

## **Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders' Inaugural Address**

*Remarks as prepared for delivery:*

"Speaker Shepherd, President Hester, members of the Supreme Court, distinguished Members of the General Assembly, my fellow Arkansans:

The oath I have just taken represents an unbreakable promise and a sacred responsibility. I accept it with the deepest gratitude for the confidence you are placing in me. Every day for the next four years, I will devote every ounce of my energy and every piece of my heart to making Arkansas the greatest state in America, so help me God.

Today, for the 47<sup>th</sup> time in our history, Arkansas takes part in a public ritual rich in symbolism and meaning. This ceremony reminds us of a simple yet profound truth: that here in Arkansas, power belongs to no single individual. In Arkansas, power belongs to the people.

For many years, Arkansas has weathered storms under the leadership of strong Governors. I'm glad to be joined by Governor Asa Hutchinson and First Lady Susan Hutchinson, who have led admirably the last 8 years, as well as former Governor Mike Beebe and his wife Ginger, and former First Lady Gay White.

As I take the oath today, I draw strength from my family, knowing that on this journey, they will be at my side every step of the way. Thank you to my amazing husband, the rock of our family, my most trusted advisor, my best friend, and Arkansas' First Gentleman: Bryan Sanders. And to the three people who represent the very best of both of us and make every day special, and sometimes chaotic: our amazing kids, Scarlett, Huck and George. You have certainly prepared me for long nights and great challenges in ways you can never imagine.

I'm also grateful to be joined today by two other very special people. They raised me in a home with love, they prayed for me and nurtured my faith, and they taught me the meaning of principled leadership by the power of their example. Mom and Dad, I have never been prouder to be your daughter.

The passing of the torch is always a historic occasion. But it's not a torch to burn something down, but instead to light a path for a New Generation of service and leadership. This day is especially notable because I happen to be the youngest governor currently serving anywhere in the country... as well as the first daughter of a governor to take the oath of office... and the first woman to serve as governor of Arkansas.

I don't want to dismiss the significance of all that. But I did not seek this office to be the first anything – I ran to make Arkansas first in everything. I'm not interested in making history because of who I am. I want ALL of us to make history for what we achieve together over the next eight years.

So today, let us begin a new chapter in the story of Arkansas – to be written by a New Generation of proud Arkansas sons and daughters who are stepping forward to lead.

A New Generation born in the waning decades of the last century, shaped by economic booms and stock market busts, forged by the triumph of the Cold War and the tragedy of 9/11. A generation brimming with passion and new ideas to solve age-old problems. A generation moored to our deepest values and oldest traditions, yet unafraid to challenge the present order and find a better way forward.

We have risen to every occasion. We have gained wisdom from years of sweat and toil. And now this New Generation assumes the mantle of leadership not to be caretakers of the status quo, but to be changemakers for the people of Arkansas.

With this New Generation, a new vision is coming to Little Rock – and today, a bold conservative reformer is coming to the Governor's mansion. I'm assembling a team of young visionary leaders from across Arkansas and the nation and know that with this team and our partners in the legislature, great things are ahead!

Our vision is for an Arkansas where strong families thrive in safe communities. Where jobs are abundant and paychecks are rising. Where the freedom that our veterans shed their blood to defend is the birthright of every man, woman and child. Where schools get back to teaching reading, writing, math, and science—and where our children learn that the identity that truly matters is the one we all share: our identity as children of God and citizens of the United States of America.

Our vision is for an Arkansas where precious unborn children are welcomed in life and protected in law. Where citizens are free to think, free to worship, and free to speak in accordance with their own conscience. And for an Arkansas where government never looms larger than liberty in our lives.

Together, I know we can realize this grand vision. And I intend to get started on this mission without delay. That is why before this day is done, I am signing a series of executive orders to ensure that the people of Arkansas have the utmost confidence in their government. Government must be the servant of the people. The people are never to be servants of the government.

Among those actions is an immediate freeze on new government hiring and new government regulations. We are limiting the growth of government before government limits the growth of individual liberty.

Today I will also sign an executive order preventing the political indoctrination of Arkansas's schoolchildren. As long as I am governor, our schools will focus on the skills our children need to get ahead in the modern world – not brainwashing our children with a left-wing political agenda.

Education is the key that opens the door to a lifetime of opportunity. We cannot allow a child's destiny to be determined by their zip code or the size of their parent's bank account. We know that students of every background can succeed if given a fair chance, a strong start, and a helping hand.

Just as I promised you as a candidate, I will make education reform the hallmark of my administration. I will be Arkansas's education governor. We will improve literacy for our youngest students. We will reward our teachers with higher pay. And we will empower parents with more choices, so that no child is ever trapped in a failing school or sentenced to a lifetime of poverty. Parents are the cornerstone of a good education. Our public schools do not belong to education bureaucrats in Washington DC – they belong to YOU.

