

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

1st Legislative Day

1/8/2025

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "All... all assembled in this auditorium give attention. The Secretary of State, the Honorable Alexi Giannoulis, sends greetings and proclaims that this day, the second Wednesday of January 2025, is the day fixed for the convening of the House of Representatives of the 104th General Assembly of the State of Illinois pursuant to Article IV, Section 5 of the 1970 Illinois Constitution. At the Speaker's rostrum ready to convene the House of Representatives of the 104th General Assembly for the great State of Illinois is the Secretary of State, the Honorable Alexi Giannoulis."

Secretary Giannoulis: "The House of Representatives of the 104th General Assembly of the State of Illinois will come to order. Welcome, everyone. We are gathered today for the purpose of convening the Illinois House of Representatives for the 104th General Assembly and electing from its membership a Speaker of the House of Representatives as presiding officer. Today's proceedings are governed by the 1970 Illinois Constitution and the rules of the House of Representatives of the 103rd General Assembly pursuant to Section 3 of the General Assembly Operations Act. To begin, we shall be led by a great leader and my friend, Reverend Michael Pflieger of the Faith Community of St. Sabina in Chicago. Will all people please stand and remain standing until after the prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Reverend Pflieger."

Reverend Pflieger: "I greet you in this new year in the name of God who is peace. As-salamu alaykum. Shalom. Peace be with you. Let us bow our heads. Almighty God, who is author of this day and the giver of the breath that woke us up, we come before you to first take an oath to you, recognizing that we

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can do nothing without you, but there's nothing we can't do with you. The scriptures say that government will rest upon your shoulders. We pray today that we will seek to govern not on partisanship or politics, but rather on the shoulders of your righteousness and justice. Set our goals high and our standards uncompromising. May we never compromise our values or integrity, nor allow political correctness to rule over what is right and just. May we be courageous enough to think out of the box and break through the man-made ceilings. God, as we seek to shape policy, set laws, and distribute funds, may we be guided by your spirit and your truth and committed to care for those who are most in need. Give us the ears to hear the cries of the poor, the neglected, and the abandoned, and may the poor find a friend in us and every human life, no matter race, creed, or gender, to be treated with respect and dignity. May we always have the courage to do what is right and fight for what is right, no matter the cost or the consequences. God, watch over our Speaker, Chris Welch, and every elected official. Bless them and cover them with your arm of protection and anchor them in your heart. May we use our titles and our positions to bend the arc of justice a little more further on this earth. May we use our minds, our hearts, and our hands to make our state a state of equality and equity, opportunity, and access for every single individual in the State of Illinois. Finally, Lord, may we, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity

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and equality and freedom for their spirits. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

Secretary Giannoulas: "Would the Dean of the House, Representative Jay Hoffman, lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance?"

Hoffman - 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."

Secretary Giannoulas: "You may be seated. For the duration of these organizational proceedings, I have appointed the following provisional officers: John W. Hollman as Provisional Clerk, Nicole Hill as Provisional Doorkeeper, and Kendra Piercy as Provisional Parliamentarian. Provisional Clerk Hollman will call the roll of Members elected or appointed to the 104th General Assembly. Each Member in attendance shall answer 'present.' Mr. Clerk, call the roll."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Carol Ammons."

Representative-Elect Ammons: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jaime M. Andrade, Jr."

Representative-Elect Andrade: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Dagmara 'Dee' Avelar."

Representative-Elect Avelar: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Harry Benton."

Representative-Elect Benton: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Diane Blair-Sherlock."

Representative-Elect Blair-Sherlock: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Amy 'Murri' Briel."

Representative-Elect Briel: "Present."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Kam Buckner."
Representative-Elect Buckner: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jason R. Bunting."
Representative-Elect Bunting: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "John M. Cabello."
Representative-Elect Cabello: "Here."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Mary Beth Canty."
Representative-Elect Canty: "Here."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Kelly M. Cassidy."
Representative-Elect Cassidy: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Sharon Chung."
Representative-Elect Chung: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Mike Coffey."
Representative-Elect Coffey: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Terra Costa Howard."
Representative-Elect Costa Howard: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Michael Crawford."
Representative-Elect Crawford: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Fred Crespo."
Representative-Elect Crespo: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Margaret Croke."
Representative-Elect Croke: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Christopher 'C.D.' Davidsmeyer."
Representative-Elect Davidsmeyer: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jed Davis."
Representative-Elect Davis, J.: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Lisa J. Davis."
Representative-Elect Davis, L.: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "William 'Will' Davis."

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Representative-Elect Davis, W.: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Regan Deering."
Representative-Elect Deering: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Eva-Dina Delgado."
Representative-Elect Delgado: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Anthony DeLuca."
Representative-Elect DeLuca: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Martha 'Marti' Deuter."
Representative-Elect Deuter: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Daniel Didech."
Representative-Elect Didech: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Kimberly Neely du Buclet."
Representative-Elect du Buclet: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Amy Elik."
Representative-Elect Elik: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Marcus C. Evans, Jr."
Representative-Elect Evans: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Laura Faver Dias."
Representative-Elect Faver Dias: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "La Shawn K. Ford."
Representative-Elect Ford: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "David Friess."
Representative-Elect Friess: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Bradley J. Fritts."
Representative-Elect Fritts: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Robyn Gabel."
Representative-Elect Gabel: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Mary Gill."
Representative-Elect Gill: "Present."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz."
Representative-Elect Gong-Gershowitz: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Edgar Gonzalez, Jr."
Representative-Elect Gonzalez: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jehan Gordon-Booth."
Representative-Elect Gordon-Booth: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Amy L. Grant."
Representative-Elect Grant: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Nicolle Grasse."
Representative-Elect Grasse: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Angie Guerrero-Cuellar."
Representative-Elect Guerrero-Cuellar: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Will Guzzardi."
Representative-Elect Guzzardi: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jackie Haas."
Representative-Elect Haas: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Brad Halbrook. Norine K. Hammond."
Representative-Elect Hammond: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Matt Hanson."
Representative-Elect Hanson: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Sonya Marie Harper."
Representative-Elect Harper: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "William E Hauter."
Representative-Elect Hauter: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Barbara Hernandez."
Representative-Elect Hernandez, B.: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Elizabeth 'Lisa' Hernandez."
Representative-Elect Hernandez, L.: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Norma Hernandez."

