

BAD PENNIES

How collective bargaining agreements shield wayward public employees

THINKING MINNESOTA



ISSUE 21
FALL 2020
\$4.95

Four
Months
Later

The Twin Cities Riots

**The
'Minneapolis
Effect'**
A conversation
with Heather
Mac Donald

**The
Aftermath**
Surges in crime
disproportionately
hurt Black people

**Fear
Factor**
Minnesotans report
unprecedented
concerns over
personal safety

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STAFF

John Hinderaker
President

Katherine Kersten
Senior Policy Fellow

John Phelan
Economist

Isaac Orr
Policy Fellow

Catrin Wigfall
Policy Fellow

Martha Njolomole
Economist

Tom Steward
Government Accountability Reporter

Peter Zeller
Director of Operations

Katie Fulkerson
Communications Director

Allison Payne
Communications Specialist

Micah Olson
Greater Minnesota Outreach Director

Kristen Sheehan
Development Consultant

Lydia Luciano
Donor Relations Coordinator

Kathryn Hinderaker
Event Coordinator

Mitch Rolling
Researcher

Jeff Johnson
Adjunct Policy Fellow

Mitch Pearlstein
Founder Emeritus

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS
CUSTOM PUBLISHING

Tom Mason
Publisher & Editor

Scott Buchschacher
Creative Director

NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP

When it came time to help the Twin Cities get back on their feet after the George Floyd riots, Minnesota's business community took a pass.

It's a close call in the finger-pointing war between Governor Tim Walz and Mayor Jacob Frey over who bears chief responsibility for the current state of the burned out, looted, and still fearful Minneapolis neighborhoods in the aftermath of the George Floyd riots. While both leaders seemed more fearful of offending key political constituencies than effectively protecting their cities, mounting evidence, if we are picking sides, puts the ongoing mess on Walz.

But there is another culprit that has so far escaped accountability: the business community.

Many Twin Citians—of all colors—were badly shaken by the live-action mini-series of unchallenged mayhem they watched on their television sets over five days in late May. In the aftermath, they looked for assurances from political leaders that it wouldn't happen again.

That's when the business community should have found the courage to enter the public discussion about the looting, rioting and general lawlessness. Business executives should have actively condemned the violent behavior of the rioters; they should have called the may-



Ron Eibensteiner

ors and the governor to account for their remarkable frontline failures; and they should have demanded a strategy to ensure our cities would never again tolerate such behavior. As these executives prepared to reopen their companies—the economic engines that sustain the economy of the Twin Cities—they should have also demanded a real-world action plan that guaranteed the safety of their employees, their customers,

their suppliers and their vendors, which includes just about all Minnesotans.

Instead, they did little. They sat in the peanut gallery as Minneapolis City Council members blustered about their proposal to condemn their constituents by defunding the police. The city council's grand plans died from the weight of their own absurdity, but we lost valuable time and momentum. It is still shocking to me that almost no one with clout in the local market pushed back on these ridiculous proposals put forth by our elected leaders—specifically by the governor and the mayor and the Minneapolis City Council.

Which is why I point to the business community. The policy questions that



THE GREATER MINNESOTA ADVISORY BOARD

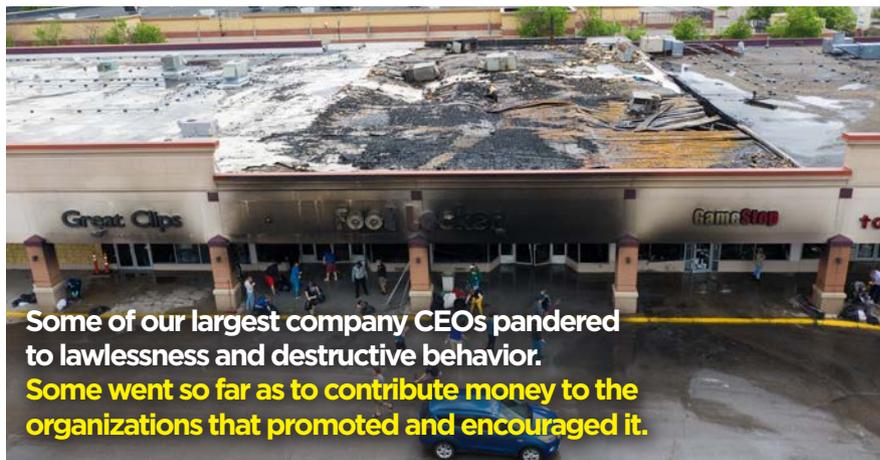
Center of the American Experiment wants to reclaim the lost art of listening.

We're looking for input from conservative thought leaders all across Minnesota to infuse better insights and greater relevance to our efforts.

Want to join?

Email Ron Eibensteiner
at
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UP FRONT



Some of our largest company CEOs pandered to lawlessness and destructive behavior. Some went so far as to contribute money to the organizations that promoted and encouraged it.

followed the riots needed advocates to demand accountability. In the absence of *any*—I do mean any—elected officials whose worldview extended beyond the “Through the Looking Glass” perspective of AOC extremists, the business community said nothing. They had the standing, the resources, and the responsible narrative that free enterprise capitalism must play a significant role in solving the problems in the Twin Cities.

Instead, some of our largest company CEOs were pandering to lawlessness and destructive behavior. Some went so far as to contribute money to the organizations that promoted and encouraged this behavior.

Minnesota has a proud history of social responsibility among the leaders of the business community. There was an era when it was led by prominent home-grown companies with leaders named Pillsbury, McKnight, Cargill, Dayton and Crosby, to whom social responsibility was more than a PR tactic. These leaders all grew from deep Minnesota roots and genuinely cared about what happened to their cities. My guess is that those business leaders would have asked hard questions of city leaders and demanded satisfactory answers. Where are the CEOs of our biggest employers today? Hiding behind the false gods of political correctness.

Many believe that today's Minnesota Business Partnership represents a formalized evolution of those civic minded executives. The Partnership is an affiliation of the CEOs of the 100 (or

so) largest companies in the state, and it doesn't speak for the countless small businesses that were harmed by the lawlessness.

So, where was the Partnership in all of this? Pretty much nowhere. A couple of members shared with me how the organization circulated some talking points about potential police reforms, but no attempts at real leadership were ever discussed, other than pandering to the maddening crowd and doing their fair share of virtue signaling.

We should use the events surrounding the George Floyd riots as a call to action for Minnesota's biggest employers to get more involved, which should start with the Partnership. We need their leadership. Their inability to publicly condemn the riots still astounds me. I don't believe that the 100 top CEOs in Minnesota operate in lockstep with the BLM/AOC progressive political agenda. Do they? Some critics say the Partnership's lack of concern stems from the fact that so few of its CEOs are actual Minnesotans anymore. So, maybe they have less urgency about caretaking our unique Minnesota culture.

The first role of government is to ensure that its citizens can work, play and raise their families in an environment that is safe for everyone. Without it, our businesses will crumble, and jobs will disappear. A vibrant business community is a must if all of our citizens are to have a chance at the American Dream. ★

> I am a new subscriber. Thank you for all the awareness you bring to issues hidden in the general news. But what can I do as a citizen to fight back? Please give suggestions on how we can make a difference on issues.

—Diane Forbes



> Thank you SO MUCH for offering conservative voices and opinions. It is so hard to find conservative news and information, so this is just the most refreshing. I cannot tell you how nice it is to read information that is not complete nonsense. (It shouldn't be so hard to find!)

—Amanda Hammond, Anoka

> Thank you for your latest issue of the *Thinking Minnesota* newsletter. I am reading it religiously during my morning and afternoon breaks at work. I find it hard to pull myself away and return to work.

—Diane Robinson, Hutchinson

POLICE BILLBOARDS

> Do you know that you are hurting businesses in Uptown? I am a small business owner, and you have now made an enemy out of me. I will stop at nothing to discredit your organization, what little credit you actually have. What if there was a shooting in

New Brighton, which there was, would you post a billboard there? Likely not. If there was a shooting in Plymouth, would you post a billboard there as well? You are what makes America stink these days!

—Joseph Walz, Minneapolis

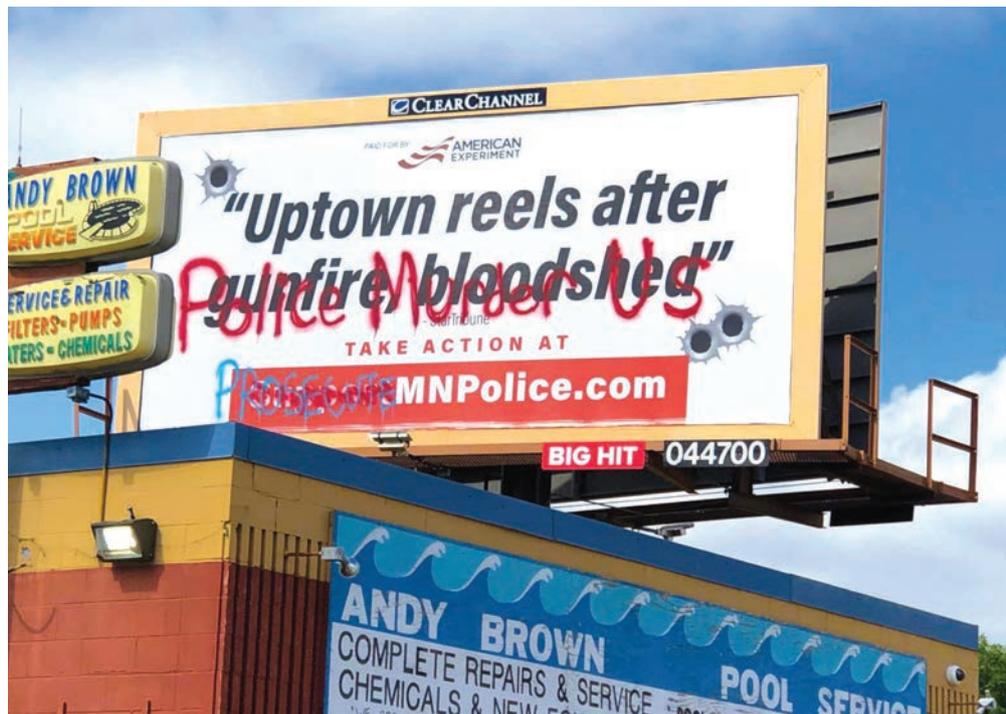
> I am a resident of the Twin Cities who is independent politically. Lately I have seen your billboards that say, "Support the Police." I certainly defend your organization's right to express its ideas and take part in public debates. That said, I felt troubled by your billboards that say, "Support the Police." I think your message is far too simplistic. Police have been and are supported immensely by the legal and political system in our state and country. I would have a much easier time hearing your

part of the "American Experiment." My understanding of the American experiment is that it calls for a check on power and asserts justice and fair play for those who are not historically the beneficiaries of political and legal power.

—Angus McGillis, Minneapolis

HEATHER MAC DONALD

> You are making a huge positive difference. I signed up to listen live to Heather Mac Donald, but I lost my internet connection. I expected that the event would have been recorded, but when I saw on Power Line that YouTube removed the presentation I was outraged (except now I'm numb from the torrent of outrageous events). Anyway, I was able to view Heather's presentation after it was restored. Simply powerful. As your billboards are defaced and your



message if you were to also take a stand against abusive police officers. Just as a teacher or doctor who acts out of line should face consequences, so should police officers who abuse their power. I don't see how supporting all police officers—even those who do wrong—is

YouTube videos taken down, I think Center of the American Experiment will be attracting more attention from a wider audience, and your important influence will be growing.

