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[Print this Page](#)

[←--back to story](#)

Dayton: Tax wealthy to solve state deficit

Democrat plans to run in primary for governor

By Kevin Sweeney Journal Editor

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NEW ULM - Mark Dayton's quest to visit all 87 Minnesota counties in 87 days is nearing its end.

With a stop in New Ulm Tuesday night, Dayton, who is planning to run in the DFL primary for governor in August, was up to 78 counties, only nine to go.

Dayton visited with a small group of DFL faithful at DJ's restaurant in an informal discussion that ranged from Joe Mauer's \$184-million contract to the need for border-to-border, seamless Internet and cell phone service.

Asked about the state's budget deficit problems, Dayton said his solution would be to raise taxes on the wealthiest Minnesotans.

The former U.S. senator cited a 2007 study by the Minnesota Department of Revenue that shows the wealthiest 1 percent of Minnesotans, earning household income over \$450,000 a year, paid 9.3 percent of their income in state and local taxes, compared to most Minnesotans, in the \$27,505-per-year to \$130,000-per-year income bracket who paid 12 percent or more.

Dayton said the "no new taxes" philosophy of budget balancing is intended to protect that 1 percent, at the expense of schools, cities and counties and the poorest and sickest in the state.

"In schools, there are 35 kids in some classrooms, and school districts voting to go to four days a week, not because they think it's a good idea, but because they have to. They can't afford more."

"It's easy to balance the state budget. Just cut schools to two days a week and we'll have a surplus," said Dayton.

"It depends on what your priorities are. If your priorities are not to raise taxes on the rich, there are ways to do that," he said.

Dayton said he favors a system of taxes that are assessed fairly and are progressive, with the wealthy paying a higher percentage than those who make less money.

The budget can't be balanced solely with budget cuts, said Dayton. "You could eliminate every state agency and still not cover the deficit," he said.

On the issue of telecommunications, Dayton said if he were elected governor, on his first day in office he would have his public utilities officials looking for ways to improve telecommunications.

"Border to border, seamless Internet service and cellular service - If you want to live in rural Minnesota and communicate with the rest of the world, you have to have it," he said.

There are many jobs people could do from rural Minnesota if they had adequate Internet and communications service, said Dayton.

On the issue of roads, Dayton said Minnesota has fallen so far behind on funding necessary repairs and replacement that increasing the gasoline tax won't let the state catch up. It may be necessary to sell transportation bonds for statewide highway and bridge projects, like Highway 14, that are being done piecemeal now over a period of many years.

Speaking about health care, Dayton said he is not sure how the nation will be able to afford the changes in the federal health care legislation. He favors a single-payer system, and feels that the nation will find it necessary to move in that direction in 10 or 20 years.

Article Photos



Staff photo by Kevin Sweeney
Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mark Dayton (let) stopped at DJ's Restaurant in New Ulm Tuesday night as part of his '87 counties in 87 days' tour of Minnesota.

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