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the Governor of the great state of Nebraska, Ben Nelson.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: (Gavel.) Governor, please proceed. Please be seated. Please proceed.

GOVERNOR NELSON: Madam President, Mr. Speaker, members of the Nebraska Legislature, and my fellow Nebraskans, I've lived in this state my whole life, and yet I never cease to be amazed by its beauty and its people. Nebraska is still the great, open land of new horizons that the Native Americans knew, and its people are still as open as those horizons. We're still as free and hardworking and willing to share as we were when our pioneer ancestors arrived here. Despite the critics and the skeptics and those who are predicting bad times ahead, Nebraska is thriving. As I travel across this vast state, I don't see "Buffalo Commons" developing, I see new opportunity, new jobs and new technology. Nor do I see the county lines and the other artificial boundaries, I see Nebraska, One Nebraska. I see the continuation of the great plains adventure. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country at 1.9 percent. Our population increased nearly 5 percent from 1990 to 1996. At the same time, the number of jobs grew 13 percent. Nebraska workers are making more money. New full-time jobs in the state are paying about \$3 more per hour than existing jobs. Thirty percent of the full-time jobs available in the state are paying at least \$12 an hour. Our per capita income is up 7.4 percent, the fourth best growth rate in the nation. We've tripled our international exports, creating even more jobs here at home. Our economy is outperforming regional and national economies. People are staying here and moving here, not just because of job opportunities, but also for our high quality of life. Our students rank in the top five in nearly every national assessment. By giving our struggling families the help they need to be self-sufficient, we've reduced the number of Nebraskans on public assistance by nearly 19 percent over just four years. We've become a leader in the promotion of ethanol, and I'll soon sign an executive order on the use of more renewable energy by state agencies. We have a clean environment, a low crime rate and the best neighbors you'll find anywhere. Our challenge is to continue a prosperous course into the future, and I believe Success 2000 is the right course that will lead Nebraska to a new century of progress and prosperity.