

Summaries of Governors' 2021 State of the State Addresses from January

February 17, 2021

Below are state-by-state summaries of State of the State addresses from January, with links to the speeches. This document will be updated in the coming weeks with February and March speeches, along with a national overview. Additionally, click [here](#) to access governors' proposed budgets for fiscal 2022.

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[Alaska](#) Governor Mike Dunleavy said its response to COVID-19 was recently recognized as the best in the nation, and that against all odds, Alaska is leading the way in testing and vaccinations. However, he said that because of the pandemic the state also incurred an economic crisis and now comes the hard work of getting the economy off its knees. The governor proposed using \$5 billion in state earnings from the last year to help pull Alaskans out of the crisis, including providing every eligible Alaskan with \$5,000. In addition to getting Alaskans help now, the governor said that work needs to be done on a long-term fiscal solution and called for implementing a spending cap, requiring that any broad-based tax be approved by the Alaskan people, and guarantee there is a Permanent Fund dividend for future generations, while also announcing his support for legislation to bring gaming to Alaska. The governor then discussed the need to start the process of making Alaska more self-reliant including creating and enhancing new sectors of the economy, strengthening the agriculture and mariculture industries, determining what pharmaceuticals the state can create on its own, and reexamining state regulations. He also said that if Alaska is to survive on its own it must prioritize energy independence and can start by harnessing renewable energy sources, as well as defending traditional energy resources. In addition to going it alone when necessary, the governor discussed the need to create new opportunities including attracting investors in unmanned aircraft systems, creating a \$350 million bond package to help Alaskans get back to work, and allowing Alaskans the option of receiving their Permanent Fund Dividend in the form of a land voucher. Other initiatives discussed by the governor included: increasing funding for public homeschooling; ensuring that federal relief money is properly targeted at improving reading schools; increasing summer camp options for students; increased funding for the prosecution of sexual assault and domestic violence; and working to complete a gas line from the North Slope.

[Arizona](#) Governor Doug Ducey said his vision for 2021 is focusing on the continued fight against COVID-19, the distribution of the vaccine, prioritizing K-12 education, creating jobs and helping Arizonans who have been impacted by the economic consequences of the pandemic. The governor began by noting that the pandemic remains the most significant threat the state faces, and that it will require vigilant attention for months to come. However, he added that if last year was the year of the virus, this year will be the year of the vaccine. The governor then outlined

steps the state is taking in vaccine distribution. He also defended the continuation of the public health emergency, and not implementing a “lockdown”, stating that Arizona has taken a measured course. Regarding schools, the governor said now is the time to get students back to where they belong and into the classroom, while adding that resources should be directed to helping children catch up from distance learning including through summer school, longer school days, one-on-one targeted instruction, and tutoring. When discussing the economy, the governor said that Arizona still ranks above most other states in job creation and personal income growth. However, he said that some Arizonans are struggling, and it needs to be a priority to help them with a growing economy and more jobs. He called on the legislature to consider a number of proposals including: tax reform; COVID liability protection; a modernized gaming compact; broadband expansion; greater access to telemedicine; better roads and bridges; water innovation; better equipment and training for law enforcement; criminal justice reform; and guarding against wildfires. The governor also added that through remote working by many state employees, there is an opportunity to further limit the size, cost, and footprint of government. Finally, the governor closed by saying that the state of the state is not only strong but resilient, and that everyone must do their part by following public health measures, wearing a mask, and practicing personal responsibility.

[Arkansas](#) Governor Asa Hutchinson said that we begin this session with historic challenges facing the nation including the global pandemic, and the violent assault on the nation’s capital. He said that the legislature can either help to bring people together, or add to the flames of division, and said that they have the opportunity to find solutions and ways to work together for the common good. The governor highlighted recent successes including lowering and reforming taxes, raising teacher pay, becoming a leader in computer science, devoting state resources to expand high-speed internet, and job creation. He also noted that the state of state finances is strong, as the state currently has an unallocated budget surplus of \$200 million and fiscal 2021 revenues have exceeded forecasts by \$300 million. The governor then turned his focus to the upcoming legislative session, stating that our first responsibility is to act on the health emergency facing the state. Specifically, he called for extending the emergency rules that are in place and to pass appropriations to allow federal COVID relief funds to be spent on vaccine distribution, testing, tracing, and education. The governor also called for another round of teacher pay increases, with the goal of raising the average teacher salary by \$2,000 over the next two years. Additionally, the governor called for the legislature to consider hate crime legislation and noted its importance to the business community. He also asked for the support of the legislature to expand high-speed internet into more rural areas, and to require a computer science course as a graduation credit. Finally, the governor called for setting aside \$100 million for the Long-Term Reserve Fund, \$50 million for tax cuts for middle and lower-income individuals, reducing the sales tax on used cars, and lowering the tax rate for new residents to 4.9 percent for five years.

[Connecticut](#) Governor Ned Lamont spoke of the challenges the state has faced over the last year related to the pandemic, but said that there is a hopeful light on the horizon as a safe and

effective vaccine has been developed, and the state and nation are on the mend. He then highlighted successes in the state over the past two years and that he would continue to work on: strengthening the relationship with neighboring states; creating faster transportation options; incentivizing electric vehicles; stronger protections against cyberattacks; modernizing gaming including sports betting and internet gaming; legalizing marijuana; addressing racial inequality and injustice; providing grants to small businesses until federal aid arrives; and a continued emphasis on education and workforce development. The governor also noted recent fiscal improvements including passing an honestly balanced budget, making a down payment on pension liabilities, and creating the largest rainy-day fund in the state's history. The governor said that over the course of the coming year they will work to expand affordable housing, access to broadband, transit-oriented development, open choice school incentives, and the workforce development and small business growth fund. The governor closed by saying that although the next year will be challenging, he has never been more optimistic about the future, and this would be the year of the Connecticut comeback.

