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[00:00:22] **Speaker 1** How's everybody? Happy New Year. Happy New Year. Absolutely. Well, thanks, everybody, for joining us today. And I hope everybody had a good holiday season, a chance to relax at the best. So, you know, as we look back on 2024, we have accomplished a lot together. I signed nearly 190 bills into law last year. The vast majority of those had bipartisan support. I signed Fair Maps for Wisconsin, undoing a decade of living under some of the most gerrymandered legislative maps in the U.S. approved $73 million in annual tax relief to reduce child care costs for working families. It was projected that more than 110,000 taxpayers will see an average of about $650 in tax cuts beginning this year and 2025. I enacted two pieces of statewide legislation enabling Wisconsin to receive over $78 million in federal investments to bolster our TV infrastructure. There are now three new fast charging TV stations coming online in Ashland, Menominee and Chippewa Falls, with more to come with the new Year. And we also successfully kept the Brewers in Wisconsin to 2050 with a new lease ensuring future generation will be able to root for the home team, which was finalized and approved just before the holidays and go brewers. And we secured a multibillion dollar investments from key industry leaders like Microsoft, Eli Lilly and Company Nestlé Purina, Kikkoman and more. In my last State of the State address, I declared 2024 the Year of the Worker to be new. Our focus on addressing our state's generational workforce challenges. Through these efforts, we continued our trend of historically low unemployment. And nine counties reported the lowest rates of unemployment on record. We achieved record high employment and participation in the state's register registered and youth apprenticeship programs and expanded apprenticeship pathways, including the first ever teacher apprenticeship pilot program. We worked with Senator Baldwin to secure the state's designation of the U.S. regional tech hub, which is set to bring more than 140,000 jobs and $9 billion of economic development to our state over the next decade. And we helped launch the U.S. Climate Alliance Climate Ready Workforce Initiative, which is working to train 1 million new registered apprenticeships across the nation by 2023. I'm incredibly proud of the work we've done this last year, built upon the efforts of over the last five years. We continued providing tax relief to the middle class and working families across our state, including the Child and Dependent Care credit I just mentioned a minute ago. That will go into effect this year. All told, through tax cuts, I've signed into law throughout my time in office, 86% of Wisconsin taxpayers have seen an income tax cut of 15% or more, with 2.4 million taxpayers receiving relief. And Wisconsin taxpayers will see $1.5 billion in annual tax relief, primarily to the middle class targeted to the middle class, thanks in part due to these efforts and tax cuts I signed into law as governor. A recent analysis by the Wisconsin Policy Forum showed Wisconsin's income tax burden. And that means how much of state and local taxes pay Wisconsinites pay as a share of their personal income is the lowest on record. That means we've worked hard and successfully to make sure Wisconsinites get to keep more of their hard earned money in their pockets. We've also approved more than 8600 miles of roads and 2000 bridges, and we have built more than 17,000 units of affordable housing since I've taken office. And our work to expand access to affordable housing will continue in 25 and 2025 as we implement one of the largest state investments in affordable housing in our history. As we look forward to 2025, there is, as always, more work to do. I look forward to delivering my State of the State address on Wednesday, January 22nd at 7 p.m., where I'll talk about the work ahead of us and to lay out our state's top priorities for 2025. While we had much success in 2020 for working to address our states, challenges are recruiting, training and retaining talented workers. Our efforts must continue in 2025 to address the workforce challenges that have plagued plagued our state for decades. We can both help address our state's workforce challenges and give working families a little breathing room in their household budgets by making childcare and housing more affordable and accessible across our state. And can childcare and housing more affordable? And addressing our state's looming childcare crisis, which could have really bad consequences for our workforce and our state's economy? It's been a top priority for me and my administration That will continue to be that case in the new year. I also continue to be concerned about the burgeoning crisis of mental and behavioral health in Wisconsin, something that we've been talking about for years. I will again propose robust investments in my biannual budget to expand access to mental and behavioral health statewide, including in our schools. And I urge the legislature to join me in supporting this important work. It also, obviously, and everybody in this room is in the same position, weighs heavily on me, that we're kicking off a new year just weeks after a school shooting. Here in Madison, an abundant life Christian school that took the lives of Ruby and Erin, injured several and affected countless others, including a student who is still recovering from those injuries. Keeping our kids, our schools, our streets and our communities safe and addressing. Gun violence has been a top priority for me and my administration over the last five years. Despite continued legislative resistance and inaction in 2025, this should be a shared priority that transcends politics and partizanship and one I'm hopeful to finally receive bi annual support and effort. So I look forward to sharing more details about my budget proposals to address these pressing statewide challenges. And I deliver my 20 2527 BI annual budget message will happen on Tuesday, February 18th, 2025 at 7 p.m.. Be there. It's going to be something. I'm hopeful that as we ring in a new year in Wisconsin after fair maps, we will see a legislature that's more collaborative, more responsive, and reflects the will of the people of the state. That work begins here today. I spent the last month of life this last year traveling across our state, hosting my biannual budget listening sessions, and completing my fifth annual 72 County tour to hear directly from Wisconsinites about the issues that are important to them. So today I am announcing excuse me, a provision I'll be including in the biennial budget, to require the legislature to give the people of Wisconsin a pathway to enshrine the will of the people. It's no secret that since I took since I took office, Republican legislators have repeatedly ignored the will of the people. Wisconsin, a majority of whom support support proposals like restoring role and access to safe legal abortion, legalizing and taxing marijuana like we do alcohol, finding our public schools and implementing common sense gun safety reform, among many other issues. Instead, Republican lawmakers have repeatedly worked to put constitutional amendments on the ballot that Republicans drafted Republicans pass all, while Republicans refuse to give that same power to the people we serve. That's wrong. Republican lawmakers shouldn't be able to ignore the will of the people and then prevent the people from having a voice when their legislatures fail to listen. We have to change that. Republican lawmakers are going to continue to try and legislate by constitutional amendment. Then they should give Wisconsinites the same opportunity that 26 other states have. It's that simple. The legislature should give the people that same power, too. And that's what I'll be asking them to do in my next budget. So thanks for being here today. And I'm happy to take your questions, folks.

