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[00:00:03] **Speaker 1** Please stay standing for the presentation of the colors. The Pledge of Allegiance will be offered by Trajan Reynolds, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin Youth.

[00:02:45] **Speaker 2** 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.

[00:03:09] **Speaker 1** Members may be seated. The first order of business is to call the roll. The clerk will open the roll. See ya! Have all members recorded their presence? If so, the clerk will close the roll. There are 91 members present, a quorum is, 92 members present, a quorum is present. Gentlemen from the.

[00:03:58] **Speaker 3** Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for leave of absence for the representative from the 38th and a temporary leave for the gentlelady from the 21st, gentleman from the 30th, and gentleman from the 56th.

[00:04:10] **Speaker 1** Gentleman from the 68th asking an Adam's consent that a temporary leave of absence be granted to the gentleman from the 38th and a leave of absence for the balance of the day for the gentleman from the 21st, the 30th and the 56th. Is there any objection? Is there any objection? Hearing none, it is so ordered. Lady from the 79.

[00:04:29] **Speaker 4** Thank you. I ask unanimous consent for a leave of absence for the representative from the 8th and the representative from the 94th for the balance of the day. And I also ask unanimous consent for a temporary leave of absence for the representative from the 90th and the representative from the 89th.

[00:04:48] **Speaker 1** Lady from the 79th Askew Anonymous, consent the temporary leave for the balance of the day be granted to the lady from the eighth and the gentleman from the 94th, and a temporary leave of absence be granted to the gentleman from the 90th and 89th. Is there any objection? Hearing none, it is so ordered. Representative from the 31st.

[00:05:04] **Speaker 5** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask unanimous consent that the rules be suspended, assembly joint resolution 18 be withdrawn from today's calendar and taken up at this time.

[00:05:12] **Speaker 1** The representative from the 31st asked unanimous consent that the rules be suspended and assembly joint resolution 18 be withdrawn from today's calendar and taken up at this time. Is there any objection? Hearing none, the clerk will read the joint resolution.

[00:05:25] **Speaker 6** Assembly Joint Resolution 18, relating to honoring the life and public service of Representative Jonathan Brostoff, whereas Representative and Alderman Jonathan Francis Brostoff, a dedicated public servant, husband, father, son, brother and friend, passed away on November 4, 2024 at the age of 41, and whereas Jonathan Brostoff was born on September 25, 1983 in Wisconsin as the second of two sons to Phyllis and Alan Brostoff. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff graduated from Cradwell School and went on to receive his bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, earning a degree in political science in 2011. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff, while attending UWM, worked for Senator Tom Harkin in Washington, DC, served as chair of the College Democrats, and completed the United Nations Summer Seminar Program. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff was elected to the Wisconsin Assembly, representing the 19th Assembly District. and served from 2014 to 2023, serving on the assembly committees on aging and long-term care, constitution and ethics, family law, financial institutions, government accountability and oversight, mental health, natural resources and sporting heritage, state affairs and government operations, regulatory licensing reform, ways and means, and on the speaker's task force on Alzheimer's and dementia and the speaker's task force on suicide prevention. whereas Jonathan Brostoff was a fierce and tenacious advocate for criminal justice reform, for safeguarding licensing regulations for workforce professionals, and most notably for disability rights, where he famously did not cut his curly hair until a bill supporting American Sign Language access became law, with his eventual haircut feature in the Wisconsin Journal Sentinel. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff was elected the Milwaukee Common Council in 2022 as all there from the 3rd district. and served on the judiciary and legislation, public works, zoning, neighborhood, and development, and steering and rules committees. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff generally cared for the well-being of others, dedicating his time each week to volunteer at Pathfinders, a youth shelter, and Madison Avenue Montessori School in Milwaukee, while also staying involved with Dry Hooch, a nonprofit supporting veterans and actively engaging as an alumnus of Milwaukee's Public Allies Program. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff built relationships with Wisconsinites across party and class, believing that working across differences was vital for a working democracy. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff was a dedicated member and advocate of Milwaukee's Jewish community. And whereas Jonathan Brostoff was a loving husband to his wife, Diana Vang Brostoff, and a devoted father to his children, Boaz, Barak, Binyamin, and Yael. And whereas Representative Jonathan Brostoff is finally. is remembered fondly for his kindness, big heart, sense of humor, commitment to community, and love for his family and the people of the state of Wisconsin. Now, therefore, being resolved by the assembly, the Senate concurring, that the members of the Wisconsin Legislature honor the life and public service of Representative Jonathan Borostoff and extend their condolences to his family and friends.

[00:08:38] **Speaker 1** Question before the body is adoption of assembly joint resolution 18 on the motion to adopt lady from the 66th

[00:08:52] **Speaker 7** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Jonathan was an incredibly dedicated colleague, mentor, husband, and son, and a loving father. And to many in this body, a true friend. He was incredibly passionate about creating a Wisconsin that worked for everyone. From supporting youth programs in Milwaukee to advocating for veterans and those with disabilities, Jonathan was a voice for so many in this capital. As mentioned, he was a fierce and tenacious advocate for criminal justice reform, gun safety, licensing regulations, and disability rights. None of us will soon forget when Jonathan came on the floor with his long hair and remained dedicated to the passage of the American Sign Language Bill in our state. Jonathan was well known for his honesty. He never held back. If he thought we were heading in the wrong direction or missing something important, often crossing his eyes and staring you down. With Jonathan, you always knew where you stood and he helped us grow as a caucus and as individual legislators. We will always remember Jonathan and do our work in his honor. He had an incredible commitment to the people of Wisconsin in his district and to this institution. And of course, great love for his family. Today we honor the life and public service of Representative Jonathan Brostoff and we extend our deepest condolences to you all and the many people who love Jonathan. May his memory be a blessing.

[00:10:45] **Speaker 1** Please hold your applause. Question before the body is adoption of Assembly Joint Resolution 18 on adoption, lady from the 79th.

