

## ISU DAY LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION

February 26, 2018

### **Remarks by Cody Woodruff, Vice Speaker of Student Government**

Thank you all so much for being here tonight and inviting us to speak this evening. I'm sure you're all wondering why this fourteen-year-old in a suit is talking to you about Iowa State, so allow me to explain. Our student body president, Cody West, is in DC and couldn't be here, and neither could our vice president, Cody Smith, so they chose me. Much like my experience with girls, I was not their first choice. I was asked tonight to talk about my story and how I ended up at Iowa State, but I want my experience to reflect the experiences of every student at Iowa State. I'm not just here speaking as Cody Woodruff – I'm here to represent the many incredible Cyclones that are going to change the world or are already doing so.

Iowa State has students from all 99 counties of this great state, and I'm one of them. I come from Carlisle in Warren County where I serve as a member of my hometown's school board – I've grown up there my entire life, and I plan to put down roots there once I've completed my education. In fact, I've told my parents that I want to buy their house as my first home. I love this state and this city, and I even helped Isaiah plan a date in Des Moines just this past weekend. Despite my love for our state and growing up relatively close to Ames, I didn't think that I would end up at ISU. I originally applied to Harvard, Columbia, the University of Chicago, Iowa State, and Drake. I always expected to be leaving this state, but I ended up staying here instead. The only schools that accepted me were Iowa State and Drake, so I had a decision to make. I did what any reasonable person would do when facing a difficult choice, and I weighed my options carefully. Eventually, two factors led to my decision to go to Iowa State: 1) it was close enough to home that I could go back when I needed to but was far enough that my parents wouldn't visit constantly, and 2) a lot of my friends were going there. Looking back, those probably weren't the best things to base this important life decision on, but fortunately for me it's worked out so far.

I'll be honest, I wasn't exactly thrilled to be at Iowa State when I first got there. I was excited to be at college, but I also sort of wished I would've ended up somewhere else. That all changed quickly. I got involved with Student Government right off the bat, and I met some of the most incredible people that Iowa State has to offer. They come from all corners of this state, nation, and world. They're aerospace engineers, agriculture enthusiasts, pre-med students, future teachers, and the next generation of leaders. We've got students building solar cars that are recognized internationally, students designing and developing a new computer processor, and students altering the way we farm to be more effective and feed more people. These are just a fraction of the people that our university boasts, and I can tell you without a doubt in my mind that the future is bright indeed.

Those are just the students – the professors Iowa State has are just as incredible. They constantly change the way we think, challenge us to grow, and help us become the best person possible so we can make the biggest impact possible. They aren't just supporting us in the classroom. I have a professor who came to one of my school board campaign events to support me. For the past three weekends, I've had Saturday morning coffee with a professor and some friends to discuss world events and talk about our lives. Another professor inspired me to add a second major and explore and practice one of my passions. This is just my story – there are thousands more, potentially 36,320 of them, from other students.

Unfortunately, if the proposed budget cuts go through, we could lose some of those amazing professors and fantastic students. Our university would suffer, and so would the future of our state, country, and world. I rely largely on scholarships, government loans, some help from family, and money out of my own pocket to pay for college, yet I still have to find a way to pay \$1,689.45 for the rest of this semester alone. I got a job as soon as I could in high school, and I saved as much as I could for college. I also work on breaks when I'm home, and I've worked on campus before, too, although the majority of my time is spent on classes and as a public servant. Over winter break, the car that my sister and I share broke down, and we still have to figure out how we'll afford a new one. Despite all of this, I consider myself lucky. I should be able to graduate without too much debt, although I anticipate around \$30,000 or more. I don't have to work constantly during the school year, although many of my peers do. I'm able to pursue my interests, although many of my classmates aren't able to because they're working jobs instead.

Much has changed at Iowa State in recent years, but the people have not, and they exemplify what we value as Iowans. They embody the characteristics of hard-work, dedication, humility, kindness, and a desire to give back to their communities. No, it's not the people of Iowa State that have changed – it's the support from the state legislature that's changed.

We're facing a midyear budget cut ranging anywhere between \$2.5 million and \$6.9 million, and that's on top of the \$11.5 million we were cut last year. Iowa State makes up less than 3% of the overall state budget, yet we've been cut by 20% over the past 10 years. This equates to a total loss of \$56 million, and that doesn't include cuts yet to be voted on for this year. In 2000, roughly 25% of university costs were covered by tuition. In 2018, that number is at 70%. While university expenses have grown over the past two decades, state support has been dropping. Despite having thousands more students and tuition costing thousands of dollars more, Iowa State receives less money from the state government now in actual dollars – not even adjusted for inflation – than we have at any time since 1998. We don't expect you to pay for all of our college, but we're asking the state to invest in us, so we can get a good, public education.