[00:10:11] **Speaker 2** That would be a referendum like the DirecTV signature deal or the work of the vote?

[00:10:16] **Speaker 1** Yeah. In order to do that, it has to be a joint resolution. And that and the requirement for that joint resolution will be in the budget. And that would give people the ability, like in 26 other states, to have a ballot initiative brought by the people of Wisconsin.

[00:10:38] **Speaker 2** Governor, you.

[00:10:38] **Speaker 3** Said previously that you would support cutting Wisconsin's prison population in half. But since the pandemic, Wisconsin's prison population is upwards. What explains that times and why hasn't the prison population increased more of your leadership?

[00:10:54] **Speaker 1** Well, we again, we had a pandemic that made things very much more difficult. We will be addressing that issue in the budget. There's no question about that. We need to have criminal justice reform. And that's one of the things we'll be putting in the budget. We're getting through this last four years and, you know, a very difficult time for our correctional institutions and the people that are in it. And we believe we'll have some answers for that in this next budget and hopefully we'll get some support for that.

[00:11:25] **Speaker 3** We indicated legislation to allow absentee ballots before Election Day is a priority. Is that an effort by you to.

[00:11:33] **Speaker 1** Go back to the session? For sure. We should have done it a long time ago. Yes.

[00:11:39] **Speaker 3** Over speaking to legislative leaders in the last few weeks, there appears to be a bipartisan push heading into the new year to try to regulate Delta eight and Delta nine. Of course, this is from a loophole in the 2018 farm bill. Right. Many grocery stores, you can buy the substance. But it's concerning a lot of parents as teens can get their hands on it. Right. We don't know what that bill will look like. But in theory, regulating the industry, possibly raising the age to 21 to be able to purchase these products. Is that something you would generally support?