[00:10:56] **Speaker 4** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spent a lot of time this morning thinking about what I was going to say here today. Jonathan and I came into the assembly together in 2015. He was one of the first people who came to me and said, you're a leader and you need to do good things. And that is something he did for so many other people as well. And I think that his ability to raise up others This is one of the things that. holds closest to me. As you heard, Jonathan was a fierce and tenacious advocate. I remember when he grew out his hair and I would send him pictures of Richard Simmons. He sent me back pictures of Bob Ross. But it's not just doing things like growing out your hair. Jonathan really lived to, Jonathan and I were two of the three Jewish members of this body when we first came into the body together. And there's a principle in Judaism that we call Tikkun Alam, which is repair of the world. And this is a concept that is built on our guiding principles of social justice, of making the world a better place, of taking care of our world and taking care of its people. And Jonathan, more than just about anybody else I've known, lived up to that principle of Tikkun Alam. He and I had long conversations about our Judaism and how it guided. our values and what we do here in this body but also more broadly what we do in the world. And I can only hope that I can live up to those principles as Jonathan did. After he left us in this body, after he left us to go to the city council, we kept in touch. I valued the frequent phone calls. I valued the fact that he, it wasn't me staying in touch, it was always him. He reached out, he made a point of calling so that we had conversations. Right now things aren't easy and I know it wasn't easy for him. Being a Jewish person, being a progressive Jew in particular, it's difficult and it's challenging. And we had long conversations about that. So much of what he said helped make it easier for me. I'm not sure that I was able to make it easier for him, but I always appreciated that he could make it easier for me. I'm going to harken back to his time here in the legislature for just a minute, because I will get emotional if I keep down this path. And I want to talk about a few fun things about Jonathan. I remember our very first caucus meeting together. Jonathan and David Bowen showed up with a case of Sprecker root beer and handed it out. And that was a trademark. It was one of his favorite things and he always brought it to share with others. Here in this body, he fought for the things that were really important to him. I can remember him talking about mental health and about his own struggles and sharing his own struggles. And it was a reminder to me that each of us brings something different to this and we we should value what each member brings. He brought his own struggles and he shared his very personal struggles with all of us here in the legislature. And I believe that they made me and hopefully made many of you a better legislator. Having Jonathan here in the legislature with us made us all better legislators, but it also made Wisconsin better. And Jonathan's presence in this world made for a better world. I look forward to always the pictures he would send of his children. Out of nowhere. I'd be sitting in a meeting and all of a sudden my phone would pop up and it's one of Jonathan's and Diana's kids. And I know how much those kids meant to him. I know how much his family meant to him. And I appreciate that he was so willing to share his family and himself with all of us. And I appreciate that his family was so willing to share him with us. As I said, Jonathan really lived up to the principle of tikkun olam, but something that we also recognize in Judaism is that no one of us is going to alone repair the world. There is always more work to do. And Jonathan left us with more work to do. Whether it is work on suicide prevention, whether it's not work on helping the homeless, whether it is work on repairing our environment, I could go on and on. I know the things that were closest to him. He wanted to prevent gun violence, he wanted to prevent suicide, he wanted to increase access to mental health. And I think it's incumbent upon all of us to commit to, in whatever way we can do that, commit to making the world a better place, commit to repairing the world, and commit to doing just a little bit of kindness, as Jonathan did for all of us, to somebody every single day. In Judaism, we also say when somebody passes away, may their memory be a blessing. And in this case, I am certain that Jonathan's memory is a blessing to his family, to all of us here in this body, to all with whom he served on the Milwaukee city council and for all of the state of Wisconsin. Thank you.

[00:16:14] **Speaker 1** Question before the body is adaption of Assembly Joint Resolution 18 on adaption, lady from the 91st.

[00:16:22] **Speaker 8** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was talking to Jonathan's father a few minutes ago and mentioned how oftentimes when I was driving back from Madison to Eau Claire, I would call Jonathan and we would process the week. I was thinking about that last week and really wish that I would have been able to talk to Jonathan last week. I had my own version of a conversation with him, but the reception wasn't clear from wherever he was, so I didn't get the message as clear. So we'll continue to have those conversations. But one time when we were talking, and I think this just speaks to what a dedicated father he was, all of a sudden we're in the middle of discussing some bill that was before us, and all of a sudden he breaks out into singing Itsy Bitsy Spider, because he was in the middle of changing a diaper at the time. And that is just always a memory that just makes me laugh. It wasn't, oh, excuse me, hold on. I'm in the middle of a diaper. It was just. He blasted it out right there in the middle of the conversation and he always brought a smile to people's faces. He always had grandma candy to share with us on the floor that we will miss incredibly. A lot of us are wearing green ribbons today in honor of him and mental health awareness. And I hadn't seen Jonathan since June of last year. I hadn't talked to him. It was about a month before he passed away the last time. I talked to him and I am so sorry that I did not keep in better contact with him. I had no idea the demons that he was battling on a daily basis. I wish I would have known. I think there's a lot of us who wish that he would have reached out, but I can only imagine the pain he was in to leave all of you, because I know he loved you all. so incredibly much, especially his children. A lot of us will carry, all of us will carry Jonathan with us in the work that we do here, and thank you all so much for sharing him with us.

[00:18:32] **Speaker 1** An adoption, lady from the 20th.

[00:18:37] **Speaker 9** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I first met Jonathan. during his first race for the state assembly. We were getting ready for a parade in the neighborhood and it was a four-way primary and I did not endorse Jonathan. One of his volunteers came over to me and made kind of a snide, nasty remark. So me being who I am, I went over to Jonathan and I said, I really did not appreciate that. The next day, that volunteer was at my door, apologizing, that's the kind of man that Jonathan was. He had so much integrity. This is really hard to talk about Jonathan. I served with him. And sometimes he could make me crazy. But that's crazier, yes. But that's only because he had such passion and such conviction for the things that he believed in. Nothing was going to change his mind, nothing at all. Just the other day memory popped, a photo memory popped up on my phone and it just really brought tears to my eyes because all I kept thinking was Jonathan wanted a family so desperately and this picture was of little boy sitting on my lap and what he had done was he grabbed my egg McMuffin out of my hand. He was about a year old at the time and he ate it. I looked at Jonathan I said Don't you feed your children, Jonathan. But it was just a lighthearted moment in the office, and we were laughing. You know, he's just, he was just such. The last conversation I had with him was about two weeks before we lost him, so tragically. He always ended our conversations with, I appreciate you. that always stuck with me, and I just want Jonathan to know. We all appreciate what he taught us here in this room. Gentlemen from the 17th.

[00:20:47] **Speaker 10** Thank you Mr. Speaker. It is an African tradition that before you address a group of people you ask an elder for permission to speak and today I rise with the permission of Harriet McKinney who was an elder in the 17th district. So I guess now my subconscious will allow me to. realized that my conscious, that my friend is not here with us in a physical form. Cause every, like twice a week, I'm like, man, I gotta call Joe Bro. I need some advice on something. And so everybody knows him as Jonathan Francis Brostoff, but we just called him Joe Bro. I met him at UWM, this little Jewish dude at UWM who was... running like the college dims, et cetera. And I remember him because, you know, a lot of people like to fan out when they find out that I'm related to my mom. And he didn't. I go, he goes, oh, so you're related to someone too, huh? And I said, yeah, he goes, oh, okay. And he liked to call himself the honey badger. If you have ever seen the video on YouTube of the honey badger, and it's this YouTube video that says honey badger don't care. He's getting into like messing with bees and snakes and all types of things. Cause honey badger don't care. And he's gonna do what he wants to do anyway. That's Jonathan Brostoff. My colleague from the 79th called him tenacious. However, let's be honest. Johnathan It was annoying. He was annoying, and everybody in this body who's ever come across him knows he was annoying. He will call you at 7 o'clock in the morning. And that's only because he's been up for three hours already. But he finally said, okay, it's late enough in the morning I can call people. So he calls you at 7 o'clock in the morning and says, hey, what you doing? And I'm like, I'm still asleep. I don't have children. You do. And so, he was a mensch. as they say in the Jewish tradition. I'll tell this brief story before I sit down. I was in the hospital in 2016 with Legionnaire's disease and I was hooked up to all these machines and I had to be on dialysis for a couple of days to flush out my kidneys, et cetera. And who was sitting beside my bed running his mouth? Jonathan Brostoff. And I remember thinking, why don't you shut up? Why are you talking so much? And I remember later I said, why did you keep talking so much when I was in the hospital? He said, dude, you look bad. I had to keep talking because you look so horrible, so I wouldn't be in a thing. So that's the kind of individual he was. I'm talking about my friend, Jonathan Brostoff. And there's a saying in Jewish tradition that says, and I'll sit down with this, may his nashama have an aliyah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[00:23:51] **Speaker 1** Question before the body is adoption of assembly joint resolution 18 on adoption waiting from the 13th.

