



**Hubert H. Humphrey 2006 Leadership Awards
May 30, 2006**

**Remarks of Sean Kershaw
Recipient of the Emerging Leader Award**

Thanks to Dean Atwood and the Humphrey Institute. This is a great honor. I can be as self-deprecating as the next person, but I'll take this. I'll take it because, for all of my self-deprecation, I have to be honest. This really is a lot of fun.

I'll take this because it also has the best modifier ever: "emerging".

- It's a great excuse. For my first two years on the job I talked about the fact that I was still in the "it's not my fault" stage. Now, in my fourth year, I have a new excuse for my Board. I was just "emerging" – that's why I screwed up.
- "Emerging" is also realistic. It recognizes the gap in accomplishments between what I've done and what Geri, Gary, Justice Blatz and the Senator have done. (I often use "solving world peace" to describe an impossible policy problem – until I realized that Senator Mitchell has actually done that!)

I'll take this because it recognizes that you always emerge *from* somewhere.

- Why am I in politics and policy? I got to work with the likes of Pam Wheelock, Susan Kimberly, and Norm Coleman at the City of Saint Paul. I emerged from real mentors and leaders.
- Why was I inspired by the Citizens League? I got to work with Dave Durenberger, Jean King, Gary Cunningham, and Keith Halleland. I emerge from an amazing institution.
- Why does it still inspire me? I get to work with all of YOU, and an amazing staff. I emerge from an amazing base of people.
- Why can I sustain this pace? I emerge from a home – a family – that recognizes and encourages and supports this passion in me – and let's me leave the house before the doughnut guy is even awake.

I also emerged from Nebraska -- and my favorite Nebraska author is Willa Cather. Her epitaph is a line of Jim Burton's from *My Antonia*: It says "that is happiness: to be dissolved into something complete and great".

Ann, my new Deputy Director, has me on a strict "exclamation point reduction program". But my enthusiasm – my happiness in this work -- relates to this quote: I've emerged from -- and into -- something "complete and great" here in Minnesota. It's hard to hide the happiness and the enthusiasm.

And I think the pioneer metaphor is apt here -- because if you are emerging you should be *going somewhere*. I promise not to over-use the "pioneer" metaphor, but it's still apt.

- I'm three years into this job, and just getting started.
- We might find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. I hope we'll work as hard as our predecessors have – and be as creative. Policy pioneers are needed.



- We have a lot of hard work ahead of us – new ground to till as it were.

Fifty other people should have gotten this. But I'll take it. I hope that in two or ten or twenty years you'll feel like I've "emerged".

Thanks.