



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Gov. Lee Delivers Second Inaugural Speech – ‘Tennessee: Leading the Nation’**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – Today, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee addressed Tennesseans during his second inauguration at 11 a.m. CT on Legislative Plaza. His remarks as prepared for delivery are below:

*Thank you to every person here – for being here today to celebrate our great state and her rich history.*

*Lt. Governor McNally, Speaker Sexton, members of the General Assembly, constitutional officers, Justices of the Court, members of the Tennessee Congressional Delegation, Governor Dunn, Governor Alexander, Governor Bredesen, Governor Haslam, members of the cabinet, members of our staff...*

*My family, of whom there are many here today, some from far away...*

*My friends and fellow Tennesseans.*

*Thank you, not only for being here, but for who you are and what you do to make this the greatest state in the greatest country in the world.*

*Tennessee reminds people in this country that America hasn't lost her way.*

*That idea is reflected by every person here today, and it's why our state motto – America at its Best – adopted many years ago, is so appropriate, especially today.*

*Tennessee is leading the nation, and it's good that we reflect on that and celebrate it.*

*But before I go on, there is one more person I want to acknowledge – someone who embodies the Volunteer Spirit of the people of our state with courage, strength and service.*

*These last few months have been hard on our family, but God is faithful. Maria and I have cherished your prayers for healing.*

*We are grateful for everyone who has supported us, and I'm grateful she's here today – my wife and our First Lady, Maria Lee.*

*While Maria and I are in a time of struggle, we know that we are not alone in these hardships.*

*In fact, the last four years have brought unexpected challenges to many of us in this state – floods, wildfires, a pandemic, tornadoes, even a bombing on Christmas morning – in addition to personal challenges you could be facing right now that your fellow Tennesseans don't even know about.*

*It doesn't take away the tragedy, difficulty or fear, but in times of struggle, we can find great hope.*

*We saw that when Tennesseans converged on the Cumberland Plateau to help their neighbors after those devastating tornadoes.*

*We saw that when six brave police officers put their very lives on the line to protect their fellow man from that bomb on Christmas morning.*

*We saw that in Waverly. I was there the day after the floods, and wept with, prayed with and embraced people who had lost everything, even their loved ones.*

*Maria was there a few days later to help clean up homes that had been reduced to rubble.*

*For Waverly, that is clearly part of the story – tragedy, difficulty, and fear.*

*But I was also there one year later, as the community gathered in remembrance of all those lost. Once again, we wept, prayed and embraced, but this time, something was different. We also recognized the remarkable transformation that occurred in that community over the past year.*

*It was a stark picture of redemption and hope. Quite frankly, it's a picture of Tennessee since our founding.*

*It's a reminder, once again, that in this life there are only a few things that really matter, and Maria and I want our lives to be about those things.*

*That's why I ran for Governor, twice now, and that thought's been with me every day these last four years.*

*The halfway point of two terms in office has caused me to reflect even more on what matters.*

*There is a parable in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew about a man who is preparing to go on a journey.*

*Before he leaves, he gives a part of his estate to each of his three servants for them to manage, with the expectation that they would be good stewards.*

*When he returns from his journey, two of the three servants have doubled what they were given.*

*The man told them, "Well done. Because you've been faithful over a few things, I'll put you in charge of many things."*

*It's been an important teaching to me – to whom much is given, much is expected.*

*And we know that Jesus wasn't merely talking about money or material things, but about life.*

*We have been given a responsibility – an obligation to use our lives in a way that multiplies in the lives of others – to spend our days considering how the work of our lives will reap benefits, not for ourselves, but for others. And each of us has been given much by way of that responsibility.*

*Each member of the Tennessee General Assembly, along with myself, have been given much to steward, and we have worked hard the last four years to steward those resources in a way to multiply.*

*We should stop at this halfway point and reflect on a few of the things that we've accomplished together.*

*We overhauled the way we fund public schools for the first time in 30 years, which means, instead of an old and broken system, a million Tennessee children are now funded based on their own individual needs.*