[Delaware](#) Governor John Carney said that over the past year Delawareans have worked hard, kept their focus, strengthened their resolve, and looked out for one another. As a result, he said the state of the state is resilient, determined, strong, and getting stronger. The governor started with the state of the budget and the economy and said that work over the past three years to build a long-term sustainable budget allowed Delaware to avoid cutting critical services, raising taxes, borrowing money to pay its bills, or laying off state employees. He also added that this year's budget will once again link state spending to the growth of the economy, invest one-time money in one-time infrastructure projects, focus on the future, and rebuild reserves. The governor noted that this past year has been a challenging balancing act between protecting public health and protecting the health of the economy, and that some people have sacrificed more than others. The governor then detailed steps taken over the past year to support individuals and businesses impacted by the pandemic and said the state will continue to support small businesses, expand broadband, invest in infrastructure, and encourage economic development. Turning to education, the governor said the best path to a good job is a good education and discussed the need to increase support for low-income students and English learners, double funding for the Early Childhood Assistance Program, and fully fund K-3 basic special education. The governor also discussed recent steps the state has taken to encourage equality and justice for all, including examining the relationship between law enforcement and people of color, creating a Statewide Equity Initiative, and banning chokeholds. Another area of focus in the address was the need to protect the environment, including investing in a Clean Water Trust Fund. Finally, the governor discussed the need to increase participation in democracy and called for making mail-in voting a permanent option.

[Georgia](#) Governor Brian Kemp began his speech by discussing the challenges the state has faced over the past year brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, but he said that the state of the state is resilient, and that we will endure. The governor said that the state's top priority over the next few

months must be to protect both lives and livelihoods against COVID-19, and the need to balance those two priorities. He then highlighted steps the state has taken over the past year to fight the coronavirus, while also thanking health care workers, the National Guard, and businesses for their efforts in tackling the pandemic. In spite of COVID-19, the governor said the state's economy was able to hold its own in 2020, and is in a position to emerge stronger and more prosperous than before. The governor highlighted the state's business ranking, economic development successes, the passage of a PPE tax credit that incentivizes in-state production, and the Public Health State of Emergency, which granted the governor's office the flexibility and tools necessary to address the COVID-19 crisis. The governor also said they were able to make the difficult choices last year to balance the budget, and that the rainy day fund remains strong. Looking forward to the fiscal 2022 budget, the governor stated his proposal will include no new cuts to state agencies, no furloughs, no widespread layoffs, and no new taxes. Additionally, he highlighted a number of initiatives in his budget proposal including: \$40 million to establish a Rural Innovation Fund; \$20 million for rural broadband grants; \$76 million to implement Georgia Pathways and Access to make health care more accessible; \$329 million for Medicaid and PeachCare to fund projected costs; a one-time supplement of \$1,000 per teacher and other school employees; \$573 million to restore funding to school systems across the state; and \$5 million for a pilot program to help keep students with unmet financial obligations enrolled in college. The governor also spoke about passing meaningful hate crime legislation last session, the need to reform the state's citizen arrest statute, continued support for law enforcement, and the need to address human trafficking.

[Hawaii](#) Governor David Ige said that twelve months ago, state revenues were at a high of \$8 billion, the unemployment rate was the lowest in the nation, and the state had its best credit rating ever. While expectations quickly changed because of the pandemic, the governor said they will begin this session with hope due to the vaccine rollout and everyday heroes all around us. The governor began by discussing the state's public health efforts and said it will continue to take the tough actions necessary to keep Hawaii safe, while also implementing a comprehensive vaccine distribution strategy. The governor then discussed efforts to support families' economic well-being while highlighting use of federal CARES Act funds, providing housing assistance, and efforts to build more affordable housing. In the area of education, the governor said he wants to move the state Department of Education into a more school-based system, empowering individual schools to innovate in ways that best meet their needs, and noted the recent creation of the School Facilities Agency established to help modernize aging schools. The governor then discussed a series of issues regarding the state's economic recovery. He said that over the past year, the state was forced to reduce the current budget by \$402 million, transfer \$345 million from the rainy day fund, eliminate \$350 million from state programs, and borrow to help make payroll. In spite of these efforts, the governor stated that revenues are not expected to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels until 2024 and the main budget initiative this year will be to find ways to cover historic shortfalls. To help the state's short-term economic recovery, the state is planning on covering interest payments on loans to businesses, and continuing to promote

policies to help keep the community healthy. To support the long-term recovery, the governor called for diversification of the economy beyond tourism including promoting technology and investing in the digital economy. The governor also called for additional investments in broadband, and creating a program of action called Hawaii 2.0, which will involve stakeholders from across the state examining ways to reboot and upgrade the economy.

[Idaho](#) Governor Brad Little began his speech by discussing the January 6th riots at the U.S. Capitol, and stated the need to redouble the commitment to peaceful assembly and civil discourse, while also maintaining the openness of the political process in Idaho. He then turned his attention to the COVID-19 pandemic and thanked health care workers for their efforts in fighting the coronavirus. The governor said that over the past year he has tried to protect life and critical health care capacity, while supporting faith, families, businesses, and students. Specifically, the governor discussed actions the state has taken including: providing \$300 million towards grants and equipment for small businesses; lowering unemployment taxes; ensuring public safety personnel had needed resources; giving \$126 million back to property taxpayers; investing \$50 million in broadband; historic investments in education; and increased testing and other steps to slow the disease. The governor said that as we begin to look ahead after a momentous year, the state of the state is strong. He noted the state's favorable rankings in economic prosperity, financial solvency, and personal income growth, while adding that the state has cut red tape, limited government spending, used conservative revenue forecasting, and maintained healthy rainy-day balances. The governor then discussed his "Building Idaho's Future" plan which includes: \$295 million in one-time tax relief; \$160 million in permanent tax cuts; \$126 million for infrastructure projects; \$80 million in new ongoing transportation funding; additional investments to support the Idaho State Police and the criminal justice system; \$60 million in strategic investments in long-term water projects; and support for education through literacy programs, higher education and career technical education programs, and internet connectivity. The governor said that beyond his "Building Idaho's Future" plan, he is proposing a "no frills" budget for fiscal year 2022 that leaves a prudent surplus, bolsters rainy day funds, and reflects his continued priority on education, including teachers. He stated that his budget fully implements a \$250 million investment in the career ladder for teachers, directs \$250 million for fighting COVID-19, ramps up investments to promote healthy lands and reduce wildfire risk, and recommends the creation of a one stop shop for Idahoans to access public meeting information for any state entity.

