Thank you. It’s my pleasure again this year to present the Minnesota Business Partnership’s Award for "excellence in management in state government."

In the business world, quality and productivity are essential to competitive advantage and success. They are equally important to success in government. Through the Award of Excellence, the companies in the Partnership strive to encourage and reward employees in the public sector for outstanding achievement in improving quality and effectiveness in government services.

In 1985 Governor Rudy Perpich initiated a program called STEP. STEP stands for "Strive Toward Excellence in Performance." Its goal is measurable improvements in the quality, quantity and cost effectiveness of state government services. STEP is based on the basic principles of superior management: closeness to the customer, a focus on processes and the ways in which those processes can be improved, improved work measurement, gaining leverage by means of partnerships, and perhaps most important, making effective use of the skills and knowledge of those people who actually do the work.
Since its inception, state employee teams have undertaken 55 projects. Many of these projects have involved partners from the business community. Partnership members such as my company, Control Data, Dayton Hudson, First Bank, 3M, Honeywell, Medtronic, NSP, Blandin Paper, and Unisys.

The success of STEP continues to bring it widespread attention. This fall the Urban Institute Press in Wash., D.C. will publish the STEP process guide under the title, "Managing Change: A Guide to Producing Innovation from Within." STEP will also be featured in the Ford Foundation's soon-to-be-released film and book series called "Innovating America." In short, throughout the world, people point to Minnesota's STEP program as a model for innovative government.

The person who has shepherded STEP from inception to this world renown is Commissioner Sandra Hale, and I would like her to say a few words at this point. Sandy ....

Thank you Sandy. Now let me turn to the people who turn STEP from concept to working reality.

Individually, each of this year's finalists could serve as models for others to emulate. They produced innovation in state agencies that affect all of our lives -- the Department of Human Services, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Labor and Industry, and the Department of Transportation.
We have with us this evening the project managers of the five finalists. The previous winners of this Award are also here. I would like these people to stand so that we may give them all a round of applause. [APPLAUSE]

The projects represented by this group are outstanding examples of the management principles I mentioned earlier. Consider just one of those -- the principle, "closeness to the customer". Legislators make the laws -- the rules, if you will, by which we must live. How often do we say, "What the _____ does this rule, regulation, or whatever mean, anyway?"

Government agencies have the not very easy task of trying to tell us what the rules mean. And all too often, to put it as kindly as possible, they only add to the confusion and antagonism. Well because of STEP, MN agencies from DNR to OSHA compliance are beginning to change that -- to approach their tasks from the point of view of those of us who try to live with the rules. And there are so many other examples of basic good management at work through STEP.

So, picking a winner was no easy task. But the selection committee managed to pick one without any casualties. Let me take a moment to recognize the other members of that committee: Eugene Olson of Deluxe Check...Richard Schulze of Best Buy...Ed Sampson of Sampson Graphics...Marcia Bystrom of Piper, Jaffray & Hopwood...Peter Benner of the Association of Federal, State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Thank you for your help. [PAUSE]
And, now, the winner: The Minnesota Weather Information Network, commonly known as MN/WIN...project manager Dean Larson, Department of Transportation. [PAUSE]

[DEAN COME TO STAGE]

MN/WIN was selected because, in the opinion of the judges, it best exemplifies STEP's objectives of superior management in state government. It is a very powerful example of government, industry, and private citizens working together to solve a problem.

In fact, I was so impressed with MN/WIN that I couldn't help but think of Dean Larson last week as I listened to President Bush call for a "coordinated, united effort" in waging America's war against drugs. "Federal, state and local government, industry and individuals...together we will win," President Bush said. Well, if there's a living example of "winning together", it's MN/WIN.

In the MN Weather Information Network, Dean has forged a partnership among 32 organizations, including both Federal and State agencies as well as the private sector. He has truly achieved, in President Bush's words, a "coordinated, united effort" to help MN become a leader in the use of weather information resources.
Before MN/WIN came along, MN’s numerous weather experts, organizations and facilities worked independently to collect, forecast, and disseminate weather information. Dean Larson and his MN/WIN project have brought cooperation and coordination to all these varied resources. The result is improved service to the people of MN.

For example, uncoordinated federal programs have required that states individually implement supplemental weather programs to meet pilots’ needs. Thanks to MN/WIN and cooperation with the FAA, a new national program will reduce Mn/DOT’s weather information costs by an estimated $315,000/year.

A new metropolitan tornado warning system, estimated to cost $80,000, languished for 10 years. Through MN/WIN, the system was done in a few months at no additional costs.

Thanks to MN/WIN, the MN/DOT is the only non-federal agency approved to distribute data over the NWS circuits.

Moreover, automated weather stations have been installed at seven MN airports and contracts let for 16 more.

The accomplishments go on and on, but I’m sure that’s enough to give you the idea of what is being accomplished. There is one last aspect of this program that deserves to be mentioned. MN/WIN has resulted in spin-off benefits that go beyond weather information. For example, through MN/WIN contacts,
the Federal Aviation Administration is establishing a school in MN to train air traffic controllers. That’s more jobs, as well as more recognition for MN’s leadership.

Cooperation is at the heart of improving quality and productivity in government as well as business. Dean Larson has done an incredible job of getting people to cooperate and work together. He is truly deserving of the Partnership’s Award of Excellence -- this Mats Jonasson Limited Edition crystal eagle. Eagles symbolize the highest and best of their breed. Dean, the MN Weather Information Network symbolizes the best of management in government. [GIVE DEAN THE AWARD] Congratulations. And, thank you.

To the other finalists, congratulations and thanks for your participation.

[INTRODUCE SANDY GRIEVE]