—George Wegner, Minneapolis
continued on page 11



MINNESOTA'S LEADING CONSERVATIVE VOICE

For 30 years, Center of the American Experiment has been Minnesota's leading voice on behalf of freedom and conservative common sense. Most often, that voice has been that of Center staff and Senior Policy Fellows.

Sometimes, it has been that of honored guests and world leaders such as Bill Bennett, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Charles Krauthammer, George Will, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Margaret Thatcher.

But in either case as well as others, American Experiment's work simply would not be possible—our many megaphones silenced—without the support of friends like you.

Would you be so kind to join us as we continue building a culture of prosperity in Minnesota? All contributions are tax deductible.

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UP FRONT

Standing Up

ALL PAIN, NO GAIN

Minnesotans gather to protest Governor Tim Walz's attempt to impose costly and ineffective 'California' car mandates on the state.

Hundreds of Minnesotans showed up in August at 16 town meetings statewide to protest against a proposal from the Walz administration that would put unelected bureaucrats on the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in charge of deciding what cars Minnesotans can drive.

The meetings were organized by Center of the American Experiment and the Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association.

Walz's proposed regulations would allow CARB to set fuel mileage standards for all Minnesota vehicles and force Minnesota's auto dealers to stock unpopular and unprofitable electric vehicles on their lots. These California car regulations would increase the cost of driving for Minnesotans up to \$2,500 per vehicle while having zero measurable environmental benefits.

"The regulations would be all pain and no gain," according to Isaac Orr, a policy fellow at the Center who specializes in energy issues.

"Dealers see the mandate for what it is, it's a violent intrusion into their business to fix a problem that Minnesota doesn't have," states Scott Lambert,



Walz's proposed regulations would allow CARB to set fuel mileage standards for all Minnesota vehicles and force Minnesota's auto dealers to stock unpopular and unprofitable electric vehicles on their lots.

president of the Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association.

The Walz proposal provides no way for Minnesotans to adapt to the significant differences between the California and Minnesota markets, according to Orr. Minnesota's colder climate, for example, reduces electric-vehicle range by up to 40 percent. On top of that, he says, 82 percent of new vehicles sold in Minnesota are large—a stark contrast to California.

Orr says Minnesotans already have access to all the top-selling electric-vehicle brands, and research concedes there is almost no demand for other electric vehicles. What's more, he adds, California's burdensome fuel mileage standards would prevent Minnesotans from buying the cars they actually want.

An analysis performed for the Colorado Auto Dealers Association estimated that the California rules would increase

the cost of conventional gas-powered cars by up to \$2,500 per car. In states that favor larger vehicles, like Minnesota, it would take more than 14 years for a 2022 model year truck to recoup this up-front cost through fuel savings. The average age for a vehicle in Minnesota is only 11.8 years, making it likely the

rules will never pay for themselves.

Perhaps more troubling, according to Orr, is that the proposed standards will arguably have no impact on the environment. Advocates claim the rules would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 2 million tons per year. "This sounds like a lot until you realize that global emissions were 36 billion

tons in 2019," Orr says, meaning the action would reduce about 0.01 percent of the worldwide total. "This would only reduce future global temperatures by 0.000052 degrees C by 2100, an amount far too small to measure with the most sophisticated scientific equipment," Orr continues. "These rules would impose real hardship on Minnesota families for imaginary benefits."

Micah Olson, Greater Minnesota outreach director at American Experiment, says the Center's town meetings reached thousands of Minnesotans through the mail, social media, and local interviews. "I found the tour as a whole to be a roaring success," he adds, highlighting that Minnesotans can email their opinions about the California car mandates to the governor and the MPCA through No-CACars.com. ★

Believe It

Xcel-onomics

How Xcel will make money by using part of your electric bill to help liberal, rich, white guys pay for their new Teslas.

Xcel Energy recently floated a plan in the *Star Tribune* to increase the number of electric vehicles (EVs) on the road by offering rebates of up to \$2,500 to people who purchase them. These rebates, which will most likely be paid to wealthy urban liberals, will come from your electric bill.

To understand how this works, you have to know a little about the con-

volved marketplace in which Xcel does business. First and foremost, most people don't know that Xcel isn't a traditional private business but a government-approved monopoly. Xcel customers have no freedom to shop for better deals from other providers. The State of Minnesota requires them to buy their electricity from Xcel, no matter how much it charges.

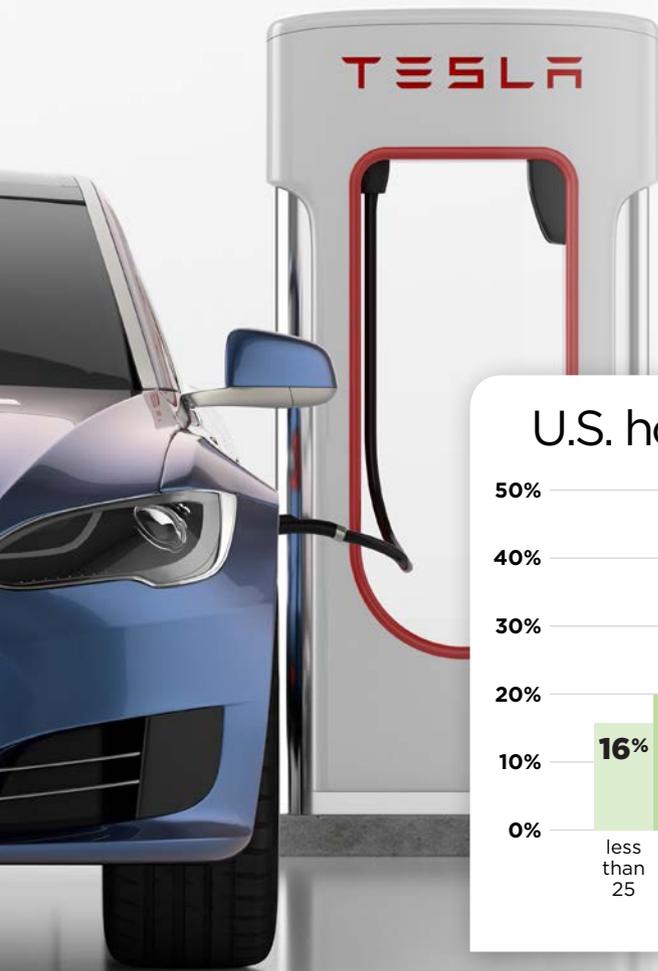
For that reason, Xcel doesn't get to profit from the electricity it sells. Instead, the company is allowed to rake in a guaranteed profit every time it *spends* money. The more Xcel spends—whether on wind turbines, solar panels, corporate c-suites, and even potentially EV rebate programs—the more money it earns for its shareholders.

The *Star Tribune* article admitted that “details are light on Xcel’s rebate proposal,” but it is clear that Xcel plans to charge customers more for their electricity to pay for the rebates, even though most EV buyers are wealthier than the

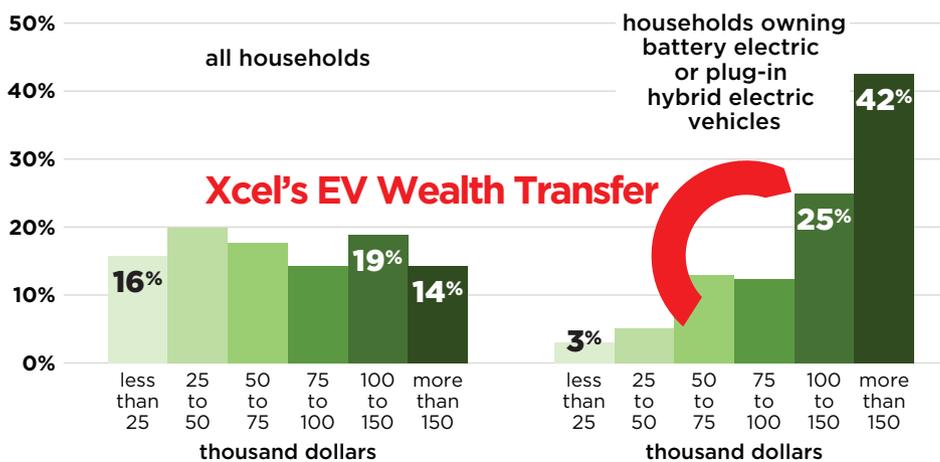
Research from Morgan State University reveals that 85 percent of EV owners are educated, affluent, older white males who are more environmentally focused than owners of internal combustion engine vehicles.

rest of us.

And they really are. Research from Morgan State University reveals that 85 percent of EV owners are educated, affluent, older white males who are more environmentally focused than



U.S. household income distribution, 2017



owners of internal combustion engine vehicles. “EVs were most popular among Democrats, and least among those not interested in politics,” the report says. Meaning, the rest of us will most likely be paying more to keep the lights on to subsidize the EV purchases for wealthy liberals in the Twin Cities.

In fact, 86.8 percent of battery EVs in Minnesota are registered in the seven-county metro area, according to the Atlas EV Hub, an online dashboard. According to the Energy Information Administration, 67 percent of EV-owning households make more than \$100,000 per year, meaning Xcel’s plan is siphoning money from low- and middle-income families to give to those who make more money. It is unclear how anyone could construe this as “environmental justice.”

While Xcel’s CEO Ben Fowke tried to play up the environmental benefits

The rest of us will most likely be paying more to keep the lights on to subsidize the EV purchases for wealthy liberals in the Twin Cities.

of this spending spree, the plan is really an attempt for Xcel to get its hands on another type of green: your hard-earned money. The \$150 million Xcel wants to spend on EVs is a down payment on future spending. If EVs increase the need for more power plants, then Xcel gets to spend even more money, and make even bigger profits.

According to a recent slideshow from Xcel, the company plans to spend an additional \$8.9 billion from 2020 through 2024, and you will have the privilege of paying for this spending through much higher electricity prices. ★

—Isaac Orr



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Minority Students DO Deserve Better

There is nothing racist about seeking a superior education.

Two Minnesota college instructors recently declared in *MinnPost* that white parents should “keep your children enrolled in their current or local public school” to show “anti-racism.”

Abby Rombalski, an instructor at the University of Minnesota, and Anita Chikkatur, an assistant professor at Carleton College, said that funding public schools is one part of paying “a large educational debt” that white America owes Black students.

Families of color in Minneapolis have long wearied of empty promises from district leaders.

“Well-resourced, culturally relevant public schools are an important facet of society that values Black lives and BIPOC children,” they said. “Leaning into your local public school is an anti-racist move to support schools through enrollment, advocacy, and community building.”

Hmm. It’s curious that Rombalski and Chikkatur believe so strongly that public schools are “paying back” students of color by providing them with the education they need.

Research and data show that Minnesota is one of America’s most generous public funders of districts with high populations of low-income students and students of color. The data also conclude that the state’s public schools—par-

ticularly in Minneapolis—have failed to meet the educational needs of these students for decades.

It is no secret that families of color in Minneapolis have long wearied of empty promises from district leaders and are using school choice options to flee their neighborhood schools in search of learning environments that prioritize the academic and safety needs of their

child to a different learning environment still pay taxes that fund public schools.

Policymakers should not rush to restore the public school system’s inefficient state by throwing more and more money at it. Classroom disruptions caused by COVID-19 have forced some parents and educators to innovate the way learning occurs. State leaders should make these options accessible



students. Without choice, these families would have had to accept the disappointing and inefficient results of the status quo, no matter how many white students stay in the district.

