

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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FLOOR DEBATE

January 15, 2004

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN: Thank you, Senator Aguilar. The motion before you is to select a committee of five to escort the Governor. All those in favor please say aye. Those opposed nay. The motion is adopted. The Chair would appoint the following committee: Senator Jensen, Senator Landis, Senator Raikes, Senator Schimek, and Senator Wehrbein. Will you please retire to the Governor's Office. The Chair will recognize the Sergeant at Arms.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Mr. President, your committee now escorting the Governor of the great state of Nebraska, Mike Johanns, and his wife, Stephanie. (Applause)

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN: The Chair now recognizes the Governor of the great state of Nebraska, Governor Mike Johanns.

GOVERNOR JOHANNNS: Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, chairmen and representatives of the Omaha, Winnebago, and Ponca Tribes, distinguished guests, friends, and fellow Nebraskans. Five years ago, I stood before you as a newly elected Governor. Whether we had years of state service under our belts or just a few hours, we never could have predicted the events that would unfold in such a short period of time. We now collectively look back. We've seen terrorist attacks on our land. We've mourned together as a nation. And today we pause in gratitude to the soldiers who have bravely answered the call to defend our country. More than 1,200 of Nebraska's sons and daughters have accepted that duty since 9-11, eight of whom have given their lives to protect our freedom. We are forever grateful for their commitment and for their service. We pledge never to forget them. Our reflection on recent years also reveals an economic bubble that burst. The economic "perfect storm" struck, and it devastated state budgets from California to Connecticut. The recession was not only as bad as we've seen since World War II, it was stubborn, and month after month it would not loosen its grip. As I've traveled the state over the last two years, I've been asked, are people giving up? I'm proud to say that my answer has been, not only are Nebraskans not giving up, they are fighting to keep going, like our ancestors who were pioneers, and like our citizens who fought back from the Great Depression. So today, in order to