

GOVERNOR JUSTICE: Okay. I sincerely hope everyone is doing as well as they possibly can be. With all that we've gone through in this State. But I can tell you that the light of the world is shining on West Virginia right now. And if you don't believe that, you're just plain not thinking right.

I'd like at this time to recognize some really, really special people, my family. Cathy and Jill are with us tonight and from beyond that, I want to go directly to my cabinet members. You know at this time, it is such a difficult time. You know, we've got for all practical purposes, all my cabinet members watching virtually. But there is one that is watching from the heavens above, Dennis Davis. A man that we just lost. A man that was in charge of all of our vets in the State. A man, a man's man. That's all there is to it.

He set out on a mission to bring billions into West Virginia and pulled it off. He set out on a mission to build facilities and have vehicles and all the different things from exempting the veterans pay from income tax. All of the different things that he set out on a mission to do, but I can tell you unequivocally just one thing and one thing alone, Dennis Davis lived and breathed every day for our great vets. And so all of us, please let's pause in a moment of silence for a great, great Secretary that we lost.

Thank ya'll so much.

Dennis Davis was not only a terrific individual and a terrific cabinet secretary, he was a real friend. And you know, from time to time, this job takes you to people that maybe you don't know and you grieve and you hate for their loved ones. But this one really hits home with me. You know, four years ago I walked in here, really on the front steps out front, with a tackle box and an axe. I walked in here to tell you just from a folksy tone, a tone that people have really enjoyed to tell you the truth. But a lot of straight talk and a lot of truth and a lot of complete transparency. You see that's me. That is me through and through. I've got a lot of experience. I got a love of passion. I've got a lot of enthusiasm and I'm a godly man and proud of it.

Now, like it or not like it when they firsthand had me the books four years ago, there is no way to cut it. I'm a business guy and our state, for all purposes, was bankrupt, and in tough, tough shape. We drained the rainy day fund down to levels where our roads were being our roads were in pretty daggone tough shape and we had all kinds of issues at hand. They handed me a budget that was a projection for the next six years.

The year that we were in we were going to come up \$217 million short. The next year we were going to be \$497 million short. And then it proceeded onto \$772 million short. It was all cumulative. Now, if you were 219 short now and you added 427, you zoomed right above 700 million. And when you added up another 700 or whatever it may be it was some really tough duke. Now, we dug in. An awful lot of you were in the

same time and we got new members that I absolutely congratulate in every way.

But with our new members comes all kinds of newness around us, new blood, new ideas, all kinds of good stuff. But we rolled up our sleeves, did we not, and we went to work. We went to work on a prayer that I'll get to in a little while, and all of a sudden things began to change. West Virginia began to really change.

And the biggest thing of all that we really needed to change was our image, the image that we knew was here and knew was good, but the image that the outside world really looked at us, they thought we were backward or we were poor or absolutely we were supposed to know our place. It was a shame. I don't subscribe to that, and I know you don't either. But let me tell you just this. We began to see a miracle, a miracle of all. A miracle of West Virginia began to evolve that's good stuff, really, really good stuff.

Now, along the way, before I go any further, I want to congratulate you. All of you who are here, I want to congratulate you on this. You had the courage to run, did you not? You know, you're going to accept rocks thrown at you. A lot of them are going to be really unfair, but you had the courage to step up and say I'll serve, I'll serve and you've done so very admirably. And I'm sure you will do in the future very admirably.

And before I go any further I want to recognize some really, really important people. And they're the people that are the Chief Justices the Chief Justice and Justices of our Supreme Court. And I think they're right up here. But if I could just say, Chief Justice Evan Jenkins, if you could stand please, and Justice Elizabeth Walker, Justice Tim Armstread, Justice John Hutchison and Justice William Lou. Please give them a round of applause.

I've got a few more people to congratulate here, congratulate on them earning the positions that many of them already have. We've got a new man to the task and at hand, but if Attorney General Patrick Morrissey, Secretary of State Matt Warner, our State Auditor J.B. McCuskey, our Commissioner of Agriculture, Keith Lynnhart and our newly elected State Treasurer, Riley Moore, please stand, our constitutional officers.

The two leaders of the band, leaders of all you all in front of you or some of you all and everything, but our Senate President, Craig Blair, if you would stand, please, sir. And our Speaker of the House, Roger Hanshaw. And I take it that they're standing. I can't see them, but they're back there, so you all please applaud for them.

