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2010 Missouri State of the State Address
Gov. Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
January 20, 2010

Thank you, Speaker Richard, President Pro-Tem Shields, Leaders Callahan and LeVota, Judges of the Missouri Supreme Court, Lieutenant Governor Kinder, state officials, members of the General Assembly and members of my cabinet.

Welcome honored guests and my fellow Missourians.

It's a privilege to be here this evening. I am blessed to have with me Missouri's First Lady, my wife Georganne, and our two sons, Jeremiah and Will.

One year ago, as we gathered in this very room, a massive ice storm struck southern Missouri.

Miles of power lines went down, plunging tens of thousands of people into bitter cold and darkness.

I'll never forget what I saw in the days and weeks that followed. Everywhere I went, people of every color and creed were joining hands to help their neighbors.

They brought blankets and home-cooked meals to Kennett.

They came with chainsaws and pickup trucks to Thayer.

They turned school gyms and church basements into havens of warmth and safety in Doniphan, Naylor and Poplar Bluff.

They didn't ask how anybody voted. They didn't care who was rich or poor.

They came together in a crisis, because that's what the people of Missouri do.

That's a powerful lesson for us here tonight: The worst of times brings out the best in us.

And when the people of Missouri join hands and work together we can accomplish anything.

That makes me proud of our state, proud to be a Missourian and proud to be your Governor.

Tonight, our thoughts and prayers go out to the people of Haiti, who are suffering in the tragic aftermath of the massive earthquake on January 12. There are many ways Missourians can help. I encourage you to go to our Web site, MO.gov, and learn more about what you can do.

From the moment I took the oath of office, I have focused my energy on one thing: turning this economy around.

Our mission is clear:

We must keep the jobs we have, and create thousands more.

We must build a granite foundation for Missouri's future growth.

And we must balance the budget without raising taxes.

Tonight, I will review some of the hard-won accomplishments of the year behind us... address the challenges ahead of us ... highlight the opportunities we must seize now to spur job growth ... and lay out my long-term strategy to create a vibrant future for our state.

But before I get to the heart of my economic message, I'd like to recognize the brave Missourians, in all branches of our military, who have left their families in our care, to fight terror around the world.

With us tonight is Specialist Michael Thomas, a Citizen-Soldier with the Missouri National Guard. Specialist Thomas was serving with the Missouri National Guard's Agri-Business Development Team II in Afghanistan when his convoy was hit by a suicide bomber in March 2009. As the gunner on his vehicle, Specialist Thomas sustained a direct hit from the blast. For his sacrifice, he was awarded the Purple Heart.

Specialist Thomas, as Commander in Chief of the Missouri National Guard, I commend you for your service to our country. You represent every man and woman who has ever fought for our freedom and liberty... in every time... and on every field of battle.

Specialist Thomas, on their behalf, please stand and accept the gratitude of your state.

Every action we took in 2009, and every action we will take in 2010, is set against the backdrop of global forces that constrain our nation's economy. That is the nature of the complex world we live in.

But it will not determine Missouri's destiny.

We will.

Our most pressing economic challenges – creating jobs, seizing opportunities for growth, and balancing the budget – are too important to be sidetracked by partisan bickering. That would betray the trust put in us by the people.

We also need to take the long view, and be wise stewards of the blessings that make Missouri so special: our families, our communities, and our God-given natural resources.

In everything we do this year, we must put our differences aside – and put Missouri first.

I'm an optimist by nature, and nothing I have seen this year has diminished my optimism.

My vision of the future is colored by my abiding faith in the resourcefulness and determination of the people of Missouri.

I want the little girl who someday cracks the code of cancer to be a product of Missouri schools.

I want the little boy who invents clean fuel to heat our homes and power our cars to be a native son.

And I want thousands of Missourians working in high-tech jobs, using technology we can only dream of today.

That's the future I see for Missouri.

And to reach it, I want Missouri to be first in job creation.

First in education.

First in innovation.

First in quality of life.

And first in leading this nation to recovery.

Everywhere I've traveled in the last 12 months, from K.C. to Cape, I've heard the same refrain from businesses large and small: "Give us the tools, help us train the workers, and we'll do the rest."

Last year, our bi-partisan jobs bill helped put more of these tools in place.

We ramped up financial incentives for businesses that offered good jobs and health insurance. And we focused state resources on targeted, fast-track training programs to prepare a workforce ready to step into those jobs.