Rombalski and Chikkatur argue that maintaining funding for public schools “ensures that these schools can continue to offer learning options for all children” and when families transfer their kids, they put funding for public schools “at risk.” That’s never been the case. Funding for public schools consistently increases, and just as consistently, many students receive an inferior education. On top of that, parents who send their

for all families, particularly low-income students and students of color whose learning needs have already been underserved for years. No matter the color of the family, parents should be empowered to access the learning environment that best meets the needs of their child.

Reality check: Parents have good reason to look elsewhere for quality education. Instead of mindlessly guilt-tripping families into supporting a malfunctioning status quo—that benefits the teachers’ union more than students—we should use this opportunity to reform and disrupt an inequitable education system. ★

—Catrin Wigfall

continued from page 5

GREATER MINNESOTA

> I was sent a copy of the summer 2020 issue of *Thinking Minnesota* and read it cover to cover. I was most impressed to see the work that Center of the American Experiment has been doing here in Minnesota. Let us know a bit more about what you are looking for regarding a Greater Minnesota Advisory Board.

—Sadredin (Dean) Moosavi, Mankato

THINKING MINNESOTA POLL

> It was good to see that the majority of people are still supporting police officers and the idea of law and order. I would like to see public opinions about the leadership of the governor and the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul and how likely the public is to re-elect these “leaders” in the future.

—Wayne Cassibo

FAIR HOUSING?

> I read every issue of *Thinking Minnesota* from cover to cover and enjoy it immensely. Keep up the good work! I just watched an interview of Stanley Kurtz by Mark Levin. It really helped to explain what is happening with Edina schools and housing.

Stanley Kurtz wrote a book entitled, *Spreading the Wealth* that explains the “Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing” (AFFH) rule formulated by the Obama administration. This rule effectively gives the federal government control over local governments, particularly suburbs like Edina. Many decisions made by local officials in Edina do not seem to be made with the best interests of residents in mind. Perhaps it is the heavy hand of the federal government weighing in on these decisions?

—Tom Leverentz, Edina

DENSIFICATION

> As a young conservative, I found

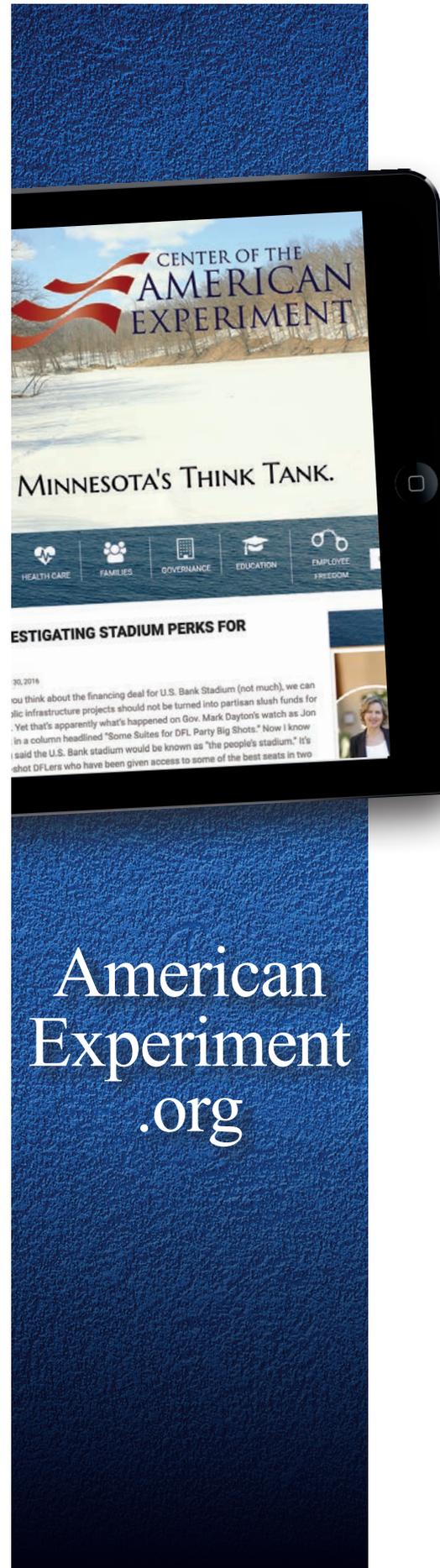
Katherine Kersten’s column “Densification” in last quarter’s issue to be inconsistent with conservative principles. Kersten laments that residents “can no longer choose to live in a single-family neighborhood” after the fall of single-family zoning. But what is conservative about restrictive policies dictating what style of housing landowners may or may not build on their property? She also asserts that “planners are making driving as...inconvenient as possible.” In truth, increased throughput (measured in people, not cars) and economic activity have resulted from virtually every effort ever made to replace parking and traffic with bike lanes and transit. The truth



It was good to see that the majority of people are still supporting police officers and the idea of law and order.

is that our car-centric cities should be regarded as a failed experiment in government policy, to use a phrase *Thinking Minnesota* readers should appreciate. Cities evolved naturally to be dense and walkable. Only in the 1950s and 1960s, partially as a result of lobbying by automobile companies, did governments spend vast sums of money (far more than has ever been spent on public transit) to raze neighborhoods and build highways through cities.

—Calvin Kotrba, Eagan



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Equity For Me, But Not For Thee

The Lost Neighborhoods

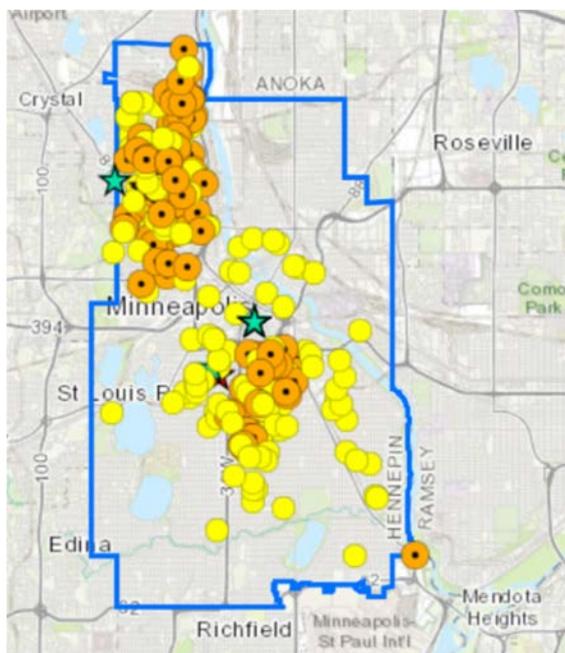
Property values fall in low-income and minority communities because violence has escalated where they live.

Liberals and the “progressive” politicians to their left love to talk about “equity, diversity, and inclusivity,” but Governor Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey have erased decades of equity for low-income families by allowing violence and rioting to run virtually unchallenged earlier this year. The fall-out is resulting in a huge drop in the kind of equity you measure in dollars.

Traditionally, the way that Americans build their wealth is through home equity. Investopedia defines home equity as “the market value of a homeowner’s unencumbered interest in their real property, that is, the difference between the home’s fair market value and the outstanding balance of all liens on the property.”

The key phrase here is “fair market value,” and the inept response to the riots by Walz and Frey, and the calls to defund the police by the Minneapolis City Council, will disproportionately harm low-income and minority communities by reducing the fair market value properties in these areas. Their actions are erasing years of equity.

Property values will fall in low-income and minority communities because violence has escalated where they live. Notice how virtually all the reports of gunfire are occurring in North Minneapolis and South Minneapolis, between I-35 and Hiawatha. Notice where gunshots aren’t being reported: Kenwood, East Isles, or Lake Harriet. In case you’re unfamiliar, these areas are



Calls for Service: Last Seven Days of Gunfire

- ★ Shooting (PFE)
- ★ Shooting Report Only (P)
- ShotSpotter Activation (P)
- Sound of Shots Fired (P)
- City Boundary

populated by white, wealthy, liberals.

To the degree that there is systemic racism in Minneapolis, this is it.

Meanwhile, as calls to defund the police have escalated and routine stops have plummeted, residents in North Minneapolis are severely under-protected. Minnesota Public Radio News recently recounted the chilling details of how a drive-by gun battle near Jordan

Park threatened the lives of 50 children attending a football practice, some as young as 5 years old.

Coach Marvin Thompson told MPR that about 50 gunshots rang out during a gun battle. But despite the gunshots, there was no police presence. “It was the worst seven minutes of my life so far,” he said.

The residents of North Minneapolis can be forgiven every ounce of outrage they feel about being overlooked by their local government. This isn’t the only instance of this happening, either. A July article in the *Star Tribune* described how a mother found a bullet in the mattress of her 11-year-old son’s bed, under his Ninja Turtles blanket.

Not surprisingly, she’s trying to find the money to move.

Who wants to live in an area where their kids aren’t safe? Who is going to invest in a community

**Minority communities
need home equity,
not empty-slogan equity.**

where people live in fear of gunshots and have zero confidence that there will be enough police to protect them? If no one wants to invest in these areas, how can the current residents build any sort of home equity? Home equity is a large percentage of most families’ wealth.

Less prosperous communities will only build home equity, or business equity, when they feel safe and confident that they can build better lives for themselves.

Minority communities need home equity, not empty-slogan equity. ★

—Isaac Orr

School Safety

Cops Out?

Teachers' unions support removing police protection from schools, despite what their members tell them.

In a stark rebuke to educator preferences, Education Minnesota—the state's teachers' union—is standing with other political groups that are working to remove School Resource Officers (SROs) from school grounds. Education Minnesota's national affiliates (the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers) no longer want officers as school security personnel, and one of its local affiliates is "demand[ing] police-free schools."

But most educators say they want to keep SROs in schools. A June survey by the EdWeek Research Center revealed that only 23 percent of educators support removing them. Thirty percent say SROs are needed because "too many students are out of control." Nearly three out of

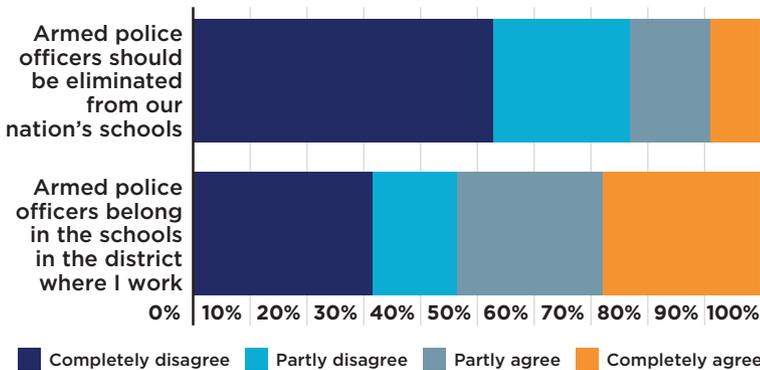
four teachers, principals, and district leaders say the officers are needed for protection against outsiders intent on doing harm to students and staff.

The NEA and the AFT represent thousands of school security personnel, including SROs, yet union leadership has recently stated they have "grave concerns" about officers in schools—starkly different from past sentiments that "SROs are vital to keep classrooms safe." When President Obama proposed legislation in 2013 that included appropriating \$150 million to hire SROs, both the NEA and the AFT supported the bill. Now that past support is being scrubbed off the teachers' unions' websites. Are they ashamed of their own long-running role in the placement, funding, and advocacy of SROs?

