

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you for inviting me here today.

This trip is very important to me. It's so important that I quickly turned to Ambassador Mondale for advice as I prepared to travel overseas to be with you.

He said that there was one thing above all others that I need to know. He said, "Watch out for the lectern at the Club – it's the worst in the world."

Well, I've taken on worse challengers in my career – including over here in Japan. So I have been working out every day to come 7,000 miles to wrestle with this notorious beast that has defeated the likes of the ambassador.

Now I find out that you got a new one. Oh well ...

(Placeholder for Japanese phrase "you go with what you got.")

I am glad to be back in Japan. Once again you have made me feel very welcome.

There are many fond memories of being here years ago. (Need five minutes with Governor to insert a personal anecdote).

Now I come here as Minnesota's governor, living proof that the American dream of citizen leadership is still alive and possible. I thank you for the hospitality and tell you that I sincerely expect that this will be a productive trip that will serve both your nation and our state very well in years to come.

Why Japan? Why travel to this nation one year into my term of office?

Right after the election, I asked many people which nation in the world was the most important trading partner? Where were our most important opportunities for developing a two-way productive partnership?

Time and again, the answer was quick – and it was JAPAN.

I found out in a hurry that my experience here when I visited as a professional wrestler was accurate: the Japanese people enjoy life:

- You like entertainment.
- You like travel.
- You welcome adventure.
- You are serious scholars.
- You are competitive business leaders.
- In other words: you are a lot like Minnesotans.

For decades there has been a critically important trading connection between us.

- You are our second largest trading partner. Last year, Japan bought nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars worth of Minnesota products. (BOW TO THE AUDIENCE) So I honor you as a very important customer.
- About 600 of our Minnesota businesses appreciate your business. Of that total, there are more than 30 companies that have offices here in Japan.
- You have just a few more – about 50 Japanese-owned companies are based in Minnesota, and many more Japanese firms have affiliations with Minnesota companies.
- In a moment, I'll talk a bit about my commitment to your business community in the way I am governing the executive branch of our state.

But first, let me continue with how we are connected because this is very important to stress as we look to our future and what I hope to accomplish while I am here.

- A total of 10 Minnesota cities have “sister city” relationships with Japanese cities. Visitors go back and forth between these places like (insert two examples). As I inherit the proclamations that my predecessors signed into being, my challenge to all of us is to take these relationships to a more visible level where our citizens can benefit from the full potential of what it means to be a “sister city.” Why not consider that we are “sister nations” – trading partners, places of destination for tourism, and intellectual equals striving to compete in this changed, new, global economy?

Truly, we are connected in this new world economy. Together, we know what it takes: a lifelong commitment to keep learning, the ability to communicate, and the desire to get results.

- One of my favorite expressions to my staff and cabinet is: “We’re never done learning.” The new economy requires BRAIN POWER. Many Minnesota public and private colleges and universities have exchange programs with your schools. There is an active University of Minnesota Alumni Club in Japan. Macalester College in St. Paul has hosted dozens of Japanese journalists in the World Press Institute.
- And what about the ability to communicate? Thousands of young Minnesota children have enjoyed learning Japanese at the Concordia College Language Village in the northern part of our state since it opened in 1988. This is important, because communication is everything in this new economy.
- Communication is made possible also because of the strong Asian-Pacific communities of Minnesota. I am grateful to our Asian-Pacific Council, which was created to advise the executive branch some years ago, for their partnership with me as a new Governor. I was proud to attend their first ever economic summit, and

applaud the strength of Minnesota Asians as they take up important challenges to raise strong families, succeed in business, and contribute as leaders.

- And even if none of us ever quite masters each others' language – technology drops the barriers than can divide us. I see every day how small the world has become thanks to the Internet connecting people and countries at the push of a button. As Governor, I am working hard to be the champion for cutting edge technologies that connect us with you in new and better ways. Japan wrote the book on technology. There are SONY products and Hitachi products and POKEMON games all over my state. Young and old, we benefit from Japanese inventions that we use and take for granted every day. I'm checking in back home with Internet reports every day so school children can follow this trip and learn along with me. Imagine!

What about Minnesota ingenuity? What do we have that you need? Let's imagine what waits for Japan on the other side of the globe.