[00:23:58] **Speaker 11** Thank you. I rise today to honor my friend and former colleague, Jonathan Brostoff. I met Jonathan in a colectivo coffee shop near UWM. I was there because I was running for office in 2018 as a first time candidate. And I was told that some guy named Jonathan Brostoff wanted to vet me. I will be honest and say I was pretty nervous, a little scared, and not sure exactly what was going What happened in that coffee shop? But I showed up, I met a fierce advocate, drinking what I remember was something like a green frothy tea. And Jonathan grilled me with questions and was very clear on his priorities. He was also very clear that he would not be supporting me if I did not pass his test. And we began to talk. What I didn't realize was that after I did pass that test, Jonathan was gonna jump on board and fight for me. which is exactly what he did. We finished my vetting, and he said, OK, let's go knock some doors. My second memory of Jonathan is one that I revisit regularly. We climbed a tall, steep hill to reach a brown wooden doorway in Wauwatosa, where I stood next to my very new friend. And he told the man who answered the door, what a great legislator I'd be. Because when Jonathan was for you, you knew it. And I think many of us know that feeling. And I think Milwaukee knew that feeling. On the day that Jonathan died, I received the news as I was walking out of an appointment and I collapsed onto the Milwaukee sidewalk. Somebody saw me and approached and said, I think I know what you just found out. Can I give you a hug? She knew that the news that I had probably just received was about Jonathan Because in Milwaukee we felt this loss as a city. Jonathan's presence was so huge, we felt his loss as a city. Jonathan and his love for Milwaukee was well known. I don't know anyone who cares so much about fences and salt and parking as Jonathan did. We heard about his quick constituent response times. If there was a way that he could make the city better for you, He was going to do it, and he was loved for that. He was loved for his fight for the people he cared about, and his loss was felt by his city. We all know Jonathan's fire. As I walked to my car after learning of his loss, I was suddenly struck with a memory from many years prior, and it felt like it was happening again in that moment. It was the table slap at a task force hearing in Wauwatosa. Jonathan served on the speaker's task force on suicide prevention, and because it was meeting in my district, I was invited. I was sitting next to Representative Brostoff. Suddenly the room shook. I jumped. I was stunned. Representative Brostoff had just slapped the table and yelled that we were not doing enough. He was furious. and I felt it in my body. And my first memory of Jonathan after he died was of that slap to the table, that we had not done enough. We all know Jonathan's fire. And I imagine that's what many of us thought of when we first lost him. His fight, his fire, his clear articulation of where he was on an issue. His relentless push on the issues that mattered to him. That fire. I sat behind Jonathan on the floor here. And when he spoke, I'd watch the back of his head. I'd watch his hands in the air and I'd look down at his feet. His suit pants, puddled around his running shoes. Classic Jonathan. Suit on the top, running shoes on the bottom, maybe more obviously signaling his energy, and more quietly communicating humility. There was a humility and a gentleness to Jonathan that I do wanna take a minute to mention. When I first joined the legislature, I was working on a piece of legislation that I thought was a good idea. I took it to Jonathan to review because it was an area of expertise for him. He didn't like it, but he didn't tell me that. Instead, he used it as an opportunity to teach me, and he did it in the most respectful and dignified and patient way. He never told me he didn't like it. Instead, he asked if I was willing to have conversations and meetings on it. And I said yes, and he set them up, and he attended. He circled up voices to share their thoughts. No one opposed me, but instead they shared their perspectives. This went on for months, and he'd check in with me periodically. Eventually I realized my proposal wasn't so good after all, and I dropped it. And there was no celebration from Jonathan or I told you so there was instead just movement forward and life moved on. and I had learned a lot about how to ask the right people questions when writing new legislation. And I had learned how to treat a colleague who was writing legislation that I disagreed with, with dignity, respect, and humility. I hope I do a good job remembering that and how I live my life as a legislator. I wore my running shoes today with my suit to honor Jonathan. I am here standing and speaking and thinking about how he used to stand right there. I am so deeply sad that he's gone. And I am so deeply grateful for what I learned from Representative Brostoff. May his memory be a blessing, complete with his humility and his Jonathan Brostoff fire.

[00:30:32] **Speaker 1** The gentleman from the 10th.

[00:30:45] **Speaker 12** Jonathan Brostoff, who was called J Bro by some of his closest friends, Honey Badger by others, and often called the Giant Slayer by me when he did something systematically dope. was a friend I was honored to have in my life for almost 12 years. When we met, I was 16 years old. And he was running for office alongside my predecessor, David Bowen. They, you know, had very successful bids for assembly through their own determination and discipline. As I got to know Jonathan Moore, I realized how much of a goofball and nerd he was, just like me. We had many conversations about video games, comic books, new music that dropped, and he taught me how to play Magic the Gathering. and then later went on to give me my first deck that I still have at home. And then I quickly learned how legendary of a player he was in that game as well, when he bust me three times in a row, then said, learn, and play me again sometime. As I transitioned into adulthood, I got to see Jonathan show up in solidarity in movement spaces, when the Sherman Park incident happened in Milwaukee. We spent many weeks showing up alongside community members in defense of black lives and young people who wanted to use their park in their community. His camaraderie in the movement eventually led to him getting arrested. And he would consistently tell me this story like I wasn't there, but I loved to hear it every time. It always felt like it was a new experience. He told me that he gave, he attempted to give the officer that arrested him a piece of gum, specifically extra gum because he was being so extra. I tell these stories to share two lessons, well more than two lessons that Jonathan taught me through our friendship, that he would consistently vocalize to me, whether it be through a 630 a.m. text message or phone call or a 10 p.m. phone call or just a random text of his kids doing all the things. The first lesson was this, life is a beautiful struggle, which he always told me when I was feeling stressed. When I asked him what he meant when he told me this, he explained to me that while life presents challenges and difficulties, these struggles are ultimately what makes life meaningful and would lead to personal growth and fulfillment. Secondly, he would say... He told me many stories about how he held so many folks accountable, his colleagues, the governor, all folks. He was not afraid of anyone. And that lesson that he taught me through all of these stories was don't start none, won't be none. And lastly, the last lesson he taught me. was to hold our friends close. Jonathan always brought people together. Whether that was, you know, at his house at a bonfire or showing up at someone's event and telling, you know, calling and texting a friend and saying, hey, come to this thing real quick. I want you to meet this person. Or whether it was at his Seder dinner, which I got to experience for the first time. last year in April. He was a bridge builder. He had a very great family. And he, by his family, I mean that all the people that he built relationships with were his family, not just his friends. And he somehow figured out how to make time for everyone. You heard all these folks who said, You know, they'd call him at 6 a.m., 7 a.m. in the evenings, and he'd always call at the right time. When you felt the lowest, I don't know what kind of magic he had, but he knew to call you at the right time. And I really miss my friend. Other folks have been speaking, I've dropped tears. And so on. Because I know that he would be so happy to hear the stories that he's told us, shared with people today. And then he'd always end the conversation with saying bless up. Which was his way of saying solidarity. stay well, and so on. So thank you, Phyllis. Thank you, Diana. Thank you as well for sharing your son with us and walking so many folks into your family.