[Indiana](#) Governor Eric Holcomb opened his speech by remembering lives lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thanked healthcare workers and law enforcement officials for their efforts, and said that Hoosiers have risen to meet unprecedented challenges. The governor said that the state of the state is resilient and growing, and the foundation has held strong. He noted the state has maintained its triple-A credit rating, is expected to finish the year with more than \$2 billion in reserves, and experienced a record year of new job commitments. The governor also added that his two-year state budget proposal: restores many agency budgets; increases K-12 funding

by \$377 million; increases higher education funding in each of the next two years; makes new investments in state parks and the state fairgrounds; builds a new state police lab and National Guard Armory; pays down \$400 million on teacher pension debt; and helps pay off outstanding bonds. The governor then highlighted current and proposed initiatives across the state. In the area of health and human services, he noted the rollout of the state's vaccination plan, the need to expand in-home care options for the elderly, the reauthorization of the Healthy Indiana plan, the expansion of a program to reduce infant mortality, a reduction of child services cases, and an increase of adoptions from foster care. Concerning education and workforce development, the governor discussed that K-12 funding was protected this past year even though other areas of the state budget were cut, the need to increase teacher compensation, a continued emphasis on helping residents obtain post-secondary education, broadband expansion to help improve remote learning, and added funding for workforce development programs. Regarding transportation and infrastructure, the governor spoke about the need for a 21st century infrastructure platform, the completion of I-69, improved safety on Indiana roads, and the expansion of hiking and biking trails. Finally, the governor spoke about a new initiative to help regions across the state attract new businesses and improve quality of life, the need for the legislature to pass a pregnancy accommodations bill, providing COVID liability protections, and ways to modernize state government. Additionally, the governor called for greater ability to access state services virtually, outfitting state police officers with body cameras, starting a diversity data dashboard, and more telehealth capabilities.

[Iowa](#) Governor Kim Reynolds said the state has faced many obstacles over the past year including COVID-19, civil unrest, a drought, and a derecho, but noted it has met the challenges and the condition of the state has never been stronger. She added Iowa is coming back, and that due to conservative budgeting, a diverse economy, and the decision to keep most businesses open, the state is not currently facing a massive budget shortfall. The governor then turned her attention to issues the state can begin to address immediately including broadband, childcare, workforce training, and affordable housing. Specifically, the governor called for: ensuring that all parts of the state have high-speed broadband by 2025 and committing \$450 million over that time period; using \$25 million of childcare development block grants to promote child care startups; continuing the work of Future Ready Iowa to increase the number of Iowans with education or training beyond high school; conducting a review of licensing boards and commissions; integrating work-based learning into the K-12 curriculum; and expanding initiatives that address pent-up demand for affordable housing. The governor addressed other areas as well including education and asked for the legislature to send her a bill immediately that gives parents the choice to send their child back to school full time, said school choice should be an option for everyone, and stated the need to continue to prioritize school funding. In her address, the governor also stated she will soon be introducing a bill that both protects law enforcement and continues the march towards racial justice. Finally, regarding healthcare, the governor called for hospitals and clinics to start a center of excellence, improving rural EMS services, increasing mental health funding, and expanding telehealth. The governor closed her

speech by saying that her two requests for fellow Iowans are to not forget neighbors that are still hurting, and not to return to normal, but instead be better, bigger, and bolder.

[Kansas](#) Governor Laura Kelly said in the coming weeks and months, the state needs to get every Kansan vaccinated, the economy moving, and kids back into the classroom. She also added it needs to be done in a way that keeps the budget balanced, with a sense of urgency and focus, and without letting political fights slow the state down. The governor said that after months of struggle and sacrifice, the end to this national nightmare is in sight due to the development of COVID-19 vaccines. She then highlighted her administration's vaccine distribution plan, while also saying that people need to continue to do their part to slow the spread of the virus. The governor added the past ten months have shown again that everyone deserves affordable, quality healthcare and she would continue to push for Medicaid expansion. The governor then turned her focus to the economy and said that it is not enough to keep the economy open, but the economy also needs to continue to grow. She stated her focus is on five areas of economic growth: small businesses, infrastructure, new job creation, agriculture, and broadband. Specifically, the governor discussed: continued funding for programs that help transform and strengthen rural downtowns; a continuation of the state's 10-year infrastructure plan to create a more modern transportation system; upgrading old IT systems within state government; increasing the capacity of the state's food supply; and a continued push for high-speed internet throughout the state. Regarding education, the governor said her goal is get every student back into the classroom as soon as possible, and also providing teachers with the tools and resources they need to get kids back on track. Finally, the governor said she will not return to the days of broken budgets and fiscal irresponsibility, that Kansas is on track to close the year with a \$600 million ending balance, and the state must continue to prioritize strategic and inclusive economic policies, not harmful tax cuts.