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Representative-Elect Hernandez, N.: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Maura Hirschauer."
Representative-Elect Hirschauer: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jay Hoffman."
Representative-Elect Hoffman: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Hoan Huynh."
Representative-Elect Huynh: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Paul Jacobs."
Representative-Elect Jacobs: "Here."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Lilian Jiménez."
Representative-Elect Jiménez: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Gregg C. Johnson."
Representative-Elect Johnson: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Thaddeus Jones."
Representative-Elect Jones: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Tracy Katz Muhl."
Representative-Elect Katz Muhl: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jeff Keicher."
Representative-Elect Keicher: "Here."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Michael J. Kelly."
Representative-Elect Kelly: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Stephanie A. Kifowit."
Representative-Elect Kifowit: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Nicole La Ha."
Representative-Elect La Ha: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Lindsay LaPointe."
Representative-Elect LaPointe: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Camille Lilly."
Representative-Elect Lilly: "Present."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Theresa Mah."
Representative-Elect Mah: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Natalie A. Manley."
Representative-Elect Manley: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Joyce Mason."
Representative-Elect Mason: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Rita Mayfield."
Representative-Elect Mayfield: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Tony M. McCombie."
Representative-Elect McCombie: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Martin McLaughlin. Charlie Meier."
Representative-Elect Meier: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Debbie Meyers-Martin."
Representative-Elect Meyers-Martin: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Chris G. Miller. Anna Moeller."
Representative-Elect Moeller: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Kyle A. Moore."
Representative-Elect Moore: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Bob Morgan."
Representative-Elect Morgan: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Yolonda Morris."
Representative-Elect Morris: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Martin J. Moylan."
Representative-Elect Moylan: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Michelle Mussman."
Representative-Elect Mussman: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Suzanne M. Ness."
Representative-Elect Ness: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Adam M. Niemerg. Kevin John Olickal."

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Representative-Elect Olickal: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Aarón M. Ortiz."
Representative-Elect Ortiz: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Abdelnasser Rashid."
Representative-Elect Rashid: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Steven Reick."
Representative-Elect Reick: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Robert 'Bob' Rita."
Representative-Elect Rita: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Wayne A. Rosenthal."
Representative-Elect Rosenthal: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Rick Ryan."
Representative-Elect Ryan: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jennifer Sanalidro."
Representative-Elect Sanalidro: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Sue Scherer."
Representative-Elect Scherer: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Kevin Schmidt."
Representative-Elect Schmidt: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Brandun Schweizer."
Representative-Elect Schweizer: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Dave Severin."
Representative-Elect Severin: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Patrick Sheehan."
Representative-Elect Sheehan: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Justin Q. Slaughter."
Representative-Elect Slaughter: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Nicholas 'Nick' Smith."
Representative-Elect Smith: "Present."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Joe C. Sosnowski."
Representative-Elect Sosnowski: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Ryan Spain."
Representative-Elect Spain: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Anne Stava-Murray."
Representative-Elect Stava-Murray: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Brad Stephens."
Representative-Elect Stephens: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Katie Stuart."
Representative-Elect Stuart: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Dan Swanson."
Representative-Elect Swanson: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Nabeela Syed."
Representative-Elect Syed: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Curtis J. Tarver, II."
Representative-Elect Tarver: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Dennis Tipsword, Jr."
Representative-Elect Tipsword: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Dan Ugaste."
Representative-Elect Ugaste: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Dave Vella."
Representative-Elect Vella: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Lawrence 'Larry' Walsh, Jr."
Representative-Elect Walsh: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Travis Robert Weaver."
Representative-Elect Weaver: "Present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Tom Weber."
Representative-Elect Weber: "From the party of Lincoln, present."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

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Representative-Elect Welch: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Maurice A. West, II."

Representative-Elect West: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Blaine Wilhour. Ann M. Williams."

Representative-Elect Williams, A.: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Jawaharial 'Omar' Williams."

Representative-Elect Williams, J.: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Patrick Windhorst."

Representative-Elect Windhorst: "Present."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Janet Yang Rohr."

Representative-Elect Yang Rohr: "Present."

Secretary Giannoulis: "113 Representatives-Elect having answered the roll and being in attendance, a quorum is present and the House of Representatives of the 104th General Assembly is officially convened. The Provisional Clerk will enter the attendance roll in the Journal. I now have the honor of presenting the Honorable Joy V. Cunningham, Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, who will administer the constitutional oath of office, following which each Member should execute the written oath to be filed in my office."

Justice Cunningham: "Thank you, Secretary Giannoulis. It is indeed my personal and professional privilege to participate in this important function of state government. Will all Representatives-Elect please stand? When I administer the oath, I will ask you to state your name and you may substitute the word 'affirm' for the word 'swear' where appropriate. Please raise your right hand. I, *state your name*, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Illinois, and

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that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Representative in the Illinois General Assembly according to the best of my ability. Congratulations."

Secretary Giannoulis: "Again, will all the Members of the House... congratulations, everyone. Again, will all the Members of the House please execute the written oath and submit them to the Provisional Clerk? Members should execute their signatures twice on the sheet placed at their chair. Staff will be around to pick up the oaths... oaths in the aisles. The House will be at ease for a few moments. Under Article IV, Section 6(b), of the 1970 Illinois Constitution, the House shall elect from its membership a Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives as presiding officer. The rules of the House provide for nominations, and all nominations require a second. The election for the Office of the Speaker requires the affirmative vote of a majority of those elected. Therefore, 60 votes in favor of a nominee shall be required to be elected Speaker. Debate is not in order following nominations and preceding or during the vote. Nominations are now in order for the Office of Speaker. Representative Robyn Gabel is recognized to offer a nomination."