Critics say that Education Minnesota should stop spending union dues to support groups that are politicizing school safety. Given discipline issues that threaten school safety, students feeling less safe at school, and the rise of school violence, SROs are critical to protecting both students and teachers. ★

—Catrin Wigfall

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



* Results show responses from teachers, principals, and district leaders

Source: EdWeek Research Center Survey, 2020



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UPFRONT

Public Safety

Thought Police

Mayor Carter plans to cut cops in 2021, but his public safety budget still includes a six-figure political advisor.

The *Pioneer Press* reports that St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter has instructed Police Chief Todd Axtell to cut \$9.2 million from the city's 2021 police budget as it wrestles with a shortfall projected to range between \$19 million and \$34 million due to costs related to COVID-19 and the George Floyd riots.

Carter argues that cuts to the police budget mirror the same percentage that he has levied on other departments. But there's a good bet that St. Paul's nervous neighborhoods will question whether Carter should impose "equal" spending cuts. Safeguarding people and property, they'll say, arguably represents *the* essential function of government, especially these days, and should get more of the dollars to maintain law and order. A city that fails to fulfill that obligation is a failed city.

The numbers show that St. Paul's already under-funded police are struggling to keep a lid on disorder.

By the end of July 2020, Carter's city had already endured 19 homicides, up 46 percent from last year's record-setting pace. The nearby chart illustrates that in those first seven months, St. Paul experienced as many homicides as in all of 2010 and 2016 and more than in the entirety of six of the previous 10 years.

Mayor Carter is willing to have fewer police officers, but he wants to keep a newly hired political director among the city's ranks. The *Star Tribune* recently reported that Jon Grebner, a former political organizer at AFSCME Council 5, continues to pull down some \$110,000 per year from the police budget.

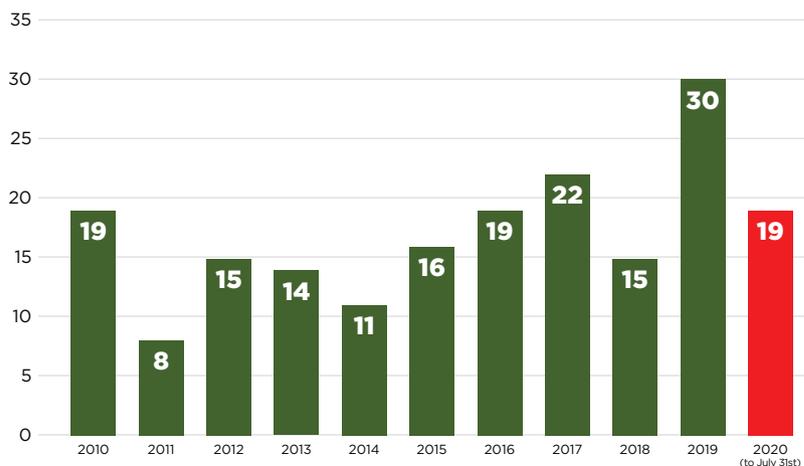
What is the point of this hire?

City council member Chris Tolbert explained it like this to the *Star Tribune*: "In the midst of a pandemic...having people who have the ability to communicate on behalf of the mayor with trust is a really important thing, not just to the council but to the entire city."

So, while St. Paulites can do without cops, they cannot, apparently, do without the mayor's opinions. ★

—John Phelan

Homicides in St. Paul



Source: City of St. Paul Crime Reports

Note to Teachers

You Don't Need the Union

Professional teacher associations offer liability insurance for a fraction of the cost of union dues.

As teachers' unions stand with groups who want to make schools less safe by defunding the police and taking away School Resource Officers (SROs), classroom educa-

tors look to liability insurance for protection. But many educators don't know there are non-union professional associations for teachers that offer twice the coverage the union provides its members for a fraction of the cost of union dues.

Membership in either the Association of American Educators or the Christian Educators Association International includes a liability insurance policy that costs less than \$200 a year and provides teachers with \$2 million in coverage. In contrast, the National Education Association (NEA) offers a \$1 million plan paid for through annual dues ranging from \$800 to \$1,000. In 2019, NEA spent \$10.6 million for

its policy to cover 2,975,933 members or \$3.57 per covered member per year. Non-union education associations also offer professional benefits and services, including legal protection, job protection benefits, and life, disability, auto and home insurance. Many teachers admire how these non-union professional associations prioritize the needs of teachers and students, not partisan politics.

Teachers who don't feel represented by the union have affordable alternatives when it comes to liability coverage and other protection. You can find more useful information at www.EducatedTeachersMN.com. ★

—Catrin Wigfall

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Racial Justice

A New Religion?

Progressives are now engaged in doing theology without God. For all its claims of ‘inclusivity,’ this new faith is deeply intolerant.

Since the death of George Floyd, a movement that condemns America as “systemically racist” has convulsed our public consciousness. Sixty years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964—and despite decades of affirmative action, massive social welfare spending and a two-term Black president—we are told that “white supremacy” deforms America today, as it has throughout history.

The movement to eradicate “white privilege” manifests in demands to defund police and in the toppling of statues—not only of Confederate generals, but of figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, Ulysses S. Grant, and even George Washington.

Educational, business, media, nonprofit and entertainment institutions have taken up the “systemic racism” mantra with breathtaking speed, issuing statements declaring their virtue and right thinking.

Yet something is profoundly amiss in the frenzied movement that has America in its grip. This movement elevates passion over reason and dogma over data. It contemptuously rejects, and attempts to silence, calls for objective analysis as self-evidently racist.

In the process, it requires adherents to turn a blind eye to its stark inconsistencies. For example, while its votaries blocked Interstate 94 and torched whole neighborhoods in the name of justice for Floyd, who died at the hands of police, they are silent about the rain of gunfire and soaring death toll from Black-on-Black violence in Minneapolis since then. As of late July, the city had 37 homicides in 2020—nearly twice as many as that time last year—and at least 274 people had been shot, nearly a 60 percent

increase. Nationally, about 90 percent of Black murder victims are killed by other Blacks, where the race of the killer is known, according to the FBI.

What is unfolding before our eyes is a new secular religion. For all its claims of “inclusivity,” this new faith is deeply intolerant. It has roots in the American past that would likely surprise its adherents:

the Puritan era of our nation’s earliest religious zealots. Progressives are now engaged in doing theology without God. “Woke is the new Saved,” in the words of commentator John Zmirak.

Parallels abound. One of Puritan theology’s core tenets is “innate depravity”—the doctrine that humans are inherently wicked as a result of original sin. The woke faith preaches an updated version: America’s original sin is white supremacy.

For white people, “having racist assumptions is inevitable,” according to Robin DiAngelo, author of the bestselling book *White Fragility*. “Straight white



Teddy Roosevelt statue outside the American Museum of Natural History.



This movement elevates passion over reason and dogma over data. It contemptuously rejects, and attempts to silence, calls for objective analysis as self-evidently racist.

men have been involved in a witness protection program” that “absolves them of their crimes,” she declares.

The Puritans divided humans into the saved and the damned, the saints and the sinners. The woke faith does the same, classifying people as either oppressors (white) or victims (nonwhite).

The new faith’s adherents view themselves as the “elect,” redeemed, as it were, by a predestined grace. They are convinced they possess a higher truth and are committed to imposing it on others.

Like their Puritan forebears, the woke faith’s adherents believe that heretics—whose false doctrine imperils the larger community—must be rooted out. Dissenters must be humiliated, shunned and branded with Hester Prynne’s scarlet “A” of shame.

Yet the new faith does offer a way for white Americans and other sinners to find salvation. To join the righteous, they must confess their sins—“check their privilege”—beg forgiveness, do penance and vow to become an “ally” of the oppressed.

Today, a Puritan-inspired witch-hunt mentality is ablaze all around us, bent on

destroying the reputations and livelihoods of those who show the slightest hesitation to profess true doctrine. “Bigot and hater” are the new “witch and wizard,” as commentator Mary Eberstadt has observed.

The list of heretics fired or compelled to resign grows every day. It includes a *New York Times* editor who dared to publish an opinion piece—reflexively branded as racist—by U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton; Grant Napear, the Sacramento Kings announcer, who tweeted that “ALL LIVES MATTER...EVERY SINGLE ONE!!!”; and leaders of the Poetry Foundation, who issued a statement denouncing systemic racism that some deemed too vague.

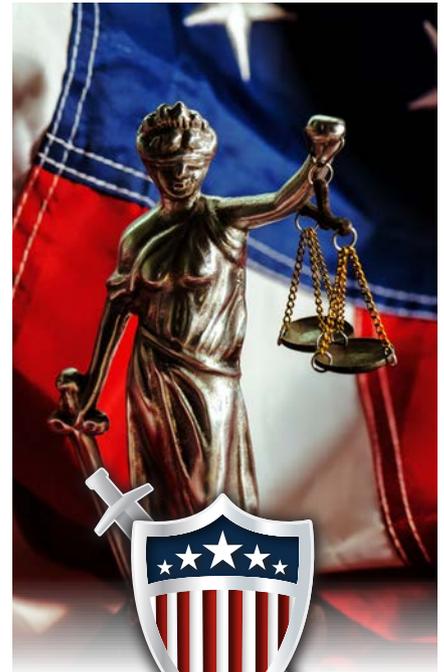
“Forced conversions” to the new faith are also becoming commonplace. Drew Brees, the New Orleans Saints quarterback, first criticized athletes’ kneeling during the national anthem and then issued a groveling apology. Dan Cathy, CEO of Chick-fil-A, sought absolution for past sins by shining the shoes of a Black rapper. Politicians kneel in repentance and whites in tony neighborhoods display a “Black Lives Matter” sign on their lawn.

What explains this lightning-speed capitulation? For many young people—restless after the COVID-19 lockdown and often knowing little of history or religion—conversion to the woke faith can be part of a search for meaning in our post-Christian society. For corporations, professing “solidarity” with the new religion is good business.

But for the movement’s leaders, this secular faith offers much more. Its goal is to dismantle as irredeemably racist the sinful nation in which we live and to build—in the Puritan phrase—a new City on a Hill, made in their own image. ★

—Katherine Kersten

A version of this article first appeared in the Star Tribune.



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—John Hinderaker
President,

Center of the American Experiment

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Lemonade

Gala, Indeed

The Center's annual event highlights a year of extraordinary accomplishments, despite COVID-19.

Center of the American Experiment celebrated a year of unprecedented success despite the constraints of COVID-19 when close to 3,000 people attended a “virtual” version of its annual gala on September 19. The 75-minute, internet-based event featured a live keynote address from former White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and a visit from South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, who received the Center's first “Courage in Government Award.”

“The theme of the evening should have been ‘lemonade,’” says Ron Eibensteiner, the Center's chairman. “It showed how John Hinderaker and his staff absorbed all the lemons that the COVID economy could muster and posted the most productive year we've seen to date.”

The gala included a video that recapped the Center's year-to-date.

Public Events

- **Speaker Series.** The Center reconfigured its once-live quarterly speaker series to a Zoom platform, attracting record numbers of “attendees.” Conservative entertainer and podcast host Adam Carolla drew 972 viewers. Iconic conservative social critic Heather Mac Donald digitally “returned” to Minnesota with a fascinating take on crime, race and policing before a live audience of several thousand. The recorded YouTube video has over 99,000 views.
- **Masterclass Series.** The Center's policy fellows swapped their growing schedule of public speaking engagements for a series of weekly “masterclass” digital seminars that provided updates on their ongoing work. In all, more than 4,300 people logged in to watch the programs either live or archived over a six-week span.

Grassroots Activism

- The Center launched a billboard campaign to support the Minneapolis Police Department in the wake of the devastating George Floyd riots in May. As vandals repeatedly defaced eight of those signs, the Center put them back up. A related website



Keynote

Sarah Huckabee Sanders

“I think it's awful that in the previous administration we started to apologize for being America. We shouldn't apologize. We should be proud of who we are. We should be proud that we're the envy of the world.”