[00:36:38] **Speaker 1** More members have popped into the queue, so I would just ask as brief as we could be while being respectful, that would be great. So lady from the 23rd.

[00:36:47] **Speaker 13** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Jonathan holds a special place in my heart because he was the first person who suggested that I run for office. I wasn't his constituent. I didn't even know him very well, but he took the time to invest his time in me and he would give me advice and he would take the opportunity to help me understand what happens in the legislature which is no easy task. Sometime but but he cared and he spent his time with me after I was elected. He would always call and check in morning If it was a random call at a random time, my husband would be like, is that Jonathan? It usually was. But he had a passion for bettering his community and a dedication to public service and a deep love for friends and family. And even if you only knew him for a short amount of time, you felt like he was your friend because he invested in you. Permission to read from a printed document?

[00:37:56] **Speaker 1** Without objection.

[00:37:58] **Speaker 13** This is a letter from Jonathan's family who is here today. Dear members, we want to thank the Wisconsin Legislature for today honoring the memory of our husband and son, Jonathan Brostoff. Many of you worked with and remember him, and that on November 4th, 2024, he took his own life with a gun he had purchased only one hour earlier. In October 2019, and while in public office, Jonathan discussed his mental health struggles in an op-ed published in the Wisconsin State Journal. and urban Milwaukee, reflected on his attempt as a teen to take his own life. And Jonathan said, for people contemplating suicide, access to a firearm is like having your own personal and permanent delete button. And let me tell you, having the power to use that delete button at your absolute lowest moments, when thoughts don't make sense and when column-structured thinking is no longer part of the equation, is not something that anyone facing those types struggles is equipped to handle. As difficult as it is to share, I can confidently say that if I had a gun all those years ago, I would not be here today. Our family believes that had Jonathan been required to wait perhaps a day or two after entering the gun store last November to make that purchase, his life may have been spared. And so now, in the interest of saving other lives, at risk for mental health issues, domestic violence, or other circumstances. It is our hope that you find the collective will to reinstate a reasonable waiting period for finalizing gun purchases, doing that would enhance your thoughtful and kind honoring of his memory today. With our thanks and appreciation, Diana Vang Brostoff and Phyllis and Alan Brostoff. Jonathan always had the guts to say what needed to be said. He didn't care if it made him unpopular or if it made other people uncomfortable. He stood up for what was right with the courage of his convictions. And I wholeheartedly urge all of you here to follow his example and do the same.

[00:40:04] **Speaker 1** Gentleman from the 64th.

[00:40:09] **Speaker 14** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know that we have a busy day ahead of us. So I promise to be brief. But I do want to take a moment and pause and give some comments on a former colleague and my friend, Jonathan Brostoff. Jonathan and I were not instant friends. It took us several years, I think, to warm up to each other. But he was a very blunt person. And he was very honest in what he thought. And once he became friends with somebody, there were two things that I think happened. The first is that he would be an advocate for that person in any room he walked into. And the second is that he would urge that person to always do more and be better. And he did the latter one an awful lot for me. He was frequently urging me, I think people have discussed quite at length about the phone calls that he would give at odd hours, sometimes inappropriate hours. He would frequently do that, and sometimes, even when you'd agree with him, he would call back a second time if he had forgotten to make a point, even after I had joined in his sentiments. He was a passionate advocate for the vulnerable in our community, and he will be missed greatly. And he always never hesitated to remind us that we all do better when we all do better.

[00:41:33] **Speaker 1** He will be missed. Thank you. An adaption of AJR 18, lady from the 78.

[00:41:41] **Speaker 15** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, like so many people in this chamber today, had the privilege of knowing former representative Brostoff as not only a colleague, but also as a friend. When I was first sworn in the legislature in 2019, my office was right next door to former representative Brostoff's office in the West Wing. We know things happen in the West Wing. No matter where my office moved in the Capitol, Jonathan was always my neighbor. He once told me that he liked staying on the ground floor because he wanted to be by the new legislators so he can guide us and give us help if we needed it. Jonathan was like a coach in that way. If you had a difference of an opinion, even if he disagreed with you, he would still be there to check in on you and to cheer you on. I will forever remember Jonathan for his passion and his tenacity as a legislator. for the heart that he had for people. In 2019, former state representative Brostoff asked for my support to sign on his sign language interpreter licensing bill which sought to reform licensing standards for interpreters and address Wisconsin sign language and interpreters shortage. And I was new to the legislature, I had no idea what this bill did, but he begged me, Sheila, please sign onto this bill because I want to cut my hair. And so I did, because I wanted him to get a haircut. But Jonathan did more than just talk the talk. He actually walked the walk. And I made sure that he helped get his bill to the governor's office. And Jonathan was a fierce advocate for the deaf in the hard-hearing community. And once he had his mind made up on something, you already know that he was going to stand his firm ground. In 2019, in July, our friend, and former representative Prostoff. finally got his bill signed into law. Thank you, Governor Tony Ebers, and got his haircut in celebration of the victory. That is how we remember my colleague and my friend as an advocate, as a voice for his constituents, as a fighter. It is my honor to say that I deeply miss him, and I last spoke with Jonathan this summer, and in the words of Jonathan Brostoff, keep fighting and don't give up.

[00:44:09] **Speaker 16** Gentlemen from the 25th. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diana and family, I'm so sorry for your loss. Jonathan was a friend, a colleague. He was also a deeply spiritual person. He attended Bible study that we had on Wednesday mornings here at the Capitol. And first he asked me, he goes, well, is that okay if I attend, I'm Jewish. And I go, yeah, I worship a Jewish man. So, Jesus, in case you don't get it. So anyhow, but it was always, he always added to the conversation. Just Jew or Gentile, we had good spiritual conversations. I didn't know as much about his struggles with mental health. I wish I did, but one in five people in Wisconsin are affected by mental health. That doesn't mean one in five people have mental health problems, but they're affected by it. A family. There's a whole family affected by mental health right now, hit in our chambers. You might be going through something, maybe you're watching this. You don't know where to turn. Well, there's a couple ways you can do that. 9-8-8, you can text, you can chat, you can call. And because I don't think, if Jonathan were here, I don't think he would want anybody to be going through this. I think he'd say, get some help. I'm sorry that he had to feel so desperate that he couldn't. We as fellow humans, we have to reach out to our friends and help them to understand that there is help available and not let that happen again. With that, the vote is green.

[00:46:03] **Speaker 1** Final speaker, the lady from the 11th.

