



STATE OF MINNESOTA

L'etoile Du Nord

OFFICE *of* GOVERNOR MARK DAYTON
& Lt. Governor Tina Smith

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**Remarks of Governor Mark Dayton – As prepared for delivery
Inaugural Address
Monday, January 5, 2015**

Thank you, Chief Justice Gildea. It has been an honor to work with you during the past four years. Justice Page, thank you for your extraordinary service to the people of Minnesota. Justice Lillehaug, it is great to have you up here.

On a personal note, I'd like to welcome the members of my immediate family, who are with me today. My father, Bruce Dayton, who is now 96 years old, is here with his wife, Ruth. My brother, Brandt, and my sisters, Lucy and Anne, have traveled from New York City and Helena, Montana. You just saw my wonderful son, Eric, and daughter-in-law, Cory -- along with my grandson, Hugo, who makes four generations of Daytons here today.

I give special thanks to my father, Bruce Dayton. Dad, you have been a guiding light throughout my life. I would not be standing here today without your love and support. Thank you.

To: Vice President Mondale; Senator Klobuchar; our Constitutional Officers; other Distinguished Guests; and my fellow Minnesotans.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Governor for four more years. I especially want to thank you, who voted for me, and placed your trust in me. I will do my very best to serve you well.

I will do my very best to serve all Minnesotans well.

We gather today at a much better time, than when I took this Oath of Office four years ago. Back then, both our state and nation were struggling to recover from "The Great Recession." Minnesota's unemployment rate was 6.8%; nationally it was 9.1%.

Since then, our country's economy has improved; and our state has helped lead the way. Minnesota's unemployment rate has dropped to a remarkable 3.7%.

We have added over 191,000 jobs during the past four years – and we're not done yet.

Recently, it was reported that our nation's economy grew at a 5% annual rate during the third quarter, the fastest pace in over 11 years. The Dow Jones Industrial Average topped 18,000. Many economists are now optimistic that our country is entering a period of more robust growth.

Yet, recent reports also show that inequities in Americans' wealth and income are at record highs. Perhaps that explains the large divide between the new optimism on Wall Street and the persistent pessimism on Main Street, where real wages and median family incomes have continued to fall, even during this recovery.

Two-thirds of Americans currently believe our country is "On the Wrong Track." Only one-fourth say it's now going "In the Right Direction."

But what is the "Right Direction"? Many Americans would like to go back in time – to regain what they had before. The world, however, has moved into a new era – marked by Globalization – where companies and countries engage in fierce competition to create the lowest-cost production sites in the world and reap the profits from doing so.

This dispersion of economic activity has cost millions of Americans their jobs, their economic security, and their confidence in the future.

The world today offers many good opportunities. Yet, while there are many roads to successful, fulfilling lives, there is, essentially, just one path. It is through education, training, and the development of marketable skills.

Surrounded by low-cost competition, the United States retains one enormous advantage – the inventive and entrepreneurial abilities of our people. Most of our challengers, be they companies or countries, have not mastered the complexities of conceiving and designing new products and services; then organizing and financing them; then managing a group of people to produce or provide them.

In Minnesota, we have a further advantage – one that has been our greatest asset for generations. Our citizens have long-known that a good education is the key to our success. Now, we need to realize that a good education is the key to our survival.

And that an excellent education unlocks the door to unprecedented opportunities.

Our future success – the health of our families, the vitality of our communities, and the prosperity of our state – will depend upon our making those excellent educations available to all Minnesotans. We're part-way there.

We have ample evidence that most of our students are now receiving good educations. Many are getting great educations, from talented teachers, professors, and other educators throughout our state.

But are all of our students learning what they will need – to find good jobs and achieve success in the world that awaits them? If we're going to improve people's lives in our state, we have to improve their educations. We have to create a State of Educational Excellence.

How? By investing in it.

There's a big difference between spending and investing. Spending is for now. People spend money to buy what they need or want right away.

Investing is for the future. People invest money now to produce future benefits and rewards.

Wise financial management requires understanding this difference. And striking a proper balance between them.

In the coming months, we will make important decisions about spending or investing a projected state budget surplus of one billion dollars. We could spend it to provide goods and services for more people. We could spend it to provide tax cuts for some people.

I recommend that our top priority be to invest it in a better future – first and foremost, by investing it in Excellent Education. This means elevating our citizens' educations from good to excellent.

And making that educational excellence available to everyone.

To begin, we need to make quality educational experiences available to all our children, even before they reach school age. In one of the best initiatives of my first term, we now offer free, all-day kindergarten throughout Minnesota. We have created better opportunities for five year-olds everywhere to develop the intellectual and social skills they will need – not just to survive, but to thrive.

