

Good morning. It's a privilege to have a few minutes to talk with members of law enforcement who have traveled to the Capitol today from throughout Minnesota.

Let me start by thanking all of you for the help you have given my administration over the last two years.

Last year, I stood here before you and asked for your support of a new BCA building. Thanks in large part to your letters, phone calls and testimony, our proposal for a new BCA building was successful. Construction on the new building has already begun and completion of this facility will greatly improve our services to law enforcement.

I also want to thank you for your ongoing support of the State Patrol. Our troopers rely on their good relationships with local law enforcement to be their partners in ensuring public safety. This partnership was evident when I attended the funeral of Trooper Ted Foss last summer. I'll never forget that service. It was a powerful reminder of how close-knit the law enforcement community is in Minnesota.

I believe that government should play a limited role in people's lives. However, as many of you know, I've always recognized that one appropriate role for government is to ensure the safety of its citizens.

My budget this year, although lean, reflects my continued commitment to public safety.

One of the most significant items in my budget is the CrimNet initiative. This \$27 million dollar proposal will ensure the timely and accurate sharing of criminal justice information, which will not only protect the lives of citizens, but of law enforcement officers as well. Your life may depend upon what you know, or don't know, about a suspect. CrimNet will ensure that you're well armed with good information.

My budget also contains funding to operate the BCA lab so that your evidence gets processed promptly. And I'm proposing critical funding for a trooper academy so that we have enough troopers on the road.

I will also be supporting forfeiture laws for those who choose to drink and drive and will be taking the handcuffs off law enforcement by supporting a primary seatbelt law. I believe in allowing you to enforce laws that are already on the books.

I know that there will be difficult issues facing law enforcement this session, and perhaps none more challenging than racial profiling.

There is nothing more fundamental to democracy than the faith of citizens in those who enforce our laws. Unfortunately, whether real or perceived, racial profiling threatens to undermine the confidence the public has in law enforcement.

Every one of us in this room agrees that no person should be stopped based solely on the color of their skin. Yet it does happen and we need to acknowledge that. The question is how do we stop it?

The issue of racial profiling is a statewide issue that requires leadership at all levels. However, the solution to this issue lies at the local level and must be addressed block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood and community by community.

If, in fact, an officer is engaging in this conduct, it is the responsibility of his or her superiors to address the issue through education, training, and perhaps discipline. The state has a role to play in providing model policies and training opportunities that reinforce the fact the racial profiling will not be tolerated.

I applaud the efforts of police departments in Minnesota who have proactively addressed this issue by voluntarily collecting data on traffic stops. Data collection is an important step, but will not ultimately solve the problem.

The solution lies in better education and training of law enforcement personnel so that there is no doubt what profiling is and that it will not be tolerated. In my budget I am recommending some funding for voluntary data collection. However, if the law enforcement community wants to bring forward a proposal to educate and train law enforcement officers on racial profiling, I am willing to redirect the \$280,000 dollars in my budget to get on with solving this problem.

I look forward to working with you this session to make progress on these public safety initiatives.

Thank you for all you do to keep Minnesotans safe. Have a great day at the Capitol.