Gabel: "Good afternoon. It's a privilege to stand here today to help usher in another legislative session, another opportunity to collaborate and improve the lives of the people of the great State of Illinois. And it's an incredible honor to stand here today and be the first to rise to nominate Emanuel 'Chris' Welch as the Speaker of the House. Over the past four years, Speaker Welch has proved himself as a leader who respects and listens to his Members, who has led us

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through some of most challenging issues of our time, like climate change, gun violence, workers' rights, health care access, higher education, and women's rights. Personally, I have learned so much from him. We are both Aquarians. Our birthdays are only one day apart. So, I know him, and I know that he is truly a people person. I have watched as Member after Member sit nervously waiting to see him, then come out of his office smiling and happy. I know there's a couch in his office, and sometimes I think he must be part Speaker and part therapist. This inauguration day, we recognize that our recent election has brought a time full of uncertainty. As I look around at 117 other lawmakers, who I know to be deeply committed to creating positive change, I'm confident we will rise to the challenge set before us with Emanuel 'Chris' Welch as our leader. Thank you."

Secretary Giannoulis: "Representative Gabel nominates the gentleman from Cook, Representative Emanuel 'Chris' Welch, for Speaker of the House. Is there a second to this nomination? The Chair recognizes Representative Dave Vella."

Vella: "Good afternoon. Today, I am honored to second the nomination of Emanuel 'Chris' Welch for Speaker of the House of Representatives. Speaker... Speaker Welch first took office in a very chaotic time, with the pandemic in full swing, political division on the rise, and countless other challenges facing our state. It was a seemingly impossible job, but Speaker Welch did not flinch. From day one, he brought poise, steady and effective leadership to our chamber. We are, at times, a boisterous group. That is because we reflect the diversity of an extremely diverse state. He

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has proven that he knows how to use that diversity, as he says, as our greatest strength. He has kept us focused, kept us on course, and delivered results for the people of Illinois. He has done this by collaborating, encouraging, and sharing the ideas that make this state great, and most importantly, he did it by building consensus. He has helped us to be the Representatives the State of Illinois need. But the hard work is not done. It is never done. In the 104th General Assembly, we will face new unknown challenges and we will have to come together again to fight those challenges. We will need to make very tough choices in the years ahead. This is a time for calm and decisive and proven leadership, a time for a leader who cares about not just one part of the state, but the whole state, a time that demands a proven leader who is willing to roll up his sleeves and get to work, as Speaker Welch has proven he's done over and over again. And that is why I ask you to please join me in supporting Emanuel 'Chris' Welch for Speaker of the House. Thank you."

Secretary Giannoulis: "Representative Robyn Gabel nominates the gentleman from Cook, Representative Emanuel 'Chris' Welch, for Speaker of the House. Representative Dave Vella seconds the nomination of Representative Emanuel 'Chris' Welch for this Office of Speaker. Representative Emanuel 'Chris' Welch is nominated for the Office of Speaker. Are there further nominations for the Office of Speaker? The Chair recognizes Representative Nicole La Ha."

La Ha: "Good afternoon. To all my esteemed colleagues, friends, family, and citizens of Illinois watching today, I want to begin with saying what an honor it is to be a part of this

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day, to be a part of this General Assembly, and to have the opportunity to serve the wonderful people of Illinois. My name is Nicole La Ha, and I represent our 82nd District. Today, I'm joined by my family, my mom and dad, Cindy and Bruce; my brother, Jim; my sister-in-law, Colleen; my goddaughter, Sofia; and my two amazing children, Cristiano and Ashlynn. They're here witnessing an incredibly special moment, not only for me as their mother, but for all of us that are gathered here today. Ashlynn is my daily reminder of all the ways good government can make difficult situations easier for families in this state and the pure joy of coming home to people who love you unconditionally after some really tough votes and some tough discussions here in Springfield. Ashlynn also gives me the desire and the motivation to make things better in Illinois, not just for her livelihood and for her future, but for the livelihoods of all Illinoisans and for the future of the next generation. And there's no one better to lead us towards that future than a proven trailblazer, fighter, and dedicated public servant. Today, I am proud to nominate Tony McCombie to serve of Speaker of the Illinois House of Representative. McCombie is not only the first woman to lead a House caucus, but a leader whose vision and determination inspire women and young girls across this state to believe in their ability to lead with both strength and compassion. Leader McCombie and I share the same hopes for Illinois. We are dedicated to listening to the needs and the concerns of our constituents, ensuring their voices are heard. We're committed to fighting the rising cost of living, addressing the burdens of unnecessary taxation, supporting

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our men and women in law enforcement, and prioritizing the issues that matter most to Illinois families. We care deeply about those families, about values, about making Illinois a place where every individual has the opportunity to thrive. And while we stand firm in our principles, we are also ready to work hand-in-hand with our colleagues across the aisle to put the true priorities of the people of Illinois at the forefront of our efforts. But let me be clear, never mistake the willingness to engage with others as weakness. I've seen time and time again Leader McCombie's ability to listen and work with those of various backgrounds and beliefs while never compromising or losing sight of her morals or convictions. She does not stray from her foundation, nor will she. And it's her foundation that has made her the leader she is today. Born and raised in Savanna, Illinois, her small-town roots play a big role in how she promotes a big vision for our state. As the owner of a café, Tony fought for the right to promote her business with a sandwich board. That fight against government overreach led her to the city council, to mayor, and then State Representative. At each step of the way, she has kept her commitment to fight for smaller government, fiscal responsibility, public safety, and local control. And while it's not always an easy fight with the current political climate, it's one that she takes on, not for the glory, but for the people of Illinois. Her fight and determination have impacted so many lives, whether it's steadfast commitment to fighting the fentanyl epidemic or her resilience in reforming state agencies to ensure our most vulnerable are protected. Tony McCombie has proved that she is the person we can look

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to and we can count on. As we step into the 104th General Assembly, we, as Republicans, do so with a renewed sense of determination and shared purpose to serve responsibly. Leader McCombie exemplifies what it means to lead with the important balance of strength and empathy. She is tough as nails, but she has a heart of gold. It is my great honor to nominate Leader Tony McCombie for the Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives. Together, under her leadership, I am confident we will move forward boldly with hearts to serve and a vision to build a stronger, more unified Illinois for generations to come. Thank you."