[00:12:10] **Speaker 1** Generally, I'll have to take a look at it, but we needed to address that. The issue of marijuana also. It'd be nice to be able to do both things at the same time, but I'm open to that. We have to make it clear to people what's legal and what's not. That I think that's important. But in addition, the people in Wisconsin, I don't know the exact numbers, 60, 70% in the that have been polled by by Marquette University to support the legalization of marijuana. It'd be great to be able to take care of both those things at the same time.

[00:12:45] **Speaker 3** Have you heard any concerns about these products being out there and being easily accessible? Yes.

[00:12:51] **Speaker 1** Yes. Yes. Yes.

[00:12:52] **Speaker 3** What would you like to see? Some type of.

[00:12:54] **Speaker 1** Regulation? Yes, I would. But but also, I'm saying, is it be great to deal with this issue, marijuana. At the same time, we have to have clarity on what's happening with what you've brought up. But we also are the will of the people. It's seems to indicate that legalizing marijuana and and treating it in a really, really appropriate way is something that we should be supporting also.

[00:13:21] **Speaker 2** After the Supreme Court ruling last year. Republicans are pessimistic on reauthorizing the bill's Nelson program. Is that concerning to you? Know, it's pretty bold. $1 billion over a ten year proposal. Do you think that's something that you can find common ground to get done?

[00:13:39] **Speaker 1** We should. I mean, if you think about the value of those stewardship fund, it is so important to who we are as Wisconsin and and also the ability to make sure that we have the land available for people to recreate on. And so, yes, we will we will be dealing with that issue in the budget. Absolutely.

[00:14:06] **Speaker 2** A budget living house.

[00:14:13] **Speaker 1** I would veto that part of it. Yes. We can't we can't stop. I mean, people expect that Wisconsin or the state of Wisconsin to support the No Notes Nelson project. And it's been great for the state of Wisconsin. It's important for our tourism industry. And and so the idea of ending it is not going to happen.

[00:14:39] **Speaker 2** Dr. Judy, certain facts in the case of. Speaker Vos recently told us that people come down to see products like delivery to anyone under the age of 21. Would you sign something like that?

[00:14:50] **Speaker 1** I mean, I need to see the whole bill. I need to see the whole bill.

[00:14:54] **Speaker 2** Another proposal that Republicans have talked about taken out earlier this session did involve requiring cooperation with Ice as it relates to individuals who are resident in the country illegally. Curious, your thoughts on a bill like that. If it were to reach your desk or some of these other conversations with. Presidential administration.

[00:15:13] **Speaker 1** Yeah, I think it's somewhat premature to. I mean, we can make some guesses as to what what might happen with a new administration in Washington, D.C.. My my goal is to work with that administration when we can and be in opposition and try to change ideas when when we can't when we can't support it. That may be one of them. But I'd have to see that bill before it's way too early for me to say I'd support it or not. The bottom line is, you know, in Wisconsin, 70% of all of our on our farm, our farms are dealing with 70% of the people that may be part of or maybe part of a federal government's idea to move them elsewhere out of our country. Think about that. How in the hell would we continue to be the dairy state when there's nobody there to milk the cows and do the other important work? So that and we've made that clear. But we the overall goal with this administration will be to work with them on the count and and work with and to be in opposition and change their minds. Well, when we cannot.

[00:16:34] **Speaker 2** Recover, do you think this difference means that people who are here without documentation, committed crimes or have a criminal history, should they be deported if they have that record?

[00:16:43] **Speaker 1** It's. You know what? What crime? Speeding. What about violent crime? I think if they're serving time already, they shouldn't be treated any differently. I mean, violent crime is violent crime. If you end up in a correctional institution. That serving that time is equally important for someone that is documented and someone that is not.

[00:17:11] **Speaker 3** Interference with murder. Saying a letter to your office. Need to address the issue around. Something that you would be willing to revisit.

[00:17:24] **Speaker 1** I'm trying to remember the letter. I remember getting it. P First thing is simple Joining Finance Committee has to release the money that was passed. It's part of law.