This is one of more than 60 viewing parties that were held across the country during the virtual gala.

petition—SupportMNPo-lice.com—has been signed by more than 30,000 Minnesotans so far.

- A “Back to Work MN” campaign generated more than 52,000 emails from Minnesotans to the governor or their individual legislators. The project achieved a national award from the State Policy Network as the “Best Issue Campaign” of the past year.
- The Center collaborated with four other regional think tanks to successfully bring about a rule change that prevents

public unions from skimming off dues from Medicaid payments intended for personal care attendants. This effort earned the “Network Award” from the State Policy Network.

- The Center's “Open MN Schools” campaign gathered 14,000 supportive signatures to help persuade state and district leadership to bring students back into public school classrooms.
- The Center hosted 16 public town meetings across two weeks in August that brought awareness to Governor Walz's proposal to impose California auto mandates on Minnesotans.

Publications

- *Thinking Minnesota* magazine, the Center's quarterly publication, has grown from a readership of 8,000 five years ago to 97,000 in its most recent issue.



Courage in Government

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem received American Experiment's first "Courage in Government Award" for her refusal to order a COVID-19 shutdown.

Policy Leadership

• Policy Fellow Isaac Orr continued his role as Minnesota's most prominent conservative voice on issues related to energy and the environment. He and

researcher Mitch Rolling collaborated on "Doubling Down on Failure," a paper that exposes how Minnesota's green energy mandates will cost Minnesotans \$80.1 billion, destroy jobs, and have almost no positive impact on the environment. Their research earned the State Policy Network's award for "Most Influential Research" of 2019.

- Economist John Phelan began the year with an analysis of Minnesota's economy, which at the time enjoyed a \$1.5 billion surplus. He will soon release a second version of that report, which addresses the current \$2.4 billion deficit.
- Policy Fellow Catrin Wigfall released an education paper, "Allergic to Accountability," that calls attention to the very little progress Minnesota's public schools have made over the years

despite increased spending. Her EducatedTeachersMN.com initiative informs teachers they do not have to financially support the teachers' union and helps interested educators opt-out during an annual September resignation window.

- Senior Policy Fellow Katherine Kersten continued her role exposing what the left is up to on a host of social, cultural, and educational issues here in Minnesota—particularly its emphasis on white privilege curricula and teacher training in K-12 education.
- Adjunct Policy Fellow Jeff Johnson, the Hennepin County Commissioner and former gubernatorial candidate, contributed his first Center research project, "Out of House and Home," that reveals how exploding housing costs in the Twin Cities are directly related to government policy and regulations. ★



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LEGISLATIVE SHOWDOWN

The Coming Tsunami of Big Government

Unprecedented levels of COVID-related spending and intrusion into private lives and public businesses have given liberals a taste for Big Government power that they'll not readily relinquish. Minnesota's policymakers must prepare for a tsunami of spending, regulations and social engineering in the next legislative session. Here are our thoughts on just a few issues they'll face.



Higher Taxes are Not the Answer

By John Phelan

Back in February, economic forecasts showed that Minnesota's state government had a projected budget surplus of \$1.5 billion for the remainder of the budget cycle ending July 2021. In March, COVID-19 hit the state, and the economy was brought to a sudden halt. By May, that surplus had disappeared, and the state budget office projected a \$2.4 billion deficit for the period ending next July. May also saw a prolonged period of rioting, which left devastation in some sections of the Twin Cities and a bill for the damage that was added to state spending. On July 31, the state budget office added a projection of an additional \$4.7 billion shortfall for the biennium beginning in July 2021.

This poses a problem. Because Minnesota's constitution requires a balanced budget each biennium, lawmakers in St. Paul must ask themselves a very hard question: How will we close this deficit? To answer, the state government has three options: higher tax rates, lower spending, or some combination of the two.

Minnesota already has some of the highest tax rates in the United States

Minnesota has the fifth highest top rate of state personal income tax in the United States—9.85 percent on income over \$164,400 a year. Only Oregon, New Jersey, Hawaii, and California have higher top rates. But Minnesota doesn't just tax "the rich" heavily. Our state's lowest personal income tax rate—5.35 percent on the first taxable dollar earned—is higher than the highest rate in 25 states.

It is a similar story with state corporate income tax rates. At 9.80 percent on the first dollar of income, our state has the fourth highest state corporate income tax rate in the United States. Only Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Iowa have higher rates.

Tax revenues do not appear to be driven by tax rates

Tax hikes as a solution to the deficit ought to be rejected because evidence suggests they wouldn't succeed in bringing in the required revenues. When a state government raises a rate, it is attempting to appropriate a greater share of the income generated by that state's residents for itself. So, we can judge the success of income tax rate increases, for example, by looking at whether they result in a greater share of the state's Gross Domestic Product

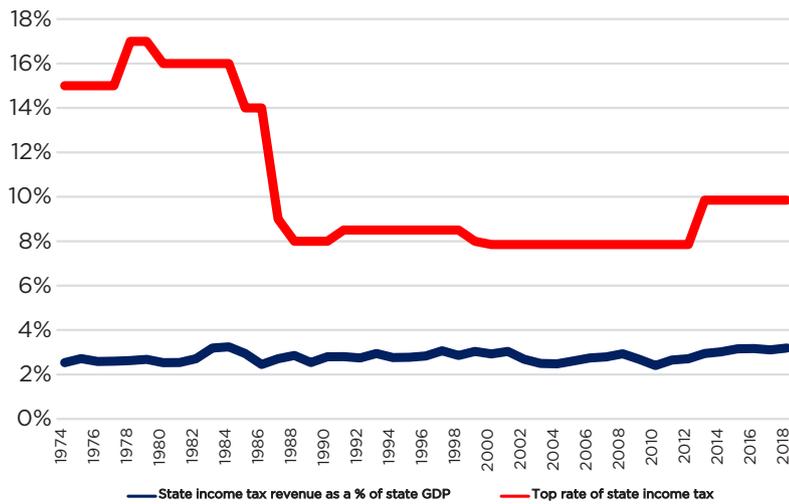
How will we close this deficit? To answer, the state government has three options: higher tax rates, lower spending, or some combination of the two.

(GDP) being taken in income tax.

That does not seem to be the case in Minnesota. Figure 1 shows the state's top rate of state income tax for a single filer and the share of the state's GDP taken in income tax. What is striking is how stable the share of state GDP paid in income tax is—both the mean and the median average for the period 1974 to 2018 are 2.8 percent. This is in spite of state tax policy. In the 1970s and into the 1980s, Minnesota's politicians tried to claim a large share of their citizens' income with top rates of tax up to 17.0 percent. But Minnesotans did not respond to these rates by handing over a greater share of their money, as shown by the stability of the revenue line. Indeed, they handed over a larger share of their incomes to the government in the 1990s with top income tax rates of 8.50 percent than they did in the 1970s with rates of 17.0 percent.

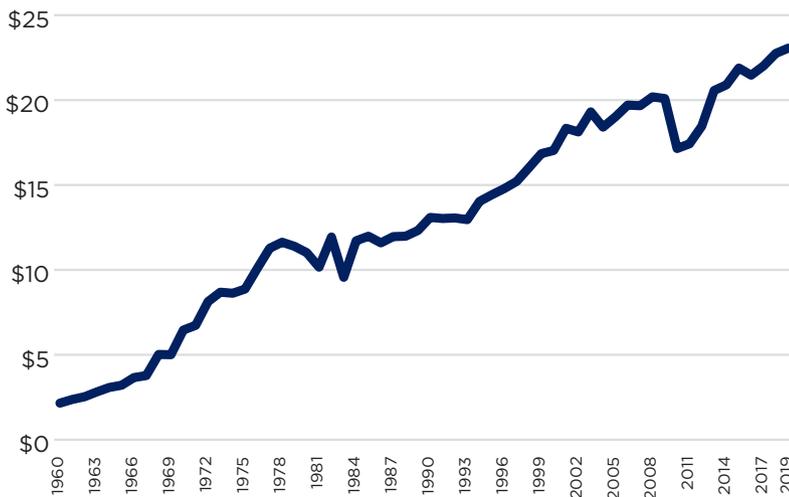
The same is true of revenue more

Figure 1: State Income Tax Revenue as a Share of State GDP and Top Rate of State Personal Income Tax



Source: Minnesota Department of Revenue and the Bureau of Economic Analysis

Figure 2: Total General Fund Spending, 1960 to 2019 (2019 dollars in billions)



Source: Minnesota Management and Budget

broadly. For total state tax revenue as a share of state GDP, the mean average is 6.6 percent since 1974 and the median is 6.7 percent. In other words, there is very little variation in these numbers.

There is an important policy lesson here. The dollar amount of tax revenue seems far more likely to be a function of the size of the state's economy than of its tax rates. This means that if you want more money to fund government services, you are better off looking to increase the state's GDP rather than its tax rates.

High tax rates restrain economic growth

With this in mind, a third reason for rejecting hikes in tax rates is that they depress economic growth.

The balance of empirical research on the effects of state tax rates on economic growth is clear. In a review of the literature measuring the impact of taxes on economic growth, the economist William McBride concluded:

...that there are not a lot of dissenting opinions coming from peer-reviewed academic journals.

More and more, the consensus among experts is that taxes on corporate and personal income are particularly harmful to economic growth, with consumption and property taxes less so. This is because economic growth ultimately comes from production, innovation, and risk-taking.

Of the 26 papers reviewed by McBride, 23 (88 percent) find a negative impact of higher tax rates on economic growth. The other three papers find no effect. Not one finds a positive effect. Of the six studies looking at state tax rates specifically, every one found a negative impact.

More recent research corroborates this conclusion. Of 12 papers published since 2012 looking at the impact of taxes on economic growth, seven find negative effects, the other five find "mixed" effects, and none finds a positive effect.

Spending is already historically high

The fourth reason that increases in tax rates ought to be rejected is that Minnesota's state government spending is already historically high.

Minnesota's General Fund spending was higher in real, inflation adjusted terms in 2019 than in any previous year. The same is true in per capita terms. In total and per person, and in real terms, Minnesota's state government has never spent more money than it is spending right now.

The two main components of this spending are education and welfare. Between 2010 and 2018, they have accounted for at least 70 percent of the state's general expenditure.

In 2018, Minnesota spent \$12,975 per pupil, just slightly above the national average, \$12,611. But our state's welfare spending is far higher. As Figure 3 shows, Minnesota spent \$30,000 in public welfare for each person in poverty in 2018, the third highest amount in the country. Only Massachusetts and Alaska spent more. For the United States as a whole, the figure was just \$17,000. For another comparison, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services set 2017 poverty guidelines as household income below \$24,600 a year for a family of four and below \$12,060 for an individual.

Figure 3: Welfare Spending Per Person in Poverty, 2018



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Not only is Minnesota's welfare spending high, it has grown rapidly in recent years. From 2010 to 2018, Minnesota's total spending on welfare grew by 30.1 percent in real terms, from \$12.3 billion to \$16.1 billion. Indeed, welfare spending grew as a share of the state budget, from 33.8 percent of general funds in 2010 to 37.1 percent in 2018. As with total spending, we also see record high welfare spending in per person terms. Between 2010 and 2018, Minnesota's public welfare spending per person in poverty grew by 46.4 percent.