Secretary Giannoulas: "Representative La Ha nominates the lady from Carroll, Tony McCombie, for Speaker of the House. Is there a second to this nomination? The Chair recognizes Representative Steven Reick."

Reick: "Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. My name's Steve Reick. I represent the 63rd Legislative District in McHenry County, and I'm proud today to stand in front of you and nominate Tony McCombie as Speaker of the House for the 104th General Assembly. In her first two years as leader, Tony has... Tony has proven that she can stand toe to toe with our Governor, legislative leaders. She operates on the principle that it's better to disappoint people with inconvenient truths than to appease them with comforting lies, because by doing so, we can more effectively identify the means of addressing the daunting problems that... that plague us and thus solve them. As a former mayor, Tony would also come to the Speaker's Office with the executive experience to know how to read the room and make the process work much better

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than we've seen during the last session. Two years ago, I sat on this stage and listened as the current Speaker said that debate and disagreement are necessary steps to compromise and cooperation. Oh, to think of what we could accomplish if those words were heeded the other 364 days of the year. One word we have heard a lot recently is autocracy. Responding to the results of the November election, Governor Pritzker said, 'What we're doing is pushing back against the increasing threats of autocracy that... and fortifying the institutions of democracy that our country and our states depend upon.' He should know. This is the same guy who governed by disaster declarations and executive orders for 1155 of his first 1552 days in office with the willing cooperation of the majority party in the House, a House that's been under one party rule for so long that people just assume that autocracy in our legislative process is a feature and not a bug. During the last two election cycles, we all heard how important it was to make sure that every vote counted, spoken by the same people who spent months behind closed doors drawing legislative maps that had the practical effect of disenfranchising tens of thousands of voters for the sole purpose of expanding their supermajority. That's autocracy. We're facing a \$3.2 billion budget deficit, a \$730 million shortfall in mass transit funding, and 140 billion or so in debt that we owe to our state pension funds. With COVID money running out, we're finally staring at the prospect of having to solve these problems on our own. Autocracy is not going to solve them. A progressive income tax, raiding the Road Fund, cutting funding to local governments, imposing crippling

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mandates on job creators, and God knows what other proposals will spring from the fevered minds of those who control all the levers of state government is not the answer. We need spending restraint. At the very least, anyone running for public office should be... have to show that they can balance their own checkbooks. Instead, we get economic lectures and tax proposals from English majors. When regular folks make stupid decisions, they have to live with the consequences, and I speak from personal experience. Unfortunately, when stupid decisions are made by the people up here, the consequences are felt by you and everybody else throughout the state. Inconvenient truths. We pledge hundreds of millions of dollars in incentives to industries that can't prove that they can make a buck, and we pass rent-seeking renewable energy mandates with unsustainable subsidies that will do nothing but raise electricity rates statewide. Progressives will tell you that whatever new boutique obsession they come up with at any given time is the great moral issue of our time and must be enacted into law before the world comes to an end, but they never show us the tree upon which the money grows to pay for them. Cooperation and compromise is the only path to solving our problems, but instead we spend too much time listening to people on both ends of the political spectrum who betray the diversity of this state by placing political conformity ahead of practical solutions, institutionalizing ideas on which there is nothing resembling a social consensus. What results are laws that offend the heartfelt beliefs of people whose voices are not being heard and toothless resolutions that call for us to

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separate this state from a world-class city that's being driven into the ground. Most of the people in this state... most of the people in this state live in the middle. They live a life of trying to make things better for themselves and for those who come after, and they look to us to do the same. Creative, competent governance is... is necessary. It's an opportunity to embark upon a fresh agenda of reform to tangibly deliver results to those whom we would govern. I'm not nominating Tony McCombie for Speaker because she's the House Republican Leader. I'm doing so because I know that our General Assembly and our state would be better off with a Speaker who understands the challenges of the entire state, who knows that good ideas come from both sides of the aisle, and knows that compromise and cooperation are not just words to be spoken at an inaugural speech. As Speaker of the House, Tony McCombie would be a strong voice for taxpayers, all taxpayers, Illinois families, all Illinois families, and our state's future. We can start that process right now, right here. To those of you among my friends on the other side of the aisle who knows that change is needed, I'm asking you to join me in voting for Tony McCombie as Speaker of the 104th General Assembly. Thank you."

Secretary Giannoulas: "Representative Nicole La Ha nominates the lady from Carroll, Tony McCombie, for the Speaker of the House. Representative Speaker (sic-Steven) Reick eventually seconds the motion of Representative Tony McCombie for the Office of Speaker. Representative Tony McCombie is nominated for the Office of Speaker. Are there further nominations for the Office of Speaker of the House of Representatives? There

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being no further nominations offered from the floor, nominations for the Office of Speaker are closed. The nominations for the Office of the Speaker for the 104th General Assembly are Representative Emanuel 'Chris' Welch and Representative Tony McCombie. And on that question, we will have an oral roll call. When your name is called, please announce your vote in a loud, clear voice for the Clerk. The question is on the election of the Speaker of the House of the 104th General Assembly. Mr. Clerk, please call the roll."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Ammons."