[00:17:35] **Speaker 2** When it comes to approaching education funding. Are you waiting for the Supreme Court decision on your veto? Q Last question.

[00:17:42] **Speaker 1** No. We will be having a robust budget for public education as as we always have. And so whatever's happening in the courts, that's that's not going to stop us from making that proposal.

[00:17:58] **Speaker 2** Speaker Vos has said that if the court upholds your 400 year veto, that's likely for education funding, it's going to be for this year, no increase.

[00:18:06] **Speaker 1** What's your response to that? That's a joke. Ever. I mean, honest to God, that is it is a joke calling.

[00:18:17] **Speaker 2** And attacking our needs. Do you believe that the city of Green Bay and the state is prepared to host the NFL draft this spring? And how is the state?

[00:18:25] **Speaker 1** Security efforts. We're working already on that issue. So, yes, we're working with Brown County and Green Bay. We anticipate it's going to be a good event, but it's an event that we are. You know, whether it's our folks at the National Guard, the folks that we have on our our work, you know, the people at the state patrol, all those people are working together. It's it's like it's going to be like the RNC that happened in Milwaukee, that those things have already begun that work on that. It's going to be a great opportunity for the state of Wisconsin, obviously, and Green Bay.

[00:19:10] **Speaker 2** To run for $3 million a year for people as a joke, because if that's not a big increase per year for revenue captures not only for the mental health but for the.

[00:19:20] **Speaker 1** It's pork. No school. There's no schools would be able to get by just on that small amount of of ability to spend money. They'd have to spend, you know, tax money back home. They would they would likely have to go to referendum even more so. So it's a joke. And, you know, the issue of mental health, you know, we put, I think, $50 million in the last budget. And I know the speaker does feel strongly about mental health issues, but that doesn't that doesn't necessarily portray what happened in the budget with the amount of money that we got in the budget, which is a fraction of that $50 million.

[00:20:04] **Speaker 2** So U.S. workers may forget for years your budget.

[00:20:08] **Speaker 1** On that piece. There's going to be more. There's going to be more money period for schools.

[00:20:14] **Speaker 3** Working on the audits, looking into the Milwaukee public schools. And if you don't have any updates, we think apps overall and orders are working fast enough to.

[00:20:22] **Speaker 2** Find some answers.

[00:20:24] **Speaker 1** Yeah, it seems like forever doesn't have the but the audits that we were that we provided will be done soon. I don't know if it's going to be done before the budget. So hopefully some information can help us in the budget. But yeah, I'm frustrated. I'm frustrated, especially I think in working together with the city on the issue of police and in the schools, that's part of state law and they have to obey the law. So somehow we have to come to a conclusion on that.

[00:20:58] **Speaker 3** Because you mentioned the 70% of the workforce on the dairy farms in Wisconsin, mostly undocumented because there's no you're obviously Google cell phone where you have thoughts about what could be done to protect that workforce and the deer in the streets.

[00:21:12] **Speaker 1** Yeah, well, we have to work with our friends in Washington, D.C. I mean, they're the ones that control that issue. And we will do everything in our power to prevent that from happening. I mean, it's it's illogical for if you're a Republican or Democrat to say, well, we're going to mess with America's Dairyland because of somebodies idea of what immigration sort of look like. We have people working there. They're doing a great job. Our farms and frankly, our manufacturers also need that work. You need those workers. So we'll be working with folks in Washington, D.C. to make sure that doesn't happen.

[00:21:55] **Speaker 2** Governor, school governors, school resource officers obviously are under the purview of local school boards, but. Right. Do you have a preference as to whether it be that strong rules in Madison and the local schools? Again.

[00:22:10] **Speaker 1** I don't have that's a local decision to make. It's been successful. Some people, some school districts feel it hasn't been successful. But the fact of the matter is the marquee public schools, I mean, as part of a last budget need to finalize that. Now, whether individual school districts make that decision. I know some people, some school districts feel strongly about having allowing it to happen and some some folks are It's just it's a local issue. Bottom line.

