

Good afternoon.

Thanks for inviting me to Minneapolis. You can't imagine how glad I am to be over here rather than back at the capitol.

We'll talk more about it later but I'm sure some of you have heard about the *Nightmare on Constitution Avenue* last night.

I am told that this speech is being broadcast live on Minnesota Public Radio. I suppose I better be careful referring to such lowbrow movies, because you know how sophisticated and intelligent Public Radio's audience is.

So given that we are live on Public Radio, I'll take this speech to a higher level so we don't have a failure to communicate.

I can do that you know. In fact there are a lot of people who think that if I would do it more often I wouldn't get in so much trouble.

But while I have learned a lot in the last two years, I still believe that much of what this job is about is common sense.

Of course it's not a simple job and you have to know a lot in order to apply your common sense values. But in the end I find that I do my best when I am true to myself.

I have to look at myself in the mirror at the end of each day. And I want you to know that I can still do that.

When I was elected I told my new staff that, I was not going to change who I am.

I knew I might upset some people, and I knew that this job would not be easy. But I also knew that if I was true to my provocative character, I could make people think about things that a conventional politician might shy away from.

In my view there are no sacred cows.

A few weeks ago I ran into my old friend Bill Walton and he reminded me of an old Abby Hoffman quote. It goes like this:

"Remember, it's the sacred cows that always taste the best."

And so as I look back, I am proud that I have not caved in to the conventional wisdom and tried to be someone that I am not.

I am not someone who backs down from a firmly held principle.

And I've never been afraid of sacred cows.

I call things as I see them, and I will not let politics get in the way of doing the right thing.

I got elected to this office because of these values and I believe I continue to have the support of the people because of these values.

I have lectured at Harvard, Carleton and Georgetown and written in the William Mitchell and Stanford Law Reviews about these values.

In spite of all the tricks, schemes, and game playing that goes on in a legislative session, I have upheld these values.

And in the next few days, no matter what happens, be assured that no matter how popular-or unpopular-the issue, I will be loyal to my deeply held values.

Be assured that I will be true to my belief that our K-12 education system should be accountable for the over 8 billion dollars they get every two years.

Be assured that I will hold firm on property tax relief to businesses that are taxed at the highest rate in the nation.

Be assured that I will not give up on reforming our tax system by abolishing the state mandated general education levy.

Be assured that I will be true to:

- Benefits for domestic partners
- Improving health care for kids
- Preventing teenage pregnancy
- Support for family planning
- Campaign finance reform
- Multi-modal transportation,
- And the modernization of workforce development.

And be assured that during these last few days-and during the entire summer and fall-I will continue to speak out against a legislative process that is putting meaningful progress on these issues, and for that matter the entire session, at risk.

Earlier this session two of the most powerful special interest groups in Minnesota-Education Minnesota and Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life-testified against certain measures that would fix our broken campaign finance system.

Why? Because the system as we know it gives incredible power to sacred cows and politically ruthless single issue interest groups.

The result is, they control the debate so that other important issues get left by the wayside or are left to be dealt with at the last second without adequate time to hold reasonable debate.

No single issue should occupy the agenda so thoroughly that it prevents an orderly and timely debate of campaign finance reform.

No single issue should divide people so much that reasonable compromise becomes impossible.

And no single issue should put a legislative session at risk.
They have been at it since the first week in January.

I believe that five months is adequate time to accomplish our goals.

Do you know that with just 9 days left in the session the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader had not even met to talk about how they can come together on spending targets?

I was meeting with the two of them and was appalled when they told me they had never met.

Can you imagine? In five months they just hadn't gotten around to it.
These are the guys who take every opportunity to criticize me for not being engaged.

Perhaps its about time the media follow them around and find out just what it is they do with their time?

I delivered my budget to the legislature in January.
I believe that five months is adequate time to pass a rebate that includes 100 % of the current biennium's surplus.

I believe that five months is enough time to figure out how to fund transit, roads and bridges.

And I believe that five months is enough time to fix the way we pay for our environmental regulation.

But it never is.

Why? Because the system is flawed.
Last year I asked the legislature to change the way we do business and start the process of adopting a one-house legislature.

Of course even though the polls said that over 80% of people wanted to vote on a unicameral system-the legislature thought they knew better. They said no.

They stood with lobbyists and special interest groups, afraid to change the status quo because the result might be that the people would have more power than a conference committee or a special interest group.

The system we have now is just fine, they said. A little fixing here and there, and we can eliminate the cynicism and distrust that the people generally have in government.

Well gee. Isn't it funny that the *fixing* never happened and today the people are as bewildered as ever?

The *fixing* never happened and so we have a single issue that has taken an inordinate amount of time away from this session.