Ammons: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Could I please have silence in the auditorium? Representative Andrade."

Andrade: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Avelar."

Avelar: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Benton."

Benton: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Blair-Sherlock."

Blair-Sherlock: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Briel."

Briel: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Buckner."

Buckner: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Bunting."

Bunting: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Cabello."

Cabello: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Canty."

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Canty: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Cassidy."

Cassidy: "Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Chung."

Chung: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Coffey."

Coffey: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Costa Howard."

Costa Howard: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Crawford."

Crawford: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Crespo."

Crespo: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Croke."

Croke: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Davidsmeyer."

Davidsmeyer: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Jed Davis."

Davis, J.: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Lisa Davis."

Davis, L.: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Will Davis."

Davis, W.: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Deering."

Deering: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Delgado."

Delgado: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative DeLuca."

DeLuca: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Deuter."
Deuter: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Didech."
Didech: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative du Buclet."
du Buclet: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Elik."
Elik: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Evans."
Evans: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Faver Dias."
Faver Dias: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Ford."
Ford: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Once again, could please have silence
in the auditorium? Representative Friess."
Friess: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Fritts."
Fritts: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Gabel."
Gabel: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Gill."
Gill: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Gong-Gershowitz."
Gong-Gershowitz: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Gonzalez."
Gonzalez: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Gordon-Booth."
Gordon-Booth: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Grant."
Grant: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Grasse."
Grasse: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Guerrero-Cuellar."
Guerrero-Cuellar: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Guzzardi."
Guzzardi: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Haas."
Haas: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Hammond."
Hammond: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Hanson."
Hanson: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Harper."
Harper: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Hauter."
Hauter: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Barbara Hernandez."
Hernandez, B.: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Lisa Hernandez."
Hernandez, L.: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Norma Hernandez."
Hernandez, N.: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Hirschauer."
Hirschauer: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Hoffman."
Hoffman: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Huynh."

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Huynh: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Jacobs."
Jacobs: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Jiménez."
Jiménez: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Johnson."
Johnson: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Jones."
Jones: "Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Katz Muhl."
Katz Muhl: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Keicher."
Keicher: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Kelly."
Kelly: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Kifowit."
Kifowit: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative La Ha."
La Ha: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative LaPointe."
LaPointe: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Lilly."
Lilly: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Mah."
Mah: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Manley."
Manley: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Mason."
Mason: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Mayfield."
Mayfield: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative McCombie."
McCombie: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Meier."
Meier: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Meyers-Martin."
Meyers-Martin: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Moeller."
Moeller: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Moore."
Moore: "McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Morgan."
Morgan: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Morris."
Morris: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Moylan."
Moylan: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Mussman."
Mussman: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Ness."
Ness: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Olickal."
Olickal: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Ortiz."
Ortiz: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Rashid."
Rashid: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Reick."

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Reick: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Rita."
Rita: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Rosenthal."
Rosenthal: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Ryan."
Ryan: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Sanalistro."
Sanalistro: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Scherer."
Scherer: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Schmidt."
Schmidt: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Schweizer."
Schweizer: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Severin."
Severin: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Sheehan."
Sheehan: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Slaughter."
Slaughter: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Smith."
Smith: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Sosnowski."
Sosnowski: "McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Spain."
Spain: "Tony McCombie."
Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Stava-Murray."
Stava-Murray: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Stephens."

Stephens: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Stuart."

Stuart: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Swanson."

Swanson: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Syed."

Syed: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Tarver."

Tarver: "Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Tipsword."

Tipsword: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Ugaste."

Ugaste: "Tony M. McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Vella."

Vella: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Walsh."

Walsh: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Weaver."

Weaver: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Weber."

Weber: "Tony McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Welch."

Welch: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative West."

West: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Ann Williams."

Williams, A.: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Jawaharial Williams."

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Williams, J.: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Windhorst."

Windhorst: "McCombie."

Provisional Clerk Hollman: "Representative Yang Rohr."

Yang Rohr: "Emanuel 'Chris' Welch."

Secretary Giannoulis: "On that question, Representative Welch

receives 78 votes; Representative McCombie receives 35 votes.

I hereby declare that Emanuel 'Chris' Welch has been elected

Speaker of the House of Representatives for the 104th General

Assembly. Having received the second highest number of votes,

and serving as the leader of the numerically strongest

political party other than the party to which the Speaker-

Elect belongs, I declare that Tony McCombie has been elected

Minority Leader of the House of Representatives for the 104th

General Assembly. Congratulations to you both. With the

consent of the House, I will appoint six Members to constitute

an honor committee to escort the Speaker to the rostrum to

take the constitutional oath. Is there leave? Leave being

granted, I appoint the following to the Committee of Escort:

Representative Sharon Chung, Representative La Shawn Ford,

Representative Edgar Gonzalez, Jr., Representative Nabeela

Syed, Representative Kyle Moore, and Representative Regan

Deering. Will the Committee of Escort proceed to the seat of

Representative Emanuel 'Chris' Welch to escort him to the

rostrum? To administer the constitutional oath of the

Speaker, I have the honor of presenting to this House the

Honorable Judge ShawnTe Raines-Welch. Judge Raines-Welch."

Judge Raines-Welch: "Pull it a little closer because I am shorter.

So, first, I'll start by saying, Mr. Speaker, I know you're

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in a hurry, but I would exercise a point of personal privilege just to say congratulations to the returning and the new Members. And I believe I heard backstage, and I'm sure the new Members have heard for quite some time, many months that the Speaker's motto is 'Winners do the work.' So, to the Speaker, I will say, honey, you did that. Let's get you sworn in. Please place your hand on the Bible and repeat after me.
I, *insert your name*..."

Speaker-Elect Welch: "I, Emanuel 'Chris' Welch..."

Judge Raines-Welch: "...do solemnly swear..."