[00:22:45] **Speaker 3** What is your number one priority in the budget to get across the finish line?

[00:22:50] **Speaker 1** Well, number number one is multifaceted. We we have to have a it we have to make sure that people in the state of Wisconsin have the ability to thrive economically. And part of that is affordable housing. Part of that is tax relief. Part of that is to making sure that our public schools are strong. And so to say, if there's one thing that we absolutely have to have, I'd say it's a multifaceted, an answer. It's the same it's the same question that I address around just our own schools and selves. Yes, we need to fund our public schools. But children are in schools maybe 6 or 7 hours a day. How about affordable housing that impacts those kids? How about transportation That that affects those kids. How about health care? That affects those children? So in order for us to thrive as a state economically, and that has to be an overall goal, there's more than one thing that has to happen. And what I just talked about is just around kids.

[00:24:08] **Speaker 3** Who are closing prisons such as Will Potter, Green Bay. And if so, should those prisons be replaced? And would you support any funding in the next budget?

[00:24:17] **Speaker 1** Well, I think you'll have an answer for that in the next budget.

[00:24:21] **Speaker 2** Governor, we're a little less than two years out from this will be the. Would run on in 2026.

[00:24:26] **Speaker 1** Is that when your appearance together? No, because I haven't decided if I'm running out in 2026. Battle that battle. I'll be making that decision sometime post post-budget. UW system.

[00:24:43] **Speaker 2** $800 million. And what is the future of the system? If I can continue the way they are? They seem to be limping from cycle to cycle cycle. Buildings are getting.

[00:24:54] **Speaker 1** Older right.

[00:24:55] **Speaker 2** Down to you. How is the system sustainable? Where do you get any kind of new.

[00:25:01] **Speaker 1** So we have 800 million for sure. And that's what's going to be in my budget. Yeah, you're right. You hit all the highlights. We can't continue to starve our system. Whether it's higher education or UW system or the technical college system or our K through 12 system. That's part of economic development. So, yes, we will. I made a commitment to to put $800 million in the budget and it will be there.

[00:25:29] **Speaker 3** For you guys.

[00:25:30] **Speaker 2** Decision about money after Budget 2024 election. Democrats have said that new Joe Biden could pass the torch. Use that phrase or that way as there's nothing do if you're Joe Biden.

[00:25:41] **Speaker 1** Or do I have a torch.

[00:25:44] **Speaker 2** You think is tied to the duration of the premiership? And if you run that decision, of course.

[00:25:50] **Speaker 1** Look, I'll think about all those things, but it ain't going to be right today.

[00:25:54] **Speaker 2** Well, Governor, given that you have new maps, we're coming into a new biennium without new Democratic lawmakers still weighing your future, would you say that you have a political New Year's resolution when it comes to reaching across the aisle?

[00:26:10] **Speaker 1** Yeah, because I see I see it already. I re I anticipate that. Well, we'll things be perfect and everybody is going to get together and Robin Vos and others aren't going to be complaining about me. Of course that's all going to happen. But I've already seen with and I've talked to every Democratic legislator and I'll be, you know, any Republicans I want to meet with me that will make that happen. But I've already seen a opportunity for some of the new people on the Democratic side reaching out and talking to individuals on the Republican side about issues that just didn't happened in the past. So do I think that there's opportunity there's certainly opportunities for us to get along better and to accomplish things for the people of Wisconsin. And that's what fair maps are all about. As you know, there were when I ran for this office, I said we have to have fair maps, not gerrymandered Democrat maps. And that's exactly what we have. And the reason I believe we've so strongly about that is that the will of the people is the law of the land. And we're a purple state. And the maps reflect that. And I think as a result of that, we will see more collaboration and cooperation. So I'm looking forward to that.

[00:27:42] **Speaker 2** Speaker Austin said he wants to see tax cuts passed before the budget, a majority of the state surplus. Do you think there's a compromise to reach there to pass the tax cut for budget?

