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## Inaugural Address – Governor Mike Kehoe

January 13, 2025

President Pro-Tem O’Laughin, Speaker Patterson, members of the General Assembly, state and federal elected officials, former Governors, judges, Cabinet officials, friends, family, and fellow Missourians...

We started this morning honoring a group of brave men and women who represent the best of those who serve and protect our communities. Thank you to our Salute to Heroes honorees for joining us today.

I would like to take a moment now to thank Governor Parson for his service to our state. His humble and steady leadership benefitted Missourians. Claudia and I wish he and the First Lady well in this next chapter.

I stand before you today, mindful of the honorable history of this occasion, humbled by the trust Missourians have placed in me, and determined to meet the challenges ahead.

I will always remember and honor the solemn oath I just took.

Growing up, no one would have looked at me and said, one day, that kid is going to be sworn in by Senator Roy Blunt as the 58<sup>th</sup> Governor of Missouri.

I will never forget where I came from—the sixth child of Lorraine Kehoe, a single mom, who often struggled to raise her family in North St. Louis City.

My mom wasn’t what some would call “highly educated,” but she worked hard. She was a very, very wise, and a caring, and loving person. She was God-fearing. Today, I proudly have her rosary with me and used her bible to take the oath. I learned a lot about life, faith, and relationships from her.

Every time we kids complained about something we didn’t have, she had a simple answer: pray harder, work harder. Mom was right. If you work hard and you love the Lord, you can get anywhere you want to go in this state and this country.

That’s been the guiding principle of my life. Whenever we saw something that needed to be done, we didn’t complain. We prayed hard, and we worked hard.

That’s what led me to get started in business. It’s why I ran for State Senate. It’s why I answered Governor Parson’s call to serve as Lt. Governor. It’s why I ran for Governor.

So, this day, this moment in time—it is a win for single mothers, like Lorraine Kehoe. My journey has been the experience of a lifetime, and I couldn't have done it without the grace of God, my family, my brother and sisters who are here today, and the support of many mentors and friends.

My wife, Claudia, has been an incredible partner and been by my side every step of the way. And she will be an amazing First Lady of Missouri!

Our kids, Carol, Michael, Maggie, and Claire and our son in law Scott were always there to support Claudia and me. I'm so proud of all of them.

This is truly an emotional and humbling experience for our entire family.

In the years ahead, we're going to need your continued prayers and support, because there is a lot of work to be done.

And because sadly, the world around us has grown more divided and more cynical. For too many people, hard work has been replaced by handouts. The power of prayer is mocked. The contest of ideas is no longer a matter of right versus wrong, but of good versus evil. Political opponents cast each other as traitors and criminals.

I reject this. I believe we can work together without sacrificing our core beliefs.

One of my life's mentors was a man named Dave Sinclair. He instilled in me that building relationships, standing for your values, relying on your faith, and finding a path to make something work is a good thing. My story is living proof that a mentor in a young person's life can have a life-long impact.

Mr. Sinclair reinforced the values my mother taught me, and that was exactly what I needed and, quite frankly, other young kids who come from struggling backgrounds need the same thing today. They need hope.

My life—growing up in the inner city, moving to a small town, building businesses, and operating a ranch—these experiences have taught me one thing: Missourians are more alike than we are different. All of us want to feel safe in our homes and in our neighborhoods. We want our kids to get a quality education. We want to work hard to support our families.

Achieving these things—that's how we secure Missouri's future.

Securing Missouri's future begins with public safety. Too many Missourians don't feel safe—and too many Missourians aren't safe. When people are afraid for their lives and for their families, they cannot be productive, and they will not prosper. Later today, as my first official act on Day One as governor, I will take our first steps in securing a safer Missouri.

But that's not all. In the coming weeks, months, and years, my administration will be relentless in our pursuit to make Missouri a place where it's easier to be a cop than a criminal.

And when Missourians are safe, they can be the best versions of themselves. Our efforts will support the brave men and women in uniform who risk their lives for us every day—officers like Eva Millar-Galvan, who did a wonderful job singing our National Anthem this morning.

Securing Missouri's future means strengthening public education and expanding school choice so that every single student has the opportunity to get a world class education. Whether it's a four-year college or career technical education, schools that teach kids how to think—not what to think—are the key to long-term self-reliance.

Securing Missouri's future means creating stable jobs that provide both a source of income and a sense of purpose. My administration will focus on reducing taxes and cutting regulations, so families keep more of their own money, and so job creators want to come here, expand here, and hire more hard-working Missourians.

Finally, Securing Missouri's future means securing our agriculture economy. Just behind me, and about 350 feet up on top of this beautiful Capitol, is our state's tribute to the hard-working agriculture families and their efforts – some multi-generational, some first-generation like Claudia and me. For our state to continue to feed and clothe the world, we must get government out of their lives and let our farmers and ranchers do what they do best: work hard and continue to produce results.

Make no mistake about it: accomplishing these goals will not be easy. We will face entrenched special interests, a fear of change, and a culture that says we should keep doing things the way we've always done them.

But Missourians didn't send us here to do what's comfortable.

They expect results. They deserve results. With my administration, they will get results.

This is my promise to you: I will talk to anyone, work with anyone, and root for anyone who has a good idea to make our state safer, stronger, and better.

And when we succeed—together—Missouri and our citizens will serve as a model of responsible, conservative, and innovative leadership.

Over the past two centuries, countless Missourians have plowed the soil, worked in factories, raised families, gone to church, and contributed to their communities.

Our grit, our resourcefulness, our work-ethic has produced remarkable citizens—people America has counted on to lead soldiers into battle, and to lead our nation into peace; people who have entertained us, informed us, and captured our imaginations; people who have led social movements, explored the heavens, and built successful businesses.

Missourians are people who work hard, who work together, and who never give up. Missouri is a land of opportunity. We are centrally located, bracketed by rivers, crossed by major highways. We have been blessed with fertile farmland, abundant minerals, and industrious people. When we take these natural advantages—and we pair them with conservative policies and limited government—we will unleash freedom and secure our future.

It will take each of us, working together, to secure an even safer, stronger, and more prosperous Missouri!

May God bless you. May God bless the United States of America. And may God continue to bless the great State of Missouri!