Let me give you a few examples of our success.

Express Scripts in St. Louis, used Missouri BUILD incentives to expand here, rather than Pennsylvania. Now it's building a huge, automated facility for filling medical prescriptions. And it will create nearly 300 jobs paying an average wage of more than \$40,000 a year.

McLane, a grocery distribution company owned by Warren Buffett, used state incentives to build a large new facility in Republic that will create 250 full-time jobs with good wages. If Warren Buffett is bullish on Missouri, it's good for all of us.

Smith Electric Vehicles makes all-electric, zero-emission trucks. It's building a new plant in Kansas City using our Quality Jobs incentives. That plant will create 200 jobs, and pump millions of dollars into the local economy.

And the list goes on.

While we were helping large employers, we didn't forget about the small businesses that are a mainstay of Missouri's economy.

We eliminated the franchise tax for 16,000 small businesses like Kelley's Furniture in Kirksville, so they could expand and add jobs.

We also started a small business loan program. One of those loans went to Beth Daniels, who owns a company in Eureka that makes educational games. Last year, Beth was worried she wouldn't have enough games in stock to fill holiday orders. So she used her loan to build up inventory and hire another employee. Please welcome one of the Show-Me State's budding entrepreneurs, Beth Daniels.

Job-creation initiatives only succeed if there are trained workers ready to step into those jobs. So we upped our investment in training people.

Last fall, we began implementing our Caring for Missourians initiative to train more Missourians for careers in high-demand health care fields – including nursing and dentistry, optometry and medical technology. Over the next two years, we'll be enrolling at least 1,300 additional students in these programs at our two- and four-year colleges, and preparing these students to meet our state's critical health care needs.

We also put more money into accelerated programs at community colleges to help dislocated workers retrain and get back into the job market – fast.

It's clear that our key business incentives and workforce investments are bearing fruit. But much more needs to be done. That's why my top legislative priority this year is my 2010 Jobs Plan.

It contains three key components.

First, we must leverage every tool and tactic to help loyal Missouri businesses thrive.

Second, we must outrun and outfox our rivals to recruit new high-tech companies to Missouri.

And third, we must train a workforce that's ready-to-roll, and second-to-none.

The Missouri First initiative is my loyalty program for businesses that are already here. They'll go to the head of the line for financial incentives to help expand plants or payrolls.

We'll give an extra bump to businesses that have been in Missouri longer than five years. After all, these are the companies who have given generations of Missourians steady paychecks. They're also the folks who paid the taxes that built our roads, our schools and our parks.

Given Missouri's need to create jobs quickly, helping loyal businesses accelerate their growth just may be the smartest investment we can make – with the fastest return.

As your Governor, I'll continue to push hard to recruit new businesses to Missouri. And make no mistake: I've got a competitive streak.

That brings me to the second part of my jobs plan, the Missouri Science and Innovation Reinvestment Act: MOSIRA.

Missouri is already home to 1,000 biological science companies. This is an area where we can add muscle to existing strength.

MOSIRA will reinvest a small part of the taxes paid by existing bio-tech firms in Missouri, to recruit new ones. It will create a stable pool of funds to increase access to capital. And it will help turn scientific breakthroughs into commercial successes.

We want our bio-tech companies to grow because that creates more jobs. But just as important are the corollaries of that growth: a culture of excellence and collaboration, a forum where brilliant minds find kindred spirits, a hotbed of ideas that spark innovation, and a nexus of risk and reward, where start-ups thrive.

Synbiotics is a perfect example of how this synergy works to Missouri's advantage. Synbiotics is a global leader in animal health. A couple of years ago, its president and CEO, Paul Hays, decided to move the corporate headquarters and research labs from San Diego to Kansas City.

Paul says there are five reasons why he brought his business to Missouri:

First, the opportunities for synergy and collaboration with other companies and scientists in Missouri's booming animal health corridor.

Second, proximity to his customers.

Third, financial incentives from Missouri, Platte County and Kansas City.

Fourth, Missouri's outstanding work ethic; and

Last, but not least, Paul's a Mizzou grad, class of '83.

All I can add to that is welcome back, and Go Tigers!

MOSIRA will help recruit more dynamic, science and technology companies like Synbiotics to Missouri. That's exactly what we want to do.