*Our innovative Medicaid waiver – the only one of its kind in the nation – means more Tennesseans now have access to dental care and maternal care, and Tennesseans with disabilities can live with the dignity they deserve.*

*With this waiver, we found a better way to serve the unseen, and – there aren't many who can say this – we've worked with both the Trump administration and the Biden administration to get it done.*

*And thanks to some of the largest economic development projects in the nation, tens of thousands of Tennesseans already have new opportunities to provide a better living for their family.*

*The largest of them – Ford Motor Company – is happening in rural West Tennessee, at a site that's been longing for prosperity for 20 years.*

*And although Rural America has been in decline for decades, Rural Tennessee is proving to be the exception, thanks to historic investments in vocational, technical and agricultural education that are shaping Tennessee's future workforce.*

*Tennessee is proof that the state with the workers will win every time.*

*These examples of bipartisan stewardship are but a few in a long list of ways that we, together with the General Assembly, have worked to multiply in the lives of the people we serve.*

*All the while, our state's finances have been stewarded in such a way that affords us the lowest tax rate per capita in the nation, the lowest debt rate per capita in the nation, and the fastest growing economy of all 50 states.*

*And let me just say, when it comes to responsible fiscal stewardship, Tennessee has a history of governors – four in particular who are sitting on this stage today – who have built a foundation and a legacy of fiscal policy that makes it possible for us to lead the nation.*

*We are reaping the benefits today, and I want to say thank you, on behalf of the people of Tennessee, for operating in a responsible fiscal way that has created a balance sheet in this state that is the envy of America.*

*We have set an example for America of how to serve.*

*The halfway point of any endeavor is a good time to reflect, but it's an even better time to plan – to focus on the work still ahead.*

*We need a transportation strategy and an energy strategy designed for one of the fastest growing states in America.*

*We need to enhance efforts to conserve our natural resources and preserve the environment of what I believe is the most beautiful place in the world.*

*We need to protect children in our custody and in our state with a better foster care and adoption process.*

*We need to do these things and many more, but we can never abandon the standard of fiscal responsibility that makes our success possible.*

*We have been given much, and I believe that we have, together, responded to these gifts. But much is expected.*

*In the parable that I referenced earlier, there was a third servant. He was afraid of losing what had been given to him, so rather than take a chance, he buried it in the ground until the man came back from his journey. Because of his fear of failure, he multiplied for no one.*

*May that never be me – or you.*

*In our efforts to use our lives in the best way we know how – to make life better for other people – there will be those who criticize.*

*There will be decisions that come at great personal cost.*

*There will be mistakes that we make.*

*There will be times we fear failure.*

*But as you endeavor to serve other people – from whatever position or place you hold in life – remember the often quoted words of Theodore Roosevelt, and I'll paraphrase:*

*It's not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how another man stumbles, nor when the doer of deeds could have done them better.*

*The credit belongs to those who actually strive to do the deeds, who know Great Enthusiasm and Great Devotion, who spend themselves in a worthy cause...*

*Those who, at the best, know in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if they fail, at least failed while daring greatly, so that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory, nor defeat.*

*Yeah, we will have critics – critics who thrive on toxic incivility and divisiveness.*

*But we don't have to step foot into their arena. There is a better way.*

*We can disagree and stand firm for our beliefs and our principles, but we should never forget the dignity of the other human being. We should never believe differences are a platform for demonization, or that one man has any greater value than another.*

*Civility is not a weakness. In fact, it has been and it should always be the American Way. And I know it can be the way in Tennessee.*

*You and I, and this state, have been entrusted with treasures, not meant to be buried but to be spent on helping our fellow man.*

*We should recognize our treasures, celebrate our accomplishments, and be challenged by what lies ahead.*

*May we, together, each one of us, consider the other and how we may use our lives to multiply in theirs.*

*That's what Tennesseans do and have done for generations. That's why we are America at its Best. That is why Tennessee is Leading the Nation.*

*It is the highest honor that I have to serve the people of Tennessee as Governor, and I thank them for the opportunity that they have given me to do so.*

*May the Lord pour his continued favor upon, and richly bless the people of the great State of Tennessee.*

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