Speaker-Elect Welch: "...do solemnly swear..."

Judge Raines-Welch: "...that I will support the Constitution of the United States..."

Speaker-Elect Welch: "...that I will support the Constitution of the United States..."

Judge Raines-Welch: "...and the Constitution of the State of Illinois..."

Speaker-Elect Welch: "...and the Constitution of the State of Illinois..."

Judge Raines-Welch: "...and that I will faithfully discharge the duties..."

Speaker-Elect Welch: "...and that I will faithfully discharge the duties..."

Judge Raines-Welch: "...of the Office of Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives..."

Speaker-Elect Welch: "...of the Office of Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives..."

Judge Raines-Welch: "...according to the best of my ability."

Speaker-Elect Welch: "...according to the best of my ability."

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Judge Raines-Welch: "And with love and a gentle reminder that even though your gavel is bigger, mine is small but mighty. And I tender the floor to you, sir. Congratulations."

Speaker Welch: "Wow. Good afternoon, everyone. Mr. Secretary, we sincerely appreciate your service and the fine way in which you have conducted these proceedings today. Thank you for being who you are. Can we give our Secretary a round of applause, please? I want to thank the Members of the House of Representatives, but in particular, I want to thank Representative Robyn Gabel, I call her Able Gabel, and Representative Dave Vella for the kind words, support, and partnership. You know, to see those two stand up and nominate and second the nomination, it really means a lot to me because four years ago, Robyn Gabel called me and told me that I was going to be Speaker. And I had no idea what the hell she was talking about. She believed in me and saw something in me that I didn't even see in me, and I'm just so honored and thankful for Robyn's vision. Thank you, Able Gabel. And Dave Vella, he's a legacy. His grandfather served in this chamber. His grandfather was a champion for the people, a champion of labor. He fought for everybody around this state, every single person in this state. And there's a conference room in the Office of the Speaker named after his grandfather, and I proudly hang a picture of Dave and I in that conference room named after his grandfather, Zeke Giorgi. And it's an honor to see Zeke Giorgi's grandson stand on that stage and second the nomination for me as Speaker of the House. Thank you, Representative Vella. Let's give Robyn and Dave a round of applause, please. I want to extend a thank you to every Member

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of this chamber, every single Member. I'm just a kid from the 'Woods, Maywood and Bellwood. And I will never cease to be inspired, motivated, and humbled by the trust you have placed in me to lead this chamber as Speaker of the House, not once, not twice, but now thrice. Thank you, Members of the House. Thank you so much. I want to thank all of the families and friends who are joining us here today. Thank you for traveling here. I think I speak for everyone here when I tell you that you are our greatest reminders of why this work matters. You are truly our source of strength and of hope. I am so fortunate to share this moment with my beautiful wife, who I just love dearly, Judge ShawnTe Raines-Welch. Can we give my wife a round of applause? I'm just glad I don't have to run for office against her. My kids, Tyler and Marley. Tyler was nine months old when I first came and took the oath of office. You guys see him today? Time flies. I love my kids, Tyler and Marley, and I'm so thankful that they're here to witness this today. My mom and dad, Emanuel and Willie Mae Welch, are here and were on the stage. Both worked multiple jobs just to take care of our family. And for them to be here today means so much to me, but I know to them that they could see their son become Speaker of the House. To my brother, my sisters, my sisters-in-laws, my uncles, my aunts, my whole entire extended family that's here, I think it's that whole section up there. My village is here. It takes a village. Thank you all so much for being here today. And I want to thank the phenomenal members of our staffs. As staff, you take this journey with us and your work takes us all further. Every Member of this great 104th General Assembly has come here by

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our own path. We've come from Illinois small towns, growing suburbs, and world-class cities. We're guided by our unique perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. And we're each charged with uplifting the voices of our neighbors who are shaped by their own perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. Our unique paths have converged in this time and in this place that has given us this moment here today. We meet here this afternoon at a critical moment in the history of our state and our country. And as the elected leaders from our communities, we have some difficult things to do in the days and months ahead. Scripture tells us in Luke, Chapter 21, verses 14 and 15: 'So make up your minds not to worry ahead of time how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to contradict or resist.' I'm leaning on that word today as I prepare to stand before you today and share my thoughts on the work ahead of us. Circumstances have brought me again and again to share a word to you today about this moment. This moment is what I want the focus to be about today. I recently heard a sermon by a faith leader and mental health advocate named Dr. Joel Tudman, where he talked about a moment as a time in your life when you can either rise to the occasion or sink. Dr. Tudman discussed how the pressure of that moment can weigh on you, but they can also empower you when you recognize that the moment plus the pressure equals opportunity. I heard about the importance of the moment again just last week in a video of a locker room prep.. pep talk by none other than Coach Prime, Deion Sanders. He told his players of the Colorado Buffaloes that they would be presented

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with moments, perhaps when they don't even expect it, and only by exceling in that moment could they move ahead to victory. He pointed to some moments where the team had come up short and how that held them back. But from the words he chose to the emotion in his voice, it was clear that he wasn't just talking about coming up short in a football game. He knew in that moment he was actually talking to young people on the cusp of adulthood about the moments they would face in life and how their lives would be shaped by their choices to succeed and move forward or to fail and fall back. We are all defined by the moments in our lives and by our responses to them. There are young people here today witnessing a very special moment. How we lead in that moment is so important. What we say in that moment is so important. Those moments when we have chosen to rise to the occasion are what made the path that brought us here today, moments of success in school, of sacrifice in our communities, of hard work in our professional lives, and, of course, all of that and more on election day. Our moments of individual advancement have given us this moment to advance now to a common good. And we all know the pressures of this moment: They are the challenges families wrestle with every night when they sit around that kitchen table. Balancing a household budget as the cost of everything from groceries to the very roof over our heads keeps rising. Seeking opportunity when the pathways to higher education and job training seem to be narrowing instead of widening. Trying to build connection, compassion, and community in a time fraught with division and discord. These are challenges created and exacerbated by many factors beyond

