

Governor Jesse Ventura  
National Press Photographers Association  
June 28, 2002

Good morning.

It feels good to stand in front of a bunch of media types and not have to worry about answering questions—I've never had a problem getting my picture taken.

I know you're the people who are quietly doing your jobs, getting the pictures while the reporters breeze in and get all the glory.

In fact, once in a while, just before one of my news conferences starts, I like to peek out into the room and see who's there.

I always see the camera guys and still photographers, all set up and ready to go.

But when I come out for real five minutes later, all the reporters have magically appeared, zipping in at the last minute like they had all this important stuff to do and couldn't be bothered to come when you guys did.

O.K., I'm exaggerating just a little, but you know what I'm talking about.

I've always said I consider the photographers the real workers, the ones getting their hands dirty.

I'm sure you've all heard about the so-called jackal passes, which was our little joke on the capitol press corps.

Well guess who were the only ones who got the joke? The photographers.

They proudly displayed their jackal passes, while everyone else was just so outraged that their journalistic integrity was so compromised and their profession was being called into question and all of that.

But you got the joke, and to me, that's typical of people who work behind the scenes but don't get much credit.

During my three and a half years as governor, that's one thing that has surprised me—how much great work is going on behind the scenes, and how many excellent employees are doing the people's work.

I can start with my commissioners.

You ask anyone in the state to name five commissioners in my cabinet and they'd have a hard time coming up with more than a couple of names.

But those people keep this state going.

Each commissioner is one of the top experts in his or her field.

As a matter of fact, Skip Humphrey, one of the candidates I defeated in the 1998 election, later told me that he thinks I assembled the best cabinet in the country.

And even though they're all experts, they can put things in simple terms so everyone, including me, can understand what they're talking about.

Before I got this job, I didn't know what the commissioner of revenue did. I figured it had something to do with money and taxes, but it didn't sound like a very interesting job to me.

Then I met Matt Smith and appointed him commissioner, and he took some of my ideas, added his own, and helped bring about the biggest property tax reform this state has seen.

I was so appreciative of Matt and his staff that a few days after I signed that historic tax bill I stopped by the Revenue department and personally thanked all the employees.

Because even though all that expertise of the commissioners starts at the top, it works its way all the way down through the departments.

In the Finance department, there's a man named Peter Sausen, an assistant commissioner who's been there for years.

Peter had always been toying with a way for the state to help the Twins build a new ballpark without sticking the taxpayers with the bill.

Well one day he ran the numbers and it worked, and he came up with a plan in which the state would use its good credit to back a loan for the team.

It was a great idea, and it became the Ventura Administration's stadium plan, and the legislature passed it.

(We still have to wait and see if the Twins are going to come up with their share of the money).

But my point is, there's an example of an unheralded, behind-the-scenes employee quietly doing a great job to help the state.

And you'll find people like that all throughout state government. From the folks at the department of military affairs and the National Guard bailing out flooded homes, to the Housing Finance

Agency creating affordable housing for people who can really use it.

You probably have someone in your newsroom who is the voice of sanity when things are going crazy—the one person who holds the place together while the big bosses are making outrageous demands.

We have a lot of those steady people in state government, and that has been one of the things that I really enjoyed about my time here: how people are willing to work hard without getting a lot of the glory.

Part of my job as governor is to take credit when we as a team do something good, and take the blame when we screw up.

I knew that coming in, and I've been ready for whatever comes.

And there has been plenty of....stuff.

But there's been much more good than bad, and for that I can thank all the good people behind the scenes.

I hope all of you get the credit you deserve, and I don't mean just winning awards like Photographer of the Year.

I mean getting a thank you for when you make that extra effort to get the shot nobody else has, or for when you stay late because no one else can.

If you're not getting that recognition, come work for us here at the state. We'll take care of you.

Thank you.