[00:27:52] **Speaker 1** It's unlikely, but you never know. We'll take a look at it.

[00:27:56] **Speaker 3** Where do you propose to spend driver's licenses?

[00:27:59] **Speaker 1** And I'm sorry.

[00:28:00] **Speaker 3** Will you propose restoring driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants?

[00:28:04] **Speaker 1** I think we've done that every time, so we'll do it again.

[00:28:07] **Speaker 3** I bring up API for altering the test scores before an exam. The changing that test scores standards. Do you think that was the right move? There's been many people critical of that decision because it's very difficult to even compare to previous years.

[00:28:23] **Speaker 1** Yeah. I hate to even talk about things that aren't my purview anymore and the Department of Public Instruction, but I just think there should have been some. Information and dialog happening with all sorts of people before that decision were made. Because of that change, as you just said, it's hard to compare year to year. If one year you're doing something completely different and so do I. Do I think it could have been handled better? Yes, absolutely. You have to have they have to have in a decision like this, I'm not even sure how many school people knew about it. And so I think in retrospect, if I would be have criticisms about the process.

[00:29:13] **Speaker 3** Was it a surprise to you?

[00:29:15] **Speaker 1** Hell, yes.

[00:29:16] **Speaker 3** Was it a mistake?

[00:29:18] **Speaker 1** Not not telling me at the last minute that you had a problem. I'm just saying the mistake was that there wasn't enough conversation with the stakeholders with parents ahead of time.

[00:29:33] **Speaker 2** Can you understand? I was there. Who do you want to see elected as the messenger?

[00:29:37] **Speaker 1** I'm not taking any position on that. It's. There's at least three people. Two of people are running, and I think there's likely a third.

[00:29:45] **Speaker 3** So for us.

[00:29:47] **Speaker 1** Yes.

[00:29:48] **Speaker 3** Do you think that there was going to be a way to get that money released from joint finance or do you think that there should be room for negotiation on getting that money?

[00:29:57] **Speaker 1** I do it. I'll do anything to get it done. I mean, the idea that we pass if we the legislature passes a law, I signed something into law. And I mean, this isn't the only time this has happened. And whatever I signed into law doesn't really happen because joint finance decides to hang on to that money. That's wrong. That's why we're in court. But whatever we can do to get it out, if that means tying it to something else and we move on. But it's just wrongheaded to think that that is appropriate and and legal. I just think it's not. That's why we're in court. But if there's something we can do in the meantime, let's have it.

[00:30:44] **Speaker 3** To us. Question This governor drew a line item veto. Some of the proposals that we have started to watch, and Republicans argue that those that your lack of your line item veto for the reason why you're holding those funds. Are you willing to visit that issue?

[00:31:07] **Speaker 1** What we did was the right thing. We, the people, the representatives of Clare area, people in the health care world, you know, Clare asked us to do this and we did it. We did. You know, the what came out of that came out of the last budget or, you know, the last budget on this was not what the people in Clare, at least the ones that talked to us and that included health care folks, they wanted a broader use of that money. So no, I mean we're well past the ideas that somehow I'm going to undo that veto. We need to get that money out. Joint Finance Committee does not have the legal authority to to do what they did. And so we're looking forward to a resolution in court.

[00:31:59] **Speaker 3** Do you have plans to do more communication with leaders of the legislature and Democratic legislators? Do you have sort of plans?

[00:32:09] **Speaker 1** Well, we'll work with that. We'll work with them any time that they're available. And, you know, we worked a lot on the budget last time, especially when we talked about shared revenue. And we hope to be able to do that in the future.

[00:32:24] **Speaker 2** Thanks, you guys.

[00:32:26] **Speaker 1** Thanks, everybody. Have a good day. Have a good year. Thanks.

[00:32:33] **Speaker 3** I'll be right back. Any other questions that I can answer for folks? Just for background, I know I distributed that press release.

[00:32:40] **Unidentified** And how to get through.