I spoke just a second ago about the miracle of West Virginia, did I not? There have been a lot of accomplishments that have happened in the last few years from surpluses to making education our centerpiece to putting money aside for PEIA. And just imagine, imagine, for four years PEIA never raised a dime in premiums. How somebody can complain about that, I don't get it. That's just all there is to it.

We got a lot of new roads. We got a lot of pass old roads. We got a lot of work that goes on every day. We got an EZ Pass where you can go up and down the turnpike for next to nothing. We created Jim's dreams and new jobs and hopes, and we've really combatted the drug issues, but we've got a long way to go. We absolutely adopted a new slogan, Almost Heaven, in our Tourism Department. And I will talk a little bit about that in a little while, but what an incredible job that has exploded into being.

We put real money in our state parks and we helped our veterans and we helped our seniors with Meals on Wheels and all kinds of different things, and lo and behold the miracle starts to grab hold. And then along comes Covid.

Now, just imagine this. I said the miracle of West Virginia, did I not? You know, I was interviewed just the other day on the 700 Club, path Robertson. And while I was being interviewed by Wendy, and I don't know her last name, Wendy was just recently married and I don't know her last name, but she's not far from here in West Virginia. And Wendy was talking and we were talking about all the different things that were happening with Covid and all the vaccination process and all the good things that we had going on. And she said to me, she said, if you can say your prayer now, what would your prayer be? And I said, well, Wendy, I said, you know, we had a day of prayer and I said a prayer, and I'm anything but Reverend Jim, and I said a prayer at that time, and I truly mean this, I don't know how in the world the words just flowed. But the Good Book tells us just do that, and words the Good Lord will take over and the words will flow, and they did.

Now, I said, Wendy, I need to get you a video of that prayer. And you know what she said to me, she said, Governor, when was that? Well, just like anyone, I said, you know, Wendy I don't know. It was probably four or five months ago. No, probably four months ago. This just happened about a week ago. And all of a sudden on my little whiteboard thing that I have out there Jordan flashed up on my whiteboard, it was last March. She had already asked me that from the date of that prayer had I seen things change. Think about it.

And every day the definition of coincidence, an everyday occurrence in which God chooses to remain anonymous. Think about it. How in the world how in the world could a little state that's the poorest, how in the world could we absolutely charge to the front like we've charged? How right behind all of that could we have handled what we handled in Covid like we've handled it? I'm telling you it is truly the miracle of West Virginia.

Now, I believe with all in me that I am battle proven and I am calm under fire. I really do listen to our experts. And you know, we've made moves for the betterment of all, not made moves that were selfish for just a few. But in all of this that miracle, and that

miracle has truly happened.

Now, I often ask myself a lot of times what is my real job. Well, first and foremost, it's to look out after the health and safety of the people, but secondly it's to mind the store, is it not? Because at the end of the day, if the economics don't work, nothing, nothing, that you do or I do can work. The economics has got to work. If we're going to continue to grow and every, the economics has to work. Well, we have along the way we have pulled off the economics.

Now, we all know that we've been first in Covid in the nursing homes and first in the vaccinations and we're on the nightly news everywhere under the sun. And we've got to be really proud because, in addition to all that, every single day that goes by more and more and more will come because they see West Virginia in a different light than they seen it before.

Now, I want to take just a moment to congratulate Cathy. Cathy and I neither one knew hardly anything about communities and schools. Really and truly we knew that it was really started in West Virginia, in Greenbriar County, but we really didn't know anything about it. And so with all that, right behind all of that, Cathy needed to have supposedly a cause. And I donated my salary to that and slow but sure they started off as Communities and Schools. Can you just imagine this? And I want you to cheer like crazy for this, but today Communities and Schools now, I don't blow smoke at anybody.

I'm telling you, honest to God's truth, I know what's going on in our schools in a lot of situations. I've coached forever. I've been there. I've seen the good and the bad. I am telling you without any question the most profound program that we have going on within our schools today is Communities and Schools. They have touched 49,000 kids now, 49,000 kids in 29 counties. You've got to give them a giant round of applause. Please do.

Cathy and my daughter Jill are way up here, and they are trying to be good. And that's good because I'm trying to keep them a little ways away from me now.