This new effort has also shown us the number of children, who are not ready for kindergarten. If our response is to do nothing – or too little – to remedy the disparities, we know that they will later cause worse crises for those kids – and for us.

So, we must expand and improve our early education and child-care programs. Additionally, some children's needs go beyond early education. They must be better-protected from neglect and abuse.

We must do more to prevent the mistreatment of Minnesota's children and to intervene quickly and effectively, when necessary. We must also develop the mental health resources to help them overcome those traumas.

I don't have the expertise to design those initiatives. However, we have many legislators, educators, doctors, social workers, judges, and others, who do. During the next five months, let us decide what more we must do to save our children. Then, do it.

After we get healthier, better-prepared children into our schools, we need to elevate their academic experiences -- from better elementary and secondary school academics, to better emotional support and career guidance, to postsecondary educations that will better lead to success.

I don't want to spend more education dollars on what is being done now. And I won't spend more on doing less.

I'll oppose four-day school weeks, less time in classrooms, or shorter school years. The era of shortchanging our students' educations is over.

Instead, I want investments for more time in studies and other developmental activities. For year-round school options. For after-school and special help services. For advanced high school and college courses in skills needed for the jobs of the future.

In the face of such intense global competition, for the sake of our children and the continued growth of our economy, we cannot do anything less.

Some critics will say: Invest more money in education? But we spend so much already! Unfortunately, No – we don't. According to the most recent US Census report, Minnesota presently ranks 24th among the fifty states in per-pupil Elementary and Secondary School spending.

Our state's support for Higher Education in real dollars recently fell to its lowest level in thirty years.

During the past four years, we started to reverse the previous decade's disinvestment– with all-day kindergarten, early childhood scholarships, per-pupil aid increases, and more postsecondary assistance. But those new investments have only returned Minnesota's education expenditures to the national average – and that's not good enough.

Now, with \$1 billion surplus, the question is not: "Can we afford to provide Minnesotans with the best educations?" It is: "Can we afford to continue providing less?"

The answer, obviously, is "No!"

For that reason, and for the sake of our state's future, I will dedicate the next four years to regaining our state's position as a national and global leader in education excellence.

I want all Minnesotans to have access to the best possible educations, to the skills and training they will need to achieve their highest aspirations.

In the days ahead, I will talk about other essential investments – including transportation.

I also recognize that there are other important, unmet needs in the lives of many Minnesotans.

I know that many advocates sincerely believe their needs – or their clients' needs – should be our state's top priority – and funded accordingly.

I look forward to working with the outstanding legislative leaders, who are here today, and with their colleagues, who will begin tomorrow, to better address those needs.

In closing, I note that much attention has been given recently to the divisions within our state. Most of them are familiar. During my forty years in and around Minnesota governance, those resentments have simmered and, occasionally, erupted.

There's Greater Minnesota against the Metro Area. Central cities versus suburbs. Urban schools against rural districts. East Metro versus West Metro. Cities, counties, and townships compared to other cities, counties, and townships.

Someone always believes that someone else is getting a better deal.

Those rivalries are not going to disappear. However, they cannot be permitted to blind us to the larger truth that we are all ONE MINNESOTA.

What binds us together is much more important than what pulls us apart. What helps one region usually benefits our entire state. Not always, but usually.

Economic growth in one area pays for property tax relief in another. Good farm prices in southern Minnesota boost sales and revenues in metro stores. Shops in Duluth do better, when the Range is at full production.

Better transit in the west metro adds to the vitality of the east metro, and vice versa. Counties benefit, when cities within their borders are thriving – and when other cities in other counties are thriving.

What helps some Minnesotans, usually helps all of us. So let's cheer each other's successes, not resent them.

And, finally, let's remember that not only are we all One, we are also Number One. When it comes to promoting Minnesota's virtues, we're too modest. Besides, we're often so focused on what we think is wrong, we forget everything that is right. And – if we do remember – we're careful not to talk about it.

But we do need to talk about it. Not as an exercise in collective self-esteem, but because we're competing with 49 other states and many countries to attract the best and the brightest – students, scientists, nurses, doctors, mechanics, machinists, entrepreneurs, executives – the talent upon which our future success depends.

When it's all added up and all sorted out, most of us live in Minnesota, because we want to. We know we're not perfect; but we're very good – and getting even better. Let's not forget that our state is often recognized by national and international experts as among the best or even the very best.

Casting all Minnesota modesty aside – we should be proud. Because we so often are the best. And because, when we are, we have earned it. Through smart minds, good ideas, and hard work.

Through all of us pulling together and making our state – despite lacking the advantages of ocean beaches, or Rocky Mountains, or fossil fuel riches – into a place unique and extraordinary.

A state upon which we proudly emblazon our motto: “L’Etoile du Nord,” “The Star of the North,” and bequeath it even brighter to future generations.

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