The path to success that starts in the classroom must eventually lead to a good job in the workforce.

To help Arkansas businesses grow and create more jobs, we must continue responsibly phasing out the state income tax. I will work with lawmakers to pass an income tax cut this year – and we must keep cutting it, no matter how long it takes, until we eventually wipe the income tax off the books.

We will no longer surrender our jobs, our talent, our businesses and our economic might to states like Tennessee and Texas that have no income tax. Arkansas is going to fight for every job – and let me be clear, Arkansas is going to win.

We will leverage our state's unmatched natural beauty to promote tourism and grow our outdoor economy – marketing the Natural State to the world, and finally becoming the leader in outdoor recreation that we deserve to be. Floating the clear free flowing waters of the Buffalo River or watching a sunrise on a duck hunt in flooded timber is a glimpse of heaven. I want the world to discover what we already know: Arkansas is God's Country.

And if you are a small business owner or one of our state's 50,000 family farmers, I make you this promise: as long as I am your governor, the meddling hand of big government creeping down from Washington DC will be stopped cold at the Mississippi River. We will get the over-regulating, micromanaging, bureaucratic tyrants off of your backs, out of your wallets and out of your lives.

Together, I know we can make Arkansas's quality of life second to none. But to reach our full potential, we must have more than good jobs and great schools – above all, we must have safe streets.

The people of Arkansas are eternally grateful for the courageous law enforcement officers who risk their lives every day to keep our families safe. They do it not for fame or glory, but because they love their state, they love their communities, and they love their fellow citizens.

Last month, our hearts broke when we learned of the tragic murder of Stuttgart police Sergeant Donald Scoby, who was cut down in the prime of his life by a violent, repeat offender. Today, we vow that Sergeant Scoby's selfless sacrifice will not be in vain. We will end the crime wave plaguing our cities, we will end the hateful defund the police movement, and we will stand up for the heroes of law enforcement every single day.

Releasing unreformed and unrepentant criminals for no reason other than a lack of space in our prisons is not compassionate. It's foolish, it's dangerous, and under my leadership, it will end.

We will shut the revolving door in our prisons. But it's not only locking people up. It's helping those in prison overcome addiction by focusing on mental health, faith-based programs, workforce skills and doing things that challenge change from the inside out. We will give our police officers the resources they need, including more money for overtime pay. And we will ensure that violent criminals like the one who murdered Sergeant Scoby never, ever set foot in our communities again.

My fellow Arkansans, let us never forget what we are fighting for. As a mom, I'm reminded of what is at stake every time I tuck my three kids into bed each night.

No matter where you come from... no matter your race or color or creed... no matter who you voted for... my pledge to you is this: from this day forward, you will have an advocate, a reformer, a friend, and a fighter at the highest levels of your state government. All I ask in return are your heartfelt prayers, that God will help me be the leader you deserve.

With your help and devotion, with unity of purpose and a singular spirit, we will lift up the least of us and make Arkansas the proud home of freedom that we know in our hearts it can be.

Together, we will build upon the best of the Arkansas we love, and we will make it even better. Our legacy will be a land of breathtaking beauty, full of kind, generous, and hardworking people. A place where values still matter, commonsense is prized, and faith runs deep.

So let this New Generation go forward with confidence and courage, for we are not descended from the weak and timid. We are the heirs of pioneers and patriots. We are the state that feeds and clothes the world. We are the state that hauls products from factories and farms to the marketplace, rain or shine. We are the home of working class heroes who are the beating heart of America. We are the Land of Opportunity, where a mom-and-pop store is free to grow into the most successful business on the face of the earth.

Arkansas is the place where children once barred from the schoolhouse are now memorialized in bronze at the statehouse. Nothing will stand in our way, as long as we stand together. We are Arkansans – and our future has never been brighter than it is today.

Four months ago, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Thanks to exceptional doctors right here

in Arkansas, a successful surgery and the grace of God, today I am cancer-free.

When I got the news, I couldn't help but think about my mom. She was 20 years old and in her first year of marriage when she was diagnosed with spinal cancer. The doctors told her she might not live. If she did live, they said she'd never walk again, and if she did walk again, she'd definitely never have children.

Three kids and seven grandkids later, Janet Huckabee is as tough as ever.

My mom once said that "if God had given us the ability to look into the future, none of us would go beyond where we were at that moment."

Fear of the unknown paralyzes us, but faith propels us to charge boldly ahead.

My fellow Arkansans, we are not called to stand still in the face of great challenges. You and I were put on this earth, at this very moment in time, to charge boldly ahead.

We know not what the future holds, but we know who holds the future in His hands. And with God as our witness, we will show the world that there is still a place in America where freedom reigns and liberty will never die, and that place is Arkansas.

It is an honor to fight by your side. Now let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Thank you, may God bless you, and may God bless the great state of Arkansas."