

Good evening.

How was *your* day?

Mine was pretty busy.

Let's see, I started in Appleton, spent some time there, then I went to Montevideo and checked out their downtown.

After that it was on to Granite Falls to tour CREP sites. As many of you know, CREP stands for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

I'll talk more about that in just a minute. First I have to finish telling you my itinerary today.

While I was in the Granite Falls area, I toured four of those sites and met some great people who farm them.

After I met *great* people, I met the media.

Actually, after such a long day, I was almost glad to see them. Almost.

Anyway, after talking with them on the banks of the Minnesota River, I headed here.

And after a schedule like that, I am *really* glad to be here.

This is my first big road trip since we passed historic tax reform and tax relief, and one thing I'm finding is that people really appreciate what we did.

They love the idea of saving 23 percent on their farm and homestead property taxes, and 11 percent on commercial/industrial property.

But what I'm really hearing a lot of is, thanks for making government more accountable when it comes to getting the most out of every tax dollar.

Since I took office, that accountability has tied into my main philosophy: it's the people's money.

And because of that, from the time I took office to the end of fiscal year 2003, Minnesota taxpayers will have saved:

- \$3.2 billion dollars off their income taxes
- \$803 million dollars off their property taxes
- \$487 million dollars off their motor vehicle license fees, and
- \$58 million dollars off other miscellaneous taxes

That's a total of \$4-point-48 billion dollars off Minnesotans' total tax bill, plus-sales tax rebates totaling \$2-point-73 billion dollars.

That's how the taxpayer has benefited.

My administration has also been very, very good to our education system, despite what you may have heard.

If government has to be efficient with every tax dollar it gets, so should schools, and that was my challenge to our state's public education systems.

By 2003 our K-12 public schools will get more than eight billion of your tax dollars every two years. That's an increase of more than 20 percent for every public school student since I took office.

I mentioned the 11 percent reduction in commercial and industrial property taxes. Before that, we had some of the highest rates in the nation in that category.

That's just part of what we've done to help Minnesota businesses thrive. Our trade missions have knocked down barriers and opened up countless new opportunities for our state's businesses.

I've been to Japan, Mexico and Canada since I took office, and we're heading to China in November.

Think it helps Minnesota businesses when their governor goes overseas and gets the world's attention? Believe me, it does.

And when we talk about business, we have to remember the family business that keeps this state running: the farm.

I talked about the 23 percent reduction in farm homestead property tax.

There are other ways we've helped the agriculture industry, and that's through partnerships.

As governor, there's not much I can do about the price of corn. That's the federal government.

And don't get me started on milk prices.

But we can work with the federal government to help lower the overall cost of doing business.

We can do that through conservation programs like CREP, which benefit everyone.

CREP came out of the Conservation Reserve Program in the 1996 Farm Bill and more than a dozen states are now taking part.

Minnesota's CREP was one of the first in the country and it's considered one of the best when it comes to getting marginal cropland out of production and removing it from taxpayer liability.

So now that my administration has done all this good work to help taxpayers, guess whose turn it is now?

That's right. It's yours.

Over the next few weeks, there are going to be dozens of referendums around the state having to do with your tax dollars and the tax relief that we've put into place.

Make sure you're completely informed on what your local government wants to do with your money.

Hold those local officials accountable and get involved in the decisions that are going to affect you.

If you're happy with what you see, vote "Yes."

If you're not, vote "No." Make sure they can tell you what your tax money is buying, and what will change for the better if they want more of it.

If you want your property taxes to be under control, take control now.

We have made sweeping changes designed to take a big chunk out of everyone's tax bill.

But if the local governments and schools turn around and want to collect more taxes to cover local issues, the people are back where they started.
And they would only have themselves to blame.

If taxpayers become government watchdogs at all levels and keep an eye on their own money, the revolution we started this year will work just the way it's supposed to.

My administration has done a lot of great things for the people of Minnesota, but it's the people who truly have the last word.

I hope you make the most of it.

Thank you.