That brings me to the third part of my 2010 Jobs Plan. It focuses on Missouri's greatest asset: our people.

"Training for Tomorrow" is a new initiative to train more Missourians for jobs in growing fields, like lab techs, nursing aides, surveyors and mechanics. It gives community colleges the flexibility to enlarge training programs where there's high demand, and ensures there are enough workers to meet that demand.

In addition, I've proposed a 20 percent increase in funding for customized training programs tailored to the needs of specific high-tech industries. By matching industry's needs with training programs, more Missourians will be able to find work quickly.

Much of this training will take place at Missouri's excellent community colleges. There's no place where the link between education and employment is stronger.

I was at Crowder College in Neosho not long ago. President Alan Marble told me that if someone is out of work, they should go to the Dean's office today. They can sign up for a career training program – in alternative energy, health care, or drafting and design – and if they're willing to give it their all, he'll help find them a job.

Tonight, I call on you to show that same can-do spirit. Let's roll up our sleeves and pass this 2010 Jobs Plan.

There's another group of Missourians eager for work, who have real-world job experience and first-rate training from Uncle Sam. I'm talking about our veterans.

When I was in Iraq and Afghanistan last summer, the troops invariably asked me two questions: "How is Pujols doing?" and "Will there be a job for me when I get home?"

Tonight, I'm proud to announce the creation of "Show-Me Heroes," our new jobs initiative just for our veterans. The leader of this effort is Lieutenant Colonel Alan Rohlfing of the Missouri Army National Guard.

He'll be calling on employers all over the state, telling them about our disciplined, dedicated, hard-working veterans. When a job comes open, I want a veteran's resume on the top of the stack, so they get first crack at an interview.

I'm asking every employer in this state to step up and show that Missouri hires its veterans.

For veterans who are ready to retire, Missouri's also the first place to look, because we're going to continue to phase out the state income tax on military pensions until it's zero dollars.

Veterans are not the only ones who can get tax relief in Missouri this year. We're also helping homebuyers.

We're putting \$15 million into an effort to give the housing industry a boost and help more Missourians afford the American Dream.

If you want to buy a house in 2010, the state will pick up your property taxes for the first year, for up to \$1,250. And we're offering another \$500 in tax relief if you make that house more energy efficient.

This will help put thousands of Missouri families in new homes, jumpstart the housing market and give our skilled tradesmen more green jobs.

In this tough economy, we've also got to protect vulnerable Missourians from a voracious predator: payday loan companies.

Hard times are like fertilizer for payday lenders; they just pop up overnight, like mushrooms.

For folks caught in a bad situation – maybe they lost their job, or the car broke down – payday loans may seem like the best option. But Missouri families shouldn't get fleeced.

According to the most recent data, the average payday loan in Missouri was \$290 – at 430 percent interest.

And even at those exorbitant rates, you know how many loans were reported? Close to three million.

Missouri laws aren't tough enough to protect folks caught in this downward spiral of debt. We need to stand up for them, and pass meaningful payday loan reform this year.

By any measure, 2009 was a rough year.

In one way or another, the downturn hit everybody's pocketbook.

Missouri unemployment ran under the national average, but was still too high. A lot of friends and neighbors were out of work. Too many Missourians lost their homes, farms and businesses. Folks who hung onto their jobs saw their wages and benefits whittled away.

The impact of those economic blows knocked the wind out of state government. Revenue fell a staggering \$778 million short of projections – the biggest one-year drop in Missouri history.

So state government did what every Missouri family had to do: tighten our belts, stretch every dollar and rein in spending.

We didn't bellyache about it; we just did it. We focused on our priorities, worked together, and made some real progress.

Unlike 29 other states, we balanced the budget without raising taxes.

How did Missouri do it?

We made state government leaner. In one year, I will have reduced the state workforce by nearly 1,800 positions.

We used technology to make government more efficient and effective.

We cut costs by renegotiating contracts.

I ordered state department heads to conserve energy, and we reduced our utility bill by six percent.

I had to cut \$600 million out of the state budget, but did so without losing sight of priorities like education and public safety.

And in terms of efficiencies, we're not finished yet.

For years, state government has been creating boards and commissions for this centennial or that special interest. Some do good work, while others don't do much of anything. Nobody paid much attention to them, and they just kept growing and growing until they turned into bureaucratic kudzu.

