Thank you, Mike (Wright).

It's a pleasure to present the 1988 Minnesota Business Partnership's Award for "excellence in management in state government."

The companies in the Partnership recognize the necessity -- and the competitive advantage -- of quality and productivity in business. This award is one way that the Partnership can encourage and reward employees in the public sector for outstanding achievement in improving quality and effectiveness in government.

As most of you know, STEP stands for "Strive Toward Excellence In Performance." The goal of the program is measurable improvement in the quality, quantity and cost effectiveness of state government services.
Since it was initiated by Governor Perpich in 1985, STEP has been emulated by numerous other states as well as countries such as Canada, Australia, Spain and Nepal. Commissioner Sandy Hale and Executive Director Terry Bock have been invited to speak around the country. In June, STEP was the only state government program to be featured at a White House conference on federal government quality and productivity.

Clearly, STEP is improving state government. Since its beginning three years ago more than 50 projects have been initiated. How often do business people look at the workings of government and mutter, "If only they would manage things in a more business-like way"? Well, I'll tell you, STEP is producing examples of managerial excellence any business would do well to emulate.

The five projects that were finalists this year came from a broad spectrum of government administration, all of which touch the daily workings and the basic economics of our businesses -- the MN Pollution Control Agency, the Dept. of Natural Resources, the Dept. of Trade and Economic Development, the Dept. of Transportation and the Dept. of Human Services.

We have with us this evening the project managers of the five projects. Also we have with us previous winners of this Award. Before continuing I would like the group to stand so that we may give them a round of applause. [APPLAUSE]
Several of the projects involved significant interdepartmental cooperation. "Strategic alliances" is a term on everybody's lips these days. How would you like to put together a strategic alliance between thirty organizations including both Federal and State agencies as well as the private sector. One of our finalist projects did that.

At the heart of any Total Quality Program is tapping the know-how of the people doing the daily work. It even has a fancy name amongst the quality gurus -- it's called "empowerment." We reviewed a project that was as good an example of empowerment as you find in any of the business applicants for the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award.

Effective affirmative action is an elusive goal for many businesses. Again, we saw an outstanding example. Likewise addressing the balance of trade and promotion of exports, especially for small business, is a matter of crucial importance in this U.S. economy. That is represented as well.

Yes, STEP is producing examples of good management that business would do well to follow.
As you might imagine, picking a winner was not easy. But the selection committee did manage to pick one. Before announcing the winner, I want to recognize the other members of that committee: Eugene Olson of Deluxe Check...Dorothy McClung of the State Department of Revenue...Ed Sampson of Merritt Electronics...Jean King of King Communications. Thank you for your help.

(PAUSE)

And, now, the winner: Sentencing to Service ... project manager John McLagan from the Dept. of Corrections, and his colleague from the Dept. of Natural Resources, Karen Loechler (Car-Inn Leck-ler).

(PAUSE)

Sentencing to Service was selected because, in the opinion of the judges, it best exemplifies STEP's objectives of superior management in state government.

Sentencing to Service (STS) is a program that puts non-dangerous offenders to work instead of having them spend nonproductive time in jail. It provides local courts with a sentencing alternative to jail or fines. Offenders work on a variety of projects that are not included in the Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) or other regular work programs. Work assignments have, among other things, included river cleanup, ski trail development, window washing, painting, and ditch maintenance.
Community service alternatives are not new to the State. What is new is the opportunity which John and Karen capitalized upon to provide coordinated and carefully planned work service projects involving both the Dept. of Corrections (DOC) and the DNR. This cooperation between the two agencies has been a major strength of the program. The project has also been "opportunistic" in perceiving and capitalizing upon opportunities to work with local units of government, private non-profit corporations, and the existing criminal justice system. Programs were organized and tailored to meet the needs of the areas and organizations involved rather than preconceived bureaucratic notions.

The project accomplishes several goals: The DNR and local agencies receive cost-free services. The courts have additional sentencing options. The Department of Corrections reduces the population pressures in its jails while providing offenders with useful, meaningful work.

No matter how you look at it, Sentencing to Service is a winner. It's a winner for the taxpayer. It's a winner for the DNR. It's a winner for the Department of Corrections. It's a winner for the offenders themselves. Most of all, it's a winner for the state of Minnesota and all of us who live and work here.
Now, I want to present John and Karen (Car-Inn) with the Partnership's Award of Excellence -- a Mats Johanson Limited Edition crystal eagle.

(PAUSE -- WAIT FOR JOHN AND KAREN TO JOIN YOU AT PODIUM)

Eagles are a royal, regal bird. They symbolize the highest and best of their breed. John and Karen (Car-Inn), you are deserving of this honor because Sentencing to Service symbolizes the best of management in government.

(GIVE JOHN AND KAREN THE AWARD)

Congratulations. And, thank you.

To the other finalists, congratulations and thanks are also in order. You are all winners! And so are all of us.