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all of us, put it all together and make it make sense and do such an important job letting the people of this state know what we're about. But probably most important behind the scenes is our staff, because all of us know here that we're only as good as our staff makes us. I've been fortunate to have staff with me for a very long time. They've served you all as well as me: Diane, LaRue, Tammy, and this year Sarah Newell joined us. So to them I give a special thanks. And, finally, every stage has an audience and we are here before an audience of about a million and a half people, and we get to walk on this stage, only 49 of us, and that is a great privilege, one that I certainly have appreciated. I think we are a real cast of characters, each playing a different role and an important role. And, yes, we have our exits and our entrances. I valued my time on this stage and as I exit I will always be applauding your good work. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Senator Schimek, for a presentation.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: My dear friend LaVon, how quickly 12 years go by. Some of you may think it odd that I would be giving LaVon accolades today because, as you all know, she's a staunch Republican and I'm a staunch Democrat. Well, LaVon, it's time to make a confession. I've known for a long time that you're really a closet Democrat. (Laughter) It's okay, you can be proud of it. And while we are speaking about confessions, LaVon made a confession in the Chamber one day some of you will remember. She stated that she always considered herself a good Catholic; well, kind of a good Catholic. She said she likes to eat fish but just hasn't learned to like bingo. Twelve years ago Senator-Elect Crosby and Senator-Elect Schimek came into the legislative Unicameral to be sworn in as state senators. Early on, LaVon and I decided that no matter what our philosophical differences, no matter what our political differences, we would remain friends, and we have. A few times, very few times really, we would find ourselves on opposite sides of an issue. More often than not we would be fighting for the same causes--for women, for children, for families, for the less fortunate. Senator Crosby's legacy is a distinguished one, an honorable one and an enviable one. She has served with grace and dignity. However, there have been a few times when LaVon made herself and others blush with her comments. I remember one