[Kentucky](#) Governor Andy Beshear spoke of the challenges the state has faced over the past year and remembered the lives lost. He added that throughout the pandemic he worked in a bipartisan fashion, his actions were targeted to have the greatest impact while being limited in time and scope to avoid unnecessary damage, and an effective virus response is necessary to sustain and rebuild the economy. He also said that 2021 will be the year that we defeat the coronavirus and work to restore our democracy. The governor then turned his attention to the budget and said that the rainy day fund is at its highest level ever, Kentucky currently has over \$600 million in one-time money available to invest, and the budget doesn't rely on any increase in taxes or contain spending cuts. The governor stated that his "Better Kentucky Budget" is built on three pillars: relief for small businesses and Kentucky families; prioritizing its people; and bold investment in its future. Regarding relief for small businesses and Kentucky families, the budget proposal includes: \$220 million for the Better Kentucky Small Business Relief Fund; authorizes \$48 million in CARES Act fund for unemployment benefits; uses \$152 million in CARES Act funds to repay UI loans; and asks the General Assembly to provide \$100 million more toward UI loans. Concerning the second pillar of prioritizing its people, the recommended budget calls for: a

\$1,000 salary increase for teachers and other school personnel; increasing funding for textbooks and electronic instruction resources; providing support for preschool programs; restoring a teacher loan forgiveness program, continued funding of school based-mental health services; a 2 percent increase in general fund investment for postsecondary institutions; establishing a new program to provide the last dollar necessary to complete associate degrees or certificates; and full pension funding for the Teachers' Retirement System. Additionally, it recommends: a 1 percent raise for state employees; improved compensation for law enforcement; the full exclusion of military pensions from the state income tax; adding social workers; increasing Medicaid waivers; added support for local health departments; and pension relief for quasi-governmental agencies. The governor said his third pillar is focused on making bold investments to allow Kentucky to sprint out of the pandemic and into the future. He called for: \$100 million in additional one-time money to help rebuild schools; \$50 million to fund the last mile of broadband; support for telehealth; added investments in the transportation infrastructure; a fund to support emerging industries; directing state agencies to identify ways to modernize and determine what services can remain remote; and legalizing medical marijuana, passing sports betting, and saving historic horse racing. Finally, the governor spoke about the need to address racism, take bold action, and come together as Team Kentucky.

[Massachusetts](#) Governor Charlie Baker said that 2020 was a year like no other, and that the mission was, and still is: do the best we can to protect the health and well being of everyone, keep our economy as open as possible, and keep our kids in school. The governor said that one silver lining in all of this has been how organizations and individuals from every corner of Massachusetts stepped up to confront the pandemic and care for each other. The governor discussed steps the state has taken to address the pandemic including its Small Business Relief Program, working with local officials through the Shared Streets Program, and helping schools to reopen including developing a weekly COVID testing program for students, teachers, and staff. Additionally, he said the legislature has taken needed steps including continuing to fund essential services without raising taxes or fees, and enacting legislation on transportation, economic development, housing, health care, and police reform. However, the governor said that there is still more work to be done on environmental justice, transportation, resiliency, conservation, and energy efficiency. Additionally, he said that Massachusetts must examine the future of work and how the pandemic will impact how people commute, where they live, where they work, and who they work for. Finally, the governor discussed the state's efforts in distributing vaccines and said that over the next few months we must continue to stay vigilant and take steps to stop the spread.

[Michigan](#) Governor Gretchen Whitmer said while 2020 was a tough year, the people of Michigan harnessed empathy and courage, and the state of the state is resilient. The governor said over the past year the state took bipartisan action to address converging crises including passing: two balanced budgets that prioritized public schools, public safety and public health; the Michigan Reconnect Program providing tuition-free job training and community college for

adults looking to earn a postsecondary certificate or associate degree; and the Clean State Legislation making the criminal justice system more fair and expanding opportunities for those who served time. This year, the governor called for finding common ground to grow the economy, reopen schools, and get families and businesses back on their feet. She stated rebuilding the economy will require protecting public health and highlighted steps the state has already taken, while also calling for people to make plans to get vaccinated and continue to wear masks until the pandemic is over. To help jumpstart the economy and protect small businesses, the governor discussed her Michigan COVID Recovery plan which, among other items, provides support for small businesses and permanently extends unemployment benefits from 20 weeks to 26 weeks. The governor said the economy demands every child receive a great public education and she will ask the Return to School Advisory Council to provide guidance on how best to promote a comprehensive recovery. To thank teachers and frontline workers, the governor discussed a \$500 grant program for school employees and a tuition-free postsecondary education program for frontline workers. Additionally, the governor announced her Michigan Back to Work plan, which will include initiatives and projects over the next year aimed at rebuilding the economy back better. Another area of emphasis was infrastructure, with the governor calling for continuing to rebuild roads in 2021 and supporting her Clean Water plan to help rebuild water infrastructure. Finally, the governor said she will be launching a “Fixing the Damn Road Ahead” tour to meet with people across the state and find common ground to help emerge from this crisis stronger than ever.

[Mississippi](#) Governor Tate Reeves spoke about the challenges the state has experienced over the past year including facing natural disasters and a pandemic, but said the state is unconquerable and is marching forward. He added that despite the once in a century pandemic, Mississippi’s economy grew over the past year. The governor said that the state cannot be content with where we are and say that is good enough, but should instead be prepared to compete with other successful states. To help compete, the governor said the state should make a bold move and eliminate the state’s income tax, while recognizing that it will take a few years to phase in. He also called for continued investments in workforce development to help get the economy rolling. The governor then spoke about the importance of a solid education and said that he supports a teacher pay raise. In concluding his speech, the governor spoke about his focuses for the year ahead. First, he spoke about the need to crush the coronavirus and said the virus is still here and cannot be solved by ignoring it. To defeat the virus, he said his most immediate priority is vaccine distribution. Second, the governor said his personal focus and goal is to cultivate more empathy and recognizing that we all are on the same team.

[Missouri](#) Governor Michael Parson said since the outbreak of COVID-19, the state has worked to take a balanced approach, fight the virus, and keep Missourians as safe as possible. In addition to COVID-19, the governor said the state also faced other challenges including civil unrest, violent crime and a difficult budget. However, he noted the state’s successes over the past year including in economic development and continuing to move forward with infrastructure projects.

