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RELEASE: Senate President Amy Sinclair's Opening Day Remarks

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The Senate

State of Iowa

Ninety-First General Assembly

STATEHOUSE

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

COMMITTEES

Education

Rules and Administration – Vice Chair

For Immediate Release:

Monday, January 12, 2026

Senate President Amy Sinclair's Opening Day Remarks

DES MOINES – Below are the opening day remarks from Senate President Amy Sinclair as prepared for delivery:

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the 2026 session of the 91st General Assembly of the State of Iowa. Welcome and congratulations to Senator Drey and Senator Hardman on your election to the Iowa Senate. To all of my colleagues, I look forward to working with each of you as we begin this new year. To our guests, I extend my gratitude that you decided to join us here today and be a personal part of our rich tradition of self-governance.

I'd like to start by taking a moment of silence in remembrance of our departed colleagues, Senator Rocky De Witt and Senator Claire Celsi.

The first day of each session, like the first day of each new year, is a time of reflecting on the accomplishments of the past and envisioning a path towards new achievements. As I took that moment to reflect on my time in office, I returned to what originally prompted me to run for this position. I clearly remember three main reasons for seeking a seat in the Senate:

- * First: A focus on advancing agriculture and rural vitality,
- * Second: A vision of better opportunities for Iowa's children and families, and
- * Third: A mission to free Iowans from an overly burdensome government.

I'm proud to say we've come a long way towards meeting those goals in the past nine years. We have protected our farmers from those set to destroy their way of life, increased marketing opportunities for Iowa's agricultural products, eliminated the inheritance tax to facilitate the prosperity of the next generation of farmers and business owners, and taken numerous steps to improve our water quality. We have provided Iowa families with the opportunity to choose the best suited education for their children, created the Children's Mental Health System to improve services for our kids, and increased opportunities for Iowans to work and gain workforce training. We have cut income taxes allowing Iowans to keep more of their hard-earned money, restored gun rights to law-abiding citizens in our state, protected consumer choice in the market from over-regulation, and protected individuals' religious beliefs from government overreach.

Through my first six years in office, the majority party in the Senate worked together as a team, voting as a nearly unbreakable block. During this time, the power dynamic in the Senate flipped, but the mantra was the same, we are in this together, as a team. I know that not everyone agreed 100% with every bill that was passed, but as a team, we set our personal interests aside to do what was best for Iowa. This wasn't limited to just party-line votes. Many of the accomplishments I previously listed had bipartisan support in our chamber. When we have worked together, we have accomplished much, even when we have disagreed.

As a body, just last year, over 60% of record votes we took in the Senate were unanimous. Nearly 70% had at least 40 yes votes. We agree far more than we disagree. Certainly, the minority of bills that we disagree on are important issues, and this is what differentiates us in governance and in the eyes of voters, but let's not lose sight of the fact that we are all working to do what is best for our state. Let's not lose sight of the fact that we have made great achievements together,

Republicans and Democrats.

We're a collegial body – a Senate family. And like any family, we don't always see eye to eye. We have our squabbles now and then, but when it matters, we pull together and get the job done. Even when we disagree, we can do it without being disagreeable.

This reminds me of a story I once heard about two former senators, one Republican, one Democrat. As they passed each other in the lounge, they exchanged a bit of good-natured banter, and the Republican was jokingly called "miserly." It was meant as a jab, but he took it as a compliment. At that time, political name-calling wasn't really name-calling, it was just a way of describing who you were. He was known as a budget hawk, and he was pleased his colleague noticed. They didn't agree on much, but they respected each other, and they never let their disagreements turn disagreeable.

Today, people of all political flavors have taken name calling to new extremes. When people disagree, it has become disagreeable. The debate no longer stops with policy descriptions; it has spiraled into slurs aimed at dehumanizing the opposition. Calling people fascists, scum, deplorables, bigots, and a host of things I cannot repeat on the Senate floor cannot be embraced as status quo. I call on all of us to do better and set a positive example of what civility looks like in our political discourse. We are all human beings, created in God's image, and we need to remember that, not just today, but every day.

In many ways, 2025 was a difficult year politically. I watched in horror this past year as two of our neighboring colleagues were targeted and shot in their own homes; Melissa Hortman and her husband did not deserve to die, and John Hoffman and his wife did not deserve to be critically injured for serving the citizens of Minnesota. My heart grieved when a young man was callously murdered for speaking truth; Charlie Kirk's life was more valuable and his call to civil discourse more powerful than the bullet that took him from us. In a time where our nation and our state, even our neighborhoods, have become divided along party lines – left and right, good and evil – I encourage each of us to tone down our rhetoric and get to work on what Iowans are telling us they really want:

- * Good jobs and affordable living,
- * Lower taxes and less regulatory interference, and
- * The freedom to flourish in the state they love.

Let's get to work together and get a handle on our property tax system so that local government growth does not continue to outpace the salaries of the people paying the bills. Let's step up and build accountability into our executive branch so that whistleblowers and taxpayers can have their voices heard. Let's eliminate laws that make government more powerful and the people less. I'll be introducing bills that do just that, and I issue the challenge to each of you to make these principles your guide as we head into the upcoming year's work.

Before I close, I want to congratulate Senator Klimesh on his new role as Majority Leader. I look forward to working with you in your new position and I thank you for your willingness to serve. I also want to thank Senator Whitver for serving as our Majority Leader for over seven years. Your leadership guided us through the challenges of Covid, delivered the state's largest income tax cut, and grew our majority as our state prospered to record surpluses through fiscal discipline. I also want to thank Rachel, your kids, your parents, and the rest of your family and friends for the sacrifices they made and the support they provided to you throughout your tenure in the Senate, but especially while you were Majority Leader. As you approach your retirement from the Senate, I am proud of what we have accomplished together, proud to call you my friend, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to make Iowa the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Thanks again to each of you for your service. Thank you to your families for supporting you as you meet the calling to guide Iowa's future. God bless each of you for the work we are about to undertake, and God bless this great state we call home.

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