

Good evening.

They asked me what my lasting message to the world is, and of course you know I'm not shy...so here we go.

Of course, whether it will be lasting or not is not up to me to decide. It's not my job to guess how the world will perceive me or anything else in the future.

It *is* my job to do the best I can possibly do as Governor, to help everyone in *Minnesota* be ready for the future.

But when it comes to making sure people are ready, you can only do so much, and that's one of the main themes of my message:

Be self-sufficient, and be responsible.

It's really pretty simple.

We need a world where people take responsibility for their actions and don't try to push those responsibilities off on someone else.

Parent a child without being married?

Pay your child support.

Drive a car?

Obey the laws of the road.

Own a gun?

Get the proper safety education and training.

Worry about yourself and your family and if your neighbor isn't violating your space, don't worry about him.

If he's responsible and you're responsible, then everything will work out just fine. Nobody has to stick his nose in where it doesn't belong.

And that's one of my key philosophies of government:

Government should do for you what you can't do for yourself, and only what you can't do for yourself.

If you're paralyzed in an accident, there are going to be things you cannot do for yourself, and government should be there to help you out with some of those things.

But if you're perfectly able-bodied and can do it yourself, pull yourself up by the bootstraps and do it!

Don't expect someone else to do it for you, just because you pay taxes.

Those taxes have to pay for things like schools and transportation, they're not for people who aren't willing to suck it up and do their share.

Last year toward the end of the legislative session a bill came across my desk, a very serious bill, I believe it was called "House File 132."

This is the legislature of the state of Minnesota, remember, a body that has important business to conduct.

Anyway, House File 132 said, and I'm quoting now—

"Bingo may be conducted within a nursing home, or a senior citizen housing project, or by a senior citizen organization, if the prizes for a single bingo game:

- Do not exceed \$10,
- Total prizes awarded at a single bingo occasion do not exceed \$200,
- No more than two bingo occasions are held by the organization or at the facility each week,
- Only members of the organization or residents of the nursing home or housing project are allowed to play in a bingo game,
- No compensation is paid for any persons who conduct the bingo, and
- A manager is appointed to supervise the bingo."

Now, I could go on about how this bill was delivered to me with just a couple weeks left in the session and important issues like taxes, education and tobacco money still hadn't been touched.

And I could talk some more about what a great example this is of bureaucracy at its worst.

In fact, I could use this bill to represent *a lot of* things wrong with government.

But my point in bringing it up now goes back to the idea of personal responsibility and government minding its own business.

If people enjoying their golden years want to win some money playing bingo, who is the government to tell them how much they can win?

The bill goes on to exempt nursing homes from gambling license requirement for bingo games when the prize is less than ten dollars.

So that means if you're going to give the seniors a chance to win 20 bucks, you'd better make darn sure the government is in there policing those bingo games.

You know, some of those seniors can get pretty shifty when there's bingo money at stake.

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We need a society that can take care of itself. Doesn't that sound simple enough?

You take care of *your* self, I'll take care of mine, and when someone needs help, we help 'em out.

That only seems fair.

I think if society were fairer, we'd have a lot fewer problems.

Because when people are fair, they're also tolerant.

For instance, it doesn't seem fair that two people committed to each other don't get the same benefits as other couples.

So what if both people from the first couple are the same sex?

What business is it of ours what they do in their bedroom?

The only thing preventing them from getting fair, equal rights is intolerance.

I agree, you shouldn't call it marriage, because my dictionary says marriage involves a man and a woman.

So call it something else, it doesn't matter. Just treat all couples the same when it comes to rights and privileges.

"But, that's not the way God intended it," say the intolerant people.

"He intended it the way we think it should be"....

Which brings me to my next subject:

Organized religion.

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Yes, you may have already heard my thoughts on the subject—but if you did, you only heard a very tiny snippet of how I feel.

Once again, it comes down to being tolerant and being fair.

My objection to organized religion involves only the organized religions that are not tolerant.

I'm talking about the right-wing organizations that just have no time for people who aren't like them.

