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STATE OF ALABAMA

GOVERNOR KAY IVEY 2019 INAUGURAL ADDRESS

My Fellow Alabamians:

To those of you who are joining us here on the beautiful grounds of our State Capitol, and to those of you watching across the state – thank you for being part of today’s historic ceremony.

To the hundreds – if not thousands – of others who couldn’t be with us here in person but who have faithfully kept me and my administration at the forefront of your prayers since I became your Governor on April 10th, 2017, I thank you!

Over the course of these past 20 months, I have felt your prayers and your love. Both have truly made a difference, and I am grateful.

The scripture reminds us in Psalm 118 Verse 24, “This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Indeed, today is a day to rejoice for all of Alabama!

It is also a day to begin writing a new chapter in the narrative of our great state. After all, this is an exciting time in the history of Alabama as later this year, we will officially celebrate our 200th year of statehood.

On this very site, many men and only one other woman have stood to be given the ultimate honor of a lifetime – the opportunity to be administered the Oath of Office after having been duly elected Governor of Alabama by the people of our great state.

Like most of my predecessors, my pathway to this spot was certainly not predetermined or even likely. After all, when I was growing up in my hometown of Camden, little girls simply didn’t dream of growing up to one day be elected Governor.

Much of any success I have enjoyed in life I owe to my wonderful parents, the late Barbara and Nettles Ivey. They taught me the values of hard work and living within one’s means. It was their unwavering love, support and confidence – through the years – that provided me the firm foundation which allows me to stand before you today.

Alabama is a state where dreams do come true. Because in Alabama, anything is possible.

It goes without saying, I am truly honored and humbled to lead this great state. But I have not made this journey alone.

To the good people of Alabama, I say thank you.

As your Governor, I am first and foremost a public servant, accountable to the nearly five million people who call Alabama home. I work for those who voted for me as well as those who didn't. And upon taking the Oath of Office, I have solemnly promised to uphold the office to which I have been elected with dignity and integrity while working hard to keep Alabama growing.

To all our men and women in the military, we thank you for your service to our nation that allows us to enjoy the freedom we cherish so deeply. Thank you to every Alabamian in uniform, as well as their families who share in their service.

And to our veterans, past and present: much like my father who served bravely in World War II, we are forever grateful for your sacrifice, love for country and commitment to freedom.

I want to thank the Inaugural Committee for their efforts to make this historic event possible. Thank you to the Committee Chairs, my longtime friends, Jimmy Rane and Doctor Cathy Randall, for their dedication and leadership not just to this event, but to their communities and to our state.

I also want to recognize – and thank – my cabinet and staff for their hard work and long hours. With their help, we steadied the ship of state and put Alabama back to work. Because of their determination, I believe we are well-positioned to continue moving Alabama forward to some of our brightest days.

On this Inauguration Day, I want to take a special moment to recognize those in attendance who have previously held the same constitutional offices to which I have been elected to serve.

Former Governors Bentley, Riley, Siegelman and Folsom are with us today.

We are also honored to have former Lieutenant Governors Windom and McMillan, as well as Governors Siegelman and Folsom who also served as Lieutenant Governors.

Alabama is certainly better because of the many years of service of these distinguished leaders. Please join me in thanking them.

On the platform with me today are our current constitutional officers, Lieutenant Governor Ainsworth, Attorney General Marshall, Auditor Ziegler, Secretary of State Merrill, Treasurer McMillan and Agriculture Commissioner Pate. Also on the platform, we recognize Public Service Commissioners Jeremy Oden and Chip Beeker. The people of Alabama thank all of you for your commitment to public service and for your dedication to them.

Also joining me are members of our State Board of Education sworn in today. Board Members Doctor McCarty, Doctor Richardson and West, as well as Doctor Reynolds who could not be here today. I look forward to continue working closely with you to ensure all Alabama students have the opportunity for a beneficial education, which puts them on a path to success.

Additionally, I'd like to thank the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Alabama Supreme Court for participating in today's swearing-in ceremony.

A very special Alabamian and my longtime friend from Wilcox County is here today – former U.S. Senator and U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions!

