

Good morning.

I just came from the Anoka County Government Center, where I named a new judge for the 10th judicial district.

I figured, hey, as long as I'm in the neighborhood, I'll stop by the Chamber of Commerce and see what they're having for lunch.

Actually I love coming to Anoka. As I found out during my campaign, this is Ventura Country.

It seems like the people of this region think a lot like I do. You don't hear a lot of B.S. up here.

People pretty much tell it like it is. And as you might have figured out by now, that's the way I do business.

So today I'm going to talk a bit about my budget. I'll tell it like it is, not like you might have heard it from all kinds of other sources.

Today you're getting it straight from the guy who put it on the table.

Let's start with education. You've probably been hearing some pretty negative things about my education budget, most of them not true.

First of all, I'm not cutting K-12 education funding, I'm not cutting funding to the University of Minnesota and I'm not cutting funding to Minnesota State Universities.

We'll start with K-12 funding.

I'm proposing a 4-point-4 percent increase in K-12 funding for the 2002-2003 biennium.

Yes, that increase would be considered small, COMPARED to what we've given them in the past.

And when I say "we," I'm including my administration, because in this past biennium, we put aside around one billion dollars for K-12 education.

What happened to that money?

I'm sure each district can point to something new, but I'm not seeing any earth-shaking education innovations, and I'm certainly not seeing any earth-shaking improvements in our kids' educations or test scores

I know where a lot of the money went: teacher salaries.

Here in the Anoka Hennepin district, revenues for fiscal years 2000 and 2001 went up a total of 11-point-7 percent.

Teacher salaries, according to the teacher contract, went up

10-point-99 percent.

11.7% and 10.99% are pretty close together.

That doesn't leave a lot of money for helping our kids out in the classroom, beyond paying the teachers better.

And that's fine, to a point. Teachers are generally underpaid and underappreciated.

But we've got to see better management in the districts. We're seeing countless examples of districts negotiating with money they don't have.

Sure, it's money they're counting on getting, but look what happens when they don't get it.

They're in trouble, and the first place they look for help is the good old state of Minnesota.

It comes down to this: Somebody hands you a bunch of money, you'd better spend it wisely, and you'd better be able to account for your spending.

I'm not seeing either of those things, and that's what I need to see before I'll blindly spend even more of the people's money.

I see that K-12 revenues have gone up 100-point-7 percent in the past decade or so. 100.7%!

Where do we stop, without seeing results?

Is that number going to be 200% before we know it? Not on my watch.

That's K-12. Now let's talk higher ed.

The University of Minnesota asks for more than 250-million, I budget for more than 50-million.

Does the 'U' take a hard look at itself, like I asked all my state departments to do, and find places to trim?

No. They come out and say, "tuition increases all around."

Once again, no accountability.

They don't get the money they want, they pass the problem on to the students.

That makes me the bad guy, and them the victims.

Another thing people seem to forget is that my being prudent with the peoples' money will pay off for them--literally.

It will pay off when they get their property tax bill, it will pay off when they get their rebate check and it will pay off for them when they fill out their taxes.

I'm talking about major tax relief and major tax reform.

I'm talking about cutting property taxes by 800-million dollars, with the state assuming the full cost of basic K-12 education.

Are you a farmer? You'll get a 23 percent reduction. You own apartments? A 28 percent reduction. Commercial or industrial properties? You're looking at a 15% reduction.

But that's just the beginning.

I'm planning to cut income tax by half a percent in all three tax brackets.

We'll reduce the corporate income tax.

We'll double the Working Family Credit by 2003.

We'll expand the sales tax, to make it fairer, and we'll reduce it by half a percent.

And on top of all that, we'll continue something we started last year, reducing those outrageous fees you pay for your car tabs.

Let's see: property owners, people who earn income, people who buy things, people who drive.

I think we've got pretty much everyone covered.

When it all comes down to it, this is a responsible budget.

I'm not going to let the price of government just keep going up and up and up.

It's got to stop sometime, and that sometime is going to be right now, while I'm doing the job the people elected me to do.

I promised them I'd limit government, and I'm going to keep that promise.

I also promised them major reforms, that require some tough decisions along the way.

Governor Jesse Ventura  
Metro North Area Chamber of Commerce  
Anoka  
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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Right now you're hearing a lot about those tough decisions, but it's in the future where you'll really notice them.

And you'll be glad someone was looking out for your money, and your future.

Thank you.

I'll be happy to answer some questions.