Now, let me take you on a ride to the future. Stimulus. You know, I've got to just tell you this this way. You see, I was really, really, and still am, really close with our President, President Trump. Close with his family. Now, I can never understand three things that happened along the way. The first thing that happened was just this. He quit having his briefings on television. Probably advisors were telling him maybe that's not the thing to do, Mr. President, because somebody in the news may trip you up. And Vice President Biden at the time is not out campaigning or anything, and he's spending most time at his house and all that and it could really cause you a problem. Well, I believe when he was talking to the people, the people really, really, really were dialing

into President Trump.

And the next thing along the way and you make a lot of mistakes in any job as you go, but the next thing along the way was he came up with the idea, you know, Pelosi and everybody was they were pushing a \$600 Stimulus package and we came out with 400. And I said, Mr. President, why? And he said, well, what do you mean? And I said, Mr. President, all these people vote and all of them hope for 600 and you gave them 400. It was the prudent thing to do, but at the end of the day we lost our President, didn't we?

The next thing that happened along the way was there was a Stimulus package and that's what I just said. I believe the Democrats and the Republicans continued to play politics and politics and politics, and it would not move while people were really hurting. People couldn't pay their rent and their power bill and their car payment or whatever it may be. All of a sudden, our President got slowly, slowly and more and more in trouble, and we lost the election. And so today, today where we are is we have a new President, of which every single last one of you and myself should get behind and support with all in us. And the reason we should is out of total respect to the presidency of the United States of America.

Now, with all of that I say to you just this. The Stimulus package that should have been passed a long time ago, in my opinion, and the President, the President, Donald Trump came out and said I want to do a trillion, 800 billion dollar package. Did he not? That's exactly what he did. And it just stumbled and stumbled and stumbled. So today, today, where I am is just this. Now, I've done a lot of stuff. I've run a lot of businesses and employed thousands of people, and I know what to do in a lot of stuff. I am telling you that we as America today are still stumbling. We need to move forward aggressively and super boldly. And if we leave some money on the table, we just do. We can't under fund what we need to jump start this world. And it will jump start the world.

What's going to happen is just this. There's going to be a trillion 900 billion dollar Stimulus package passed. With that there is a good chance that a lot of different things will happen to West Virginia. A lot of good things will happen to West Virginia. I can tell you, though, the Stimulus packages will end, and you really need to listen to me.

West Virginia has not only dug itself out of a hole and got itself on a launch pad, it's even taken itself off and become that diamond in the rough that everybody's missed. But yet, if everything just goes back to the way it was, I challenge every single one of you, West Virginia will fall back into being West Virginia some day.

We are on the launch pad right now. In fact, we're airborne right now. And that's why tonight, tonight I am asking all of you to join me to repeal the income state income tax in the State of West Virginia.

Now, how do you do that? What do you got to do? There's a lot of people in this life that will work night and day to try to do nothing. That's not me. Here's how you do it. First of all, you take one bite of the elephant at a time, a big bite. You cut the income tax on everybody in the State of West Virginia except the super highest earners and you cut theirs by a third, but you cut everybody else by a half right out of the gate. You absolutely explain that just this is the way it has to be. If you do that, you're going to the total income tax dollars are \$2.1 billion, 2.1 billion in our state, half almost of our total revenue.

Now, if you'll stay with me just one second. I'll tell you just this. If you take half of our revenue and still put it in the bucket, half of our income tax don't go away, half is still in the bucket. You've got to go back and revisit and look at tiering the severance tax on oil, gas and coal. I told you this years ago. We should help our coal companies, our gas companies, our oil companies. We should help them in every way to continue to create jobs and to go on and on all we can. But you know, my family's been in the coal business forever. And I'm going to tell you that when profits rise to levels that are beyond our imaginations, we ought to be willing to step up and pay just a little tiny bit more.

I think what we're going to have to do that's going to hit the everyday man is we're going to have to raise sales taxes by one and a half percent if we're going to eliminate our income tax. We need to look at putting an additional tax on cigarettes and soda and trying to make us healthier and better, and that could be a source of revenue for us. We need to absolutely bring into taxation our professional services as well. And then you need to have a wealth tax, a tax on those that are very, very, well to do, that can pay just pay just a little bit extra. And then you need to make some cuts. The cuts need to be, in my opinion, very miniscule. You do not need to cut to the bone, but you do need to make some cuts. By miniscule I mean very miniscule. \$25 million of cuts will get you there.

