



Governor Ventura's Remarks (Text of written speech may vary from actual presentation)

I am very pleased to join members from all five caucuses of the legislature to announce our support for a campaign finance reform package this session.

In the 2000 elections we saw candidates, political parties, and special interest groups pour unprecedented amounts of money into our elections.

- Between 1992 and 2000, political party and caucus spending in Minnesota increased by 413% to \$17.8 million dollars.
- Independent expenditures by parties and caucuses went from \$308 dollars in 1996 to \$2.9 million dollars in 2000.
- Independent expenditures made by outside groups is also escalating. In one 2000 legislative race, outside interest groups spent over \$310,000 dollars, about 12 times a candidate's spending limit for a House seat.

This spending is just a glimpse of what we'll see in future campaign cycles. Why? Because money wins elections, buys political power, and preserves the status quo.

We are headed down a very dangerous path. Unless serious campaign finance reform is passed this session, we can expect special interest spending to undercut candidates' campaigns and the tone of our campaigns to grow more negative and less focused on issues that matter to Minnesotans.

If we hope to re-engage citizens in our political process, we must give candidates more control over their campaigns, level the playing field between challengers and incumbents, and focus on real issues not 30-second sound-bytes.

While Minnesota is doing a lot of things right, we must address some of the flaws in our system. My Administration's goals for campaign finance reform are quite simple. I want to:

- Allow citizens a stronger voice in campaigns by doubling the amount they are able to claim as a contribution refund from the state,
- Give candidates the public money when they need it, right after the primary,
- Provide better citizen access to campaign finance information, and
- Give candidates the tools to respond to independent expenditures that are made against them in the final days of an election cycle.

Doubling the amount citizens are able to claim as a political contribution refund from \$50 to \$100 dollars will allow citizens to show their support for a candidate or political party. It also forces candidates to work for their public subsidy by convincing voters that they are the right person for the job.

In Minnesota, legislative and constitutional officer candidates are currently given public funds following the general election if they receive a certain percentage of the total vote in that



election. This financing mechanism forces many candidates to take out loans to cover campaign expenses until after the election when they receive the public subsidy.

This is unfair to challengers since many incumbents have built-up a sizeable war chest over several election cycles. Some candidates, particularly challengers, have difficulty securing the loan even if they demonstrate a certain level of support. As a candidate for Governor, 22 banks turned me down before I was able to find one that would give me a loan.

I support changing the timing of these direct payments to candidates. Minnesota candidates who sign a spending limit agreement, raise the appropriate level of qualifying contributions, and have the nomination of a major political party should receive their public subsidies after the primary election.

This common sense change will help level the playing field by putting viable challengers in a position to run competitive campaigns.

It's also time for state campaign finance information to be available on-line to provide easy and timely citizen access to this information.

Campaign expenditures and contributions are public information. But in many states, including Minnesota, this data is not available on the Internet. Putting this information on-line will help bring government back to the people by giving them the tools they need to make good decisions about who they want representing them.

That one's a no-brainer.

Finally, empowering candidates to respond to independent expenditures that are made against them in the final weeks of an election is critical.

The current barrage of negative and misleading ads and mailings in the final week or two of the election is unfair to the candidates and to the people they seek to represent.

Candidates in competitive races are taken by surprise and most often don't have the time or resources to respond to inaccurate claims.

We must give candidates the ability to respond to these independent expenditures and to set the record straight. Then voters will have all the facts and can make an informed choice at the ballot box.

By working with the legislature to accomplish these goals, we will ensure that any person interested in elected office can run a competitive campaign and be judged on the issues rather than the size of his or her pocketbook. And if we take the next step by going to a single legislative session every two years, we will free candidates from running non-stop campaigns and let them focus on issues that matter to their constituents.

Governor Jesse Ventura
Campaign Finance Reform Announcement:
Open and Accountable Campaigns
State Office Building, St. Paul
March 6, 2001



3

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

I look forward to signing a bill this session that will encourage more open and accountable campaigns. Now I'll turn it over to Sen. Hottinger and Rep. Haas, two key supporters in the Legislature, to say a few words.