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[00:00:20] **Speaker 1** The following program is a PBS Wisconsin original production. Welcome to Wisconsin Public Media's coverage of Governor Tony Evers sixth state of the state address. We are bringing you live coverage tonight from the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison. In a few moments, the 46th governor of Wisconsin will make his way into the assembly chambers.

[00:00:52] **Speaker 2** He will speak tonight before a joint session of the Wisconsin Assembly and Senate, the state supreme court, his cabinet and tribal leaders. Good evening. I'm Shawn Johnson from Wisconsin Public Radio.

[00:01:03] **Speaker 1** And I'm Frederica Freiberg from PBS Wisconsin. Tonight, Democratic Governor Tony Evers lays out his plans for 2024. He'll be speaking to the 107th session of the Wisconsin Legislature.

[00:01:16] **Speaker 2** Senate Majority Leader Devin Lemon, who represents communities in Sheboygan and Manitowoc counties along Lake Michigan, will provide this year's Republican response immediately following the governor's state of the state address.

[00:01:27] **Speaker 1** And we do understand that the governor expects this evening to focus on what he has called workforce challenges, including shortages of workers and childcare and that kind of challenge ahead of this just shining night for the governor. The Republican legislature has been busy since yesterday and today.

[00:01:51] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I mean, tonight this speech is all about him framing the agenda as he sees it. They've spent the last couple days framing it as they see it. They've passed, or they'd rather they held a hearing yesterday in the Assembly on a 14 week abortion ban. Today, Republicans in the Senate and Assembly introduced a package of tax cuts. And, you know, Senate Republicans even passed a redistricting plan. And so they have been busy, kind of laying that laying out the table for, you know, the legislative session, what's left of it. This is the governor's chance to do the same before the state of Wisconsin.

[00:02:27] **Speaker 1** And the governor is expected to, make his way into the assembly chambers very shortly. We know that the Supreme Court, a new Supreme Court. And the last time that the governor gave this address, is seated and the state Senate is also in the assembly chambers awaiting the governor's address.

[00:02:49] **Speaker 2** Yeah. I mean, that's a pretty seismic change in terms of the audience. Speaker two in the room, you still have this big Republican majorities that he's been used to during his first term and the, you know, the first year of this term. You have 22 Republicans in the Senate, 64 in the Assembly. You can know the drill. If you watch these speeches, they're not going to clap for a lot of this stuff, he says. Democrats will clap for most of it. The court, though, is a huge deal, and there's A43 Liberal majority there now and you know they're going to be busy in the next few months on issues like redistricting. But, you know, they're not they won't be the vocal people in the audience. I think it's fair to say tonight.

[00:03:31] **Speaker 1** Yes. And as you've just said, of course, the redistricting case is before, the new liberal majority Supreme Court, a very major, major deal as the governor gives his address tonight.

[00:03:45] **Speaker 2** And, you know, we also have, different circumstances for the state of the state than we did last year in that this is not a budget year. So this is not kind of a hint at what he's going to be doing with his budget. It's not his own, you know, reelection year. He's not on the ballot this year. But we do have the 2024 election and everything that it brings with it a presidential election. As we get drawn in by the orbit of the, the the gravity, we are going to everything just gets more and more political. Everything gets more and more partizan. And so some of the bipartisan compromise is that they reached last year on issues like shared revenue or funding for the Brewers Stadium housing. It's going to be tougher to reach potentially in a year when you have an election like we do, and where the center of the political universe. But, they have a couple months to work on some stuff in the legislative session.

[00:04:38] **Speaker 1** Well, we'll see how that goes. And again, we were just describing how, just yesterday and even today, really right up to this address, the Republican, legislature was working on, bills. We'll see. What happens with those? It seems unlikely to me that that kind of compromise will persist again, as you say, leading into this very polarized kind of election season.

