

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Minnesota State Bar Association convention today and talk about judicial selection.

Thank you Dick for your kind introduction.

Before I get to judicial selection I thought I would just talk briefly about the status of the special session.

As lawyers and members of the bench I am assume that you are as frustrated as I am with the legislature and their inability to do their duty.

Isn't it ironic that you, as officers of the court, are required to live up to your oath of office. If you don't, there are consequences. Right?

Well what about the legislature? Isn't their principle duty to make laws by which public policy is established?

Didn't each one of them take an oath of office and swear to live up to their constitutional responsibility?

I think it's time for the people to demand that the legislature come to agreement and as it says in the Minnesota State Constitution; "discharge faithfully the duties of their office."

While accountability is the thread that binds the integrity of our government, it is the responsibility of the people to provide that accountability.

That is why I believe the people must hold our legislature accountable not only for the laws they pass but for the laws that they do not pass.

And to get on to the reason I was invited here, I also think that the people should hold me accountable for my action as governor, and one of the more important responsibilities I have is to appoint judges to the court.

The appointment of judges is one of the longest-lasting legacies of a Governor and therefore one of the most important functions I perform as Governor. I know that the policy initiatives I have advanced could be undone by the legislature after I leave office, but the judges I appoint will likely continue to serve on the bench for 20 to 30 years after I am gone.

**Since taking office two-and-a-half years ago, I have appointed 33 district court judges. I have also appointed two Court of Appeals judges.**

The Commission on Judicial Selection, which reviews judicial applications, conducts preliminary interviews and recommends finalists to me for district court vacancies, has sent an average of three finalists per vacancy to me for my consideration. I asked my at-large appointees

to the Commission on Judicial Selection to follow a similar process for the two Court of Appeals vacancies as well.

In each instance, I have appointed a judge from among the list of finalists recommended to me. The Commission has consistently sent me top caliber candidates and I am confident that I could have appointed any one of the finalists they recommended to me and that person would have been a solid judge.

I know the Commission puts in a lot of time on each judgeship they consider and they take their work seriously. I want to publicly thank them for the excellent job they have done.

Keep up the good work!

I know a lot of people want to know what I look for in a judicial candidate. By the time the candidates get into my office, they all have the necessary legal experience to be a solid judge. So I look for people with good temperament who will treat the people that appear before them with respect and fairness.

I also look for people who are active in the community or in professional legal associations such as holding officer positions in their district bar association, and while I don't want district court judges to rewrite the law from the bench, I like candidates who are innovative in their approach to the handling of cases and who will be proactive in their job.

Finally, I like people who have some balance to their personal lives.

I do not ask the candidate's political affiliation nor do I ask how the candidate would rule on a particular case. The judiciary must be fair and impartial to continue to earn the trust of the citizens.

To have a political litmus test or an issue-based agenda in my appointments would undermine the bench and call into question the fairness of the judiciary.

This is also why I am opposed to the endorsement of judicial candidates by political parties and by special-interest groups.

I also enjoy announcing the successful judicial candidate from the courthouse where the judge will be chambered when I can. It is great to see a huge turnout from the community at these announcements and helps to reinforce the importance of the position.

I understand that three of the judges I appointed to their current positions on the bench will be talking to you a little later. I also see some other judges in the audience whom I appointed. I have heard great things about your work on the bench and I commend you all for your excellence.



If any of you lawyers in the audience are thinking of applying for a future vacancy, I encourage you to do so. It is an open process and I think you will find it a rewarding experience, even if you are not the successful candidate.

Thank you again for inviting me today and thank you all for attending.

I hope you have a successful convention.