In an effort to root out government waste and inefficiency, I have already eliminated 13 of these boards and 227 positions.

And I call on the legislature to haul out the brush hog, and get rid of 18 more boards and 246 more positions.

Working together, we've been able to avoid the meltdowns we're now seeing in other states:

Massachusetts and Nevada jacked up their sales tax.

Arizona's on the verge of closing two-thirds of its state parks and selling its House and Senate buildings.

Nevada's Governor has proposed cutting K-12 funding by \$700 million.

That's not going to happen here in Missouri.

Our early action and sound management have helped Missouri keep its spotless Triple-A credit rating. That saves taxpayers millions in interest each year. And it signals investors that Missouri is where smart money goes to grow. Moody's Investors Services, one of the nation's premier financial ratings firms, rated Missouri one of the top states to lead the nation's recovery.

By balancing the budget without raising taxes, making hard choices, and managing debt, Missouri is in a strong position to accelerate out of this downturn.

We could never have accomplished that without steadfast bipartisanship. I want to thank all of you for standing together last year and putting Missouri first.

We must summon that same bipartisan spirit for the hard work that lies ahead.

This year, although we're in better shape than other states, we still face sobering fiscal challenges.

Revenue projections for fiscal 2011 are austere; we'll have less revenue than we did in 2009. It will take the patience and good faith of every person in this General Assembly – all 163 members of the House and all 34 members of the Senate – working as a team, to manage our limited resources and move Missouri forward on the path to prosperity.

While we are taking steps to get immediate economic returns, we also need to be making strategic investments to secure Missouri's long-term economic growth:

Investments in our children's education;

In health care;

In communities that are safe and vibrant;

And in the beauty and bounty of our state.

In our rapidly changing world, the education of Missouri's children is a high-stakes enterprise. Missouri can't succeed unless our schools succeed. And wherever students excel, we have dedicated teachers to thank.

All across the state, our public schools are stronger for the commendable work teachers do. And I'm not just talking about the work that goes on in classrooms from the first bell on Monday morning to the last bell on Friday afternoon.

I'm talking about the extra hours teachers put in before class, giving students extra help with math or English. And the weekends teachers devote to AP prep and band competitions. For these exceptional people, teaching isn't a job – it's a calling.

Criticizing public education is easy – and cheap. Educating children is hard – and takes serious investment. It's not enough to tell our teachers how much we value them; we must show them. And that is why my budget this year includes continued funding for Career Ladder. Our teachers have earned it.

Last year, we provided record funding for K-12 classrooms, even in the face of severe economic challenges. Other states, like Kansas and Georgia, are restricting education funds already appropriated.

Let me be clear: Every penny appropriated by the legislature last year will go to our K-12 classrooms this year.

Our budget challenges next year are no less daunting. Until the revenue picture changes, most folks in government understand that getting the job done with fewer resources is a given.

But budgets are about protecting priorities. And as we discussed my budget, and where and how much to cut, I took one thing off the table: K-12 classrooms. Our children are precious; their education is too important. So even in these difficult times, I am recommending increased funding, at a record level, for our K-12 classrooms.

Our commitment to education must extend beyond high school. But for too long, steep tuition hikes have put college out of reach for many Missouri families. Tom and Sandy Ray, who live in St. Louis, had three kids in college at the same time. That's a big price tag for a working family, but Tom and Sandy understood the value of a college degree and were willing to make the sacrifice.

When their family budget suffered a blow last year, they wondered how they'd manage to pay all three tuition bills. But last year, we froze tuition at all two- and four-year public colleges and universities in the state. For thousands of families like the Rays, that was a godsend.

Please welcome these two terrific Missouri parents, Tom and Sandy Ray.

But we're not done. I call on you to join me – and lead the nation by example – in supporting another tuition freeze this year. That would mean Missouri students and their families won't have to pay a penny more in tuition and fees two years in a row.

I want to bring college within reach for even more Missouri students, by addressing a blatant inequity in Missouri's A+ scholarship program. That program pays two years of community college tuition for high school kids who keep up their grades, give back, and stay out of trouble.

Today, a third of the kids in Missouri's public high schools can't even apply for these scholarships. That's because their schools aren't "officially designated" as A+ schools.

And that's just not fair.

A+ scholarships should be open to every hard-working public high school student in Missouri. And I count on your support to make that happen this year.