Now, at the end of the day just imagine, imagine, imagine if I were to say to me, to anybody, we can cut our income tax in half right off the get go. We'll have to pay another percent and a half on our consumer sales tax. If you're not a smoker or you don't buy soda pop, that's it. For you that's pretty much it. We need to tier our severance tax on coal and gas and oil. It won't bring in a whole lot of dollars, but it will bring in a few. It is so miniscule it is unbelievable what I'm asking you to do. And with all of that along the way, with a wealth tax and a luxury tax basically that is also miniscule.

By miniscule, it can maybe only bring in 20, 30, 40 million dollars. Maybe if just for, you know, for items that you would purchase one item in excess of 5,000 or 10,000 or 30,000 or whatever, I've got a chart on all that, but I don't need to go through all that

right now. And then there's that small, small level of cuts. What if I were to say to you that is our chance? The door is right here for you, West Virginia, the door stands right ready for you right now. Opportunity will flash in front of you, and if you don't go through, it closes. It's your chance. It's your real chance. The Stimulus will die away. Covid will die away. And then ask yourself step back from it and ask yourself how are they going to come, how are they going to come. Really and truly, how are they going to come? This is an opportunity beyond all comparison.

Now, I would ask you to do two other things. I would ask you to establish buckets. You see, I'm really big into buckets because I believe when you put something in that bucket, it stays there. I'd ask you, first and foremost, to tab a flat, no growth budget in the State of West Virginia for the next three years.

I would also ask you in my buckets to put some considerable amount of dollars, 30 to 50 million dollars in a bucket that basically we use to entice businesses to close, to close, and to come and bring their employment to West Virginia. And the other bucket that I would like you to establish is an additional rainy day fund. You see, if we freeze the budget at where we're at right now, our rainy day fund is absolutely adequately funded, period, right now. If we freeze the budget right now at where we're at, absolutely our rainy day fund is in great shape.

If you create that second rainy day fund, and let me tell you how you can do it, you see, by the wisdom and good stuff of a lot, a lot of people we have built surpluses, have we not? In 2019 we had 511 million extra dollars. In 2020 we got across the finish line with a surplus in a Covid year plus moving the state income tax to the next year. We still got across the finish line. We did. And what's happened now? Now what's happened is you have a surplus of cash that is extraordinary, and we continue to grow it. I would not spend it. I would set it into a bucket, a rainy day fund bucket, for the elimination of our income tax, for any shortfalls in the elimination of our income tax.

Now, the opportunity is there. It's entirely up to you. My ideas surely can be tweaked. I will listen to any and everybody, but absolutely I've given you a pathway, a pathway to eradicate our income tax. And you may say, well, Governor, we understand, but Governor, that gets us halfway there. And you said you're going to eliminate it. Stay with me just one second. In the State of West Virginia today you're growing at a pace of really, really, really close to \$300 million a year. If you think of how many will come into our state, it could blossom to who knows where. If you don't raise and spend extra money on the budget or on unnecessary items, if you have the discipline to really watch the store, the growth, the growth alone, the growth alone will take you there. And the growth alone will eliminate the rest of the balance of the income tax.

Now, I could go on about this for a long, long time. It is the single I will promise you to God above, it is the single biggest issue that you could possibly, possibly

address. You need to spend unlimited amount of time addressing this issue. This issue would transform our state like you can't imagine. And if you don't do it, you might as well just sit back and listen to old Jim who's sitting here with white hair and absolutely has had a lot of experience. You mark it down, Covid will get gone. Stimulus will get gone. And when they get gone, absolutely you'll turn back and you'll say let's build another field and they'll come and they'll put a factory in or whatever it may be. And then when you build the field and they don't come, what next?

The downside of this, the downside is nothing. It's absolutely nothing. Soda pop and tobacco, a little bit of tiering on the severance tax, one and a half percent and that's it. Not touching our property taxes for all practical purposes, absolutely not laying in additional taxes on our businesses. Tennessee has three different taxes under businesses. Their property taxes are multiples of what ours are. Think of the story. Think of the story one more time. The best in the nation with Covid. The best in the nation. The best in the nation. And now, that state is going to get rid of its incomes tax. And that state is the most northerly state in the Union to the population. They got to come through us to get to somebody else. You think they're going to come through us and go anywhere else? Four of the most beautiful seasons on the planet, the greatest people. It's our chance. It's our chance.