[00:05:05] **Speaker 2** It's tough. Maybe they got some, maybe they got used to it last year a little bit, because I think some of the things that they were group able to agree on last year, particularly, you know, local government funding, sales tax for Milwaukee. I mean, that is we've kind of take it for granted now because we've talked about it a lot, but those are kind of big deal. And that was you know, Republicans passed it with help from Democrats signed by a Democratic governor. So, the the framework is there. They haven't done it.

[00:05:36] **Speaker 1** I do know the joint venture shall come to order tax cut that they have, introduced as the chair recognizes the assembly, you know, to the governor, Mr. president.

[00:05:47] **Speaker 3** And members, the governor of the great state of Wisconsin, the honorable Tony Evers.

[00:07:24] **Speaker 1** At this time, I.

[00:07:26] **Speaker 2** Introduce to you the governor of the great state of Wisconsin, the Honorable Tony Evers.

[00:07:36] **Unidentified** Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

[00:07:50] **Speaker 4** No, I didn't see. I asked one of the four legislators that were coming down with me to one of them to do a somersault. Did anybody do that? No. Darn it. Next year. Anyway, good evening, Wisconsinites. Honorable Supreme court justices, tribal nation leaders, constitutional officers, members of the Wisconsin National Guard, and active and retired members of our armed forces. Cabinet members. Senate. President. Campaign. Majority leader Lemmy Hew, minority leader has often been Speaker Vos and Minority Leader Neubauer. Legislators, distinguished guests and Wisconsinites joining us here and from afar. Thank you for being here with us tonight. I'm Tony Evers, and I'm proud to be here tonight as the 46th governor of the great state of Wisconsin, to deliver my 2024 state of the state address. My daughter Katie, my daughter Katie and my grandson Keaton are here with us tonight. And if you'll bear with me for a minute, I'd like to give a special shout out to my better half. Cassie was here as well. Kathy was named a 2023 three Caregiver Hero by Lutheran Social Services, which is awarded in honor of our good friend, governor former Governor Marty Schreiber. Kathy was recognized for her advocacy around Alzheimer's and other dementias, including making the executive residence on dementia friendly location. Kathleen Francis, I am so proud of you. I love you so much. Wisconsin. It's been one heck of a year and I have much to report. When I delivered my 2023 state of the state address a year ago, we are kicking off Wisconsin's 175th birthday and celebrating 175 years of statehood. Wisconsin has never been in a better fiscal position. Let's. Wisconsin. I begin tonight with even better news as we enter 2024. Our state has never been in a better fiscal position than we are today. Better than last year. Better than when I took office, and better than any year in Wisconsin. 176 years of statehood. We began this biennium in the best fiscal position in our state's history. We set out to prepare a breakthrough budget, a rare opportunity to define our posterity. And together we did. We needed to take responsibility for some of our state's most important obligations. But we still couldn't afford to be careless or reckless. We needed to make investments and priorities long neglected, but we still had to save where we could. We needed to stay prudent and well within our means while still marching towards the future. We're working hard to build together. Our bipartisan efforts on housing are a good example. I completed my fourth 72 county tour of Wisconsin this past December. I've been to every county at least four times and sometimes many more. And no matter who I'm talking to or where I go, our largest communities are small towns and villages. Wisconsinites tell me we need more affordable housing and I agree. Building affordable housing in every corner of our state is critical to make sure that Wisconsin is prepared to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce in a 21st century economy. Since I took office, we've invested in building nearly 15,000 affordable housing units, nearly 2500 last year alone, and more than 24,000 housing units total. And we're not stopping there. This past year, we worked together to invest more than $500 million in workforce housing. One of the largest investments in our state's history. We're working every day to