

Blake, Cumah (GOV)

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Subject: Forum editorial: Dayton's no-win is a win

Forum editorial: Dayton's no-win is a win

<http://www.inforum.com/opinion/editorials/3890724-forum-editorial-daytons-no-win-win>

Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton's decision to view a video of the shooting by Minneapolis police of an unarmed black youth was the right thing to do, even as it put him in what appeared to be a no-win situation. His reading of the video was that it proves nothing. That is, it does not support or dismiss claims against police by protesters that police acted inappropriately. It does not, the governor concluded, confirm "that the officers acted as some allege they did."

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That assessment will not satisfy the family of the dead youth, nor will it tamp down protests that have all to do with the larger issue of police misconduct. Facts – or the inconclusiveness of the video – are not necessarily germane to the protesters' purposes.

That being said, Dayton's extraordinary decision to request and view the video injects a measure of common sense into a volatile debate. The governor has been appropriately careful about criticizing Minneapolis police; he has been sensitive to the legitimate concerns expressed on the street. That attempt at fairness included viewing the video, which had become the flashpoint between police and protesters. He did not take sides when police initially failed to release the video, and it became a focus of anger. If nothing else, Dayton has put the video's relative value in perspective.

There is no political upside in this thing for the governor. Surely there will be elements among the protesters who believe Dayton is part of a whitewash. Knowing his personal commitment to fairness and racial justice, that's a bogus charge. No doubt there are members of the police establishment who believe the governor is throwing them under the bus. But Dayton's reading of the video should put the lie to that canard.

There are moments in a politician's life that define character and commitment to principle. Dayton could have stayed out of this awful situation. He did not. He did the right thing. It was one of the better moments of his tenure in St. Paul.

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Matt Swenson