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our control. But how we respond in the moment is critical. So, I ask you, the men and women entrusted to lead our state, how are we going to respond in this moment? Do we give in to the pressure of this moment, or do we embrace that pressure and create opportunity? Do we fall apart, or do we rise together? Because I... as I can assure you that no matter where you're from, no matter what you believe, no matter what side of the aisle you sit on, the people who sent you here, who gave us this moment, expect us to move forward as one. People from Chicago to Carbondale want smart and sustainable investments in the resources that help people be their best because they don't want to choose between a compassionate state and a responsible state. They expect us to do both. Whether people from Waukegan to Washington Park, they want all options on the table to tackle the rising cost of housing, of education, of groceries, and everyday essentials because they don't want to just get by. They want to get ahead. And from Cook County to Carroll County, leader, people want to see our skilled trades thrive, see career education and job training options for everyone, and see the seeds of emerging technologies that will shape our 21st century economy take root and flourish right here in Illinois because people in every part of Illinois can no longer wait for opportunity to trickle down. They're ready for opportunity to flow up from modest- and middle-income families like mine, like yours so we can all grow together. And with that in mind, this is the... the commitment that I make to all of you today, to every single Member of this chamber, whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, because what was witnessed here today, I am not

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Speaker of the Democrats. What you saw here today, for a historic third time, a Black man was elected Speaker of the House. I'm Speaker of the House. Speaker of the House, the entire State of Illinois. Everyone who is here to work in good faith and pursue the common good will find common cause with me. Everyone who values civility and respect will find that we have a strong foundation to work from. Everyone. Everyone, Democrat or Republican, who is ready to do the work and meet the challenges of this moment will have a partner in me, always. But know this, know this: We were sent here to foster compassion, not division. We're expected to make the path to a bright future wider, not narrower. And our mission is to build something better, not tear it down. So, cruel and regressive policies that dehumanize our neighbors or strip away fundamental freedoms, I'm going to tell you right now, we will have no home in Illinois for those policies. Those whose goal is simply performative outrage and provocation will find that this House will not waste the people's times on those games. And those wrongly only believe their job here is simply to say no will find that decisions are made by those with the sincere desire and the moral clarity, Father Pfleger, to get to yes. Because that's what this moment, unlike any other, demands of all of us. As I look around this room today, I see people who have risen to the moment in their own lives. I'm asking us to do the same for the people of Illinois, all of the people of Illinois, because this is Illinois' moment, and it's up to us to rise to the occasion and lift up the people of our state, the people who have given us this moment to lead, the people who have given us this moment to shine

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together. They don't want to see division. They want to see us working together. The paths we've taken, the experiences that have shaped us, and the communities that have given us this moment show that diversity is our strength. The urgency of this moment shows that unity is our power. Members of the 104th General Assembly, let's rise to meet this moment together. Let's use this time and all that has been given to us to do the work and move Illinois forward. Winners do the work. All of us here today on this stage are winners, and we're going to do the work that the people of Illinois demands of us all. May God bless each and every one of us. Thank you for the honor of a lifetime. At this time, the Chair will recognize Minority Leader McCombie. Leader McCombie, would you care to address the body?"

McCombie: "Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations. Sounds like it's a new day in Illinois."

Speaker Welch: "You got that right."

McCombie: "We'll see how it goes. All right. Good afternoon and thank you, everybody, for coming. Before we get started, I... I want to say thank you to UIS and all of the staff and team that put this together for us and for all of you. This takes a lot of organization, and I just want to say thank you to all of you. Thank you to all of you that are here for us. We certainly appreciate that. I want to say thank you to Representative Nicole La Ha, one of our shining stars this election cycle, and my friend who came in with me the 100th General Assembly, who eventually got there, Representative Steve Reick. I appreciate both of you, your confidence in nominating me, and I deeply support... appreciate your support

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in the nomination. Congratulations to all the new Members or those that maybe have been appointed and haven't gone through this process before. I do want to call special attention to a couple of our new Members, Representative Kyle Moore from Quincy and Representative Regan Deering of Decatur. I'm thrilled... I'm thrilled to welcome you both to the Illinois House of Representatives. I know... I have no doubt that you're going to serve your districts with empathy, determination, and an unwavering commitment to your constituents. The House Republicans sitting here today, we have a great caucus. Thank you to those of you that have offered your loyalty, your friendship, and your guidance. Your influence has been essential to our victories, and I'm grateful for every one of you. Two years ago, when I took the oath as the House Republican Leader, I was excited about the potential, but, honestly, very naive about my expectations. Since then, I have learned a lot and have grown alongside my leadership team and our caucus. I am blessed to be part of a team, this team, that communicates openly, works diligently, and most importantly, prioritizes our constituents we serve. Our achievements would not be possible without the sacrifices made by our families and our friends. Many of you know... sorry. Many of you know the demands it takes for us to be here, and it takes a toll on you, and it's hard. This is a team sport, and you are our team. I'm happy to have my husband, Curt, my family, my dearest friends, some of them, here with me. Thank you for supporting me, carrying me when I need it, and helping me shine in almost every aspect of my life. I'm truly blessed. As we reflect on the 2024 election cycle, I want and need to

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express my gratitude to the grassroots effort in Illinois. Regardless of the funding disparities, your dedication and tireless work with our candidates allowed us to hold the line. You are the backbone of the Republican Party, and your efforts did not go unnoticed. To the Members of the 104th General Assembly, especially our new Members, if I can offer one piece of advice, always be honest and transparent. You will make mistakes that you can correct. You will want to be all things to all people, but, unfortunately, you cannot. Celebrate your victories. Represent your districts with enthusiasm, and don't forget why you're here, why you wanted to be here in this moment. Congratulations to all of you. As we approach the 104th General Assembly, our caucus is focused on three things: one, fostering economic growth; two, cutting unnecessary spending; three, and opposing any tax increases. These priorities are not just goals, they are essential steps toward making Illinois a place of opportunity and prosperity. Illinois is a great place to live and Illinois has always been a state of possibilities, but one-party control has stifled that success. I, like many, were disappointed with our election outcomes and the ability for us to secure more Republican seats to bring some balance to the General Assembly. However, this was not due to a lack of good candidates or hard work, but due to special interest and Illinois' gerrymandered maps. The most outrageous maps in the nation. They have indeed disenfranchised the voice of the voters across all parts of the state. Yes, ma'am, they do. In the 2020 cycle, Republican House..."