The governor said his main challenge is how to make Missouri a better place including a better place to raise a family, find a job, open a business, and for future generations to achieve the American Dream. He said the state must continue to find ways to strengthen public safety, improve healthcare, and make state government more accountable. The governor spoke about how children are the workforce of tomorrow and called for reforming the state's early childhood system, fully funding the K-12 Foundation Formula, assessing the impact that virtual learning has had on students, continuing to increase opportunities for job training at the high school level, and expanding job-training programs. The governor added the state workforce is one of the least competitive in terms of attracting future public servants and asked the legislature to fund a pay increase for state employees. He then discussed the link between workforce development and infrastructure while calling for additional funding for new and existing infrastructure projects, as well as expanding broadband. Next, the governor turned to a series of fiscal issues while calling for: supplementing the Department of Labor's Unemployment Trust Fund; passing a COVID-19 liability protection bill; approving legislation to allow for greater taxation of online retailers to help promote tax fairness; and setting aside dollars into a cash operating expense fund. Another area of focus was public safety with the governor highlighting recent efforts to improve relations with police officers and the public, fight violent crime, support law enforcement officers, and make communities safer. The governor also discussed healthcare and thanked healthcare workers for their recent efforts, announced expansions of community mental health and substance abuse programs, called for greater support for telehealth and telemedicine, and said he will fund the voter approved Medicaid expansion. Finally, the governor called for reforming the state's foster care and adoption systems.

[Montana](#) Governor Greg Gianforte said that last year brought real, serious challenges, but through it all we have seen the resiliency of Montanans. He spoke about the heroes in the state including doctors and nurses, first responders, educators, small business owners, and everyday heroes. The governor said that addressing the pandemic is his top priority and spoke about the state's vaccine distribution efforts and the need to ensure that those most at risk get vaccinated. He then spoke about the need to address the economic fallout from the pandemic and said he is guided by the need to get the economy going again, get Montana open for business, and get Montanans back to work in good-paying jobs. Specifically, he spoke about the need to make the state more competitive and called for lowering the top personal income tax rate, passing a bill that allows for the personal income tax rate to continue to be reduced as the economy grows and efficiencies in government are found, reforming the business equipment tax, reducing red tape, passing the Entrepreneur Magnet Act to encourage businesses to locate in the state, and prioritizing trades education by providing 1,000 scholarships per year. The governor also spoke about the need to support teachers and encourage them to stay in the state while calling for providing \$2.5 million in incentives to improve starting teacher pay. Next the governor turned to providing property tax relief to lower-income Montanans and proposed spending \$3 million per year to mitigate the impact of reappraisals. He then talked about combating the drug epidemic and public safety while calling for directing marijuana tax revenue and part of the tobacco tax

settlement to substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, funding for five drug treatment courts, banning sanctuary cities in the state, adding new district judges and parole and probation officers, and extending the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Task Force. Finally, the governor spoke about his budget and changing the way the state does business. He said his budget proposal holds the line on general fund spending, preserves the rainy day fund, has a strong ending balance, and does not cut essential services. He also said that he will provide state agencies with a clear mission, measure progress, celebrate successes together, and emphasize providing exceptional customer service. The governor closed by saying that the state of the state is strong and resilient.

[Nebraska](#) Governor Pete Ricketts said the past year had brought out the best in Nebraskans as healthcare workers and others worked to keep people healthy. He noted the state worked to protect its hospital capacity by using six pillars: testing, contact tracing, providing PPE, making quarantine space available, protecting at-risk populations, and using directed health measures. The governor added that despite challenges, the work of Nebraskans has kept the state of the state strong. He discussed steps the state has taken to help Nebraska recover including investing more than \$10 billion in federal aid, the creation of 2,280 career scholarships at colleges and universities, and continuing to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state government services. Despite challenges, he noted the legislature was able to pass property tax relief, renewal and reform of incentives, veterans tax relief, flood relief, pandemic relief, relief for a tunnel collapse, career scholarships, and a pro-life bill. The governor then discussed the need to continue to move forward by doing things the Nebraska Way: by working together for the best interests of the people the state serves. He said his two-year budget proposals controls spending at a growth rate of 1.5 percent and is focused on the priorities of protecting tax relief, supporting veterans and the military, licensing reform, public safety, and broadband. In the area of property tax relief, the governor's budget proposal includes \$550 million in direct property tax relief, \$596 million in a refundable property tax credit; and \$214 million in relief through a homestead exemption program; additionally, the governor is calling for limiting the growth of local government property taxes to three percent. The governor said even with these limits, his budget continues to fully fund state aid to the education funding formula. Regarding support for the military and veterans, the governor is proposing investments to help bring Space Command to Nebraska, exempting 100 percent of military retirement income for military retirees, and helping military spouses take jobs in licensed professions on a temporary basis. Also in the area of licensing reform, the governor called for allowing universal reciprocity for out-of-state healthcare workers to continue. To help protect public safety and to replace the state penitentiary, the governor is proposing building a new, modern correctional facility, including an initial investment of \$115 million in his budget proposal. Finally, the governor is proposing investing \$20 million in each of the next two years to help another 30,000 households get broadband connectivity.

[Nevada](#) Governor Steve Sisolak said that every Nevadan has been impacted by COVID-19 and that challenges remain. However, he said that we will get through this difficult time together and that the state of the state is determined, resilient, and strong. The governor noted that throughout the crisis the state has attempted to balance protecting the public health while working to keep the economy afloat and businesses open. The governor said that his priorities are to: win the battle against COVID and vaccinate residents; get students back into the classroom and provide teachers with the tools they need; get the economy back on its feet and people back to work; and to look ahead to what is next for growing the economy and helping small businesses. In discussing his priorities, the governor began by noting efforts the state has taken over the past year to battle the coronavirus and support the economy while also detailing the state's plans for vaccine distribution. To help small businesses, he said he will propose an additional \$50 million for a small business assistance program and is working to create a Small Business Advocacy Center. The governor then detailed five initiatives to help propel the economy forward including: calling for the legislature to pass a bill to support clean energy and the new energy economy; the creation of innovation zones in the state; helping prepare the workforce for the new economy by establishing the Nevada Job Force and the Remote Work Resource Center; providing additional funds for infrastructure and capital improvement projects; and making government work better through better IT systems, modernization, private sector help, and utilizing more federal dollars. The governor then turned to the state budget and said that while revenue projections remain below pre-pandemic levels, the state's financial situation has improved slightly in the past few months due to working to strike a balance between protecting public health and protecting the fragile economy. The governor said that his budget proposal: anticipates nearly 9 percent less in revenue than the previous year; uses \$100 million from the rainy day fund to avoid even deeper cuts; spends \$187.2 million less than the prior budget and eliminates 152 vacant positions; and does not include a continuation of furloughs. Additionally, it restores \$40 million in funding for preschool, dedicates \$415 million for various projects intended to help create thousands of jobs, adds \$25 million to help complete the UNLV Medical School Building, and restores Medicaid rate reductions. Finally, the governor said he will work to have all students return to in-person learning, address the inequities in the education systems, implement changes to K-12 funding, and ensure that marijuana tax dollars will continue to help support education.