Our children are growing up in a high-speed, digital world; just watch them texting their friends. Without access to the fast lane on the information superhighway, we'll simply be a dusty detour.

This year, Missouri is competing to bring high-speed Internet to every part of our state, from the urban core to the last mile of gravel road.

For a small business like Strawberry's Bar-B-Que in Holcomb, that means instant access to customers from Jamaica to Japan. A college student could take courses on her laptop in Fair Play. A cancer specialist in St. Louis can read medical records from a family doctor in St. James.

We will compete for every possible dollar to turn this broadband project into reality and help Missouri stay competitive.

There's an undeniable correlation between a state's competitiveness and the cost of health care.

Last year, Missouri was poised to make real progress on health care. The Missouri Senate voted overwhelmingly to support my plan to provide health care to 35,000 working Missourians at no additional cost to state taxpayers. Unfortunately, that proposal failed on the last day of the session.

This year, there's been a lot of talk about health care, from the halls of Congress to town hall meetings across the country.

Congress is debating significant health care legislation. If that federal legislation passes, it's our job to show steady, bipartisan leadership and maximize the benefits for the people of Missouri.

There's another important health care issue that demands our immediate attention: autism. This spectrum of disorders is diagnosed in one in 110 children. And the sooner it is diagnosed and treated, the better their lives will be.

Myles and Lora Hinkel have a 7-year-old son, Blake, who has autism. Myles and Lora have been outstanding advocates not just for their son, but for all children with autism. Please welcome the Hinkels tonight.

Blake's father tells a moving story about hearing his son speak his first word at the age of three. Reaching that milestone took months of intensive therapy at the Thompson Center for Autism in Columbia. It was an enormous victory for Blake, summed up rather nicely in that first word: "MINE".

When the Hinkels' insurance company refused to pay for Blake's therapy, they willingly took the hit.

Because they know there is a critical period of time to turn on the light in the developing brain of a child with autism. And if that critical time passes, the light goes out.

Children with autism shouldn't have to wait for their parents to come up with the cash, or for insurance companies to grow a conscience.

They need our help now.

For months, I have stood with Democratic and Republican legislators on this issue, and laid out the key elements of a bill that we all know will make a real difference in these children's lives.

This is the year we stand up to insurance companies.

This is the year we make them cover autism.

This is the year we turn on the light for thousands of children like Blake Hinkel.

There's another young man I'd like to tell you about. His name is Travis, and he's up in the balcony tonight with his family. When Travis was 8, both his legs were crushed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. Travis and his mom, Karen, almost died from their injuries. They told me they feel lucky to be alive.

Travis is 11 now; he's had five operations on his legs so far, and he'll need three more. But he's making steady progress. Please welcome this brave young man and his family.

The man behind the wheel of the car that hit Travis and his family had a prior conviction for drunk driving. But there he was – drunk again – coming at them the wrong way on an exit ramp. Travis and his family paid a terrible price for that man's terrible crime.

And that's why I have proposed legislation to effectively prosecute and punish drunk drivers and – most important – yank their licenses, and get them off the road before they shatter more lives. I urge you to send that bill to my desk this year.

Any long-term strategy for improving Missouri's economy, and enhancing our quality of life, must take full advantage of our natural heritage: our woodlands and our streams, our caves and our canyons, our plains and our prairies.

Hunting, fishing, hiking and camping are part of our Missouri way of life. When I was a kid, I did a lot of fishing with my dad. We'd get up early, toss our gear in the back of the station wagon and head down to Bennett Spring or Montauk. I'd be hip-deep in cold water before the mist had rolled off the river.

I spent many golden hours learning to read the river, learning to tie flies that could fool a trout. That kindled my love of the outdoors, which I passed along to my sons – and I hope they'll pass along to theirs.

We need to get more kids off the couch, away from their videogames and back outdoors, because there are some lessons that only Nature can teach.

Tonight, I am pleased to announce the creation of the Missouri State Parks Youth Corps. We'll put more than a thousand young people to work this summer at our 85 state parks and historic sites.

Our park system is a legacy passed on to us by Missourians of extraordinary vision and generosity. Missourians like Edmund Babler, Peter Bennett and Leo Drey; Annie Van Meter, and Ted and Pat Jones. Even in these lean times, we have a responsibility to be good stewards of these treasures, and preserve them for future generations.

