

Good evening.

Thanks for taking the time to join us for this “Friends of Minnesota” evening.

- Since I’ve become governor, I’ve taken an active interest in our tourism and travel industry. It’s vital to the state’s economy. And business travel is a significant part of that industry. That’s why Minneapolis and St. Paul have put so much into developing top-notch convention facilities.

I’ve had a chance to get to know many of the people who work in our hospitality industry, and I can tell you, they go out of their way to be terrific hosts to our visitors.

You know, I have something of a reputation of speaking up about things I feel strongly about. And one of the things I’m pretty vocal about it promoting Minnesota and all it offers to those who come for business or pleasure.

- Tonight we’re here to focus on the Twin Cities, but I also want to take this opportunity to tell you about the many other unique places for business meetings in Minnesota. Many of our resorts have facilities for smaller business meetings; they’re ideal places for executive planning retreats, for instance. And some of them can host mid-size conventions of 500 to 1000 attendees.
- But tonight I want to tell you about the Twins. The Twin Cities, that is. Often, when you read or see reports on the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, you hear about the competition. Sometimes they make it sound like the World Wrestling Federation, But we all know it is a healthy rivalry and in good fun.

The reality is, there’s a lot more cooperation than competition. Each city has its own character, its own style. These are two wonderful cities that complement each other. And tonight, they’re here together to invite you to come to town. Though there are two cities, The Twin Cities is really one destination. If you only visit one, you’ll be missing great things in the other.

- We make it easy for you to get here. The Twin Cities is a central hub, only two or three hour’s flight time from most major airports in the U.S. and direct service from 25 cities in Europe, Asia and Canada.

As you might expect from twins, The Twin Cities area has two exceptional meeting



facilities.

The Minneapolis Convention Center is currently undergoing an expansion, to be completed early next year. After the expansion is complete, the Minneapolis Convention Center will concentrate on hosting major national and international meetings.

The facility is served by 6,000 hotel rooms in downtown Minneapolis—many of which are linked to the convention center through a system of enclosed second story pedestrian skyways.

- The Plenary Hall here at the center is amazing. The space seats 3,400, but in five minutes, it can be converted into a 2000-seat lecture hall and three separate 450-seat learning centers.
- We've also got a terrific facility across the river in downtown St. Paul. Its called RiverCenter—and it sits on a blufftop above the Mississippi River.

RiverCenter is the perfect facility for small to medium-sized national conventions.

- It's connected to the brand new Xcel Energy Center arena, home to the Minnesota Wild, the newest expansion team in the NHL.

Downtown St. Paul offers 1,400 guestrooms. There's also skyway system in downtown St. Paul, and the convention center will be connected by skyway next year.

- All told, the Twin Cities area has about 35,000 hotel rooms. There's been a building boom going on in both downtowns, with more than \$1 billion of construction, much of it in the hospitality industry. It will bring two new four-star hotels to downtown Minneapolis—The Renaissance and the Grand. They join the four-star St. Paul Hotel, an elegant historic inn in downtown St. Paul near the RiverCenter complex. In addition, a 260-room Holiday Inn will open in St. Paul in just a week or so.

Also in the works are Residence Inn and a Courtyard by Marriott. Both are part of an exciting project in downtown Minneapolis that involves the renovation of the old Milwaukee Road train depot.

A great new indoor skating rink at the Depot is already open.

- But we don't just invite guests to stay in our downtown areas. We think they're so great that 40,000 of us live there. Both downtowns have become popular residential

neighborhoods.

- Another exciting development for the Twin Cities is the arrival of our first light rail system. We just broke ground on the first leg, which will connect downtown Minneapolis with the Mall of America and the airport. Completion of this first phase is about three years away, but I'm very excited. I've been a big supporter of light rail, so it's very satisfying to get started on this.

Also, downtown Minneapolis will have a free circulator bus taking convention-goers from their hotels to the convention center, theaters, museums, restaurants and shopping.

- Shopping is, of course, a favorite activity of visitors to the Twin Cities. You never go home from a convention empty-handed, right?

Our hometown store is Dayton's. It has just changed its name to Marshall Fields to increase their recognition worldwide. Both department store businesses are owned by Target, one of our Fortune 500 companies. So there will be new Marshall Fields signs going up on the stores in both downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis.

- We've have Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus in Minneapolis.
- And, of course, we're home to the shopping center everybody's heard of—the Mall of America, with Nordstrom, Macys and Bloomingdales.
- One of the things that really pleases visitors to Minnesota is that there's no sales tax on clothing, and that savings adds up.
- In addition to shopping opportunities, another thing that really makes a city a popular place to gather is a great restaurant. And we have them in abundance. In fact, a Minnesota-grown, fine seafood restaurant recently opened here in D.C.—Oceanaire
- We've also have a remarkable array of arts and entertainment. You'll find a tempting calendar of concerts, plays, musicals and exhibits.
- Just behind the convention complex in St. Paul is the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, where you can see a touring Broadway show, an orchestra concert or dance performance. The Ordway is under the direction of Kevin McCollum, one of the original



producers of the musical “RENT.”

- Minneapolis is home to the Tony-award winning Guthrie Theater. In a few years it will be moving to a new home on the riverfront. The Twin Cities is known nationally for its hot theater scene, offering a range and quality of productions that few other cities can offer.

Downtown Minneapolis boasts the beautifully renovated historic State and Orpheum theaters. Several Broadway touring productions have been launched at these theaters, three this year alone, including Elton John and Tim Rice’s Aida, that will open next month.

- We’ve also have an interesting collection of museums. Downtown St. Paul alone has the new Science Museum of Minnesota, The Minnesota History Center and one of the best Children’s Museums in the country.
- Minneapolis has three terrific art museums, with a great Degas exhibit coming this summer.

And we make it easy for our visitors as both cities have one museum pass. For one price you can visit 14 of our museums over five days.

- One of my favorite roles as Governor is that I get to invite visitors to Explore Minnesota. It’s the ideal location to extend your stay beyond a meeting or conference. It’s the land of 10,000 lakes, but so much more.
- Of course, we’ve long been known for our fishing. I get to kick off the opening of the fishing season each year at the Governor’s Fishing Opener. It’s a tough job, but someone’s got to do it, right? Our visitors can find plenty of good fishing lakes not too far from the Twin Cities area.
- Golfing has really taken off in the state. Every year, new designer-courses are ready for play. There are many right in the Cities, but I invite you to go further afield and stay and play some of our top-notch golf resorts.
- Our lakeside resorts are also great places for a family vacation or romantic getaway. What a great way to relax after a few days of business at a convention!

- Getting out of the city also gives you the chance to enjoy some of the north woods beauty of Minnesota. The North Shore of Lake Superior, for example, is truly stunning. In fact, the North Shore Scenic Drive is one of only 17 nationally designated All-American Roads.
- So, come take advantage of our excellent meeting facilities. We've got what it takes to help you have a successful convention. But when the business is over, I invite you and your members to stay and relax. Enjoy all we have to offer in the Twin Cities.
- St. Paul,
- And Minneapolis. Two great cities—one great destination.
- And then, stay and play. Explore greater Minnesota, and take home a story or two.

Thank you.