Jeff, I am thrilled that you are on stage with me.

If you're from Wilcox County, you just never know where you'll end up.

It is always good to welcome home — and publicly thank — Alabama's outstanding Congressional Delegation, lead by Senior Senator Richard Shelby, and represented today by Congressman Byrne and Congresswoman Roby.

Time and time and again Alabama's delegation chooses to put the people of our state ahead of any partisan interests. To each of you, we offer our heartfelt thanks for your service.

And speaking of our Congressional Delegation, my Administration has already been hard at work with local and state leaders in all 67 counties to begin the tedious — but all-important task of making sure we get an accurate head count for the upcoming Census.

This isn't just about the possibility of losing a seat in Congress; it's much more important than that.

It's also about protecting our crucial Federal funding that the hard-working taxpayers of our state send to Washington.

As this work kicks into high gear, it is all our responsibility to make certain that every citizen is counted in the 2020 Census; that's the only way to make certain that "Alabama counts" when it matters most.

I extend my profound thanks to the members of the Alabama Legislature, and I salute them for their genuine commitment to public service and our great state.

With the first session of a new quadrennium beginning in just a few weeks, I am encouraged by the men and women who represent us in both the Alabama House of Representatives and the Alabama State Senate.

We have 27 new members in the House that will be led by Speaker Mac McCutcheon; we also welcome 12 new members to the Alabama Senate led by President Pro Tem Del Marsh.

Our two legislative minority leaders are on the platform as well: Senator Bobby Singleton and Representative Anthony Daniels.

All of our leaders – from both parties – the 140 men and women of the Alabama Legislature – serve as partners in our quest to keep Alabama working and growing.

As Governor, one of my proudest accomplishments has been establishing a strong bipartisan relationship with the Alabama Legislature.

In order for our state to work properly, we must work closely together.

You, the members of the Alabama Legislature, have the opportunity to make your mark in Alabama history as one of the most impactful legislatures ever. And I look forward to working with each of you as, together, we work to address our state's most pressing problems.

Eight years ago, when I was sworn in as Lieutenant Governor, I used my inaugural address to call on the legislature to end proration forever. I am proud to say that call was quickly answered. Today, we budget with a more balanced and predictable model that has improved the way we fund state government.

The good news on this Inauguration Day is that our budgets are strong and our financial health is good.

More Alabamians are working today than ever before and our economy continues to grow and prosper.

With ‘Strong Start, Strong Finish’, we are making our largest investment ever in education. We are setting high standards for student learning, and our efforts are paying off as we provide our students with the tools they need to grow and succeed.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can all be grateful for this progress. But make no mistake... we’re not done yet; we’ve only just begun.

We know we cannot rest on recent successes; instead, we must keep reaching for new heights, taking Alabama to the next level so that we can continue to compete in the 21st Century Global Economy.

The people of Alabama will always be our greatest resource, as well as the fabric that holds this state together in the best of times, as well as in the most challenging of times.

Alabama’s dedicated and skilled workforce has helped ensure that our “Made in Alabama” brand is one of excellence and top-quality, which is recognized worldwide.

Just like all of you, I am proud to be an Alabamian.

Fifty years ago, one of my childhood heroes, Governor Lurleen Wallace, was sworn in as the first woman governor in Alabama and only the second in our nation’s history.

Although she is not with us in person, her spirit, life and legacy live on to this day. In her memory, I’ve requested that an empty chair be placed on the platform. We are honored to have her daughter Peggy with us today representing the Wallace family.

In her Inaugural address, Governor Wallace called on the Alabama Legislature to, among other things, provide greater funding to build and improve our roads.

Interestingly, on January 21st, 1919, when Governor Kilby was sworn in to office, during the year we celebrated our Centennial, he, too, called for a commitment to improve our roads and bridges.

I am very hopeful that 50 or 100 years from now, Governors will not have to include requests to improve our infrastructure.

Today, I follow in Governor Lurleen Wallace’s footsteps in many ways and make the same ask to the members of the Alabama Legislature.

After all, if we want to compete in a 21st century global economy, we must improve our infrastructure by investing more in our roads, our bridges and our ports.