Now I'm going to move on. Tonight I am asking you to elevate in the cabinet to elevate cabinet level agencies to secretaries of cabinets in two areas. You see, I am hung up like crazy on tourism and economic development. Tonight I am asking you to create two agencies, two new cabinet positions. I will put Mitch Carmichael in the economic development position and Chelsea Ruby in the tourism position. They absolutely Mitch is stuck on on. Everybody that knows Mitch knows he's stuck on on all the time. He could probably sell bread to starving Russians on credit, you know, but and Chelsea has done an amazing, amazing job. That's all there is to it.

Now, I'm asking us also to create the closing fund that I just said earlier. And I'm asking us to create an additional rainy day fund that we can put excess dollars and let me give you just another tidbit. Just imagine this. Can you imagine in the State of West Virginia, today we've got \$464 million of a cash surplus today right now, right now. We have \$178 million surplus through the first seven months of the year. And hopefully it will continue to grow, but I can't guarantee that.

\$464 million cash surplus right now. Absolutely what do you think? Just stay with me where you can understand what I know. What do you think's going to happen with the Biden Stimulus package? What could happen? They could forgive all of the dollars that we've put out towards unemployment. They have already backdated to January of 2020 all of the match to FEMA. What if? What if we had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds more millions dollars? Put them in the bucket. Don't spend them. For God

sakes, don't throw them away because you'll spin around five times and wake up and say, huh, where are we. You won't even know what happened. Put them in the bucket.

Now, through all this, record surpluses in 2019, getting through you know, probably the biggest accomplishment that I've ever been involved with is with our revenue people and getting us through the 2020 year with an absolute surplus. It's amazing. It's amazing. With a cannonball to the stomach on Covid and absolutely nowhere to turn and income tax all moved, the surplus, are you kidding me? Really and truly it is amazing. But with all of that, that all has happened, I've got a few announcements to make. With all of that, we have done one thing. And I give many, many kudos to my office, all the people in economic development, all the people at commerce, all the people all across all the agencies. We took all the cabinet up there and met and met and met, but we landed hyper looped in West Virginia.

Now, we got we got two visitors with us. We've got well, first of all, a special thanks to Gordon Gee and all of WVU's efforts and all the stuff they put in, all the licks there. And Corby Robertson. Corby's a great personal friend and everything, and he's doing a lot of stuff. We've got some more announcements to come in regard to that, and not very and not very too distant in the future. And John Chambers, a guy that all of us know very, very well and has done so much good in trying to help us tell our story.

In addition to that, there's Mike Snyder. And I think he's on with us right here. And Mike is with Hyperloop, and he can't and I don't know why with this technology age, but he can't talk, but all we can do is clap for him and thank him. So he's going to wave to us. Mike, thank you, sir.

Can you imagine, can you imagine that little state, that miracle that I talked about, that little state absolutely working with these great people that could revolutionize, revolutionize travel as we know it. They gave us validation. They've given us so much. And I told you over and over you'll always be remembered, you'll always be appreciated, and you'll be loved here beyond on good sense. Thank you again, sir.

Also, at our North Central Airport I'll never forget David Hinkle and people coming in to talk to me about what was going on at North Central. And we had some dollars that were there, and so we said I mean, after we listened to the presentation I said do it. Do it right now. Well, they did it. And I'm just going to follow my script here, but MHIRJ, MHIRJ at the North Central Airport employs 300 people today. And we just had an announcement just not long ago that they are moving their employment to 800 people and the jobs' average pay is \$28 an hour. Absolutely unbelievable. Their leader of the band is in Japan right now. And I hope I'm going to get this correctly, but Ishmeal Mocabil is with us or not with us because of the time differences and everything, but I

hope some way, somehow, he can hear us as well.

In addition to that, DST Innovations. Now, get this, people that make organic material, and a lot of it can come from coal, are moving right now into Morgantown and set up show there. And then they have promised in phase two to do a manufacturing process in southern West Virginia. And with all that, they hope to create a thousand, a thousand new jobs in West Virginia. Please give them a great big round of applause.

I've got to tell you this, tourism in West Virginia has exploded, has it not? Absolutely, Chelsea Ruby has done a marvelous job beyond belief. Without any question whatsoever, we needed to be the frog that was proud of his own pond and invest some dollars and turn that into really something really good. We've done that. You know, we absolutely just think about this. Our parks are having millions of visitors. Absolutely, we did a hundred million dollars of upgrades to our parks. I can't thank Steve McDaniel enough. What an incredible job he's doing. We had the best tourism add in the entire nation.