make sure our workforce, economy and infrastructure are ready to meet the needs of the 21st century. Part of that is making sure kids, families, workers, farmers and manufacturers have the infrastructure they need to get from point A to point B safely. When I took office, years of this, this investment, it caused our roads and our bridges to crumble in disrepair. So you're darn right we've been fixing the damn roads. You gotta do is find those orange barrels. Since 2019, we've improved over 7425 miles of roads and 1780 bridges, including over 900 miles of roads and over 200 bridges last year alone. We've also worked with our Minnesota and federal partners to secure over $1 billion in federal funding to support our effort to replace the blank bridge in superior. It's a critical economic driver for our state and supports our largest part on the Great Lakes. And I'll tell you, this just got done. You bet. And I tell you this, we got this done because there's no one, no one who's been fighting harder in Washington to bring this investment back home. And Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin. When I was here four years ago, I announced a three pronged plan to address our state's dairy crisis. I later proudly signed a bipartisan bill creating the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports. We're working to meet our ambitious goal of increasing the value of Wisconsin's agricultural exports by at least 25% by mid 2026. So we worked together last year to invest $2 million to help promote Wisconsin's milk and dairy, meat, crop and other products around the world. I'm also proud that our administration worked with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Menominee and Liquid Array tribal nations last year on a new effort to preserve and restore wild rice in Wisconsin. Wild rice has been harvested here for thousands of years, but it's threatened by the effects of changing climate and water quality. We secured nearly $2 million to support researching and developing strategies to help conserve this important cultural resource for future generations. Serving and protecting our natural resources and land continues to be a top priority for my administration. I'm also excited to announce tonight that I'm approving the largest forest conservation effort in our state's history, in partnership with the Biden administration and the Conservation Fund. We have approved the conservation easement for the Pelican River forest. Forest remaining acres to protect the forest for generations of future Wisconsinites to use and enjoy. This is a big deal for. Wisconsinites. This is the future we're building. And no matter where you live, you can see the results of our efforts in Wisconsin today. A kid got ready for school and put on their favorite Milwaukee Brewers shirt. Because we worked together last year to keep major League Baseball in Wisconsin through 2050. That kid can draw, graduate, and start a family in Wisconsin, and they'll be able to take their kids out to the ballgame, where the Brewers will still be the home team. Today, Wisconsinites turning joining in from their T.V. at home is using electricity that is 100% solar powered and carbon free because we've approved enough solar projects across our state, 4000MW worth to power more than 750,000 Wisconsin homes, with average electricity usage for 365 days straight. In Wisconsin today, volunteer EMS and fire providers in Delavan are receiving increased stipends. Marion County has hired two new public safety officers. The goal is purchasing new EMS equipment, and residents on the south side of Milwaukee will have quicker emergency response times. This progress is possible because we work together to provide a historic increase in shared revenue state support that goes directly back to our local communities. Our bipartisan effort included a 20% increase in support to most municipal USA founded statewide. After a generation of our state asking for local partners to do more with less. Today, we're working to deliver on our promise of making sure our communities can meet basic and unique needs like today. Today in Wisconsin, one of our nation heroes has joined our workforce after transitioning from service back to civilian civilian life. He went to work today and a good paying, family supporting job right here at home in Wisconsin, where I'm proud to announce that we now ranked fourth in the country for successfully helping veterans find employment now.

