

I am told that you have not seen a Governor here in quite some time—the last was Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas.

Maybe that's a sign. When is the next presidential election?

First, let me say thank you to Roger Hale for the wonderful introduction.

I am fortunate to have such a capable and knowledgeable person heading up our workforce council in Minnesota.

Roger is a thoughtful and experienced leader and I appreciate his service.

Roger not only brings common sense to our workforce council but a healthy dose of reality.

It would be nice if Roger Hale's common sense approach could be applied to the complex set of rules and regulations sent down from the federal government on workforce programs.

Our economy has changed, not just in my state but across this country. Our system needs to change in order to keep up.

The era of high unemployment and minimal job growth is gone.

I would like to send a friendly message to the new Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao [CHOW] and her staff...

If you decentralize it—it has a better chance to work.

When Secretary Chao was confirmed, she said she would work to "protect, nurture and develop America's most precious resource, its working men and women."

I couldn't agree more.

But in order to develop our "resource" we must first set it free from the bureaucracy. The Feds need to recognize that one size does not fit all.

Let the states decide how to help our citizens based on our unique conditions.

A year ago, my Commissioner of Economic Security, Earl Wilson, invited me to speak at a celebration luncheon for all the people who worked on the Workforce Investment Act state plan. I expected to have lunch with a dozen or so people....

Imagine my surprise when I walked into a room of about 500 people.

I thought to myself...what kind of government regulation would require hundreds of people just to write one plan?

And who's really going to read all that stuff?

In talking to Commissioner Wilson later, I discovered it was all about a compliance document we needed to write in order to keep the federal money coming. That document took a significant outreach effort in order to get the buy-in the feds required.

But then, even that report was dwarfed by the volume of regulations that followed from the Department of Labor.

It seems to me we are worrying too much about compliance, and not enough about getting people into jobs and growing our economies.

As Governor, I must find solutions that are much more comprehensive.

In Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota we have 1,400 steel workers who have lost their jobs because the steel plant has closed.

A workforce development program alone isn't going to save those jobs or the town, nor will an economic development plan alone.

It is the two things WORKING TOGETHER that will make the difference.

I believe a strategy that includes BOTH elements is absolutely necessary to tackle this and the other problems we are facing in Minnesota.

It is one of the reasons why I will be announcing a major workforce reorganization in Minnesota later this week. We have done a terrific job up to this very moment, but we can't sit back and admire what a great job we have done.

I intend to recognize that in this economy, workforce development IS economic development.

And you know what?

The state with the best, most educated workforce is going to win

and rest assured.....

Minnesota intends to win.

Thanks so much for the invitation to speak, have a great conference, and Roger thank you again.