[00:46:09] **Speaker 17** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely didn't want to speak because I felt like it would put me in a very vulnerable situation. Diana, to the parents, those of us who know JoBro. Most people say Jonathan, but if you say JoBro, that means you know JoBro. I can just remember them many times. We eat kids, birthday parties, bonfires. phone calls, real conversations. I knew JoBro even before even thinking about running for office. There was a lot of late nights that we would spend together just as families, eating, talking. And I remember when I was running for office and we was just in the middle of a meal. I wanna say we was by one of the Senator's houses and in the middle of him eating, he was like, give me your spill. And I was like, what? He was like, give me your spill. You wanna run for office? Give me your spill. And so, you know, I was like, right now he was like, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's how it's gonna happen. Somebody's gonna come up to you, ask you what you're running for, what you're running on, and you have to be ready, right? And so, you know, I went through my little spill and he took a moment and he looked at me. He was like, you'll be good, right? And then he was like, next time somebody asks you this, though, I want you to be able to say this in 30 seconds flat, right? And that was just him. He was always a straight shooter. You never had to worry about a gray area with Joe, bro, because there was no gray area with him. It was either black or it was absolutely white. There is no in-between, and I love him for that. As we talk about all of the things that he has done, I want people to remember that his love for his community, his love for his family, his babies, I look at those pictures like every week. If you are really close to him, you will get a picture out of nowhere. It can be 11 p.m. at night, and he'll be like, look what they're doing, and you're like, okay, Joe, bro, that's cute, it's late, right? But that's just who he was, and who I will remember him to be. We talk about a lot of things, but I think we often have to talk about those that are closest to us, remembering who they are in spite of what they went through, but also to continue to fight of what they advocated for. A lot of times, we get up and say a lot of great things, and we go on about our life. but he still has a family and babies. And not to put a lot of pressure on anyone else, but please make sure we stay in touch with them because Joe, bro, if it was us, he would stay in touch with us. And so I thank you for just having to lean in seat and I absolutely need to sit down.

[00:48:41] **Speaker 1** Question before the body is adoption of assembly joint resolution 18. All those assembly members in favor of adoption, please rise for a moment of silence. The joint resolution is adopted. Gentlemen from the 31st.

[00:49:07] **Speaker 5** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now misconsent the rules be suspended and AJR 18 be immediately a message to the Senate.

[00:49:12] **Speaker 1** Chairman, from the 31st ask unanimous consent that the rules be suspended in assembly joint resolution 18 be immediately met with the Senate. Is there any objection? Hearing none, the joint resolution is in the Senate. While today is not a joint convention, as you could tell by the action that we just took, which is not normal during a joint convention, I do wanna recognize that we are joined by members of our Supreme Court, Governor Evers, members of the constitutional officers for our state. and by members of the State Senate. So welcome all to our address. As we begin, I'd like to call forward Thomas Fowler, who's chairman of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, who will address our members.

[00:50:46] **Speaker 18** Hello and welcome, my name is Thomas Fowler. My Anishinaabe name was given to me by Gladys Bearhart. It translates to Chief sitting on the mountain. I am humbly honored to spend this time with you today on behalf of Wisconsin's tribal nations and as the chairman of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin. First I want to say thank you to my family, my wife Melissa. I want to say thank you to my children, Arianna, Hunter, Nova, Naya, Anakee, Koya, and Myla Merle. Will you please stand? My heart has grown bigger with each of you, and without a doubt, I would not be the person I am today without each and every one of you. Looking back, I remember when David Mobbin-Merle, the chairman of the San Croix tribe at the time, brought myself and his son, Mai Niji, to this very place, the state of the tribe's address. They say that it takes a village to raise a child. But mobbing was that village. And it feels surreal to be back here in this very place, now as the chairman of the St. Croix Tribe, giving the 2025 State of the Tribes Address. I wanna take a minute to thank my parents for teaching me to always stand my ground for what I believe in, even when it is met with opposition. I wanna thank my grandmothers, Dolores Chouise Rogers and Eileen Miscobanesi. for teaching me to respect my fellow Anishinaabe people, especially to respect women. I want to thank my ceremonial family, my mentors, and my boss ladies. You know who each of you are. The support you have given me really does mean the world to me, and I am so grateful to have each and every one of you in my life. It is an immense privilege to have been chosen to speak today on behalf of Wisconsin's tribal nations at the 21st annual State of the Tribes. Chi-mi Gwich, thank you in our Ojibwe language to Governor Evers, Lieutenant Governor Rodriguez, Speaker Voss, Senate President Falkowski, Senate Majority Leader Lamahuyo. I hope I got that right. Senate Senate Minority Leader Hasselbein and members of the Senate Assembly Majority Leader August Assembly Minority Leader Neubauer and members of the Assembly our local representatives Senator Romaine Quinn Senator Rob Staff Schulte Representative Dave Armstrong representative Duke Tucker representative Bob cry back Constitutional officers, cabinet secretaries, justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, special thanks to Wisconsin Tribal Judges Association, who would like to take a moment to express gratitude to the Wisconsin legislator for extending the same protections afforded to Wisconsin Circuit Court and appellate judges to tribal judges. Tribal courts play a vital role for many things. The protocols for WICWA, discretionary transfers of child support enforcement and collections, healing to wellness courts, and peacemaking mediations are all examples of justice traditions they have upheld. At this time, I would like to recognize my fellow Tribal Nation leaders for entrusting me with this great responsibility. When I say your name, please rise and be acknowledged. Bad River Band of Lake Superior, Chippewa, Chairman Robert Blanchard.

[00:55:25] **Speaker 19** All right.