My Parks Youth Corps will learn to be good stewards of the land from the ground up: picking up trash, cutting brush, and building trails.

They'll also be outdoor ambassadors in my effort to reverse a 10-year decline in the number of visitors to our beautiful, affordable state parks. More visitors will also pump more money into our tourism industry.

For families who love the outdoors, there's just no better deal around. Now we've got to spread the word: If you like to kayak or fish, bird-watch or mountain bike, come to Missouri first.

Missouri's land has always been the foundation of our economy. Our farmers have fed the nation, and they can feed a hungry world. In a global marketplace, the demand for Missouri agricultural products is primed to expand exponentially.

We've got to sell globally, and buy locally.

This year, we'll sell a record amount of corn and soybeans to Taiwan. That's good for our trade balance and good for our farmers.

Here at home, every Missouri family should be able to share the bounty of the land, including fresh, healthy produce. That's why my budget will help promote local farmers markets, and encourage more folks to start community gardens in their neighborhoods.

I've focused this evening on our shared obligations: creating jobs, managing the budget and holding down taxes. I've talked about working together to make our communities safer, stronger and healthier. I've talked about making strategic, long-term investments in Missouri's future.

But we have one more piece of unfinished business: Ethics.

It's time we gave the people of Missouri a state government that's as honest and straight-shooting as they are.

Last year, we demolished the patronage system long-used for awarding license fee offices. We created a more efficient system with a transparent bidding process. And it will produce revenue we can put to good use.

Two years ago, the legislature passed a bill to pay for college for the families of veterans killed or seriously disabled in combat. Just one problem: no funding.

Last year, the legislature passed a bill to pay a survivors' benefit to the families of firefighters, police officers, state troopers and sheriff's deputies killed in the line of duty. Same problem: no funding.

With the \$800,000 our new fee office system will produce, we can finally do right by these heroes and their families, and fund both of these programs this year.

Good government really does pay dividends.

And we can do more. We can pass meaningful ethics reform this year.

There are a number of good reform proposals out there.

But to my mind, meaningful ethics reform must do four basic things:

Stop the sneaky, back-door donations from committee-to-committee.

Ban one officeholder from working as a political consultant for another officeholder.

Shut the revolving door between the legislature and lobbyists, for good.

And most importantly, set strict limits on campaign contributions. Missouri voters overwhelmingly mandated them. As Attorney General, I fought for them. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld them.

It's the right thing to do.

In the last year, I've logged thousands of miles traveling our great state. I've had coffee with small business owners on Main Street, and chewed the fat with cattlemen. I've visited with combat veterans and college kids, schoolteachers and scientists.

I've met hard-working families struggling to pay their bills, and laid-off factory workers with no health insurance.

A lot of folks are worried about their jobs. About how they're going to pay the mortgage and medical bills. They're anxious about retirement, and what, if anything, will be left for their kids and grandkids.

But not once – not one single time – did I hear anyone say: “Poor me.”

Not once did anyone tell me, “Governor, I give up.”

Times may be tough.

But Missourians are tougher.

Remember the lesson of the ice storm: Our greatest strength lies in one another.

If we can hang tough a little longer, work together and stay on the path, we're going to keep climbing... and climbing... and climbing ...until we see the bright horizon.

Because Missouri's future is bright.

Even now, there are glimmers of recovery. Some parts of our economy – like health care and technology – are starting to hire again.

Home sales and industrial production are beginning to tick upward. Consumers are cautiously starting to spend.

These first warm rays of recovery are a sign that our discipline and hard work of the past year are paying off for the people of Missouri.

And at the end of the day, whether we vote red, blue or purple, most of us want the same things.

A state that's competitive and prosperous.

A state where hard-working people can find a decent job, buy a house and raise a family.

A state brimming with opportunity, so our children can sink roots and raise families of their own.

A state where health care is abundant and affordable.

A state where every child gets a first-rate education.

A state whose natural beauty beckons us to hike and bike, hunt and fish.

And a state where neighbors help neighbors.

Do we have hard work ahead of us? Yes, we do.

Will we make progress this year? Yes, we will.

Can we move faster if we work together? Absolutely.

Tonight, let's swear an oath, to the people of the state we love and to each other – that nothing will stand in the way of rebuilding our economy and reimagining our future.

Let's make 2010 the year we put politics second, and put Missouri first.

Thank you.

And God bless Missouri.