***EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER THE GOVERNOR’S STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS IS COMPLETE***

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**TRANSCRIPT – STATE OF THE STATE RESPONSE – SENATOR TY MASTERSON**

*Below is the transcript of remarks from Senate President Ty Masterson’s Republican Response to the State of the State address:*

Good evening and welcome back to the Senate Chamber here in the Kansas State Capitol, where I am proud to serve as President and where I am honored to deliver the Republican Response.

First, I want you all to be aware this "response" had to be prerecorded, so my remarks are clearly not in response to the governor's address but a republican response to the elements of her agenda we are aware of.

In 2022, Republicans learned a hard lesson about how houses divided inevitably fall, resulting in the Governor winning another term with less than 50 percent of the vote – while we acknowledge that result, we also celebrate that a true majority elected Republicans to every other statewide office and to super majorities in the House and Senate. These results reveal a simple truth - that neither side can work from where they wish they were, but from where we are.

As we begin the legislative session, I joined with our new house Speaker Dan Hawkins and the Republican super majorities in revealing our vision entitled a Better Way – Our Commitment to Kansas. It includes priorities from reducing your taxes and empowering parents, to creating jobs and protecting your liberty.

During the campaign, the governor made repeated claims that she governed from the middle, and claimed many victories. Of course, the nature of our divided government means that any bill reaching the governor’s desk only does so with Republican effort, and all meaningful victories -- whether axing a tax, balancing a budget, or bringing new economic development to Kansas, all began with Republicans. Regardless of who attempts to take credit, I am optimistic that we will find more common ground.

For instance, I was pleasantly surprised when the governor recently announced her support for Republican proposals to lower the retirement tax burden. I believe we can work with her to implement these ideas alongside structural reform that is key to keeping Kansas competitive. Republicans want to make taxes lower, flatter, and simpler – so when we send a bill to the governor's desk that does all that, I am hopeful she will meet us in the middle and sign it.

Let’s be completely honest, when it comes to the budget, it was not a big accomplishment for any of us to "balance" a budget with hundreds of millions in printed federal dollars awash in the system. But with most economists forecasting a recession, due to the disastrous policies from the Biden administration, we hope to work with the governor to ensure our state remains on solid footing. That means setting aside sufficient resources for that rainy day and continuing to pay off debt, just like your household would. We must remain fiscally responsible and resist the considerable temptation to overspend and grow government. We hope the governor meets us there as well.

While we are hopeful about opportunities to work together, there is no question significant differences remain. On many issues, the governors party has her walking down the far left lane, if not the ditch outside of that. With how many times we heard her tell us she is in the middle - this session, we will give her ample opportunity to show she really meant it.

On education, Republicans will focus on students, not legacy systems, which means expanding educational opportunities for all of our children and ensuring parents are ultimately in control. We want high quality classical education that focuses on academic excellence, preparing our kids for a successful future, not the sexualized woke agenda we see permeating the system today.

The sad reality is her party remains beholden to the public union leadership, which fears and resists parents having any form of school choice, just wanting a blank check to their system. This path is resulting in our schools devolving into little more than factories for a radical social agenda. This is why she vetoed the Parents Bill of Rights – but we will give her another chance this session. If she’s truly in the middle of the road, she’ll buck the radical elements of her party and sign the bill.

Republicans also celebrate women's sports and recognize that to ensure a level playing field for all who compete, biological men should not compete in women's sports. It has nothing to do with sexuality or gender, it’s simply about fairness and science -- it's for that same reason we divide athletes up in weight classes or separate varsity from junior varsity. The governor said in an ad that "of course" she agrees with this, but has twice vetoed the bill. This session, we will provide her with a third opportunity to prove her words have meaning.

Republicans support health care freedom and expanding access to affordable care through cost transparency, more competition, and less government regulation over your consumer choices – This can all be done while preserving a safety net for those in our society who are most vulnerable. Unfortunately, the governor's party remains focused almost solely on government-run health care, which would dramatically expand the administrative state and harm the very people for whom the Medicaid safety net was intended.

Republicans support an "all of the above" energy policy --- that includes gas, coal, and nuclear -- which is necessary to lower utility bills and most importantly, delivers reliable heating and cooling for Kansans during extreme weather conditions. Democrats are increasingly beholden to climate activists that would send us back decades and put our citizens and our economy at risk; an agenda, that by its nature, opposes American energy independence. It is our hope that the governor will again resist the extreme elements in her party and work with us to reduce utility rates and protect our economy.

Republicans will always support a culture of life. We desire to reduce the number of abortions by promoting adoption, expanding availability of crisis pregnancy centers, and preserving our common-sense protections currently in law, all which are currently under attack. In stark contrast, the governor’s party remains devoted to taxpayer-funded abortion on demand, allowing the most inhumane procedures up to, and even past, the moment of birth.

Finally, Republicans support our constitution, which means, that even in the toughest of times, we should pass no law that abridges our freedom of speech or our freedom of assembly, or prohibits our free exercise of religion, and preserving all other clearly-enumerated constitutional rights; Democrats increasingly believe that such rights are subservient to the administrative state in order to create a false sense of safety. If the governor is truly moderate, she’ll side with us and the constitution we all swore to uphold.

As Republicans, we are committed to putting you, our fellow Kansans, first. For now, we will take the governor at her word, that she will govern from the middle, and extend a hand of cooperation and begin this session with high hopes. You rightfully expect us to deliver results, not rhetoric, and work together to improve the lives of the people we represent. That is our commitment to you.

May God Bless you and your family and may God Bless the great State of Kansas.

Thank you for listening.