to thank my best friend and forever junior prom date, Kathy Evers.

I wouldn't be here without you. Thank you for being here tonight and for everything you've done for me and the state of Wisconsin.

I'm here tonight, proudly running for re-election. But as we gather tonight, I'm acutely aware of the weight of this moment and what's at stake for the future of our state if we're not successful.

Yesterday, we took a step backward in this country as the Supreme Court ruled that politicians can insert themselves into deeply personal decisions about reproductive health. These decisions should be made between a woman and her doctor, family, and faith. Now, these decisions are being dictated by partisan politicians.

Just this week we tried to overturn Wisconsin's archaic 1849 criminal abortion ban. A ban that has zero exceptions for rape or incest, and only a narrow and confusing exception for the life of a mother.

Republicans in the legislature refused to act. And, in fact, every Republican running against me supports this law – or wants to take it even further.

I don't think that a law that was written before the Civil War, or before women secured the right to vote, should be used to dictate these intimate decisions on reproductive health.

I've been proud to veto bill after bill that would take us backward on reproductive health. And you have my promise that I will do anything in my power to protect

abortion access in Wisconsin and we will always fight for reproductive freedom.

There is so much at stake in 2022 and we know what will happen if we aren't successful. That's why we have to win.

My opponents are already running a scorched earth campaign to divide our state. We don't have to imagine what they'll do if they're in office, because they've already told us.

Rebecca Kleefisch has said she wants to "hire mercenaries" to work for her campaign, and uses violent language threatening election officials – and the policies she supports are even more radical. Meanwhile, it's pretty clear that Tim Michels hasn't spent much time in Wisconsin since he last ran for office in 2004. He's sticking by the same radical positions he held then: he wants to get rid of marriage equality and take away a woman's right to choose. But unlike 20 years ago, he'll now tell Donald Trump whatever it takes to keep his endorsement.

The Republican primary is a race to see who can be the loudest, most divisive, most radical candidate.

To put it simply: Wisconsin deserves better.

Look — I know I'm not the flashiest guy in the room. Because of that, sometimes, people underestimate me. Just ask Scott Walker about that…

I believe in respect, compassion, fairness.

I believe in a common sense approach to leading our great state.

I believe Wisconsin is at its strongest when we come together. And when leaders focus on doing the right thing for everyone, regardless of their politics.

Wisconsinites are sick and tired of the divisiveness. Quite frankly, so am I.

That's the choice on the ballot this year: we can either go down a path where our communities are further divided and our rights are no longer guaranteed. Or we can choose to keep doing the right thing for our state.

While Republicans want to divide us, I'm focused on delivering results that matter.

During my first term, we've brought common sense leadership and Wisconsin values back to the governor's office.

I worked with both parties to fund our K-12 schools at the highest level in nearly two decades, and directed millions to our technical college and university systems.

We've worked to fix our damn roads – with over 1,700 miles of roads and nearly 1,300 bridges already repaired. That's more than enough road to go from La Crosse to Nashville and back.

We're on the way to connecting 300,000 homes and businesses to high-speed internet access.

We've supported small businesses and helped them grow.

We've invested over $100 million in violence prevention and public safety efforts, to help communities tackle the root causes of violence and keep neighborhoods safe.

We're also helping working families get ahead. People are keeping more of their paychecks to help with rising costs. We brought Republicans and Democrats together to cut income taxes by 15 percent for working families.

When we choose to get things done, instead of playing political games, Wisconsin is stronger.

We've achieved a historic budget surplus, record low unemployment, and more people working than ever before.

We've accomplished all of this by focusing on the issues that matter AND stopping radical, dangerous, and divisive bills from becoming law.

I've vetoed several bills seeking to limit voting rights. I've vetoed attempts to restrict access to critical healthcare, including reproductive care. And I've vetoed bills that would make our state less safe, like allowing guns on school property. That kind of divisive policy making will only endanger our schools, teachers, and our kids.

There is no doubt that if someone else sits in my position, these bills will come back and they will become law next year. Wisconsin deserves better than that.

That's why I'm running for re-election: because we have to continue doing the right

thing.

When it comes to our public schools, I'm proud of how far we've come already. But these historic investments don't make up for the years that public education was starved in our state.

That's why we need to invest more into schools so they can focus on the strategies that work – lowering class sizes by hiring and retaining more teachers, investing in special education, and supporting mental health programs like our "Get Kids Ahead" initiative.

You have my promise that I will always do what's right to make sure that Wisconsin's public education system remains one of the best in the country.

We've also supported our technical colleges to expand programs that train students in high-demand fields and expand Wisconsin's workforce.

I know college is a great choice, but it's not the best path for everyone. That's why job training and apprenticeship programs are so very important.

I visited a training center recently that has eight classrooms and four training bays for hands-on learning — and it trains nearly 2,000 men and women annually on skills like concrete, demolition, welding, and much more. That's an incredible opportunity and we need to make sure every kid knows about programs like this when they're growing up.

We have to also do the right thing for small businesses. And I know we can make Wisconsin the small business powerhouse of the Midwest.

This doesn't have to be complicated. One of the programs I'm most proud of is the Main Street Bounceback Program that has helped more than 4,500 small businesses open their doors or expand. We gave business owners $10,000 to make their vision a reality, as long as they fill an empty storefront.

It's been a game changer for towns of all sizes.

I'll give you one example: I was in Medford recently — and they reminded me when I got there that there weren't many Democrats in town, but the bottom line is this: I was visiting a business that had received one of these grants and taken over a vacant storefront in Medford.

Just as I was talking to her and she was telling me how successful she is, a group of people walked through her door.

It was 15 people who had opened up 15 new businesses in the town of Medford. That changes a community almost overnight.

These grants, no matter how small, meant a lot to our communities and to our local economies. It's programs like these that can really make a difference.

This is the kind of thing we can accomplish when we do the right thing.

Wisconsin is at its best when we connect the dots and that's what we're doing. Whether it's job training programs, strong public education systems, quality healthcare, good infrastructure, affordable internet access, or clean water – we need all of these pieces to move our state in the right direction.

That's not something that's possible if we have a governor more focused on radical policies and political division.

That's why we are going to win.

But, I can't do it alone. I'm counting on all of you in this room to stand with me. When we organize, bring people together, and talk about the future we want to build for our state – we win.

That's how we beat Scott Walker in 2018. That's how we're going to give Tammy Baldwin another Democratic U.S. Senate member. That's how we're going to re-elect Josh Kaul, Gwen Moore, Mark Pocan, and keep Ron Kind's seat in Democratic hands. And how we're going to elect more Democrats to the state legislature and offices up and down the ballot.

I'm counting on you, and you have my promise to always do the right thing for our state.

Thank you.