Improving our infrastructure is more than an investment in our roads and bridges; it's an investment in economic development, public safety and local communities.

It has been nearly three decades since we last made any changes to our current funding, and the challenge has grown with the passing of time. Now is the time to increase our investment in infrastructure – now is the time to solve this problem!

We will have only one chance to do so. With the people's help – and the support of the Alabama Legislature – I am confident we will do the right thing.

Let's face it. The challenges we confront today did not just arrive on our doorstep; likewise, they will not go away in weeks or even months.

But if we work on them together – Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals – then today's challenges can be looked upon as tomorrow's accomplishments.

Much like our roads and bridges, our prison system, too, has been sorely neglected for decades. The poor conditions of our prisons create a risk to public safety and are placing a heavy burden on taxpayers.

The status of our corrections system is an Alabama problem that must be solved by an Alabama solution. As your governor, I plan to do so. We are revitalizing our statewide corrections system by replacing costly, at-risk prison facilities. This effort will ensure that Alabama stays committed to statewide prison reform, and we will be announcing more detailed plans in the coming days.

As we stand in the shadow of our majestic state capitol and look down historic Dexter Avenue, we must never forget where we've come from nor how much progress we've made.

Thankfully, the Alabama we live in today – the Alabama we love – has changed with the times and, in most instances, this change has been for the better.

But we would be less than honest with each other if we did not acknowledge that change has not always come easily. Standing here on Dexter Avenue, we are reminded of two different chapters in Alabama history: a time when the Civil War raged and 90 years later when the Civil Rights movement was inspired.

It is important for all of us to acknowledge our past; after all, it was at a pulpit just down the street that Doctor Martin Luther King Junior so powerfully taught us how to confront struggles with honesty, courage, and love.

Having learned from the past, let's now turn our focus to the future, which is filled with so much hope and opportunity.

Alabama successfully helped launch the program that took man to the moon and returned him back safely. And today, we continue to build the next generation of rockets that will take men – and women – to Mars and deep space and return them home safely.

It is hard to believe that 25 years ago, not a single automobile was built in Alabama. Today, we are one of the largest automotive producing states with soon-to-be five global automotive companies.

And only six years ago, we did not build a single airplane in Alabama. Yet, today, we are assembling one of the world's best-selling single-aisle aircraft with a major groundbreaking happening later this week.

Just as Huntsville is recognized around the globe for its work in space exploration and discovery, I predict in just a few short years, Mobile will become one of the top four cities in the world where large, commercial aircraft are assembled. And we will reach this milestone in under a decade.

Over the next four years, we will build upon these advancements, attracting even more world class companies and creating more good paying jobs. As we create these new opportunities, we will also be challenged with the task of ensuring that our workforce is prepared and equipped not just for the challenges of today but for the jobs of tomorrow.

It can be easy to focus only on the issues that need the most immediate attention – such as education, roads and prisons – but in reality, as we dig in and begin to address these issues, I hope the progress that we make will inspire us to tackle other pressing challenges, such as health care, rural economic development, access to broadband and other important issues.

After all, these matters can be seen either as a challenge or an opportunity; I prefer to believe they are opportunities worthy of a state whose good people are fortunate to call Alabama their home.

So today, I stand before you filled with optimism and eager with anticipation of what's yet to come.

More good paying jobs. Better education for our children. Roads that are the envy of the nation. But one thing is for sure... We cannot do this work alone.

The campaign season and elections are long since behind us. Today, all Alabamians – regardless of party affiliation – have the chance to stand together, united, to help build a brighter future and guarantee that our best days are still in front of us.

And we need everyone to help... teachers, farmers, job creators, health care professionals, law enforcement and the media.

The great composer Johann Sebastian Bach was once asked why he composed music. Without hesitation, he responded “for the glory of God and the good of mankind.” My hope is that when I leave this office, it can be said that this state is in better shape than when I began. I too serve “for the glory of God and the good of mankind.”

With your help – and with God's amazing grace – the next four years will not only mark the beginning of our third century, they'll be the foundation for our best years to come.

May God bless each of you. And May God continue to bless our Sweet Home Alabama!

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