[New Jersey](#) Governor Phil Murphy said that although the state has been wounded by COVID-19, it enters 2021 tougher than ever, wiser than before, and ready to move forward together. The governor said that his priorities for the year ahead include a focus on the current public health challenges, while charting a path forward to build a stronger, fairer, and more resilient economy that works for everyone. During his speech, the governor highlighted some of the accomplishments over his first three years in office including: increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour; ensuring tax fairness through a millionaire's tax; passing earned sick leave; expanding paid family and medical leave; continued investments in pre-K and tuition-free community college; moving toward full funding of schools; enacting reforms to the state's incentives program; improvements to NJ Transit; investments in offshore wind-energy; and

reducing health care costs and eliminating surprise medical bills. The governor then turned to what he hopes to accomplish in the coming year. In order to address the challenges of COVID-19, the governor discussed the rollout of the state's vaccination program and the work towards vaccinating every willing adult resident. He also spoke about the need to continue to support small businesses and startups, while highlighting a recently passed business and job-creating recovery plan. To help students and parents, the governor spoke about programs aimed at addressing the digital divide, providing academic and social-emotional support, and building a robust and affordable childcare system. He also spoke about the need to provide greater assistance to renters and homebuyers and called for giving renters impacted by the pandemic up to 30 months to make up for back rent. Regarding infrastructure, the governor called for greater investments and working with the federal government to fund the Gateway Program and build new tunnels under the Hudson River. Other areas of focus in his address included: develop a green jobs workforce development strategy; addressing the root causes of racism and making the criminal justice system more transparent and fairer; codifying women's reproductive rights; and instituting comprehensive ethics reforms to ensure accountability across government.

[New Mexico](#) Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham said although the state has grieved often over the past year, New Mexico has emerged stronger, tougher, and more resilient. The governor outlined steps the state has taken over the past year to provide emergency resources to families and businesses, while also noting that the state was able to maintain its financial footing. She said that her fiscal 2022 budget proposal will avoid harmful cuts to essential state services, deliver almost \$500 million to pandemic relief, and will increase investments for public schools, health care, and the economy. The governor noted that the pandemic has shown that New Mexico cannot wait to make needed investments in areas such as high-speed internet, behavioral health, health care affordability, and infrastructure. Additionally, the governor discussed steps taken to allow students to return to in-person learning and said the state will enact an equity-first budget for public education, ensuring money reaches students and schools in proportion to the socioeconomic needs of families in the community. Concerning higher education, she called for committing \$22 million to allow 30,000 additional students to receive free tuition and fees at two-year institutions. Other areas of focus included: improving the Small Business Recovery Act to provide additional direct relief; considering legalizing recreational cannabis to generate additional jobs and revenue; and taking steps towards clean energy and a sustainable future. The governor closed by discussing the need to move beyond getting back to normal and restoring what New Mexico had, to building together and setting up the state for sustained success.

[New York](#) Governor Andrew Cuomo discussed current state conditions and said in many ways the state of the state is like the state of the nation and the world: hurt, frustrated, in mourning, and anxious. However, he added that the state of the state in New York is different because its DNA, character, impact, and how the state responded is different. He added that they will win the COVID war and are smart, united, disciplined, loving, and New York tough. The governor then outlined his seven-point plan that includes defeating COVID-19, jumpstarting the economy,

and creating a fairer, more just state. First, the governor said that they must defeat COVID and called for passing the Medical Supplies Act and comprehensive telehealth legislation. Second, the governor said that we must vaccinate 70 to 90 percent of the 20 million New Yorkers and do it quickly. To achieve the vaccination goals, he called for ensuring racial and social justice for the vaccination effort, creating a public health corps, and free citizen public health training. Third, he discussed the need to address a record \$15 billion state deficit and said that New York will continue to fight for additional aid and fair funding from the federal government and should also address the budget gap through other measures including passing an adult-use cannabis program and enabling online sports betting. Fourth, the governor said the state must plan its economic resurgence and cannot stay closed until the vaccine hits critical mass and called for: reopening the economy smartly and safely through efforts such as creating a rapid testing network; facilitating the creation of a statewide childcare network; providing rent and mortgage relief for tenants and small business owners; supporting the arts; affordable internet for all low-income households; partnering with businesses to invest in workforce training and recruitment; providing scholarships to low-income workers for workforce training; expanding SUNY's online training center; and creating a commission on the future of New York's economy. Fifth, the governor called for making the state a leader in the shift to green energy through offshore wind energy, constructing a green energy transmission superhighway, public-private partnerships to build renewable energy projects, energy storage projects, and training the green energy workforce. Sixth, he said the state must anticipate how COVID will transform society and the economy and capitalize on those coming changes. Seventh, the governor said the state must address systemic injustices including inequity, racism, and social abuse. His proposals included facilitating policing reforms, addressing gender-based violence, continuing New York's Liberty Defense Project, expanding access to elections, repurposing commercial space for affordable housing, and sustained care for homeless on the street. In addition to other priorities, the governor also outlined a series of projects to rebuild and strengthen New York's infrastructure.