Given that levels of state government spending are at record highs, there is ample opportunity to address the forecast budget deficit entirely through spending cuts without threatening key services. The budget for the current biennium, which runs from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021, is \$48.3 billion with a \$2.4 billion deficit forecast. If we took this amount out of the amount of projected spending for FY 2021—\$24.4 billion—we would be returning spending in real, inflation adjusted per capita terms to the level of 2016-2017.

Getting a Bang for Minnesota's Education Bucks

By Catrin Wigfall

The upcoming 2021 legislative session will undoubtedly begin with spending advocates calling for increased education spending. At 41.3 percent of the state's budget, education consumes the largest share of General Fund dollars—more than transportation, public safety, and

health and human services combined.

Education Minnesota (the state's teachers' union) has stated it will lobby for "significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it to inflation" because "Minnesota's share of funding for public school districts hasn't kept pace with inflation." This is not accurate. Even after adjusting for inflation, total revenue per student is up 25 percent just since 2003.

Arguments for increased education spending will likely focus on budget constraints that schools are facing due to COVID-19, especially given that many districts were already in the red before the coronavirus pandemic hit. But there is a solution to help school districts save thousands of dollars without asking for spending increases that the state can't afford: K-12 emergency education savings accounts.

The government already sets aside tax dollars for every child's education, but in an ESA, the money is able to follow the child. Given the numerous COVID-19 related concerns facing education, ESAs could be a solution to address a variety of these concerns while ensuring students can continue learning safely.

We know from the state's past track record that despite consistently increasing the flow of dollars into Minnesota's public schools, educational disparities persist, and achievement scores are stagnant or in decline. Until we pursue policy solutions that give us more bang for our education bucks, too many Minnesota students will continue to be left behind. Policymakers and state leaders should focus less on automatically increasing the education dollar amount and more on what can be done to leverage the

diminishing returns the state is getting for that additional spending. If legislators are going to continue arguing for increased K-12 spending, they owe it to taxpayers and Minnesota families and students to make that argument in honest terms.

No spending increases for public pre-K

During the 2019 legislative session, legislators did not increase funding for public pre-K but extended the current funding until 2021. Calls for either increasing the funding or again extending current funding are expected. But the expansion of public pre-K is a huge burden on taxpayers, and it undermines existing preschool options by forcing them to compete with "free" public programs, which often force them out of business.

No reversal of teacher licensing changes

After years of effort, Minnesota's teacher licensing system was overhauled with the adoption of a four-tiered licensure system in 2017. These reforms brought effective improvements to a badly broken and complex licensing system and streamlined the licensure process.

During the 2019 legislative session, DFL legislators proposed changes to the newly adopted licensing rules that would hinder a highly qualified teacher from becoming licensed and undermine the important gains made in helping qualified individuals become teachers in Minnesota. The proposed changes would also undermine efforts to address teacher shortages and attract teachers of color into classrooms. We need to give the newly adopted system an opportunity to work instead of rushing to rebuild licensing roadblocks.

While efforts to require pre-K teacher licensing were successfully defeated during the 2019 session, it is possible attempts to require this will be made in the upcoming session. Pre-K teacher licensing is unnecessary and creates barriers for teachers to enter the field. Minnesota already requires pre-K teachers to hold a bachelor's degree from an approved program. The teachers' union is pushing for pre-K teachers to be licensed because it would increase union dues revenue and expand the union's power.

Reining in Energy's War on Reality

By Isaac Orr

William F. Buckley, Jr. once said, “A liberal is someone who is determined to reach into your shower and adjust the water temperature for you.”

If liberals want to control the temperature of our showers, the progressive politicians to their left want to control everything else. These far-left lawmakers at both the state and federal level see energy and environmental policy as a weapon to radically change the lives of Minnesotans, especially when it comes to electricity generation and mining.

Electricity policy

Liberal politicians are obsessed with the idea of forcing us to use wind and solar power to generate the electricity we rely upon every day. But we need look no further than California to see the disastrous future of Minnesota, and the United States, if we continue to elect politicians who prioritize a Green New Deal.

In August, more than two million California households and businesses lost their electricity during a record-setting heatwave. The reason? The sun went down, rendering the state's solar panels as useful for electricity generation as a garden gnome.

For decades, California politicians have patted themselves on the back as they have forced the shutdown of coal, natural gas, and nuclear power plants—which can operate at night and when the wind isn't blowing—while mandating ever-increasing quantities of solar and wind on the electric grid.

As a result, there were not enough reliable power plants left standing to generate electricity when it was needed most. California's rolling “greenouts” come at a time when the state only gets about 30 percent of its electricity from wind and solar. Power outages will only become more common as the state mandates more wind and solar onto its power grid.

Imagine your elderly parent relying on a ventilator whose whirring noise fades along with the sunlight. Imagine your spouse relying on a sleep apnea

machine that starts and stops at the whims of the wind.

What do Californians get for their dangerously unreliable electric grid? Some of the highest prices in America. The high cost of energy in California is one reason why the Census Bureau states California has the highest functional poverty rate—which adjusts for the cost of living—in the country.

In 2019, Minnesota liberals and Governor Walz wanted to mandate that 100 percent of Minnesota's electricity come from carbon free energy sources by 2050. But the Walz administration refused to legalize new nuclear power plants, and it also refused to allow clean hydroelectric power from Canada to



California shows Walz's belief in wind, solar, and battery power is both wrong and dangerous.

qualify as “carbon free,” even though it emits zero carbon dioxide.

Instead, the administration said it believes wind, solar, and battery power can power our society. California shows this belief is both wrong and dangerous. The only thing Minnesotans will get from emulating the Golden State is a dangerously unreliable electric grid and higher prices.

Mining

Despite the fact that liberal energy policies would require enormous amounts of copper, nickel, and cobalt to build the wind turbines, solar panels, and batteries they want to force upon us for electricity generation, liberal politicians have zero interest in allowing these metals to be

mined in Minnesota.

The Iron Range produces 85 percent of the iron ore mined in the United States, and Minnesota has some of the largest undeveloped deposits of copper, nickel, platinum, cobalt, and titanium in the world.

Responsibly mining these resources could create up to 4,667 jobs in the mining industry, which pay an average of \$80,000 per year. Another 4,912 people would have jobs in support industries, and 5,271 jobs would be created as miners and support staff spend their paychecks in the local economy. In total, there would be up to 14,851 new jobs on the Range generating \$5.9 billion in annual economic output.

But these jobs are unlikely to come to fruition if liberal politicians are allowed to call the shots.

In January 2017, the Obama/Biden administration improperly cancelled the longstanding leases held by Twin Metals Minnesota in the final lame duck days of their reign. This not only includes Twin Metals Minnesota, but it also prevents other iron ore mines from being evaluated as well.

Rep. Betty McCollum staffers appear to believe that a Biden presidency would cancel the mineral leases for Twin Metals, just as President Obama had done, which would be an enormous setback for the Iron Range.

When a mine shuts down, it sends shockwaves through entire towns. Schools lose revenue as people leave to seek out new opportunities. Small shops, churches, and social groups suffer with less money flowing through the local economy.

The promise of a new mine offers the exact opposite. It offers high-paying jobs, good health insurance and retirement benefits, and new residents in towns that have been watching their young people leave to find work elsewhere. In short, it offers a brighter future.

Minnesotans can choose between brighter days or designed decay. We can choose to create thousands of high-paying, American jobs or we can be dependent upon imports of the metals we use every day from other countries. We can reject the energy policies that have plunged California into darkness, but only if people see the light. ★



BIG GOVERNMENT

THE CASE AGAINST RE-REGULATION

The government cut back on bureaucratic red tape to help get through COVID-19. Here's why it should make that move permanent.

When COVID-19 swept through America, a number of states rushed to change regulations that would help businesses and individuals respond to the epidemic. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz used emergency powers to allow health care workers licensed in other states to practice in Minnesota for the duration of the emergency period. Among other things, he also allowed restaurants and bars to temporarily sell alcohol to go, with some restrictions, during the shutdown.

Such suspension of rules did not lead to faster



By Martha Njolomole

spread of the coronavirus, which showed the state can do with fewer regulations. Therefore, Minnesota should not backtrack on this progress by re-instituting rules that constrain hospitals, health care workers and businesses from functioning efficiently. In addition, the legislature should repeal or adjust other unnecessary regulations that would hamper Minnesota's recovery from COVID-19. Those listed below are a good starting point.

1. Minnesota should join the Nurse Licensure Compact

When COVID-19 cases peaked in May, hospitals faced a shortage of nurses to staff existing and newly activated ICU beds. Governor Tim Walz rightly decided on April 25 to permit out-of-state health care workers, including nurses, to work in Minnesota without requiring extra licensing. Why did it take an executive order to allow nurses with out-of-state licenses to work in Minnesota during a time of shortage? Regulation.

Historically, states required nurses to get a new



state license in addition to their existing license in order to practice locally. This changed in 2000 when the National Council of State Boards of Nursing established the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), which “allows a nurse (RN and LPN/VN) to have one compact license in the nurse’s primary state of residence with authority to practice in person or via telehealth in other compact states (remote states). The nurse must follow the nurse practice act of each state.” Since Minnesota has not joined the 34 states that belong to the NLC, it barred out-of-state nurses from helping combat the coronavirus. Hospitals had to wait for an executive order before they could bring nurses in from other states.

There is no good reason that the state of Minnesota should not be part of the NLC after COVID-19 is over. The Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA), a labor union, claims that allowing outside nurses to work in Minnesota would threaten safety and quality of care delivered in the state’s facilities. But NLC’s internal system strictly upholds safety and quality of care. Allowing outside nurses to practice in Minnesota without the burden of obtaining an extraneous license will better position the state to handle any future staff shortages. Additionally, Minnesota nurses will also enjoy increased mobility among NLC member states.

2. Minnesota should loosen regulation on telemedicine/telehealth

The coronavirus epidemic has called for an unprecedented use of remote services. Social distancing protocols paired with fear of infection have led to a demand for alternative ways to “visit” a doctor or hospital. To meet this new demand, states have relaxed rules and waived certain requirements so patients can access health care services remotely. Minnesota, for instance, suspended rules requiring out-of-state mental health care providers to obtain a Minnesota license before they could administer remote mental health care services to the state’s residents.

On April 6, Governor Walz declared in an emergency order that “allowing

out-of-state mental health care providers to provide telehealth services in Minnesota will ensure that the mental health needs of Minnesotans are met during the stress and uncertainty of this pandemic.”

There is little worry when these laws are suspended because qualified doctors possess the necessary skills to treat patients regardless of whether they are licensed by the state of Minnesota or elsewhere. If mental health providers can effectively provide telehealth services during this emergency period, they should be able to do so once the pandemic is over. Which leaves the question: Why do qualification laws exist in the first place?

The COVID pandemic has proven the viability of telehealth services. Telehealth greatly improves efficiency in the health care system, in part because it reduces the need for most in-person visits. Regulation should not prevent health care providers from continuing to use such services when the pandemic is over. The state should repeal obstacles to telehealth, such as state licensing laws, not only for mental health care providers but for all other services that can be performed remotely.

3. Minnesota should get rid of the hospital moratorium

A majority of states maintain Certificate of Need (CON) laws that require providers to show a need before establishing or expanding facilities, taking on large capital expenditures, offering new services, or purchasing new equipment.

While Minnesota does not officially have a CON law, its “hospital construction moratorium law” does require hospitals to get permission from the Minnesota Department of Health as well as the Minnesota Legislature before they expand capacity. CON law proponents argue that these laws prevent hospitals from over investing in excess capacity, which keeps prices low. Research, however, shows that CON laws do not lead to lower prices but instead limit access to care and contribute to higher costs of health care services.

