

## State of the State Address: Governor Walz Remarks as Prepared

**April 5, 2020**

Good Evening, Minnesotans.

Thank you for joining me on this beautiful Sunday.

I am speaking to you live from the Governor's Residence where I have been in self-quarantine.

Self-quarantine. Self-isolation. Social distancing.

Phrases that many of us never used before now roll off our tongue in daily conversation.

A new vocabulary to define a new reality.

A *hard, cold* reality. One that far exceeds the reality of Minnesota's harshest winters.

From my daily briefings, many of you know the current situation. You know about COVID-19—and you know there's a lot we don't know about it. You know about the actions we've taken to combat it—and you know how these actions disrupt your daily life.

Many of you are out of work. Businesses, large and small, are shuttered across the state. The companionship we normally lean on to get through difficult times—a hug from a grandparent, coffee with a friend, or a laugh with a co-worker—forced out of reach.

Vacant streets. Deserted classrooms. Empty pews.

Chairs stacked on restaurant tables.

Graduations, weddings, and funerals postponed.

Right at the time Minnesotans are usually putting away their shovels and snowblowers, opening up their windows, and emerging from their homes—we are bracing for a storm of epic proportions.

We are used to long winters in Minnesota. We are resilient people with a deep reserve of courage, optimism, and grit.

But this will be a winter like we've never seen before.

And as we have done for generations, once the tree limbs are stark and the sky a cold dark gray—we prepare.

There's no stopping the storm of COVID-19 from hitting Minnesota, but we are preparing for it.

We are building our hospital capacity so that we can ensure as many Minnesotans as possible receive the care they need when they need it.

We are increasing testing to better track the disease.

We are increasing ventilators and ICU beds for when people fall ill.

And just as we wouldn't send a loved one out into the cold without the protection they need, we are doing our best to find more personal protective equipment for the selfless doctors, nurses, first responders, and so many others on the frontlines against COVID-19.

Minnesotans won't just prepare for COVID-19—we will lead.

The brilliant minds and hard work of Minnesotans will help lead the world's response to this crisis.

Mayo Clinic is leading a national trial to use blood from patients who have recovered from COVID-19 as a treatment for others who fall ill with the disease.

Hospitals across the state, from the largest systems to the smallest, are preparing in new ways for a surge in patients.

3M workers are producing millions of protective face masks a month.

Medtronic is publicly sharing the design specifications for its ventilators to spark rapid manufacturing of this critical equipment desperately needed to save lives.

From Duluth to Hallock to Saint Paul, smaller companies and employees are halting production to produce masks, make hand sanitizer, and help in any way they can.

And you—staying home—are doing some of the most critical work of all.

I know it doesn't feel that way for many of you. Minnesotans are hardworking people who step in to help. In many storms, that means plowing out your neighborhood, filing sandbags, or trudging through the snow to check on your loved ones.

Now that means staying home. What you are doing isn't paralysis—it's action.

Staying home reduces face-to-face contact and thus the threat of virus transmission by up to 80 percent.

Staying home is the only vaccine we have right now.

You are slowing the spread of this disease. You are protecting your neighbors. You are giving hospitals time to prepare to care for the many who will fall ill.

You are making a difference. You are saving lives.

As a dad and as a former teacher, I want to speak directly to our children for a moment.

I know this is scary. I know you miss seeing your teachers and your classmates. I know it's disappointing that many of the important end-of-school activities have been canceled. I know there are athletes out there who were prepared to go win state championships on diamonds and fields across the state.

But what you are doing matters. Your sacrifice is keeping people safe. You are protecting people. Someday when you have children of your own, you will tell them about this moment in history and what you did to help the people of your state. Thank you.

Parents, I know this is hard. Many of you are watching your children while trying to work yourselves. And you're worried about the bills.

This is hard for everyone. Take a deep breath. Be kind to yourself. We are all doing the best we can—and that's all we can do.

Minnesotans, I don't take what we've asked you to do lightly. I served in the Army National Guard for 24 years. I raised my hand to defend freedom and liberty.

In a democracy, any action to restrict these rights cannot be enacted lightly. But at the moment, they are critical—to save lives.