[North Dakota](#) Governor Doug Burgum said the state has faced a lot over the past year including flooding, a drought, an ongoing global pandemic, market crashes, and historic economic contractions. However, he said the state is well-positioned to recover and the state of the state is one of optimism and new beginnings built on the confidence of overcoming adversity and the knowledge that the state will emerge stronger than ever. Looking forward, the governor said the state has a historic opportunity to invest in infrastructure, diversify the economy, build healthy and vibrant communities, support research and innovation, transform government, and build true legacy projects for the prosperity of North Dakotans for generations to come. He also said all of this can be accomplished with a fiscally conservative budget that holds the line on general fund spending, invests in priorities, maintains healthy reserves, and does not raise taxes. The governor then turned his attention to the economy and discussed the need for continued growth in agriculture including crop production, advancements in the energy sector including in hydrogen storage and clean coal power, support for unmanned aircraft systems, and growth in the biotech sector. The governor also spoke about efforts to modernize state government including investing

in new IT systems and streamlining processes to provide better service. Other areas of emphasis in his speech included: better support for behavioral health including substance abuse disorder vouchers; continued engagement with tribal nations including tuition assistance programs; additional funding for career and technical education programs; working with community partners on the Main Street Initiative program; and studying the creation of a permanent higher education stabilization and transformation fund for public higher education institutions. A final area of emphasis was infrastructure with the governor calling for taking advantage of low interest rates through a \$1.25 billion bonding proposal that includes a \$700 million revolving loan fund to support strategic, high-dollar projects. Finally, during his speech the governor thanked all the everyday heroes that have helped to battle the pandemic and called for moving forward together to finish strong in the fight against COVID.

[Oregon](#) Governor Kate Brown said that one year ago we did not know what lay ahead in addressing COVID-19, but now we know we were in it for the long haul, and preparing to run a marathon. The governor said that in a marathon, the goal is not only to finish, but to finish strong, while detailing steps the state has taken to tackle the coronavirus. She stated that as the finish line comes into view, the state must not go back to the way things were, but needs to move forward, and outlined necessary steps for the state to take. First, the governor said that the pandemic has taught us that every Oregonian deserves access to affordable health care and called for legislation to help lower the costs of healthcare. Second, she stated the pandemic has shown that broadband access is as essential as electricity and noted that her budget invests over \$100 million in broadband expansion statewide. Third, the governor spoke about the impact of the recent wildfires on the state and announced steps to help communities prepare for wildfires, respond safely and effectively to active wildfires, and prevent fire by creating healthier landscapes. Fourth, the governor said that the state budget and policies must be built on a foundation of racial equity and inclusion and noted that her budget proposal makes over \$280 million in investments prioritized by the Racial Justice Council. Fifth, the governor talked about the importance of education in making progress against racism and discussed continued investments in early childhood education, K-12, career and technical education, and wrap-around services. Sixth, the governor spoke about the importance of housing and said that no one should be kicked out of their home in the middle of a pandemic, while also calling for a \$250 million investment in affordable housing, homelessness prevention, and rental assistance. Finally, the governor said she is committed to strengthening the country's democracy and called for fortifying the state's voting infrastructure, expanding the automatic voter registration program, and allowing same-day voter registration and ballots to be counted as long as they've been postmarked by election day.

[South Carolina](#) Governor Henry McMaster said that over the past year the state has experienced loss and suffered but added that the state is strong and resilient and that now is the time to act boldly. The governor highlighted the steps the state has taken in addressing COVID-19 including following the recommendations of the accelerateSC task force, increasing internet access for

students, providing financial relief for small businesses, and replenishing the state's unemployment trust fund. He also said that by freezing new spending and holding state government steady at last year's spending level, the state has been able to avoid cutting services, raising taxes, or borrowing money. The governor then detailed his budget proposal which includes depositing \$500 million to the rainy day fund and allocating an additional \$123 million in state funds for small business grants, while also calling for a phased-in five-year 15 percent across-the-board tax reduction for all personal income tax brackets. The governor spoke about several K-12 proposals including investing \$48 million to expand access to full-day kindergarten, using \$13 million in lottery proceeds to establish Education Scholarship Accounts, providing \$35 million to maintain classroom funding, funding for a law enforcement officer and nurse in every school, providing \$30 million for broadband expansion, and calling for school districts to re-open full-time. Regarding higher education and workforce development, the governor proposed \$60 million in additional financial assistance for students at public universities and \$20 million at private colleges, \$60 million for high-demand jobs skill training, \$37 million for workforce scholarships and grants, investing lottery proceeds in scholarships for students with intellectual disabilities, paying 100 percent of college tuition for active duty military, and helping to pay down the state's deferred maintenance liability for higher education buildings. Other proposals from the governor included: preventing taxpayer dollars from going to Planned Parenthood; dedicating \$13 million for public safety recruitment and retention; eliminating state income taxes on retirement pay of career military; moving from a defined benefit pension plan to defined contribution; reforming the Department of Health and Environmental Control; passing ethics reforms; and enacting various reforms to state government practices.

[South Dakota](#) Governor Kristi Noem said 2020 included incredible challenges, but the people of South Dakota met the adversity head on, and that fortitude enabled the state to emerge stronger. She then discussed reasons why South Dakota is the perfect place to work, run a business, raise a family, and live life as you see fit. The governor said one of her chief priorities is to grow South Dakota and detailed a series of proposals aimed at strengthening families and helping individuals and businesses prosper. Specifically, the governor spoke about plans to: finish connecting the state with broadband; increase investments in agriculture; permanently ease access to telehealth; develop a new strategic plan to grow tourism; adopt simpler hunting and fishing licensure requirements for individuals under the age of 18; and provide additional support for the military. The governor also discussed initiatives focused on education and workforce development including: improving the civic education of students; investing \$40 million over the next five years in Build Dakota Scholarships to match students with high-demand career opportunities; a one-time \$50 million allocation for a needs-based scholarship endowment; the recent launch of the South Dakota UpSkill program which supports workers dislocated by COVID-19; and expanding the tuition program for veterans to include technical colleges. Finally, during her speech the governor discussed efforts to keep the state open during COVID-19 and recent economic successes, while also highlighting positive news about the state's revenue situation.