[00:20:38] **Unidentified** We all have to be proud of that.

[00:20:40] **Speaker 4** Wisconsinites, this is the state of our state. This is a future we spent years working hard to build together. Let me be clear. These results and our accomplishments don't mean. Doesn't mean our work is finished. If anything, our progress demands our efforts to continue. There is, as always, more we can do. And that work begins in earnest here tonight. Let's start with the defense. He was a real threat to our kids, our families, our communities. These human made chemicals can be toxic to humans and wildlife, and they've been used in everyday products for more than a half a century. In Wisconsin, where we hunt, fish and want to trust the water coming from our tap and where the our economies rely upon water resources for livestock, livestock, crops, and outdoor recreation. People are a threat to our way of life and our economy. That's why I directed $10 million into a new statewide program to help contaminants like PFAs out, to get to get contaminants like PFOA out of our water supplies. I'm proud to report this program has helped replace or abandoned nearly 500 contaminated water wells across Wisconsin. And after five years of calling for legislative action, we saw the first real and meaningful state investment to specifically address PFAs and our state's history last year that the legislature and I both approved a $125 million investment to start tackling PFAs across our state. That's great news. That's great news. But here's the rub. I signed that budget last July. Today's January 23rd. It's been over 200 days and Republicans had not received released $0.01 of that investment, $125 million investment to fight PFI statewide. Sitting right here in Madison because Republicans refused to release it. That's breathtaking. Republicans, please release this funding so that we can get it out to families, childcare facilities, schools, businesses and communities across the state who need it. Another area where we must work together to do more and quickly. Let's talk about mental health. As I said here last year, that I feared the state of mental health in Wisconsin was a quiet, burgeoning crisis, one I still believe will have cascading effects for generations if it goes unaddressed. So I declared 2023 of the year in mental health in Wisconsin. And yes, we accomplished some important work together. We fought hard to secure another $30 million in this budget to build upon our successful Get Kids and Get Kids Ahead initiative to provide mental health services and to mental health services to every school district in Wisconsin. But I don't need to remind this legislature that I requested more than $500 million last year to help expand access to mental and behavioral health services statewide, only a fraction of which was approved one year after declaring the year of mental health. I'll tell you tonight, as governor and as a grandfather, my concerns have not changed and my fears have not waned. Much work remains. The data have not improved. According to the latest report from the Office of Children's Health Mental Health. Kids continue to report highly concerning levels of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. That's still especially true for teen girls, students of color and LGBTQ kids. One third of our high school kids still experience feelings of sadness and hopelessness nearly every day. About 1 in 10 teams have attempted suicide, and nearly half of LGBTQ youth seriously, seriously considered suicide. Today, 1 in 6 kids experience a serious episode of depression, and 2023 used to be 1 in 7. My administration and I are not going to let up on our work on this issue in 2024. We're going to double our efforts and take a whole of a whole of government approach. Tonight, I'm announcing I'm creating an interagency Council on Mental Health and directing Wisconsin state agencies to work together to reduce barriers and address gaps in mental health services. We're going to develop a statewide mental health action plan to address the root causes of our mental health crisis, increase awareness and reduce stigma, and to build capacity for us to expand access to mental health services statewide. Our state's mental health challenges are very, very significant. Let's do more and urgently make a difference on this issue in 2024. We have to and I'm optimistic we will because our kids are leading the way. Students in Maryland are doing amazing work through a student led program called Raise Your Voice. It's part of an effort led by Nami Wisconsin to educate, support and empower youth to talk openly about mental health. The program at Merrill High School began with just eight kids, and then it grew, and these students have helped expand the program to other middle schools and high schools across the region. With more than 200 members, Merrill's Razor Voice Advisors and founding students are here in the gallery tonight. Please join me in recognizing them, and let's resolve tonight to do the work to support our kids. Where are the. Now, as we continue looking toward the important work we have to do before us in 2024, there are also good things on the horizon. We have important elections coming up this year, including one in November. I've been clear that I believe we should make it easier, not harder, for every eligible Wisconsinites to cast their ballot. And yes, I'll continue to veto any effort by politicians to abuse their power to interfere with our elections, just as I always have. In the coming weeks also be announcing new steps I'm directing my administration to take to help ensure every eligible Wisconsinites has the opportunity to participate in the most precious and fundamental function of our democracy the right to vote. And there's more good news, I promise. From the beginning I would never stop fighting for fair amounts. As I stand here tonight, I have never been more hopeful that when Wisconsinites head to the ballot box later this year, they'll