Minnesota’s hospital construction moratorium is no different. By restricting the expansion of hospital beds, the moratorium creates a shortage and decreases the available bed space. Minnesota’s providers experienced this when hospitals in Minnesota were trying to prepare for an uptick in coronavirus cases. In anticipation of a need for greater ICU capacity, hospitals had to expand, but the moratorium had already limited available capacity. This would not have been the case if hospitals were allowed the flexibility to expand bed capacity any time they anticipated an increase in demand for hospital beds. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the United States will soon face a growing aged population, which will lead to higher demand for hospital services in the near future. Doing away with the hospital moratorium is one way Minnesota can prepare for changing demographics.

Further, the hospital moratorium is founded on the illogical premise that hospitals can or would invest perpetually to build unneeded capacity. Hospital executives, like any other business managers, operate on profit and loss guidelines. Hospitals would not increase capacity without foreseeing increased demand. When they are allowed the flexibility to expand, they reduce or increase their capacity based on changing market demands. The hospital moratorium, however, restricts any flexibility in hospital capacity. This incentivizes hospitals, especially big hospital systems in metro areas, to bank bed licenses that they can use in the future to expand capacity without going through a review process. However, when hospitals hoard bed licenses without providing additional space, it gives the impression that the hospital system has adequate capacity when in actuality the number of available beds is lower and may not be adequate to accommodate patients’ needs. This is especially disadvantageous to small hospitals in rural areas, as they cannot bank licenses or easily obtain a license to expand when circumstances require them to.

4. Minnesota should loosen liquor laws

When COVID-19 hit, restaurants and bars were among the first establishments to close and the last to open—which cost them customers and revenue. Minnesota’s burdensome liquor laws treated craft breweries and distilleries even more harshly.

The state’s liquor laws stringently restrict self-distribution and bottle sales. Craft breweries can’t sell directly to customers unless they produce fewer than 20,000 barrels of beer a year, and even then they are limited to taprooms and off-site sales of 750 ml bottles known as growlers. Once they hit the 20,000 mark, craft breweries have to stop selling beer off-site. Minnesota also dictates that microdistilleries only produce 40,000 gallons a year. When distilleries reach the cap, they either have to close their taprooms (resulting in lost revenue) or move their production. Additionally, microdistilleries can only sell one 375 ml bottle to a person per day.

These laws hurt craft breweries and microdistilleries and became even more onerous when establishments had to shut down their taprooms during the onset of COVID. In addition, customers were preferring to buy a 12-pack of 64-ounce containers that only liquor stores are allowed to sell, forcing craft breweries and microdistilleries to rely on deliveries or pick-up orders of growlers and miniature bottles for revenue.

Businesses need to respond to changes in consumer preferences, which Minnesota’s liquor licensing rules prevented producers from doing, thus hurting their survivability. The Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association argues that these liquor rules are in place to keep produc-

ers from getting a special competitive advantage over small liquor stores. But this is not a good reason for regulation. By restricting craft breweries and microdistilleries from selling directly to customers, these rules stifle competition, reduce customer choice and also raise prices. On top of that, craft breweries and microdistilleries are hesitant to expand their operations and grow, for fear that they will exceed their production limits and have to shut off their taprooms or stop selling offsite. There is no good reason why these laws exist.

5. Minnesota should loosen occupational licensing laws

States all around the country typically license certain occupations to ensure public safety and quality. In reality, however, occupational licensing only manages to restrict production, raise prices, limit economic physical mobility and contribute to inequality. High barriers to entry into certain occupations create costs that are mostly borne by low-income individuals who are denied affordable prices and job opportunities.

Minnesota licenses occupations that are rarely licensed in other states and licenses them more onerously, which increases its licensure burdens. According to a study by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, Minnesota had the 12th fastest growing breadth and burden of licensure in the country between 2012 and 2017. Legislators could help Minnesota’s post-COVID recovery by repealing its growing code of occupational licensing laws.

Research shows occupational licensing laws provide no significant benefit at high costs. These laws rarely improve quality of service, and they do not contribute to safety. But they do manage to keep people out of jobs, especially low-income individuals who cannot afford the cost of licensing. Since Minnesota,

like most states, requires all individuals moving to Minnesota to acquire a Minnesota license in order to work in-state, skilled individuals without the required license cannot contribute to Minnesota’s economy. Given that Minnesota’s unemployment is high and many low-income individuals have been affected by the state’s shutdown, loosening occupational licensing laws would expand job opportunities for the most adversely impacted groups while also making it easier for the economy to recover.

6. Minnesota should loosen regulation on childcare

The coronavirus has exacerbated a long simmering crisis in Minnesota’s childcare industry. Particularly in rural areas, Minnesota parents face an acute shortage of providers. And the providers that do exist are among the most expensive in the nation. This shortage of high quality, affordable childcare will greatly hinder Minnesota’s path to economic recovery.

Policymakers can ensure the viability of existing childcare providers and encourage new ones to enter the market by loosening the state’s rigid childcare laws. Minnesota’s low student-to-teacher ratios and its rigorous training standards have been cited as two contributing factors to high childcare costs. And Minnesota’s stringent staffing ratios make it hard for providers to find qualified teachers, which can lead to a shortage of available capacity.

Additionally, operators of Family Child Care (FCC) providers, which comprise a majority of capacity in rural areas, have cited regulation as a principal reason why they exit the market. In the last several years, the state of Minnesota has tightened regulation and increased training and paperwork requirements, and FCC homes are having trouble navigating the expanding, as well as changing, regulatory environment. Legislators must assess Minnesota’s regulatory code and remove all rules that rarely contribute to safety and quality in childcare but make it harder and more expensive for providers to operate. ★



Martha Njolomole is an economist at Center of the American Experiment. Martha earned a Master of Arts in economics at Troy University in Alabama, where she worked as a research assistant on several projects that advanced the ideas of economic freedom and individual liberty.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a red face mask and a dark t-shirt, is holding a large white sign with both hands. The sign has the words "STOP! MURDERING BLACK PEOPLE" written in large, bold, black, hand-drawn letters. In the background, other people are visible, some wearing face masks and hats, suggesting a public gathering or protest. The scene is outdoors with trees and a building in the distance.

STOP!
MURDERING
BLACK PEOPLE

A DATA-DRIVEN
ANALYSIS

The ‘Minneapolis EFFECT’

The idea that the police are wantonly killing Black men is a creation of a politicized press and an elite establishment **dedicated to the idea that racism is America’s defining trait.**

A conversation
with
Heather
Mac Donald

On May 25, four Minneapolis police officers arrested a man for passing a counterfeit \$20 bill.

One of the officers kept his knee on George Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes while Mr. Floyd was handcuffed on the ground and pleading that he couldn't breathe. Mr. Floyd died of a heart attack during the arrest. The next day, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey announced that whatever the investigation into Mr. Floyd's death revealed, "being Black in America should not be a death sentence." Mayor Frey's interpretation that Mr. Floyd's horrifying end was a function of his race instantly became universal. That idea was coupled with the claim that Mr. Floyd's death was representative of an epidemic of racially biased police killings of Black men.

Together, these two claims triggered an explosion of violence in Minneapolis and across the country, destroying thousands of livelihoods, turning city streets into war zones, and ripping apart the very foundation of law and order. Police

officers were shot at, slashed and assaulted with bricks and bottles. Their precinct houses and cruisers were firebombed. Courthouses were vandalized. Firefighters let public and private property burn to the ground rather than risk being attacked by the rioters. Professional thieves used stolen cars as missiles to hurtle into stores, which they then cleaned out through the shattered glass. The flames of that terrible week have burned out, but the attack on civil order continues. Monuments to the nation's founders have been torn down and defaced; anarchists colonized portions of Seattle and New York with impunity. Violence has become the reflexive choice to any criminal justice decision the activists do not like.

In mid-July, vandals tried to torch the Georgia Department of Public Safety as part of ongoing protests against the police in Atlanta. In Salt Lake City, after the district attorney declined to prosecute an officer-involved shooting, vandals broke the windows of his office and pepper-sprayed police officers. Courthouses and police precincts remain favorite physical targets. In Portland, for weeks on end, Antifa thugs have hurled bombs at the Federal Courthouse. They have tried to blind federal agents with lasers. And across the country, police officers are routinely attacked as they try to make a lawful arrest. The unchecked anarchy



BANNED by
YouTube

Heather Mac Donald is the Thomas W. Smith Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a contributing editor of *City Journal*, and a *New York Times* bestselling author. She is a recipient of the 2005 Bradley Prize. Her writing has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Criterion*.

This article was adapted from remarks she delivered during a Center of the American Experiment event via Zoom. It should be noted that after American Experiment posted Mac Donald's speech on YouTube, the platform removed it for "violating" its community guidelines, later reversing the decision. YouTube then labeled her remarks "inappropriate" for young people under 18.



of those riots and their long aftermath has sent a clear message to criminals. No one is controlling the streets. Gang shootings and homicides have spiked nationwide as a demoralized police force pulls back from discretionary stops and arrests. In the weeks following the Floyd riots, homicides were up by 100 percent in Minneapolis, 200 percent in Seattle, 40 percent in St. Louis, 240 percent in Atlanta, and 182 percent in Chicago. In New York City, shootings have more than doubled so far in 2020, compared with last year.

Blacks are actually shot less by the police than their crime rates would predict, and whites are shot more.

In June, 97 percent of New York shooting victims were people of color. Since George Floyd's death, at least 35 children under the age of 18 have been fatally shot, nearly all Black. We've been here before. In 2015 and 2016, homicides in the U.S. saw their largest increase in almost 50 years following the police shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014. Brown's death fueled the first iteration of the Black Lives Matter movement. Cops backed off from proactive policing, having been relentlessly told that they were racist when, for example, they questioned someone hanging out on a known drug corner at 1:00 a.m. who hitched up his waistband as if he had a gun.

As a result of this decline in discretionary enforcement, another 2,000 Blacks lost their lives in 2015 and 2016, compared to 2014 numbers. The rapid rise of crime over the last two months makes that first version of what I've called the Ferguson Effect look like child's play. Today's Ferguson Effect 2.0—or better, the Minneapolis Effect—promises far worse, especially since the Black Lives Matter narrative that policing in the

U.S. is lethally racist has been amplified by every mainstream institution in the country. A lot is riding, therefore, on whether that narrative about the police is correct—not just thousands of lives, but the very possibility of a civilized society. Essential criminal justice practices are being rapidly dismantled in the name of fighting alleged law enforcement bias. Is it true—as Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden announced after Mr. Floyd's death—that every time a Black person leaves his house, his family members need to fear for his safety from the police? It is not.

The idea that the police are wantonly killing Black men is a creation of a politicized press and an elite establishment dedicated to the idea that racism is America's defining trait. The raw numbers are these: Every year, the police fatally shoot about a thousand people, the vast majority of whom were threatening the officer or bystanders with deadly force. About 50 percent of those police fatalities are white, and about 25 percent are Black. The Black Lives Matter folks look at that 25 percent number and proclaim police bias since Blacks are about 13 percent of the population. That is the wrong benchmark, however. If there is one thing you should take away from this discussion, it is that police activity must be measured against crime, not population ratios.

Every article you read, every news story you watch in the mainstream media will compare police activity to a population benchmark because that is the only way that the Black Lives Matter narrative can be sustained. Such an analysis ignores the fact that policing today is data driven. Officers are deployed to where people are most being victimized, and that is in minority neighborhoods. And it is in minority neighborhoods where officers are most likely to interact with armed, violent and resisting suspects. Here are the victimization data: Nationwide, Blacks between the ages of 10 and 43 die of homicide at 13 times the rate of whites, according to the CDC.