“If you're different, we don't want ya'.”

To me, religion is a personal choice, and what you decide is between you and your god. You, as an individual, are the only person who should decide what you believe and how those beliefs will guide your life.

I know of too many cases of the religious right trying to force its beliefs on someone else.

Organized religion may not have been a major influence in my adult life, but I respect the beliefs of anyone who *is* influenced by it, including my close family members.

Here's my other objection about religion—not all religions—just certain religions—the ones that take advantage of people.

When I was in the Navy during the Vietnam era, I'd see so-called religious leaders pushing their beliefs on people too uneducated to comprehend what they were giving up, and too poor to afford the money they were being asked to hand over.

Yet there they were, giving their last dollar for a baptism they were promised was essential.

It seems to me the spirit of religion would put a family first and a profit last. But that wasn't the case with these profiteers.

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Places of worship are extremely important to growing healthy communities.

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Sure, Sunday's the busy day for churches, but they can make a great community center the other six days of the week.

They often have gymnasiums, meeting rooms and daycares that everyone is welcome to use.

Their youth groups are also usually open to any young person who's looking for a group to hang out with.

Places of worship can make a huge difference when it comes to getting people together and creating a bond among them.

And you know what?

Most places of worship have a sense of fairness and tolerance.

They're not looking over your shoulder to see if you dropped any money in the collection plate. They're not taking attendance every Sunday to see if you show up.

They're tolerant of you choosing to worship the way you want to worship, and raising your children the way you believe in.

When organized religion is that tolerant, I'm all for it.

Religion is something a family can do together, and I'm all for that too.

To me, there's nothing more important than family.

I get asked why I never made acting my full-time career.

I'll tell you why I didn't.

It has to do with where they make the movies. I have nothing against Southern California—it's a great place to vacation.

But I didn't want to uproot my family and raise my kids there. We're all Minnesotans, through and through and I wanted to keep it that way.

All the glamour in the world isn't as important as a rock-solid foundation for your kids. If you have kids, you know what I'm talking about.

And if you have kids, that means you are the number one educator of your children.

Don't leave it entirely up to the schools.

Don't leave it up to movies stars or sports stars.

Certainly, do not leave it up to politicians.

I love what my friend Charles Barkley says about being a role model. He says:

"I'm not a role model, I'm a basketball player."

I feel the same way.

I hope I'm a role model to my kids, but you should be a role model to your kids.

I wouldn't want my kids looking to some stranger for their values. That needs to start at home and continue there.

Which is not to say teachers shouldn't model good behavior.

Obviously kids spend a lot of time with teachers and those adults can be pretty influential.

I'm just saying the primary influences should still come from home. Last year I did an interview you may have heard about—it was for a publication called *Playboy*.

Now I hadn't read Playboy in a number of years, but I'm was pretty sure it was still an adult magazine.

Yet I heard all kinds of outrage from adults worried about the opinions I expressed in that interview.

Aside from the fact they were my opinions and they had nothing to do with how I do my job as governor, I was amazed at how many kids were apparently reading Playboy!

Where were the parents?

And if the kids weren't getting the story from Playboy, they were only getting the part the newspapers reported—that is, the quotes taken out of context.

I had an awfully lot of people come up to me and say:

“Ya know, I read the whole interview, and it made perfect sense—once you read the whole thing.”

It was the parents' responsibility to either limit their childrens' reading of adult magazines or else make sure they had the whole story.

In other words, education not only begins at home, it should never stop, just because a child heads off to school.

And once he or she does go to school, we need to make some changes in our system.

I think it's essential that students get a well-rounded education in the “traditional” subjects like math, English and science.

But we don't go far enough.

We need to develop an educational system that doesn't lose track of the simple things of life.

I'll tell you a story about a friend of mine.

He's a doctor, a great hand surgeon.

He can re-attach people's fingers if he has to. But when it comes to running his doctor business, he's lost.

Here's a guy who sailed through medical school, but he never got the necessary education for the things he really needs to know, like balancing his books.