be voting under legislative maps that are fair, responsive, and finally reflect reflect the will of the people of this state. And I want folks at home to understand why fair maps are important. Because when elected officials gerrymander themselves into safe seats, they can comfortably and ignore the overwhelming majority of Wisconsinites who support commonsense, commonsense policies like badger care expansion, red flag laws, and expanding paid family leave. And that's wrong. What has happened on the issue of reproductive freedom in Wisconsin over the last two years is another good example of why we need fair maps. For a decade now, 60% of Wisconsinites on average have consistently said they support abortion being legal in all or most cases. And yet, each time I have asked Republicans to restore Wisconsinites reproductive freedom to what it was the day before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe. They said no. And because of that, Wisconsin women spent over a year experiencing firsthand what it's like to live in a state that bans nearly all abortions, even in cases of rape or incest. Today, thanks to the lawsuit Democrats filed days after the Supreme Court decision, Wisconsinites now have the same reproductive freedom in Wisconsin that they did on June 23rd, 2022, before Rove was overturned. But made no mistake. The freedoms Wisconsinites just got back are already under attack. Republicans are advancing a bill that would ask Wisconsinites to strip themselves some of the basic reproductive freedoms that were just recently restored to them in cases, and no exemptions in cases of rape or incest. Folks, Wisconsinites have been abundantly clear. That's another example. Republicans last candidate for governor wanted to take those same freedoms and more away. You might notice he's not here delivering the state of the state address. So I want to speak directly to women in Wisconsin tonight. I will veto any bill that takes away your reproductive freedom or makes reproductive health care any less acceptable. And that is today. Period. Everyone, every Wisconsinites should be able to access the health care they need and when they need it. And yes, that includes contraception. Last summer, the Food and Drug Administration approved the first daily oral contraceptive pill for use without a prescription, which is expected to be available in stores and online later this year. And that's great news. Magic Hair Plus currently covers over-the-counter emergency contraception and daily contraception with a prescription from a provider. Today I'm announcing I'm directing the Department of Health Services to issue to issue a standing order for Badger Care Plus to serve as a prescription to over-the-counter to cover over-the-counter contraception, including emergency contraception. So here's how it will work. Once this contraception is out on the shelves and individual on Badger Care Plus or able to go to any pharmacy and pick up the contraception they need. The pharmacy will use DHS is standing order to process their insurance company coverage. That individual will be able to leave the pharmacy with the medication they need at no out of pocket product cost excuse. There's also work that we can do together to support healthy moms, babies and families across Wisconsin. Wisconsin, especially as we celebrate Maternal Health Awareness Day. Pregnant women in Wisconsin, up to certain income levels are eligible for Badger Care Plus for the term of their pregnancy and up to 60 days after they give birth. But as most people know, a recovery time for pregnancy often lasts longer than 60 days. Today, a bipartisan bill, Senate Bill 110, introduced by Senators Baldwin and Koski, would enable Wisconsin to join 43 other states that already extend coverage to pregnant women for up to 36 365 days to birth. Tonight, I'm urging Republicans and Democrats to work together to get this bill across the finish line this session and to send it to my desk. We have to get this done for. This past year, showing my showing there's much we can accomplish when we work together. Today, there are pressing issues that demand our work. Bridging Partizan divide continues again, calling the legislature to address what I believe are the two greatest challenges facing our state. The first, our decade long struggle to retain, attract and train talented workers to address our state's workforce shortages. And the second Republican majority is disinterest in working towards a meaningful, bipartisan plan to do something about it. Well, no. Isn't the workforce plan? Asking more kids to work in the workforce is not a workforce plan. Giving more big breaks to millionaires and billionaires is not a workforce plan. These are not serious proposals to address generational statewide issues. In April last year, our state unemployment rate hit a record low of 2.4%. Last year, Wisconsin had an all time lowest number of unemployed workers ever in modern history. And our state's labor force participation participation rate also consistently remained above the national average throughout the year. So it's time we get rid of that old talking point that Wisconsinites aren't working or working hard. Scott and I work hard and they are working. From my vantage point, three things are key to addressing our state's workforce challenges. First, we must find a long term solution to our state's looming childcare crisis. Second, we must expand paid family leave. And third, we must invest in public education at every level. Early childhood to our technical colleges and universities. Wisconsin faces a looming childcare crisis. Costs to working families are skyrocketing. We don't have enough childcare providers and providers and providers we have are struggling to keep the lights on, and the effects are intuitive. As a kid, no longer has childcare or a parent can't afford it. Someone's going to have to stay home with them. Folks, lack of accessible, affordable childcare is a statewide workforce issue. Without continued investments in child care costs, our workforce will suffer mightily. 