[Utah](#) Governor Spencer Cox spoke of the extraordinary times the state and country are currently in, while thanking people for the sacrifices they have made to save lives and keep the economy open. He said that the state currently finds itself in a period of rebuilding and discussed foundational cracks that need attention. First, he spoke about the need for educational equity and ensuring that all students are treated equally and have the same opportunities. The governor said this may mean changing the way schools are funded and setting aside what may be good for an individual school to instead support the best interests of the whole state. The governor also called for a 6 percent increase in education funding and teacher pay raises. Second, the governor discussed foundational cracks that could derail the success and opportunities for future generations including air quality, transportation, water, and the cost of housing, and said that the administration's recently released One Utah Roadmap details goals and initiatives to address these issues. Additionally, the governor called for providing an \$80 million tax cut targeted at senior citizens and Utah families, as well as significant new funding for transportation, water, recreation, broadband infrastructure, job-training, and trade and technical educational institutions. The last foundational crack the governor addressed was that of contempt, tribalism, and discord that has impacted the nation. He discussed the need to not be agents of division and instead work for unity, while also calling on individuals to volunteer, check in on your neighbor, and listen to someone that looks or thinks differently than you. The governor closed by saying that the state of the state is hopeful and resilient.

[Vermont](#) Governor Phil Scott, in his inaugural address, spoke about Vermonters' resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, while calling for unity in tackling the recovery and addressing Vermont's fundamental challenges. The governor spoke about the obstacles the state has faced over the past year, and thanked Vermonters for doing their part during the pandemic. He also noted the importance of staying focused and committed as vaccines are beginning to be distributed. Looking forward, the governor said it is important that the state support policies that serve all Vermonters, while promoting economic opportunity and job growth, addressing disparities in education and childcare, and making the state more affordable for working families. To help businesses and the economy grow, the governor called for reducing the cost of unemployment insurance, expanding Tax Increment Financing, investing more for the revitalization of homes, and increasing tools to recruit and retain working families. The governor then discussed the need to do more to give every child access to equal education, while calling for state agencies to develop a plan to safely get every child back in the classroom this school year, increased investments in childcare, providing a property tax exemption for licensed preschool programs, a stronger focus on literacy, and reorganizing the education department to allow greater support for child development. The governor also spoke about the need to continue efforts to make healthcare more affordable and proposed improvements to the mental health system, a renewed focus on drug prevention and treatment, reviewing health insurance premiums, setting a cap on annual healthcare increases, and moving to a healthcare systems that pays for quality, not just quantity.

[Virginia](#) Governor Ralph Northam said it is important to ask the questions of who we are as a state, what we believe in, and the actions we're taking to live out our values. He noted that during these challenging times, he has seen Virginians taking action and care of one another. The governor highlighted the state's vaccine distribution efforts and said that it will be through vaccination that we get back to a new normal. He then turned his attention to his budget proposal and said that it is focused on two things: helping Virginians who are hurting because of the pandemic and laying the groundwork to help the economy rebound. The governor started by discussing health care and said that now is the time to modernize the way public health is funded in Virginia, while also highlighting other issues including funding for doula services for pregnant women and increasing access to long-acting reversible contraceptives. Next the governor discussed proposals to help individuals and businesses impacted by COVID-19, while calling for greater assistance for affordable housing, using revenue from gaming machines to help small businesses, and making additional investments in broadband. In the area of education, the governor proposed making sure that schools do not lose funding from drops in enrollment this year, directing additional funding for school counselors, teacher pay raises, a pilot program to provide three-year-olds access to early childhood education programs, greater financial aid, tuition assistance for National Guard members, and additional assistance for historically black colleges and universities. Other proposals highlighted by the governor included: added investments for state retirement plans; efforts to protect the outdoors and improve water and air quality; increased funding for rail service; a constitutional amendment to allow felons the opportunity to vote; legalizing marijuana; ending the death penalty; and reconsidering what the state's Civil War monuments should look like.

[Washington](#) Governor Jay Inslee, in his inaugural address, said that this year has been challenging in ways none of us have ever experienced, but Washingtonians are answering the call. The governor said that we have big challenges that demand we take big steps, and the state is going forward to a new normal. His hope is that by the end of the legislative session, the state is more equitable, has more opportunities for careers and affordable housing, and is more committed to climate change than ever before. The governor said that the state will incorporate equity into how laws are applied and institutions are run, and they will work to add an equity lens into healthcare, jobs, education, pollution and more. He stressed the need to support businesses and called for reducing increases in the unemployment tax, aiding small businesses with all available resources, and helping workers when they lose pay because they are sick or laid off. The governor also called for strengthening new approaches to career training so that people do not have limited pathways to good jobs. Other areas of emphasis in his address included: working to remove politics from the public health system; supporting frontline and essential workers; helping students get back into the classroom in a safe way; continuing student financial aid commitments; addressing homelessness and housing insecurity; and recommitting the state to fighting climate change and supporting the cause of environmental justice. The governor closed by saying that we all share this struggle, and we all will also reap its benefits, noting that the recovery will be robust and equitable.

[Wisconsin](#) Governor Tony Evers began by saying he would like to dedicate this address to the people the state has lost, and to those who have had to mourn the loss of someone they love. He said at this time last year the state was coming off a successful year, including making progress on priorities such as fully funding public schools, fixing crumbling roads and bridges, and making healthcare more affordable and accessible, but then things changed overnight. While many of the remnants and hardships of 2020 remain, the governor stated now is the time to get started in the fight for progress and prosperity, including for the ones that have been left behind. The governor said the fight begins with broadband access and addressing the digital divide that exists across the state. He added that 2021 would be the year of broadband access, while investing \$200 million over the next biennium into broadband. The governor then discussed the urgent need to fix the state's antiquated unemployment system, which has been around since the time Richard Nixon was president, and called for a special session of the legislature to modernize the system. Finally, the governor spoke about the need to fix gerrymandered maps and said his biennial budget will require that the legislature draw maps in the public eye, and will also require the legislature consider maps drawn by the recently established People's Maps Commission.