In the last two years \$250 million of tourism investment, investment in our state has come to pass. We've also welcomed the newest national park in the country, the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. And with us tonight is a fellow that's going to even take us even further, and that's Brad Smith, the Chairman of Intuit. And Brad's right with us. And Brad has made an incredible donation to us and everything to work on a concept that would bring remote workers to West Virginia.

Now, I have a bill that is in front of you and in just a second we're going to give Brad the biggest round of applause in the world. But I have a bill in front of you to propose the attraction of remote workers to West Virginia. It's a fundamental change and a modernization to how we look at corporate tax and the corporate tax structure and how we move towards making West Virginia attractive for remote workers. We want to do it. Brad has an idea. Not only does he have an idea, he's has put his money where his mouth is and he's absolutely given us a chance to do this. So many, so many want to work from home. So many can work in other places and do great work here. This gives us a real chance. So Brad, thank you from the very, very bottom of all of our hearts. We love you. And please give him the greatest round of applause.

Drugs are still a real issue in West Virginia. Covid has really taken us off track. We had Jim's Dream and Jobs and Hope and we had some beginnings, beginnings, but we still have got to know that drugs can cannibalize us. It attacks us all, Republican, Democrat, black, white, rich, poor. It doesn't matter. It attacks us all. I'm not going to go into great, great detail, but we have we have a fellow that's with us tonight, right there. His name is Joe Bozick. And Joe had brought a concept to us and everything and he asked me if I'd be the head coach. And that's game changers. There has been so much happened, and tonight I am announcing the game changer. In conjunction

with the West Virginia Drug Intervention Institute has established a partnership, now get this, with the world renowned Hazleton Betty Ford Foundation to bring evidence based prevention programs for opioid and substance abuse to all students in West Virginia schools. It is unbelievable. And tonight we've got with us and I think this is Mark Mishek, and he is the President and CEO of Hazleton Betty Ford. And we have Angela Jerabek, and she is the founder and Executive Director of BRR BARR, Building Assets and Reducing Risks. So please give them a giant round of applause.

Just so you'll know where I am, we made some really, really bold steps for broadband, did we not? West Virginia is deficit on broadband beyond belief. We need to do any and everything we can to blanket our state with broadband. It will make us better and better and better, and the opportunities just abound everywhere. It is the next highway construction project. We absolutely have fed dollars now pouring in, and we have real progress in broadband, but we got to do more. We got to do more. That's just all there is to it.

From the standpoint of a roads report, our roads to prosperity, you know, a long time ago we absolutely moved along the lines of if we're going to start our roads to prosperity vote, I went on the road, stayed on the road, and lo and behold, 73 percent of the people voted for it. I promised them we wouldn't raise additional taxes. We haven't raised a dime of additional taxes. And we have absolutely continued to do work and we absolutely had our roads get in this situation over decades of neglect. We still have more to do. And I want to tell you we will continue to do it.

Tonight I also want to strongly support and hope like crazy it gets in through this year is an intermediate Court of Appeals. I want to announce something that is really close to our heart. We have a lady that's with us who is the Teacher of the Year. I said in my first State of the State we needed to make education our centerpiece. Not that we needed to just throw a bunch of money away in education or anything, but here is my whole thought. We had to change our image. We absolutely had to start down a pathway to really trying to change our image to the outside world.

Tonight we have a fifth grade teacher that's with us at Tennerton, from Tennerton Elementary, in Upshur County. She's a 20 year veteran. She is sponsored by Toyota Motor Manufacturing of West Virginia, Highmark of West Virginia, Horseman Insurance, West Virginia Lottery and the West Virginia Professional Educators Association. Her name make her absolutely welcome, an achievement that is unbelievable, our Teacher of the Year, Erin Anderson.

I won't keep you a whole lot longer. I've got to just say this. I've had a team around me in this Covid deal, our Covid czar, Clay Marsh. And I owe him a bunch. Our General of National Guard, General Hoyer. Our DHHR Secretary, Secretary crouch, and Doctor Amjad and all those all over the place, all those in our health communities and our first

responders and all those that absolutely have braved this fight. Can you imagine and I say it all the time, but can you just imagine, imagine crawling out of bed, getting your scrubs on or whatever it may be and going right into the fire as you kiss your children goodbye and hope you'll see them again later in the day, knowing you could bring it home, knowing there were so many uncertainties in the beginning and yet they went. Our grocery workers do the same thing and yet they went. They did everything for all of us. We owe them so much. But we could absolutely owe no one more than our National Guardsmen and women. 1460 of them are deployed right now. They have started our Mountaineer Challenge Academy. And now we have Mountaineer Challenge Academy II. And and they have stood up as the leadership in the Joint Interagency Task Force for Covid Vaccination. We owe so much. I have said it so many times, to all of our military we owe everything we have, everything. And if you don't think that, you're not thinking right. Please give them a great big round of applause.