2110 child care programs are projected to close. 87,000 kids could be without child care. We could lose over 4880 child care jobs. That's about a half $1 billion of economic impact on our state. I introduced a comprehensive workforce plan to stabilize our childcare industry and prevent its collapse. Republicans rejected it. So last fall, I directed $170 million in emergency funding to keep our child care industry afloat. I wanted to be clear. I directed that funding that I could, but it wasn't enough. Wisconsin child care providers will soon receive their final payment from the federally funded portion of child care counts. So the emergency $170 million I directed last fall as a stopgap measure now kicks in, and Republicans are officially on the clock to make this meaningful. Investments necessary to make the mean, meaningful investments necessary to to prevent the collapse of an industry that's essential for making our current levels of workforce participation. Wisconsin. We also need to expand paid family leave. I propose investing $240 million to jumpstart a program that would provide most private sector workers 12 weeks of paid leave. Republicans rejected my proposal not once, but twice. Paid leave is the right thing to do for kids and our families, and it's also what we need to do to compete and keep talented workers. And yes, doing what's best for our kids is what's best for our state, and it's what's best for our families and our workforce too. So yes, we must invest in public education at every level, from early childhood to our technical colleges and our universities. Now. I will never expect to Republicans and Democrats in this building to agree with each other, or me for that matter, on the merits of every policy 100% of the time. That's what democracy is about. But there's no excuse for not building being willing to work together. I want, everybody agrees. Is most pressing issue facing our state. I've introduced a comprehensive workplace workforce plan twice. Anyone on either side of the aisle is a better plan than mine. That not only prevents the collapse of our state's childcare industry, but also helps us complete compete against our neighboring states for talent and invest in public education at every level to prepare our kids for the future. Let's hear it. I will work with any legislator, any partner, any stakeholder who's willing to engage in meaningful conversations on these issues to do the right thing for Wisconsin. In the meantime, I administration will continue to pursue every pathway and seek every, every avenue to address our workforce challenges. Without legislative action, just as we have for five years, and will continue that work here tonight, making sure our workforce is prepared to meet the needs of a 21st century economy. Economy is a top priority for me, and my administration is going to lead by example. That's why tonight I'm declaring 2024 the year of worker of the worker in Wisconsin. We are working in earnest to reduce barriers. Employment so we can try to make sure every available worker can join our workforce. I directed over $150 million to find innovative, long term solutions to our workforce challenges, subsidize employment and skills training with local employers, and support Wisconsinites working to reengage in our workforce. Because of that investment, we've been able to deliver workforce training and support services to more than 33,000 Wisconsinites across the state. I joined with the Wisconsin laborers about a year ago to announce Wisconsin had the highest participation rate in our registered apprenticeship program in two decades. In November, I celebrated National Apprenticeship Week and announced Wisconsin had reached an all time record high number of participants in the registered apprenticeship programs, a 112 year history. How about that? There are also high need areas of our workforce we need to bolster and support. According to the Department of Workforce Development. Wisconsin faces a potential deficit of 20,000 nurses by 2040 between 2020 and 2030. Wisconsin's health care industry will see nearly 32,000 annual openings across occupations. So last year, my administration launched one of the country's first ever registered nurse Apprenticeship pathways to help address the demand for workers, and we announced a new initiative to train over 10,000 certified direct care professionals to address our state's shortage of caregivers. But there's more that we have to do to address our health care industry's chronic challenges. Next week, I'll sign an executive order creating a new health care workforce task force focused on finding finding long term solutions to our state's health care industry and make recommendations for me to consider in my next biennial budget. We also know we must work to retain talent and educators, or work every day to do what's best for our kids. Recent estimates show that only 67% of new educators in Wisconsin make it past five years. So through the Department of Workforce Development, our administration is launching a new teacher apprenticeship pilot program with the Department of Public Instruction to provide more mentorship and support for new educators. And finally as one of the largest employers in the state. My administration is also going to make sure the state of Wisconsin is leading the way by example, with new efforts to recruit and retain talented workers in our state workforce. I'm also announcing tonight I'm creating a new Office of State Employee Engagement and Retention to improve retention, mentorship, and engagement of our state workers across all of our state agencies. Wisconsin. We've proven this past year that we can do big things, especially when we're willing to do them together. I know we can build upon these efforts in 2024, and together we will. Let's get back at it. Let's get to work. Thank you. And. On Wisconsin UW marching band. Take it away.