- There are farmers raising specialty crops like mushrooms and soybeans and prime pork – because we have rich soil and generations of know-how to grow the best food in the world.
- Those open spaces that make good farm lands make great places to snowmobile and ski in the winter ... and in between are the best freshwater fishing lakes and streams anywhere. I'm Jesse "The Tourism Governor" Ventura because I'm so proud of my state I'm its biggest salesman. I warned Minnesotans that we've become the new political zoo – everybody wants to come and look, not at me, but at the people who elected me Governor!
- On a more serious note: We are the mecca for medical devices and research to make life better no matter where a person lives. Places like the Mayo Clinic and the University of Minnesota, together with companies like Medtronic and 3M, make our state a destination for health care professionals and patients.
- And – one of my favorites -- there was a crazy idea to put hundreds of stores under one roof with an amusement park in the middle. I was a mayor of a small town at the time and personally thought it would never work. But today the success of the Mall of America has inspired me to think BIG.

In fact, my strategic plan is called THE BIG PLAN.

It's my vision for the state. And there's a future for Japan in the Big Plan because of our shared values about important things like:

- Building healthy, vital communities

- Inspiring people to be self-sufficient and personally responsible with dependence on government
- Delivering service ... not protecting old “systems” that today’s citizens and customers don’t want or need.
- And being a World Competitor.

At 47, I’m proud to be serving as Governor with a variety of experiences to shape my thinking. Without it, I wouldn’t be able to hold firm to core beliefs, budget principles that have stood the test of tough debate, and now The Big Plan as a roadmap for the next three years.

As Governor, I do believe it is my job to help other mayors see a bigger picture than they might see from their more narrow point of view.

Two weeks ago it was my privilege to speak at Harvard University. It was also a privilege to go to school that day with some of the nation’s best economic advisors.

They told me that my job is not to pick the winners in this new economy – it is to invest in basic infrastructure that benefits everyone. **SCHOOLS, TRANSIT, ROADS, ENERGY, AND TECHNOLOGY.** We need only to look at the decisions by the Japanese government and its people in the post WWII years to see the wisdom of investing wisely in these core pieces of tomorrow’s future economy.

We need only look two generations back in Minnesota’s history to see the wisdom of reaching out our arms to people of all nations as we build tomorrow’s economy. Immigrants and native peoples built our state over the past 100 years and will continue shape the way it looks into the new millenium.

With new people come bold new ideas that I welcome. We also benefit by traveling to learn firsthand.

I remember so well standing at a hog farm in southern Minnesota several months ago when an older woman came forward and said, “Thank you, Governor.” I thought she meant about what we were doing to help farmers. But she said, “I mean thank you for taking a tough stand on light rail. You know, lots of people oppose it, but they are people who have never had the opportunity to ride it themselves. I travel, and I know you are right.”

So I am not here alone.

I’m traveling with some of my key people, like Transportation Commissioner Elwyn Tinklenberg. We want to see how Japan uses computer technology to control transportation and traffic in central cities. The Advanced Traffic Information Service is a spectacular achievement – well beyond anything we have experienced in Minnesota.

I'm also looking forward to a ride on the Bullet Train from Toyko to Osaka. This opportunity to see the benefits of a working rail system is something that I hope will be valued as the story is told back in Minnesota.

There are other high ranking officials eager to explore Japan as well. I'm here with Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson, who will celebrate some big news about a new venture between our farmers and Japan before the end of the trip.

And I'm here with Trade and Economic Development Commissioner Jerry Carlson, who is a big believer in the power of business and in government getting out of the way of being competitive. He's the one who first showed me that if Minnesota was a nation, we'd rank 29th in the world in size. With a freshwater port that connects our goods by boat to anywhere in the world, and a world class airport, there is nothing "landlocked" about Minnesota.

Jerry would be very disappointed in me if I didn't close by pitching that we have 450 golf courses open to the public with inexpensive greens fees and hardly any waiting. I will add that I have banned cell phones from the golf course when anybody plays with me – so that's one place where technology doesn't belong!

The famous American Will Rogers had an expression that I really enjoy.

He said, "Even if you are on the right track, if you don't keep moving you're going to get run over."

Minnesota is moving and we're very happy to be here exploring how we can move together with Japan.

Thank you.