

Good afternoon.

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this very important conference.

I am glad to see that Senators Wellstone and Dorgan and Congressmen Kennedy and Sabo are also involved here today. Their presence--along with many experts in the field--shows the importance of renewable energy to the future of our state and country.

Thanks to all of them for taking time out of their busy schedules.

Since I took office, we have seen gas prices peak at nearly \$2 a gallon, rolling blackouts and high priced electricity in California, and natural gas price shocks.

We don't like those things and we especially don't like them here in Minnesota.

We like our energy available, affordable, and reliable. And, when it is practical, we want our energy from renewable resources.

The questions about our energy future require answers that aren't from our energy past.

That's why my administration is leading the way in the promotion of renewable energy--(when it's practical and economical)

The Energy Bill that I signed into law last year requires utilities to make a good faith effort to increase electric generation using renewables by 2015.

Now is the time to do more with renewables.

Now more than ever, it makes sense.

Here in Minnesota, we will need more electricity by the end of the decade. We will have to find a way to produce more because we are using more--and that trend is projected to continue.

Bob Dylan said, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows." Or that the wind blows a lot in Minnesota.

The potential for wind power in Minnesota is huge--in fact, our potential is 10 times greater than California.

We're ranked 9th in the lower 48 states for wind energy potential.

This would be the obvious place to make a joke about installing a wind turbine outside the legislature, but that's too obvious.

Minnesota is already one of the top states in the nation for producing electricity from wind. But we can do more and we should do more.

Last year, about 2 percent of Minnesota's total electric use came from wind. My Commerce Commissioner Jim Bernstein has said that 10 percent should be our near term goal--and I agree.

There are more than 400 wind generators supplying more than 106,000 Minnesota households.

Almost all of those generators are on wind farms. You might have seen them in southwestern Minnesota--actually they are hard to miss.

Everywhere we go--from Buffalo Ridge to the Range--people say they want wind power--and for good reason.

- It's good for farmers,
- it's good for consumers,
- and it's good for the local economy.

When you ask about building a coal or nuclear power plant, people say "not in my back yard"--when you ask about wind energy, people say "yes, please put that in my back yard"

Farmers like it because they make money--up to \$3,000 for each turbine when they lease their land.

Commissioner Bernstein tells me that 7 out of 10 Minnesotans say they would prefer to purchase electricity that is generated by the wind and that number is supported by utility industry surveys as well other studies.

If everybody wants it, and it helps answer our need for energy, we should be doing more with it.

And in more places.

Instead of building one huge power plant to serve several states, we should be building power where it's needed.

It's called distributed generation, and Minnesota communities have said time and again they want it.

At a conference last year in St. Cloud, dozens of Minnesota counties and cities made it very clear to everyone who is listening—

--They want to have control of their energy future.

They don't want to have to rely on power being delivered over big power lines from a plant hundreds of miles away.

And they want as much renewable energy as possible.

It helps them to be self-sufficient, healthy, vital communities--and that's what my BIG PLAN is all about.

I also believe in the kind of renewable energy that goes in the gas tank.

I figure it this way:

You can either put your money in the pockets of OPEC states--or in the pockets of Minnesota farmers and rural communities.

Which would you prefer?

My administration prefers keeping the money right here and that's why we will continue to promote the use of home-grown fuels.

Let's face it--OPEC is not on our side. The less we have to depend on them, the better off we'll all be.

It's simple. Ethanol means

- We grow our own fuel
- A stronger market for corn and other Minnesota crops
- And, less pollution

More than 200 million gallons of ethanol blended fuel was sold in Minnesota last year. I think that number will grow.

The 14-ethanol plants in Minnesota have the capacity to produce 325 million gallons of ethanol each year.

It's a good thing they can produce that much because people want a cleaner, homegrown alternative to gasoline.

That's one of the reasons there are more flex-fuel vehicles on the road--the kind of vehicle that can use either regular gasoline with 10 percent ethanol--or E85 made of 85 percent ethanol.

There are about 70,000 of those vehicles on Minnesota roads today.

Automobile makers like Ford--a major employer here in St. Paul -- are building more cars and trucks that use E-85.

And the private sector is responding with more places to fill up.

There are now 64 E85 fueling sites in Minnesota--about half in the Metro and half in Greater Minnesota. That's more than any other state in the nation.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce, working with the Twin Cities Clean Cities Coalition and other public and private partners, will continue to promote E85 in Minnesota.

My administration will continue to work hard on tough energy issues--because we don't want to be another California and we don't want to line up at gas stations over rumors of oil shortages in the Mideast.

We will work hard to promote affordable, available, and reliable energy for all Minnesotans.

And--working real hard--keeping Minnesotans first--we will not fail.

Thank you.