[00:50:45] **Speaker 1** And so that's the marching band. Governor Tony, yours concludes his sixth state of the state address before the Wisconsin Assembly.

[00:50:55] **Unidentified** And Senate Majority Leader Devin Fleming, who is making his way back here as we speak. In tonight's Republican. Right know.

[00:51:04] **Speaker 1** You split. You know that. The one thing that obviously stood out about.

[00:51:09] **Unidentified** The governor's address tonight, was that he declared.

[00:51:16] **Speaker 1** The year of the worker in Wisconsin, and he was really quite pointed. He spoke about this being the most pressing issue. In our state having to do. With what he calls a child care crisis, calling for expanded family leave, investments and coming.

[00:51:36] **Unidentified** Health care workforce. I mean this. This is more.

[00:51:40] **Speaker 1** Focused on survival.

[00:51:45] **Unidentified** Some chocolates to Republicans.

[00:51:49] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I would say. Style. Because he has. He's not like a big booming order type of governor, right? But if you look at what he was saying there tonight. Republicans specifically. There were some pretty sharp veto threats. He also kind of made reference to his gubernatorial opponent in the 2022 election, he said. He's not standing.

[00:52:12] **Unidentified** Here right now. Referencing your. Abortion rights. You don't hear that from governors very often, you know? Referencing. A couple years ago. So those I think you can.

[00:52:26] **Speaker 2** Call those fighting words a little bit from the governor as he also talked about, you know, areas where he wants to find some kind of an agreement because, you know, on a lot of these issues, there's only so much he can do unilaterally within his administration. He talked about some of that federal money that he's going to use to continue a child care subsidy that's going away. But he's going to need support from the legislature for that in the long run.

[00:52:52] **Speaker 1** He also, spoke clearly and ponderously to things like new voting maps and the importance of zones. And he spoke to abortion rights for women in Wisconsin, even mentioning. The fact that the Republican legislature has taken up a bill that would ban abortion after 14 weeks, with no exceptions, and he said he will veto them so as to his threats of the midterms.

[00:53:22] **Speaker 2** Yeah. No ifs, ands or buts. Around that one. The maps thing is pretty significant. And, you know, how that resolves itself will be very big for the balance of power and government and for who's in that room for the next state of the state address, you know, because, right now, the state Supreme Court has a bunch of Map proposals before they generally, make the Republican majorities are projected to make the Republican majorities smaller. And, you wouldn't have what we've kind of gotten used to in state government, very lopsided Republican majorities in the Assembly, in the Senate, you know, that affects the way things work around here. It affects, you know, how negotiations do, both parties behave differently when you have lopsided majorities or close majorities? So that's a big deal. And that's largely in the court's hands right now. Although the legislature may get more involved, the Senate did pass its version of a map today. I think all we can say is we'll see on that stuff.

[00:54:26] **Speaker 1** Yeah, that's that's a super interesting thing, that the Senate came out, with a new map proposal. It apparently goes to the Assembly now. And meanwhile, the Supreme Court is now considering these other submissions of maps. And so, again, we'll see what happens there. It doesn't seem likely that the governor would be holding hands with the Republican legislature on their latest, kind of submission of a voting map.

[00:54:59] **Speaker 2** Yeah. He and he, I think, alluded to that as much. It doesn't seem likely, although they did base their latest plan at least as a starting point. They used a map that he had submitted to the court, but they made changes. And we don't really have the Partizan breakdown of those changes yet. So it's kind of hard to come, comment on it in comparison to the other maps that are out there at the moment.