He's a perfect example of why the system needs to be updated to include the little, practical things you'll need to know to get by in the real world.

I've suggested that colleges consider paying their athletes, but if you don't think that's a good idea, don't you at least think schools should offer classes for them that will get them ready for the world they're heading into?

Classes like how to pick an agent and how to keep from being taken advantage of by people who want your money.

After all, isn't college supposed to prepare you for your career? That's what those athletes need to prepare for their career.

Teaching the practical skills means everyone is included.

We've all been in classes where it was real obvious who the "brain" was, but our system needs to be balanced to take in not just the brilliant minds, but the average and below average ones too.

Everyone deserves an education, and everyone should get the same chance.

In any event, we all need a better education when it comes to practical, daily skills.

Book smarts are great, but if you're like my friend the hand doctor, they'll only take you so far. It's easy to train a nuclear physicist—but we also need to teach those basic, real-world skills.

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A few minutes ago I made a reference to “my world.”

You might think I was talking about Minnesota, because that's the world I'm in charge of, so to speak, and that's where my primary concern is.

But my world is also *the* world.

The world everyone lives in.

I think we'd all do a lot better if we looked beyond the exact geographical borders we're in charge of and thought about how certain things effect everyone.

I'll give you an example on a small scale, and I'll give you one on a large scale.

Here's the small-scale example:

In Minnesota, we have a lot of legislators who are quite concerned about the districts they represent: that's good, that's their job.

But they're *not* doing a good job when they push for something that's good for their district but bad for the rest of the state.

Or fight against something that doesn't appear to benefit their district but would be great for the rest of the state.

Just because you're being personally responsible and worrying about yourself doesn't mean you should do that to the detriment of someone else.

Now here's my large-scale example of thinking outside your own borders:

There are a lot of family farmers who are in trouble and can use some help.

But propping them up isn't the answer if half of the world is starving to death. Instead of fighting over subsidizing farmers, why don't we figure out how to feed the world?

If we did that, the farm problem might take care of itself and people would get to eat.

Easy for me to say, right, but how do you feed the world?

I do have one idea.

We have soldiers all over the world, right?

Along with their M-16s, why doesn't each serviceman or woman carry food, and give it to impoverished and hungry people?

I know it's more complicated than that, but it's a start.

It's also a way we can look beyond a band-aid solution and beyond our own borders.

To take an isolationist point of view is destructive.

In the Navy we have a saying, "KISS," which stands for Keep It Simple, Stupid.

As simplistic as my plan to feed the world sounds, maybe that's the beauty of it, simplicity.

We're living in a world that's getting more and more complex every day. It seems like it wasn't that long ago that not everyone had telephone answering machines.

Now everyone has cellular phones!

I hope we don't have a society that becomes so complex that everyone withdraws, but I'm afraid that's the direction we're heading.

You can now sit at your computer by yourself (or use your laptop), check your messages with your cell phone and pop your TV dinner in the microwave.

You don't need human interaction anymore, so it gradually disappears.

I don't think we'll get to that point, but I think practicing more simplicity may turn things around.

I'm all for technology, I just think it needs to be used to bring people closer together, instead of sending them into cocoons.

I want the small businessman in the most remote part of my state to have access to all the latest innovations and information within his industry.

It doesn't matter if those innovations are coming out of Bora Bora, he should have access.

That kind of technology puts us all on the same team, instead of dividing us into millions of little teams that have withdrawn from each other.

Once again: to take an isolationist point of view is destructive.

Rest assured, my ideas of what's right and what's not didn't just form overnight. They started forming early—my parents were very influential when it came teaching me values.

They taught by example and I'm very proud of the value system they instilled in me.

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Since becoming an adult, I've traveled the world as a wrestler and talked to the world as a broadcaster, and now I'm getting an entirely different education in the public sector.

But through all my travels and experiences, I've found that my core beliefs stand up to anything:

- Be self-sufficient,
- Be responsible,
- Be tolerant,
- Be honest, and
- Be fair.

If future generations hear that message and act on it, the world should be in pretty good shape.

Thank you.