

Your Holiness, the Dalai Lama ...

On behalf of the People of Wisconsin, I welcome you to Wisconsin.

We are honored by your visit to our State Capitol today and very much anticipate your remarks before the Legislature in a few moments. But first, we wanted to take a brief moment to formally welcome you to our state.

Your visit comes as Wisconsin celebrates 150 years as a state, and it gives us pause to reflect on the values and beliefs that make our state so great.

Wisconsin is a state founded by people of deep faith, who came to this rich land from many different countries and cultures.

While the religious beliefs of our ancestors may have been different, they inspired the values and traditions that unite us as a people today.

They are values and traditions that allowed Wisconsin to grow into one of the strongest states in America, particularly when it comes to a high quality of life for our families.

The people of Wisconsin remain unwavering defenders of religious freedom. We are undaunted in our pursuit of a peaceful environment for our families. And we are a kind, compassionate people committed to helping our neighbors lead full and rewarding lives.

We are strong as a state because we are strong as a people.

We know that you share and extol around the world many of the values that make our state great. And your words remind us of the importance of faith and religion in our lives and in our future as a state.

As you have said before: “Wherever they came from, all the world’s major religious traditions are similar in having the potential to help human beings live at peace with themselves, with each other and with the environment.”

Thank you for making this visit to our state, especially during this special year for Wisconsin. Now, I would like to introduce you to our media for any comments you would like to make.

Source: Marquette University Libraries; Tommy G. Thompson Collection; Series 2: Gubernatorial Speeches

We honored that you have returned to our state and have chosen to share with us your wise thinking.

From our earliest days, our state has been a shelter for those seeking the freedom to express their beliefs as they understand them. We are peopled by those who sought refuge from oppression in Europe at our founding as a state of the American union 150 years ago.

We were enriched by those whose brothers and sisters used Wisconsin as a way-station to freedom on the Underground Railroad away from slavery. In more recent times, we have been revitalized by a fresh wave of people yearning to breathe free from the killing fields of southeast Asia.

Yet, we can never be reminded often enough that people choose many ways to be reminded that we are solely material creatures ... that we have a responsibility to help others ... to lead by example ... and to be aware of our responsibilities.

As you yourself have noted, "We accept the need for pluralism in politics and democracy, yet we often seem more hesitant about the plurality of faiths and religions."

Your Holiness, you have a full schedule and an eager audience for your message of Peace and Inner Fulfillment.