

Opening Remarks

Senator Dave Schatz

Friends, colleagues, and guests: good afternoon. I am humbled to be speaking from this dais today, the first day of the 100th General Assembly, as our Senate Pro Tem. Before we begin, let us recognize the honored guests who have joined us.

We come from different backgrounds, we have varied policy preferences, and we often have competing priorities. But we are all here, together, because we felt called to serve our communities. And we are able to serve because of the support of our families. At this time I'd like to thank my family, and all of yours, for making our service possible through their sacrifice. I would like to recognize my family for the tremendous support they have given me through the years:

My wife, Chara. My son David and his wife Stephanie, along with their children: Caden, Nolan, and Tyson. My daughter Devon, her husband Woody, and their son William. And my daughters Dailee and Dana.

Being away from our loved ones is the hardest part of this job—we owe it to them to make the most of our time here—to build a better Missouri for our children and grandchildren.

As I embark on the opportunity to serve each of you as Pro Tem I am reminded of the lessons learned through decades of working in my family's small business. Our business is like thousands of others throughout this state—we work together to provide for our customers. Through the dignity of their own hard work our employees support their families, care for their loved ones, and provide opportunities to their children that they never would have dreamed.

We've had successes and setbacks. We've celebrated our personal and professional achievements as a family—and we've supported one another through tragedy—including my own. Through it all, we have relied on one another as family.

The same hallmarks of our small business successes have preserved this institution through our state's good days and bad. In the Senate, our success relies on our collegial relationships and deliberative debate. Romans 12:18 tells us “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” The key there is that peace depends on us. This will be my guiding principle as I seek to serve and honor the trust each of you have placed in me. There will be many debates and many long nights in the coming months, but we should never lose sight that we were all called to this place in the name of public service.

We can disagree without being disagreeable—it's a choice we must consciously make every day. The work we do here isn't glamorous and it often attracts harsh and sometimes hurtful feedback—but it's important work nevertheless. The faith our constituents have placed in us is

immense—we have a responsibility to them to look beyond our differences and find common ground.

When I find myself feeling frustrated in this chamber, I look at the fronts of our desks as I am now—and I see our district numbers there and not our own names—and I am reminded that we are here for our constituents—and not for ourselves.

Each and every day, we owe it to the people of Missouri to remain committed to our shared priorities—great schools, good jobs, and safe communities. We must work to reduce the burden of government by promoting reforms to our regulatory, tort, and tax systems to ensure Missouri can compete and win in the 21st century. We will pass a fiscally responsible and balanced budget. And we will work to ensure that our shared priorities, like education and infrastructure, receive the investment they deserve.

We face an economy that is very different from the one many of us grew up in. Advanced practical skills are the ticket to the middle class and economic prosperity. We need to invest in the citizens of our state by offering training opportunities—regardless of age or previous experience. Any Missourian that wants to better themselves through hard work and education should have their state as an ally—not as a hindrance.

When I look back on this session, I will not measure our success by the quantity of legislation we pass but by the quality. We won't measure ourselves by the number of days we spent here—but by the lives we positively impact.

Though we face many challenges in the year ahead, I rest a little easier knowing that this body has nearly two centuries of history to call upon. The traditions and decorum of this institution deserve our respect and our passionate defense. I appreciate the ability to speak my mind plainly, maybe sometimes a little too plainly, and to hear my fellow senators do the same. I appreciate the great wisdom I've picked up listening to our debates—and the growth that comes from working together. And I appreciate the hard work of our Senate staff, true public servants, who spend many long days and late nights keeping us on track and moving forward.

I am not one for long speeches so I will leave you with one final thought that is not original but that has been repeated in this chamber often because of its power and plain truth. What I consider the unofficial motto of our chamber, is inscribed on this wall: "Free and Fair Discussion Will Ever Be Found the Firmest Friend to Truth." Let us remember this in the days and months to come and let us work together to make Missouri better for every person who calls it home. May God bless our work and our great State of Missouri.