[00:55:23] **Speaker 1** So we are again awaiting. Majority Leader Devon Lemon Hue from the state Senate to provide the Republican response. And we do believe that he is in place.

[00:55:38] **Speaker 2** Majority leader. Devin let me queue is represents district from iceberg and he has the Republican response. And actually, we can keep going here for just a moment. Senator?

[00:55:57] **Speaker 1** Well, we get this temperature. All right, there we go. Oh, my. All right, Senator. Go ahead. Good evening. Today, Governor Evers highlighted a vision for the state that does not align with the reality of the state's financial picture. State spending is at an all time high over this two year budget cycle. Wisconsin state government will spend almost $44,000 per income. Taxpayer. Our K-12 schools are enjoying the highest level of funding in history. Local governments and the School choice program have recently gotten their largest increase in state support ever. The state budget included over $3 billion of investment in health care services, including increases for nursing homes, hospitals and mental health care. We heard from our constituents about the state of Wisconsin's infrastructure. So we invested $360 million in local roads and bridges as part of a $1.5 billion transportation budget. And we used one time surplus money to pay cash for major projects to avoid costly borrowing. Workforce housing is a recurring issue for Wisconsin's middle class. So we invested $525 million in revolving loan funds to rehabilitate Wisconsin's aging housing stock. Revitalize main streets and incentivize the creation of new workforce housing. Republicans and Democrats work together to keep the Milwaukee Brewers in Wisconsin for another generation of baseball fans. Wisconsin's priorities are fully funded. And yet, the state still is projected to have a $4 billion surplus. That surplus should not be spent to further grow the size of government as the as the governor suggests. Rather, create or create new entitlement programs, or even sit in a bank account in Madison earning interest. The surplus should be returned to the hardworking taxpayers who have given the state government more than them, their money than is necessary. The legislature released a plan today that would cut taxes for the middle class. It would exempt retirement income from state income taxes. It would increase the married couples credit. And it would increase the child and dependent care tax credit. Since he's been reelected, Governor Evers has consistently rebuked the legislature's attempts to cut taxes for the middle class during budget deliberations. Governor Evers used his veto pen to unilaterally increase taxes on Wisconsinites, making $28,000 a year or more. That highlights the core problem with the governor's administration. He consistently says one thing and then does another. After his campaign promise to cut taxes on the middle class, Governor Evers unilaterally raised them. The governor campaigns as a commonsense leader of the state. Leader of our state. But then he governs as a Partizan leader of the Democrat Party of Wisconsin. Democrats see state surpluses as an opportunity to grow government entitlement on the backs of hardworking taxpayers. Legislative Republicans have a different version. We stand for limited government, low taxes, safe communities, and a strong economy. A strong surplus is an opportunity to advance those goals. This spring, the state legislature will continue to compromise where we can, but we won't compromise the principles of Wisconsin, the principles that Wisconsin voters sent us here to uphold. We are working on behalf of you and your family, and you can be confident that with principled leadership, Wisconsin's best days remain ahead.

[00:59:41] **Speaker 2** That was Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu with the Republican response.

[00:59:45] **Speaker 1** If you would like to watch tonight's speech from Governor Tony Evers or Senate Majority Leader Devin, let me here again. We will have it posted later this evening on our website at PBS wisconsin.org. We'll also have continuing coverage and reaction to the state of the state address this Friday evening at 730, here and now.

[01:00:04] **Speaker 2** And Wisconsin Public Radio will also continue to follow developments from the state Capitol on the air and online@wpri.org. Want to thank you for joining us for this evening for this from the state Capitol in Madison. I'm Shawn Johnson with Wisconsin Public Radio.

[01:00:22] **Speaker 1** And I'm Frederica Freiberg from PBS Wisconsin. This concludes our coverage of the Wisconsin 2024 state of the state address. Thanks for watching.