[00:55:29] **Speaker 18** Forest County Potawatomi Community Chairman James Crawford. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Ho-Chunk Nation, President John Green Deer. Likudere, band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, Chairman Louis Taylor. Lac du Flambeau Band, Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, President John Johnson. Menominee, Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Chairman Joey Awanapie. Chicago and Chippewa Community, Mowlake Band of Lake Superior, Chippewa, Chairman Robert Van Zyl. Oneida Nation Chairman Tassie Hill. Mesquabacan, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Chairman Nicole Boyd. Stockbridge Muncie Community Band of Mohican Indians, President Shannon Halsey. Chief Executive Officer of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Brian Bainbridge. I'd also like to acknowledge my fellow St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin Tribal Council members, Bernice Taylor. Conrad St. John. Rick Benjamin. in Georgia Colbany. It is no easy task to lead a nation. It takes ambition, devotion, dedication, time away from your families, and more often than not, really, really thick skin. The work you are all doing is inspiring, and I thank each and every one of you for your contributions. Chi-miigwech. I cannot continue this speech without giving a special mention of thanks to St. Croix's Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist, Mike DeCora and Peter LeBlanc. Mike and Peter LeBlanc, each contributing 20-plus years of service to our tribe. Together, Mike and Pete reformed the Chippewa Federation, which is once again active with 16-member tribes from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. Their contributions here in Madison and at home have made St. Croix and Indian Country better. Finally, Chi Miigwetch, our St. Croix tribal elders, our St. Croix royalty, youth council, drummers and singers. veterans, friends, relatives, guests, and all others watching at home. Today's gathering is proof of the strong relationship that exists between tribal nations in greater Wisconsin. We are the legacy of all negotiations that came before us and as an Anishinaabe person, my grandparents, great-grandparents, and ancestors knew that a positive relationship between tribes. and the state and federal governments could only strengthen our communities. Our similarities, differences, values, expertise, and culture and tradition enrich each other's lives. Our government-to-government relationship is forever transforming, and the work we do together contributes to shape our communities for everyone's benefit. Wisconsin is home to 11 sovereign tribal nations. The 2015 census data estimated around 5.2 million people in the United States identify as American Indians and Alaskan Natives, with an estimation of around 86,000 tribal members residing Wisconsin alone. Tribal nations entered into treaties with the federal government in 1837, 1842, 1847, and 1854 which established Wisconsin's reservations and territories in exchange for thousands of miles of our historical homelands and began the trust relationship between the federal government and tribes. Today, this trust relationship certifies tribal sovereignty and the inherent authority of indigenous tribes to govern ourselves and manage our own affairs. It acknowledges that Native American tribes are distinct self-governing entities with their own legal and political systems, separate from state and federal governments. This trust relationship also obligates the protection and regulation of tribal lands and natural resources. education in health care. Health care services are provided to our members through Indian Health Service and Tribal-run health programs. Trust responsibilities to tribes require the U.S. government to uphold its commitment in providing services to our people. Treaty rights have been reaffirmed by various court rulings, including the landmark Voigt decision in 1983, which upheld Ojibwe off-reservation hunting. and fishing rights in northern Wisconsin. Tribal nations each have their own governments, languages, stories, traditions, values, beliefs, and ceremonies. We operate our own healthcare facilities, law enforcement agencies, educational systems, social services, and more. Our tribal people are both citizens of the United States and members of their own sovereign nations. And we are very proud of this. Our love for our country and our homelands is intertwined in every part of our being. So much so, that at the forefront of our important celebrations, powwows, and gatherings, our veterans lead the way, carrying not only our tribal nation's staffs, but the American flag first and foremost. There is no other being more patriotic than our Ogichidok and our Ogichidok way. Our warriors, both men and women, American Indians and Alaskan Natives served in the armed forces at five times the national average and have the highest rate per capita serving than any other nationality in the United States. American Indians and Alaska Natives have served alongside patriots with distinction in every major conflict for over 200 years. Our tribal members, our tribal members throughout history take great pride and honor in serving and protecting the United States. Wisconsin is home to an estimated 2,800 Native American veterans. Chi miigwetch to our warriors who have bravely defended our country and our homelands and who continue to defend our way of life. I would like to recognize those carrying our flags today. TVSO, Eagle Staff, Jeff Taylor, U.S. Marines, Desert Storm, Wisconsin Tribal Veterans Service Have a seat. St. Croix Eagle Staff, Bruce Taylor, U.S. Army, Vietnam, and Germany. The United States flag, Kylie Lightfeather, U.S. Army Reserves, active. St. Croix flag, Annie Holmes, U.S. Air Force, retired with 20 years of service. In Wisconsin's flag, Georgia Cobanese Army Reserves. And carrying in our POW flag, Petty Edwards, U.S. Army, peacetime. At St. Croix, we strive to demonstrate the same bravery that exists amongst our warriors by continuingly seeking solutions that defend and reassert our sovereignty as a nation and by securing our most valuable assets, our elders and our children. Near the end of 2023, the St. Croix tribal government held a historical secretarial election which removed the Bureau of Indian Affairs oversight of our constitutional process. This removal, consistent with the government's desire to drop the parental oversight of our sovereign nation while also supporting true self-governance. The secretarial election also removed our tribe the opportunity to remove blood quantum requirements for tribal members and move St. Croix to lineal descendancy, meaning Eligibility to become a tribal member is now based on if a parent is a member. The election results were certified by the BIA on December 15th, 2023. Our enrollment department and enrollment committee have spent the last year enrolling 765 descendants into the St. Croix Tribe. In doing so, providing them with greater opportunities and services. Moving our relatives from descendants to tribal members has allowed our people to explore their identities and learn and participate in various cultural practices, exercise treaty rights for fishing, hunting, and harvesting, and increase youth opportunities so our children can learn to be proud of where they come from. Our tribe, like many others, face the possibility of extinction prior to the elimination of blood quantum. With lineal descendancy, we are no longer measuring who we are by the amount of Indian blood we have. We are St. Croix because of our ancestors, because of who came before us. This decision to remove blood quantum requirements for enrollment ensures our sovereignty continues on forever. Sovereignty and strong intergovernmental relationships are always focal for our tribal leaders. While our country experiences many new changes as our newly elected president and federal administration transitions in, it is important that we continue to distinguish and differentiate this sovereignty from ethnicity. The Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Intergovernmental Relations, State Tribal Relations, describes it best. Tribal members are not racial minorities. We are citizens of our own tribal nations. To speak to citizens of tribal governments as a minority is insulting and inappropriate. These protocols go on to explain Native Americans have had strained relationships with governments due to lack of follow-through. appropriate respect, and broken promises. Be mindful of this fact when working with tribal governments. This verbiage speaks volumes to the government to government relationship, which has grown and strengthened between tribal nations and the state of Wisconsin in the past 180-plus years. Chimi gwitch to our present, tribal and state leaders who have had a hand in negotiating. in good faith to make good things happen for our people in this great state. And while we discuss good faith, it is no secret that there is some uneasiness surrounding the recent changes at the federal government level and what this may mean for tribes and our people. I think it is important not to dwell in uncertainties. The truth is that we have navigated through some great administrations throughout history who worked hard to uphold treaties and responsibilities and sought to strengthen relationships with tribes. We also have experienced some administrations that did quite poorly at best. We've always had and will continue to have experienced lawyers, advocates, organizations, councils, politicians, and allies working tirelessly within and alongside tribes to defend and propel tribal rights and sovereignty forward. We are strong, cohesive, proud, intelligent, hard-working people. We will continue to be there for each other. Be there for your elders. Help raise your tribal community's youth. Offer your sema. your tobacco. There's a story that the Anishinaabe tell about the Magizi, the eagle, and why he is such a revered and respected being. I won't tell that full story here today, but in that story it is said that if one Magizi sees just one Anishinaabe still offering their tobacco and giving thanks, that our Creator will recognize that and take pity upon all of us. So offer your tobacco. Give thanks for all that we have. And if you had not had a chance to hear that story, I would encourage you to offer tobacco to an elder in your community who can tell it to you, because it is really a beautiful story. As indigenous people, we believe in a collective responsibility to one another. We provide our people in many ways. I believe all of us in this room want the same things, financial security, love and happiness. Most of us want that for other people as well. I think that is why you all ran for public office, because you want those same things for others as well. Governor Evers has repeatedly acknowledged the importance of respecting tribal nation sovereignty and has committed to empowering tribes to manage their own affairs and resources and by ensuring native communities are guaranteed the resources they need to promote self-governance Fully reason for fully realizing tribal sovereignty and self-governance is is possible and tribal nations are eager to contribute or continue. to work with administrations to move closer to that full realization. Tribal nations seek common-sense policy reforms that strengthen our ability to govern and protect our own people and preserve our own cultures and control our own lands and resources within our own boundaries. Because tribes are not children of the government. Wisconsin Act 31 mandates schools to teach about Native American history, culture, and sovereignty. The inception of Act 31 stemmed from the violent controversy over our Ojibwe rights to spearfish in the 1980s, as acknowledged in the Voigt decision. These were the days of the Walleye Wars. Save a Walleye, spear an Indian. Well, we remain grateful for the lawmakers who 36 years ago propelled this bill forward. and mandated education on Anishinaabe practices, we want more. We fear returning to a public education environment without Native American history and teachings. Act 31 is not enough. It truthfully has never been enough. Our neighbors do not know about the ceded territory, our treaty rights, our sovereignty. I thank Governor Evers for taking time to bring his cabinet. members to St. Croix at the end of 2024 for the cultural sensitivity training on these very topics, with staff from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. Your commitment to understanding and collaborating with our people has never gone unnoticed. And I applaud you, Mr. Ebers. It has always been the tribe's position that Native American history needs to be taught in our public school systems. We ask this body to collaborate further on Indian education at all levels. We thank the University of Wisconsin at Madison for bringing free tuition to enrolled tribal members. We ask it now be expanded through Governor Evers' budget to include full tuition waivers that other UW campuses. closer to those of us in rural Indian country. St. Croix is in an educational desert, and our kids won't all find success moving so far from home, away from their support systems and culture. We also ask for more support for tribal universities in Wisconsin, like LeCoultre's Ojibwe University and the College of Menominee Nation. Investing in investing in both UW campuses and tribal higher education supports tribes and our students and ultimately changes lives Our kids sometimes struggle with walking in two entirely different worlds We ask that this body supports legislation that serves our students like a B 998 SB 8 5 so that school boards and charter schools don't don't it prohibit American Indian students from wearing traditional regalia at a graduation ceremony.