Speaker Welch: "Order, please. Order. Let her finish her speech."

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McCombie: "Thank you, Speaker. In 2022, Republican House candidates received 70,000 more votes than Democrats. House GOP Member... or, candidates, 70,000 more than Democrat candidates. Yet, we only have 40 seats. And then, in 2024, election rules were illegally altered in the middle of a cycle in order to stifle competition and deprive voters of choice on the ballot. The gimmicks of election interference by the majority party must be permanently ended in Illinois. Despite the challenges, House Republicans worked tirelessly in the 103rd General Assembly. We wanted to collaborate with the Speaker. Unfortunately, our earnest desire for bipartisan collaboration has not been reciprocated. Whether it was through rules, roll call thresholds, or a my way or the highway attitude, our caucus has been excluded to collaborate by design. Our caucus represents... our caucus, the only caucus that represents parts of all 102 counties, and our districts deserve better. This caucus here is a team, and we can imagine a government that works for the people, where we know a political agenda does not. The House Republicans are committed and will continue to be committed to protect your constitutional rights, advocating for strong ethics reform, promoting educational opportunities through school choice, protecting parental rights, and ensuring a balanced approach to governance. It's time we stop playing politics with Illinois families and with Illinois businesses. We will expose harmful policies, state mismanagement, and oppose lunacy... lunacy in all of its form. We have learned from the past, and we must structurally reform Illinois. Government's role should be to improve outcomes, carve out relief for

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working families, keep families safe, serve our most vulnerable, not pursue woke policies. Two years ago, on this very stage, I called on the Speaker to be courageous, unafraid, and forthright. As we kick off this next session, I'm not asking for an invitation to your table, Speaker, but know that your Members and your team are always welcome at mine. When you are ready to solve real problems, we have solutions. And, again, to all of here in the audience, thank you for supporting all of us. Together, we can build a stronger Illinois, but if... only if it's rooted in collaboration, puts business growth as a priority, lowers taxes, builds our tax base instead of our tax rate, a quality education, and solutions that address the challenges that holds our state back. Thank you, and God bless Illinois."

Speaker Welch: "The next order of business is the election of the Chief Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and Doorkeeper for the 104th General Assembly. The lady from Cook, Representative Gabel, is recognized."

Gabel: "Mr. Speaker, I move for the suspension of the applicable House Rules to allow for the immediate consideration of House Resolutions 1, 2, and 3."

Speaker Welch: "You heard the lady's motion. All in favor say 'aye'; all opposed say 'nay.' The 'ayes' have it. And the motion is adopted. The lady from Cook, Representative Gabel."

Gabel: "Mr. Speaker, I move for the adoption of House Resolution 1, a resolution for the election of John W. Hollman as Chief Clerk, Bradley S. Bolin as Assistant Clerk, and Nicole Hill as Doorkeeper."

Speaker Welch: "Mr. Clerk, read the resolution."

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Provisional Clerk Hollman: "House Resolution 1."

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that the following Officers are elected... hereby elected for the term of the One Hundred Fourth General Assembly:

John W. Hollman: as Chief Clerk of the House

Bradley S. Bolin: as Assistant Clerk of the House, and

Nicole Hill: as Doorkeeper of the House."

Speaker Welch: "The lady has moved the adoption of House Resolution 1. All those in favor signify by saying 'aye'; all those opposed by saying 'nay.' In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the resolution is adopted. Pursuant to House Resolution 1, the Chair declares John W. Hollman elected as Chief Clerk of the House, Bradley S. Bolin elected as the Assistant Clerk of the House, and Nicole Hill elected as the Doorkeeper of the House for the 104th General Assembly. Do the gentlemen and the lady accept the offices to which they have been elected? They have all indicated that they do. The lady from Cook, Representative Gabel, is recognized to offer a resolution."

Gabel: "Mr. Speaker, I move the adoption of House Resolution 2 to direct the Clerk to inform the Senate that the House is organized."

Speaker Welch: "The lady has moved the adoption of House Resolution #2. This is the traditional notification to the other chamber that this body is prepared to do the people's business. The lady from Cook, Representative Gabel, is recognized to offer another resolution."

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Gabel: "Mr. Speaker, I move the adoption of House Resolution 3 for the appointment of a committee to attend the Governor and to inform him that we are organized and await any communication he may have."

Speaker Welch: "The lady has moved the adoption of House Resolution 3. This is another traditional ceremonial procedure. Without objection, we can take both motions on one vote. All in favor signify by saying 'aye'; all those opposed 'nay.' In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And House Resolutions 2 and 3 are adopted. In conclusion, congratulations to all Members of the House of Representatives for the 104th General Assembly. Members and guests are invited to tour the House chamber at the Capitol Building downtown after this. Let me say this. God bless you all, God bless America, and God bless our great State of Illinois. And now, allowing perfunctory time for the clerk, Representative Gabel moves that the House stand adjourned until Thursday, January 9, at the hour of 10 a.m. Those in favor say 'aye'; those opposed say 'no.' The 'ayes' have it. And the House stands adjourned until Thursday, January 9, at 10 a.m., allowing perfunctory time for the Clerk."