Incredibly, important issues have been falling by the wayside with legislators lamenting that "there just isn't time."

There just isn't time?

There just isn't time to deal with the need for telecommunications reform?

There just isn't time to deal with campaign finance reform?

There just isn't time to deal with funding for the DNR?

There just isn't time to fix an outdated funding mechanism for the Pollution Control Agency.

But for the second year in a row there was time to fix the "hotdish" problem.

They had time to deal with kids drinking soda pop in school.

They had time to wrestle with the difficult issue of kids and tattoos.

Perhaps the legislature needs help defining what is a parental issue and what is a public policy issue.

And finally, because Representative Matt Entenza seems to be obsessed with my private life, the House has spent countless hours of committee time trying to ban my private life.

In fact it now seems incredible that Representative Entenza is saying that the reason the legislature is "adrift" is because I was working XFL games on Saturday nights.

Unbelievable.

I have to believe that even the people who listen to public radio are confused.

As I have said so many times; we desperately need to change this system.
We need a system that is more accountable, more fair and more understandable.

But legislators will use the lamest of excuses for their abuse of the bicameral system.

In a unicameral system, similar to the one in Nebraska, this kind of political maneuvering would be unnecessary.

A unicameral system like Nebraska's could provide every legislator an opportunity to bring one bill of his or her choice to the floor for a vote.

Representative Boudreau: In a unicameral system you would not have had to deal with a powerful committee chair who initially refused to hear your concealed carry bill.

Speaker Sviggum: In a unicameral system you would not have had to use up precious legislative days trying to maneuver your 24-hour waiting period bill into a position to overcome the maneuvering of the Senate Majority leader.

In a unicameral system we would easily have had a vote by now on the ballpark issue and know where legislators stand.

In a unicameral system we could avoid all this nonsense and actually move important revenue and spending bills through before the last week of session.

In a unicameral system we would have had discussions on spending targets before the last week of the session.

In a unicameral system we would have had tax bills on the floor in the second month of the session instead of the fifth month.

Yesterday, I was informed that a newspaper editorial page writer said that this last minute, end of session confusion is the result of tripartisan government.

I don't know who wrote that but he or she must have just starting covering legislative sessions since my election.

I know that whatever system you use is not going to be perfect. But why not try something more constructive, more accountable and more fair?

And what about personal responsibility? If a bicameral system is what you want then use it responsibly.

The fact is, no issue is so important that it justifies risking the integrity of the legislative process.

I believe that five months is enough time to get a bill to the floor and vote it up or down.

The people deserve at least that much.

We have four and one half days left in this session.

If, for whatever reason in those four and one half days, we do not pass-at a minimum:

- significant property tax reductions and the elimination of the general education levy
- a rebate that includes all of this biennium's surplus, and
- spending bills that do important things but check the growth of government,

I will be very, very disappointed. And you should be disappointed too.

Disappointed that 201 legislators were given an opportunity to do great things and they did not.

I hope the people understand how big this deal is. Why would we pass up this historic opportunity? I guarantee you that this is a unique opportunity. We will not get this chance again next year, or perhaps ever.

But that doesn't seem to matter to some legislators. To them it's all about politics. Who wins is what they ask.

Which party will have an advantage when they run for re-election?

I continue to be confused.

What about the people? Isn't it about the people?

If the legislature is listening I hope you hear this message:

Its not about Democrats and Republicans-its about the people.

And if you don't agree you are so out of touch that it is no wonder that the people don't trust their elected officials.

Last year Representative Barb Haake from Mounds View gave up her seat in frustration saying that she was "tried of checking her conscience at the door."

And speaking of tired, can you imagine what it's going to be like over there in the next 4 days?

Get out the midnight oil. Legislators will be passing bill that they haven't read and haven't debated.

And they'll be doing this with little sleep and lots of stress from being told to "check their conscience at the door"

This is how we want our legislature run?

Think about this-If there is no tax bill this year:

- There will be no Rebate and over \$800 million dollars will be left sitting in the bank.
- Your property taxes will go up instead of going down by an average of 15%.
- And healthcare providers? The provider tax will, according to current law, automatically go up by over a third.

The more I think about it the more disturbed I get.
But can we still do it?

Yes. It can be done. All that is needed is for everyone to understand that they have a chance to be part of a historical session.

But it is now in the hands of the Senate and the House.

If they have the courage to make decisions for the people we can still do it.
Again, this opportunity may not come again for a long time-if ever-and to let it go would be irresponsible.

We have a choice.

Why wouldn't we choose a win-win?

A winning session.

And a summer full of graduations, weddings, picnics, ballgames, golf, boating, swimming, and family reunions.

Rest assured, I don't want to even think about the alternative.
And I don't think the people do either.

Thank you.