

Thank you for inviting me to speak this afternoon. I just finished doing my weekly radio show, which is my chance to really speak my mind directly to Minnesotans without any interference.

Now I get another chance to speak my mind -- and still, no interference. But you don't have to worry -- I'll be my usual, soft-spoken, un-opinionated self.

We're at about a year and a half into my administration, which means we have two and a half years to go.

Today I'm going to talk about how I got here, what's been accomplished so far and what we'd still like to get done.

First of all, where have *I* been?

Well, life from the jungles of Southeast Asia, from the center of a professional wrestling ring and from behind a talk radio microphone seemed pretty exciting.

But then I was elected Governor of Minnesota, wrote a couple of books and did a *Playboy* interview. Will life ever be the same? I don't think so.

But that's fine, because it's my nature to live on the edge and as long as I'm on the edge, life will continue to be exciting.

And rest assured, I'm not going to change.

I'm going to be a good father, a good husband, a good friend to my South Side buddies, a good citizen, a good governor, and I'm going to have a good time doing it.

How I got here is pretty simple.

Minnesotans elected me because they were sick and tired of having to choose from the same old radical left and the same old radical right.

As a result of some very progressive election and campaign finance laws here in Minnesota the environment was ripe for someone like me to expose the tired old thinking of the Republican and Democratic parties.

With same day voter registration available in Minnesota I was able to engage young and disaffected voters and urge them to go to the polls.

And with public financing available to major party candidates I was able to have just enough money (\$600,000) to compete with the traditional party candidates (\$4.3 million-combined).

And I won.

And you know what? If congress would ever have the courage to trust the American people the same scenario could take place on the national level.

But, of course, congress is run by democrats and republicans whose number one job is to get re-elected, and in that process, make sure that there are only two viable choices.

It sure doesn't look like things are going to change this year, but I'm not giving up. If the people keep speaking their minds like Minnesotans did when I was elected, things will change.

We just need Congress and individual states to let go of their stranglehold on ballot access and quit allowing the buying and selling of candidates. Once that happens, third party movements will be able to produce major candidates who can compete within the system.

Can you imagine if we had same day registration all over America and a legitimate three-way race for president?

I have the utmost respect for Vice President Gore and Governor Bush, but under our current primary system a fraction of the American people decide who will be our candidates. You get the predictable and the conventional and as a result an apathetic and unengaged electorate. This year is no different.

But it did work in Minnesota and I am your Governor. So now that I'm in place, what have I been up to?

Well, in the next month or so you're all going to be getting a nice check in the mail, for the second year in a row. I played a pretty big part in that.

Income taxes have been reduced across the board two years in a row.
Since I've taken office we've seen a reduction in car tab fees, (although not as much as I'd like).

We've put more money into Education funding to help schools reduce class sizes.
(Unfortunately, the legislature failed to put accountability language into the bill like I asked them to -- but I guarantee you that I will be even more insistent the next time)

We also added money for school breakfast programs and special education, while keeping other spending in check.

We're building a light rail line.

That's part of a multi-modal transportation system that will keep our roads from getting so clogged you can't even drive on them.

We're making plans to reform the property tax system.

We're making Minnesota a global competitor. I've already had a very successful trade mission to Japan, and I expect to have one to Mexico coming up in the fall. These are important trade partners, and everyone in Minnesota benefits when we make these contacts.

We're moving toward getting rural Minnesota the technology it needs to compete in the world economy.

And speaking of the world economy, did you know that travel and tourism is now the leading industry in the world? Incredibly, in 1999 travel and tourism generated over \$3.7 trillion in revenue worldwide and by the year 2008 it is expected to reach \$7.5 trillion.

Well, since I have become governor I have spent considerable time selling Minnesota to the world. And it works. There has been a major increase in tourists coming to Minnesota and tourism is now a \$10 billion industry that is comparable to agriculture in economic benefit to the state.

And, it is also interesting to note, the Minnesota Historical Society reports that since I have been governor the number of visits to the Capitol itself is way up. All of these things are part of my Big Plan.

You can get a lot done in four years (or eight), and when my four years are up (or eight), you will know the Ventura Administration has made its mark. And you'll see the results for many, many years.

In the meantime, I'll continue to be out meeting the people of Minnesota and hearing first hand how you feel. That is important because I don't look to a political party for direction, I look to the people.

Thank you for inviting me here today and have a great weekend.
If you like I will be happy to answer a few questions.