My promise is to continue to communicate my decisions, explain when we change course, and never stop fighting alongside you, the people of Minnesota.

These last few weeks have been difficult—and it's only going to get harder.

Long hours of darkness are ahead.

We are going to do everything in our power to save lives—and as hard as we work—we won't be able to save everyone.

It's going to be a cold winter. How do we get through a cold winter? We get through it together. As One Minnesota.

We shovel our neighbor's sidewalk. We push out a stranger's car. We donate hats and mittens.

This collective spirit empowers us to endure winter—and it is how we will endure this crisis as well.

You see it already.

The White Bear Lake Pee Wee hockey team was on the road to New Ulm for the state tournament when it was canceled mid-route due to COVID-19.

While the season ended abruptly, the team is still a team—virtually.

The players and their parents have started a text chain to check in every night to see how everyone is doing and if anyone needs help.

One evening, a player's mom shared how she is exhausted from her work as a nurse and is worried about doing her job without personal protective equipment.

The next day, the hockey dads cleaned out their supplies of masks at work and in their garage.

A big box was left on the nurse's doorstep with a note that said: "Your hockey family loves you."

It left her in tears. Her hockey family is helping her through this crisis.

This same spirit flows between the high rises of downtown Minneapolis where people go out on their balconies to clap, cheer, and bang pots and pans to celebrate health care workers when they get off a shift.

In North Branch, a state trooper pulled a woman over this weekend for speeding.

It turns out, she was a doctor in town for work.

The trooper noticed some medical masks in her bag that she had been forced to re-use due to the current shortage.

Instead of handing her a ticket, the trooper handed her a stack of masks that he had been given to keep him safe.

At a state veterans' home, the grandchildren of one of the residents were sad that they can no longer visit their grandpa.

They created chalk drawings outside his window not only lift his spirits, but also to thank the staff for caring for him during this difficult time.

While we may be separated physically, we stand united. From Rondo to the Range, from North Minneapolis to North Mankato, we are One Minnesota.

And a new day will come.

The sun will shine. The trees will bud. The birds will sing.

Spring will arrive. And when it does, we will dig out. We will do whatever it takes to support Minnesotans and businesses to get back on their feet.

Our communities will forever be changed. Our state will forever be changed. Our world will forever be changed.

We will grieve all that was taken from us. But we will also celebrate all that's given to us.

Unity. Humanity. Gratitude.

We will be more united as a state. We will cherish each other's humanity. We will have endless gratitude for the lives we lead.

These trying times have led us back to each other.

We will value those we overlooked before. When times got tough, who did we lean on? It was the nurse. The grocer. The truck driver. The farmer. The janitor.

We will recognize all that educators and child care providers do for our students, our communities and our economy.

This crisis shows how much Minnesota depends on our schools not only to teach our children - but to feed them and provide for their physical and mental well-being.

We will recognize all that public health workers do at the local and state level to detect and respond to health threats, not just infectious disease outbreaks but the many other threats that impact our personal and community health.

We will continue to look out for the most vulnerable—the poor, the sick, the hungry. Many have stepped up to protect them during this crisis and that dedication to their dignity and livelihood must endure.

We won't take normalcy for granted. Our modern lives move fast—and this presents an opportunity to slow down and appreciate what truly matters.

We will welcome the morning rush getting our children to school.

We will smile as we pass restaurants bustling with friends sharing a meal.

We will gather again in our houses of worship.

We will have a renewed appreciation for the calming power of a warm embrace.

We won't just make it to spring. We will come out better on the other side of this winter.

Because we are Minnesotans. We see challenges—and we tackle them.

No matter how daunting the challenge; no matter how dark the times; Minnesota has always risen up—by coming together.

Our blood saved the Union at Gettysburg.

Our iron forged the tanks that liberated Europe.

Our farmers sparked a green revolution that fed the world.

Our imagination transformed medicine—and appears poised to do so once again.

The State of our State is strong.

The State of our State is resilient.

The State of our State is united.

And our hearts are filled with gratitude for each and every Minnesotan and the role they play in the fight against COVID-19.

Thank you.

Stay home, and stay healthy, Minnesota.

Goodnight.