[01:15:10] **Speaker 19** It's time to get going. It's your time to get going.

[01:15:19] **Speaker 18** We also ask, or we also seek support for the bill SB 87, which gives tribes more discretion over tribal teacher licensing and removes barriers for qualified tribal teachers and American Indian language educators. We need to protect. We need to continue to protect our students' education by also passing AB 101, SB 89, which will require that each school district reports the number of ages and tribal affiliations of American Indian children attending the schools or the school district. In December 2024, the US Senate took a historical step by passing the Truth and Healing Commission on boarding school policies. Act of 2023, which, with unanimous consent, the U.S. House of Representatives received a bill on December 20, 2024, where it continues to sit. This act seeks to uncover the U.S. government's role in Indian boarding school systems. It will also deliver research and examine the long-term effects on Native American communities so that pathways towards healing can be identified. This act is critical for our communities. The tragedy of boarding schools requires remembrance so that the spirits of our ancestors are not lost or forgotten. We have a duty to afford them dignity and respect, to address the loss they suffered, oftentimes while being alone. We respectfully ask this body to help propel the S-1723 bill forward. I recognize that not all the people in this room are responsible for those detrimental past policies. But each of us have an opportunity and, quite frankly, an obligation to ensure that history never repeats itself. We need to use this knowledge to understand and improve the quality of our communities. Our people are descendants of grandparents or great-grandparents that were negatively impacted by boarding schools. The loss of our language and identity throughout our families in Indian country is immense. Many of our relatives turn to self-destructive and unhealthy activities, including drugs and violence. that stress our communities and overwhelm our systems. Indian country is overdue for an honest effort towards reconciliation. It is no secret that our children are up to four times more likely to be removed from their homes and placed in foster care. Being a foster care parent and provider and an adoptive parent for over a decade, I have personally experienced how boarding schools disrupt traditional Native American parenting and damaged healthy family systems. We know that trauma affects us so profoundly. that it can physically change our DNA and impact our future generations. Our elders today throughout tribal nations share a similar story, a memory of a black car coming down their driveway and the children scattering into the woods to hide so they wouldn't be taken away from their families. Like so many others, I hold our language close to my heart. We are reclaiming our ability to speak are Ojibwe Moan. Since colonization, traditional languages have been lost. Many of our Anishinaabe relatives, including my own grandparents, were forced into boarding schools and were not allowed to speak Ojibwe Moan. While our language may be currently on life support, Ojibwe Moan has no borders, no walls, and through revitalization, it will have no. No Limits. A collaborative effort from our tribes to fund language revitalization has begun. Establishing funding has us trending in the right direction to find ways to build our vocabulary back and to be taught words we never heard while surviving through intricate and abusive oppression. Preservation of our language is so important to see so many of us. I personally look forward. to our youth cataloging our elders speaking Ojibwe Moen and sharing those lessons with the world. We have never been so closer to this dream where we are now with the Flexible Facilities Grant program. I believe I speak for everyone in St. Croix when I say we express our gratitude, our immense gratitude to Governor Evers and the Wisconsin Department of Administration. for the grant award of $4.25 million to assist in the expansion of our public library and our community center and our Sand Lake community. The facility. The facility will reduce barriers to crucial services for our people, including providing cultural connection, economic advancement, and educational opportunities. The facility will be a multi-purpose building and include an elder center, language and music preservation studio, and six classrooms. Chi-miigwetch to Governor Evers. I ask that we all collectively continue investing in revitalization of our Ojibwe Moen. Not just momentarily, not just monetarily, but with your time, your attention and your people. In the summer of 2023, the St. Croix Nation updated our road signs to include the Ojibwe words for our communities. I know many others have done this as well. New facilities across Indian country are being constructed with dual language signage throughout. Language revitalization is also growing in Red Cliff's collaboration with the Bayfield School District to teach Ojibwe Moen in their public school system. Bed Rivers adult The Scrabocon. And also Bad Rivers Adult Immersion Program and Menominee's language campus. The connection to tradition by using our traditional language in everyday life is a way to provide healing in our communities. I encourage all of us in this room to push further in our communities to move into a place of normalized use of our language amongst community members. We have shifted from preservation to revitalization to normalization. Along with our language being a central value, indigenous people have gathered mishkiki and relied on plant medicines for centuries. Our archeological evidence suggests that indigenous peoples were cultivating and utilizing cannabis for medical, spiritual, and practical purposes. As early practitioners of herbal medicine, cannabis found its place among the array of medical plants. used by indigenous peoples across the Americas. From treating pain and inflammation to addressing spiritual maladies, the deep knowledge of medicinal plants, including cannabis, were passed down through generations, forming an intrigue part of our traditional healing practices, because Western medicine in the shadow of prohibition. In our modern society, our people are medically predisposed to numerous afflictions. We need medical marijuana for chronic pain management, epilepsy, post-traumatic stress, and addiction. Addiction has left no family untouched in Indian country. Addiction rates amongst Native Americans are now four times higher than national rates. I've seen firsthand how opioids and fentanyl can destroy people and families. My daughter wrote a poem to her mom when she was nine years old. This is her poem. I seen baby turtles and frogs and birds and grasshoppers and spiders and I smelled bug spray and trees and leaves and people and the sun and ponds and mosquitoes. They were biting me. I put bug spray on and they were still biting me. So I got so irritated. I love you. She left this poem written on a small piece of notebook paper at her mom's grave. In May 2023, my daughter's biological mother's life was taken too early from an accidental overdose of this deadly fentanyl. Naya's story isn't unique. Overdoses have nearly wiped out a generation of our tribal nation's mothers and fathers. Through the regulation of medical marijuana in the state of Wisconsin, we can work towards moving people off highly addicted drugs, drugs which are killing our people. Recent data indicates that in the state, in the state of Wisconsin where cannabis is not legal, there is a 25% reduction in opioid use and overdoses. As leaders, we have a duty to protect our citizens from tainted street drugs. and to provide our citizens in Wisconsin with alternative medicines over deadly and addictive pharmaceuticals. A Marquette Law School poll last year showed that 86% of Wisconsin registered voters support medical cannabis legalization. The Chippewa Federation, in partnership with the Indigenous Cannabis Industry Association, ICIA, the Wisconsin Tribal Task Force on Cannabis, and tribal nation leaders are here today in support of the 95 percent of Democrats, the 84 percent of independents, and the 78 percent of Republicans to advocate for the medical cannabis legalization. Let's see this forward. We must now focus our work on education, reform, regulation of safe medical marijuana. There are so many things to be proud of in our tribal communities. Wisconsin tribal nations are major employers and economic engines. In recent data provided by the American