So in wrapping this thing up, you've given me an honor beyond belief. A lot of people along the way would say gosh, oh, man, I bet it's just awful being the Governor at this time. I mean, how lucky unlucky could you have been, blah, blah, blah. But you see, I believe just this. I believe the good Lord made you who you are for a reason and he put you right here for a reason. And I believe he made me who I am for a reason. That's why this has not been a burden. It's been an honor. It's been tough and you've had all kinds of sleepless nights and it has been really tough, but I am telling you I've got to also thank all those that are around me in my office and all the great work that they've done as well, especially you Cathy, Jilly, Jay, Adam and Catherine and those little rascals J.C. and Conleigh. And more than anybody, in a lot of ways Baby Dog.

But before I go, let me just tell you this. West Virginia was really rolling before we got Covid. Covid, no one even knew what in the world it was. For crying out loud, at two o'clock in the day we were having schools and sporting events all over the country, Big 12 events and everything, shutting down everywhere. We had our state tournament going on right down there, and at two o'clock my team, my team was playing at 7:00. We pulled the plug and we started to work, did we not? And along the way along the way we have done a lot of really good work. We've lost in excess of 2,175 people. And I say that because this morning it was 2,175. It's a shame and it's absolutely sad. Please always remember them in your thoughts, in your prayers, and absolutely you will see that through all this, when we were really rolling, I am now in a position of honor. And with that, I have delivered right back there to our Speaker and to our President that flat budget that I referred to. I'm very, very proud of that and we can do it. We can do every single thing that I have outlined here tonight. Before, let's tell the truth, we were 50th in all kinds of things. We were competing against Mississippi, like I said, who was going to be dead last. And we were at the blunt end of a lot of bad jokes. And now we are that diamond in the rough that people we are not the diamond that is going to be found. We are the diamond that they have found. We are

absolutely the star of the game show on the national news every single night almost. It's West Virginia, West Virginia and West Virginia. And now you've have got the reins. I'm telling you with all in me if you want to drive property values in this state up and if the border counties are concerned that somebody is going to go across and buy soda pop or they're going to buy cigarettes across the border, I would say to them just this. Those people across the border are going to come to you to live. I mean, for crying out loud, why would we be worried about such a thing as that? They're going to be coming to you to live. Your stores are going to be filled like you can't imagine. The opportunity is right here, right now.

I can tell you just this, too. The steepest part of the mountain, if you'll just watch, any mountain you've ever climbed in your life, where's the steepest part? It's always near the top. It's always near the top. You start off like this, then it goes like this, and then all of the sudden you're standing there looking and that last little part to get from here to Cathy is almost straight up.

Most people slide back down. I'm confident that you won't. And the big question in all of our minds has been asked me over and over is where are we going to be in ten years, where are we going to be in 20 years? I'm going to tell you, and somewhere here, and who knows where they are, so I'm not going to I'm not even going to go there because I can't even find oh, they're here. They're here.

Think about this. Let me make sure because I didn't want to disappoint you and not have some kind of graphic. Well, okay. Say what? Okay. It's the middle one. But a lot of ways this is where we were. And this is where we are today. And this is where we want to stay. Where are we going to be in the next ten years? Where are we going to be in the next 20 years? I'm going to tell you if you'll just pay really close attention to just this one thing. I would say just this, we have a chance of being the state that has the things that we have wanted so badly that other states have had, the good things that we have wanted so badly that we didn't have, we'll be the state that has them. And you know what else we'll be? We'll be the state that doesn't have the bad things that others still have.

And the last thing, you know what we'll be able to do? We will be able to have that and we will be able to live in paradise because that's West Virginia. You all know it. All you got to do is look outside. You all know just what an opportunity we have. And so I'm going to read to you just two lines. Over the next four years I want us to be even better. I won't be satisfied until West Virginia's success is no longer a surprise, but it is what is expected. I want every other state in America to know if they want to get to the top of the mountain in anything they do, they're going to have to go right through the Mountain State to get there. God bless each and every one of you. Thank you so much.