The products of a thriving and strongly state-supported ISU are all around you. Some of our alumni include state representatives and senators, the current governor, an Iowa Congressman, and a US Senator. We've fostered inventors and innovators, poets and patriots, athletes and astronauts, and teachers and trailblazers. We can continue to do this – the people are there, the ideas are planted, but we need the support to make them grow to their full potential. I can point to so many people in my life who have been impacted by Iowa State. My grandfather who came from a farming family went there and opened a veterinary practice back home. Two of my favorite high school teachers who had a major influence on my life went there. Many of my closest friends go there, and so do I.

The university that I once was reluctant to go to is now the place I call home for part of the year. It's a place I adore, and I love the city of Ames and the history of our great university. However, I know that there's more history to be made, and we need your support for Iowa State to be at the forefront of it. My story is about as Iowan as it gets, and it's just one of tens of thousands that our university has to offer. I can tell you that as students, we're ready to head boldly and bravely into the future to lead this state – the question I leave you with tonight is this: are you?

### **Remarks by Isaiah Baker, Co-Chair of the Civic Engagement Committee**

Thank you so much for having us here today. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you, and I'd like to use that opportunity to talk a little bit about how I ended up at Iowa State University.

My story begins more than half a century ago.

In 1963, my grandparents immigrated to the United States from India with twenty-five dollars in their pockets and a newborn baby daughter—my mother. Although they spoke little English and had little money, they knew that the opportunity of a public education could provide their family with a brighter future. In fact, earning a college degree is the only statistically proven way to get out of the poverty cycle. My grandparents earned degrees at a state school—The University of Wisconsin-Madison—and then settled in Iowa City, where my grandfather went on to earn a PhD and teach as a professor at the University of Iowa. Over the several decades he was there, he brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars in research grants for the University's Medical School. My grandmother also worked for the University, helping students navigate academia as an educational advisor. They raised two daughters, both of whom attained medical degrees. It wasn't easy financially, but my grandparents taught my mother and my aunt the value of a public education in principle and in practice, and I am fortunate to say that tradition has been passed down to me.

My dad's story is at once both different and the same as my mother's. He was born in Mason City, Iowa to the owners of a small flower shop, neither of whom had attended college. Although my grandparents on my father's side did not realize the dream of a higher education for themselves, they encouraged my dad to work hard and study so that he could go to college and have a better life. Because of their support and his own hard work, my dad earned scholarships that gave him the opportunity to attend two public universities in this state, despite the financial hardships he faced. He later served in the United States Air Force in order to have the opportunity to attend medical school.

My father's story is very different from my mother's, and yet contains some remarkable parallels. Whether from New Delhi or Mason City, my parents were both able to earn a higher education here in the great state of Iowa. In many respects, both sides of my family are the embodiment of the "American Dream." I think it's important to recognize the factors that made that dream a reality. My parents' successes may certainly be traced back to their own hard work, as well as their good fortune in being born into families that, despite hardships, valued and encouraged education. But none of that would have mattered if my parents hadn't grown up in a state with three world-class public universities.

The affordability, quality, and accessibility of Iowa's schools are the reason my grandparents came here, the reason my parents achieved the life they did, and the reason that I'm here speaking to you today.

I want to continue the dream of my family, and I want that dream to be a possibility for all Iowans and all Americans. And yet, even now, I can see that dream slipping away from future generations. Budget cuts have led to tuition hikes and the rescinding of scholarships, which are exactly the sort of barriers that would have stopped people like my parents. Shrinking appropriations have led to a reduction in tenured positions and a decrease in the quality of higher education, which in turn leads to a decline in opportunities for college graduates.

There are plenty of logical connections that can be made here about how a decrease in support for Iowa State drives away future engineers and doctors who could serve our communities. There are also plenty

of data-driven arguments to be made about how the decline in the quality of education harms Iowa's economy. But I'm not here to make those arguments. I'm simply here to say that I hope that someday, when I have children of my own, they too will have the opportunity to chase their dreams the same way that the daughter of Indian immigrants and the son of flower shop owners did.