Gaming Association, In Wisconsin, tribal gaming alone accounted for over 26,700 jobs, many of which are located in rural areas, helping tribal and non-tribal families alike. Our 25 gaming facilities accounted for over $604 million in tax revenue and tribal revenue share payments annually for all levels of government. Tribes employ thousands of people. The St. Croix Casinos offer 400-plus jobs for entry-level workers who earn a living, receive health benefits, and raise a family. We are the largest employer in rural Burnett County and one of the largest employers in rural Barron County. Many of our tribal nations are also some of the largest employers in their own counties as well. Money spent in tribal nations is circulated back into local communities. grant funds awarded. to tribes allow for the hiring of contractors, consultants, teachers and more. The provisions we provide for our people benefit others too. Our local communities and economies benefit from our presence. There is a lot of good work being done in our native communities. The generosity of our tribes could be seen clearly through the COVID pandemic. Our communities with the help of our public health professionals. set up dozens of vaccine clinics, including mobile vaccine clinics, which were open and free to the public. Our people worked on food and milk giveaways, often in poor weather conditions, which were also open and free to the public. Most recently, St. Croix deployed four public health vending machines in our largest reservation communities, Danbury, Sand Lake, Maple Plain, and Round Lake. They are the first of their kind in rural northwestern Wisconsin, dispensing 15 unique products to anyone regardless of tribal affiliation and at a zero cost. The machines dispense Narcan, Fentanyl and Xylene test kits, drug disposal bags, various testing kits, pregnancy tests, gun cable locks, AA books, and smudging kits. We prioritize this initiative to provide these products completely free of charge across three counties to everyone because we believe healthy communities benefit us all. The partnerships we have developed along the way with local county programs and private companies are a secondary benefit of this program. The first and most important benefit is that these machines had undoubtedly saved lives because harm reduction is public health. I would be remiss if I failed to highlight and bring to the forefront awareness for missing and murdered indigenous women and relatives as a public health crisis. A 2016 study by the National Institute of Justice found that nearly 85 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime, including over 54 percent have experienced sexual violence. Other reports indicate that there is no reliable count of just how many Native women go missing or are killed each year because there is not enough adequate research. In January, a San Carlos Apache teenager, Emily Pike went missing. Her remains were found nearly a month later. And her remains were found nearly a month later, more than 80 miles from where she was last seen. This is such a tragedy. Her death in Indian country, and her death is felt throughout Indian country, and our thoughts and prayers are with her relatives and loved ones. This is too common for our people, and it must stop. We need more state. and federal resources, we need adequate funding allocated to serve our understaffed police departments, more cohesive law enforcement training, strengthened alert systems, increased funding for tribal programs that provide shelter and increased mental health resources. We must do better. For every one of them, say their name. Emily Pike. I stand here on behalf of my indigenous friends and relatives to implore this body to increase water quality standards in the state of Wisconsin as well. We need to improve our standards of water cleanliness to better protect our natural watersheds, which will provide better protection to Gigoon, our fish, and Manuman, our wild rice. There is an increased lack of research on the safety of the use of chemical treatments to fight invasive species in the water. The lack of appropriate sulfate levels in our waters significantly impacts. manuman growth. In order to improve sulfate levels, the state needs to find ways to reduce pollutants from accessing our watersheds. This involves better regulations of many things – agricultural runoff, of chemical sprays, commercial waste, road salt. We are blessed to live next to Gitchi Gami, our Great Lakes. Fresh water is available now is valuable now. but it will be more valuable in the future. The natural world has always been central to our existence as indigenous people, but our environment faces numerous threats including pollution, climate change, and habitat loss. Our partnership with the state and the protection and stewardship of our lands has never been more important. The challenges are too vast to tackle alone. We must unify to secure the highest level of environmental protection possible. St. Croix has committed to clean energy through a partnership with the federal government on a $4.5 million solar project. This initiative is fundamental to our community and our way of life. Our greatest asset is something we can all work together to save a collective goal. This is why it feels so disheartening to see another oil spill. the DNR investigation of a 69,000 gallon Enbridge Line 6 leak in December of 2024. Tribes have never been silent on their concern of the environmental hazards that come with pipelines. Our lands and waterways are at risk, putting our food, water, medicine, cultural practices at risk too. The protection and preservation of our environment and the natural resources that have sustained our people for generations remains a priority. We have a responsibility to ensure clean environmental protection for our next seven generations. Yeah. One of St. Croix's most revered elders and previous tribal chairman for many years journeyed home last year. His name was Louis Jean-Louis Taylor. Louis represented St. Croix for 38 years on tribal council. He gave this speech in 2010. Louis helped pave the way for gaming exclusivity across Wisconsin's Indian country. He stood firmly on tribal sovereignty and treaty rights. He was a member of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Committee, and at one time, served as chairman for the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council. All the things you see around us, Lewis had a hand in them. I would like to take a moment to recognize Mr. Taylor for all his contributions, not just for St. Croix. but throughout Indian country and our great state. I also cannot close this speech without recognizing two additional elders whose absence has been an incredible loss for our communities, Jean Vashkeke Sangate from our Danbury community and Eileen Muscobanesi, little pipe skin away from our Round Lake community. Both Jean and Ms. Kobaneshi were not just leaders. but shining examples of the strength and resilience of our culture and communities. As Indigenous men, we cannot nurture the world like our women can. This is why it's so important to respect our mothers, grandmothers, sisters and aunties. Now more than ever it is essential to have strong and supportive and state relations. When we support each other, we build a better and stronger Wisconsin for all. Our 11 tribal nations and Wisconsin can stand in solidarity to overcome critical issues. This begins with honored history. Wisconsin's collaborative relationship with tribal nations can be an example the entire nation can look up to. The Chippewa Federation and its member tribes Thanks for watching! believe we are stronger when we stand together. And I am here today to ask that you remember going into this new session, we are all better when we are working together. When you take positions on bills, please continue to respect tribes and our Anishinaabe people. Wisconsin is our homeland. We all want to represent Wisconsin well. and for the best interest of all residents, our veterans, our elders, our youth, families, and community members. Because when Wisconsin is at its best, we all win. Chi-miigwetch. Visit Adalia. Thank you all.

[01:42:00] **Speaker 19** Uh-huh.

[01:42:11] **Speaker 18** And I just want to say one more thing. To all my indigenous brothers and sisters out there, we are not broken, we are strong, and we will continue to rise. Miigwech. And if some of you are up for it, we're going to sing a couple of powwow songs out there in the middle of the Capitol there. And you should come dance with us. I'm gonna leave now.

[01:43:00] **Speaker 19** Bye.