In Minnesota, Blacks of all ages die of homicide at 12 times the rate of whites. You might think that the Black Lives Matter activists would care about such loss of Black life, but you would



Nationwide, Blacks commit homicide at eight times the rate of whites and Hispanics combined.

be wrong. They ignore those Black deaths because the victims are killed overwhelmingly not by the police, not by whites, but by other Blacks. Here are the criminal offending data: In the 75 largest U.S. counties, which is where most of the population resides, Blacks constitute around 60 percent of all murder and robbery defendants, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, though they are only 15 percent of the population in those counties.



Nationwide, Blacks commit homicide at eight times the rate of whites and Hispanics combined. In Chicago, Blacks commit about 80 percent of all shootings and homicides, though they're less than a third of the population. Whites commit about two percent of all shootings and homicides in Chicago, though they too are less than a third of the population. In a typical year, Blacks in St. Louis commit all or nearly all homicides, though they're less than half of the population. In New York City, Blacks commit a little less than 75 percent of all shootings on average, though they are 23 percent of the city's population. Whites commit less than three percent of all shootings in New York City, though they're less than 34 percent of the city's population. These crime disparities have enormous consequences for police use of force. The biggest determinant of officer behavior is

civilian behavior. The greater the chance that officers confront armed and resisting suspects, the more likely they are to escalate their own use of force. And that chance is far higher in Black communities.

Blacks are actually shot less by the police than their crime rates would predict, and whites are shot more. The percentage of white and Hispanic homicide victims who were killed by a cop is three times higher than the percentage of Black homicide victims who were killed by a cop. That 25 percent or so share of fatal police shootings each year comprised of Black victims when measured against the crime benchmark does not support the Black Lives Matter narrative. What about the individual case? Mr. Floyd's death was immediately portrayed as what is known in literary theory as the synecdoche—a part that stands in for a whole. In

this case, the whole is anti-Black police violence. But if we conclude from that one case, however shocking, that the police are biased against Black men, we could just as easily conclude from other individual cases that the police are biased against white men.

In 2016 Tony Timpa, a 32-year-old schizophrenic, called 911 in Dallas to report that he was off his medication, frightened, and needed help. Three Dallas police officers responded and kept him face down on the ground for 13 minutes, with a knee to his back, all the while joking about Timpa's mental illness. Timpa was handcuffed and had not resisted or threatened the officers.

Police activity must be measured against crime, not population ratios.

He pleaded for help more than 30 times, exclaiming that the cops were killing him. Eventually, Timpa stopped moving or making any sound as the officers continued their wisecracks. After Timpa was loaded into an ambulance, an officer said, "I hope I didn't kill him." Timpa was already dead from homicide caused by physical restraint and cocaine. Very few Americans outside of Timpa's family know his name. His death did not make international news or spur widespread riots because Timpa was white. His death did not fit the Black Lives Matter narrative, and thus was of no interest to the media.

That same year, a cop in Mesa, Arizona unleashed a barrage of gunfire from his AR-15 rifle at a 26-year-old man in a motel who had been reported as having a gun. The victim was down on his hands and knees in the corridor, outside his motel room, trying to comply with the conflicting demands that the sergeant was screaming at him while begging, "Please don't shoot me." Like Timpa, the victim Daniel Shaver was white. In 2015, the year that the Black Lives Matter movement became a national phenomenon, a

50-year-old white man in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, involved in a domestic violence incident, ran at the officer with a spoon and was fatally shot. A white 25-year-old male in Des Moines led the police on a car chase then walked quickly toward the officer when he got out of the car and was fatally shot. A white 21-year-old male in Akron escaped from a grocery store robbery on a bike, didn't take his hand out of his waistband when commanded to do so, and was fatally shot.

None of these victims were armed. No one knows these men's names either because they don't help the narrative. Had any of these victims been Black, however, there was a good chance that they too would have become an international cause celebre. The widespread perception that questionable police shootings occur exclusively or almost exclusively against Black males is a function of selective coverage. Let's look more closely at unarmed victims of fatal police shootings. According to *The Washington Post* database of fatal police shootings, there were nine unarmed Black victims of fatal police shootings in 2019, and 19 unarmed white victims of fatal police shootings. *The Washington Post* defines unarmed to generously include suspects who beat an officer with their own gun or flee a car stop with a loaded semiautomatic pistol in their car.

Those nine allegedly unarmed Black victims of fatal police shootings make up 0.1 percent of all Black homicide victims, assuming that the 2019 Black homicide count resembles that of 2018 when 7,400 Blacks were killed—more than all white and Hispanic homicide victims combined. This 0.1 percent is not a large percentage, to say the least. After I publicized the 2019 tally of unarmed Black victims in early June, *The Washington Post* went back into its database to recategorize as unarmed as many armed Black victims of fatal police shootings as it possibly could. No new information spurred this reclassifica-

tion; the database had been closed for six months. Despite its best efforts, the *Post* came up with only six more Black victims previously deemed armed, now miraculously disarmed, to bring the total of unarmed Black police victims in 2019 up to 15. That 15 represents 0.2 percent of all Black homicide victims, still a drop in the bucket.

So individual cases, including unarmed



***The Washington Post* defines unarmed to generously include suspects who beat an officer with their own gun or flee a car stop with a loaded semiautomatic pistol in their car.**

cases, do not support the Black Lives Matter narrative. The claim that the death of George Floyd was the result of racism rather than bad tactics and a generalized carelessness is pure supposition with no supporting evidence.

The narrative about police-civilian violence is also the reverse of the truth. Black males make up about 40 percent of all cop killers, though they are 6 percent of the population. Police officers are between 15 to 30 times more likely to be killed by a Black male than an unarmed

Black male is to be killed by a police officer, depending on the year. Expect such attacks to rise, as the political establishment and the media continue to fuel anti-cop hatred. Meanwhile, there is hardly a single aspect of the criminal justice system that is not being undone to avoid disparate impact on Blacks.

Felonies are being reclassified as misdemeanors to lessen the number of Blacks sent to prison. Prosecutors are declining to prosecute low-level offenses like public drinking, disorderly conduct, graffiti and turnstile jumping. Bail is being eliminated, gang databases are being purged, undercover police units that get illegal guns off the street are being disbanded. Valuable crime fighting tools like facial recognition technology and analytical crime software are being mothballed.

Overall, 2,243 people have been shot in Chicago as of July 25—one person every two hours and 14 minutes—and 395 of those shooting victims died. The Chicago police had shot seven people, three fatally as of July 25, virtually all armed and dangerous. That police tally represents 0.3 percent of all Chicago shooting victims. Not one of the children who have been shot this year in Chicago or elsewhere have been shot by a cop. The only thing that will slow this false narrative about police racism is if white children start to be gunned down in drive-by shootings. The allegedly anti-racist press ignores young Black victims but goes into crisis mode if white children are shot in rare school shootings.

Cumulatively, there are several Newtown, Connecticut's every year in the Black community. Only the police pay consistent attention. It is not just lives at stake; this attack on law enforcement undermines our justice system and fundamental rights. If it continues, we could descend into civil war. It is essential, therefore, to counter the lies about the police with the truth. And we must hope that reason still has a place in public discourse. ★



NOTE TO THE CITY COUNCIL

THE AFTERMATH

Post-George Floyd surges in crime disproportionately hurt the Black community, which widely rejects proposals to hobble police.

Between May 25, following the death of George Floyd under Minneapolis police custody, and August 31, there were 40 homicides in Minneapolis—an increase of 150 percent over the median average for the previous five years.

The Powderhorn area of Minneapolis, near where George Floyd was arrested, made the

news recently after some residents “informally agreed not to call police” when there is a problem. Fox 9 quoted one, a burglary victim: “I’m thinking systemically, not in the moment anymore. I can replace all [my] stuff. [The thief] got some extra money out of it. That’s just what happens, that’s life.” She and “many of her neighbors share the feeling that

By John Phelan

police put people in danger, especially people of color.”

But the absence of the police poses a greater danger to people of color than their presence. A new paper by economists Tanaya Devi and Roland G. Fryer, Jr., finds that “Pattern-or-Practice” investigations “that were preceded by ‘viral’ incidents of deadly force have led to a large and statistically significant increase in homicides and total crime” because of “an abrupt change in the quantity of policing activity.” Evidence suggests we are seeing that in Minneapolis. MPD data show that cumulative stops fell 36 percent in the week after George Floyd’s death, and that trend

Surges in crime hurt the Black community disproportionately.

has persisted. During the week between July 6 and July 12, MPD officers made just 193 stops, down 77 percent from the same week in 2019. Stops involving searches of people or their vehicles have also plummeted. MPD conducted just 20 over the week of July 12, and 11 the week before—87 and 90 percent declines, respectively, from the preceding year. One consistent finding in academic research is that more cops mean less crime. It follows that fewer cops mean more crime.

Surges in crime hurt the Black community disproportionately. Twenty percent of Minneapolis’ population is African American, but they account for at least 62 percent of the city’s homicide victims since Memorial Day. They include: Mohamedwelid Mohamud Muse, Daniel J. Mack, Jr., Brandon Jerome Salter, Marcus Lashaun Banks, Jr., Jeremy Conley, Dameon Chambers, Shateke Jamal Bruce, Diontae Rayquan Wallace, Cody Pollard, Abdihakim Mohamed Areis, Antonio Dewayne Taylor, Larry Borteh, Leneesha Helen Columbus,

Scorecard



Frey 1, Walz 0

Despite Walz’s venomous public criticism at the time, documents now show that Frey clearly requested assistance from the National Guard in time to save the Third Precinct.

In the early hours of Saturday, May 30, after a fourth consecutive night of violence and destruction in Minneapolis, hundreds of police officers, state troopers, and National Guard troops, some in armored vehicles, fanned out into troubled areas and confronted rioters with mass force, tear gas, and orders to disperse, issued via bullhorn. Order was finally restored, and Saturday passed relatively peacefully.

During a July hearing at the State Capitol, Maj. Gen. Jon Jensen, adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard, was asked if earlier mobilization of the Guard would have prevented rioting and damage. His response was unequivocal. “My unprofessional law enforcement position: yes. My professional military position: yes.” The events of Saturday, May 30, seem to bear him out.

If deployment of the Guard could have stopped the riots earlier, why did city and state authorities wait four nights to do it?

At the time, Governor Walz placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. At a press conference on the morning of Friday, May 29, after the Third Precinct had been surrendered to rioters the previous night, Walz launched a stinging attack on Frey’s “abject failure” in handling the crisis. Asked why the Guard hadn’t been deployed, he explained that he deferred to local officials, stressing his fears that the sight of the Guard—soldiers with Humvees in combat fatigues—might further inflame the situation. But the fall of the Third Precinct “was the turning point,” Walz explained, “where we were prepared, and that’s where we moved in, and we did not believe the Third should be given up and that area was taken back.” He went on: “If this would have been executed correctly, the state would not lead on this.”

It took about a month for Frey to respond, as reporters used the open public records law to retrieve hundreds of pages of text messages, emails, documents, and briefing notes from the City of Minneapolis. This information reveals that at 6:28 p.m. on the evening of Wednesday, May 27, Frey’s Communications Director Mychal Vlatkovich texted other senior advisers, “Mayor just came out and said the chief wants him to call in the National Guard for help at Third Precinct. Mayor appears intent on doing.” At 9:11 p.m., Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo sent a plan to Minnesota Public

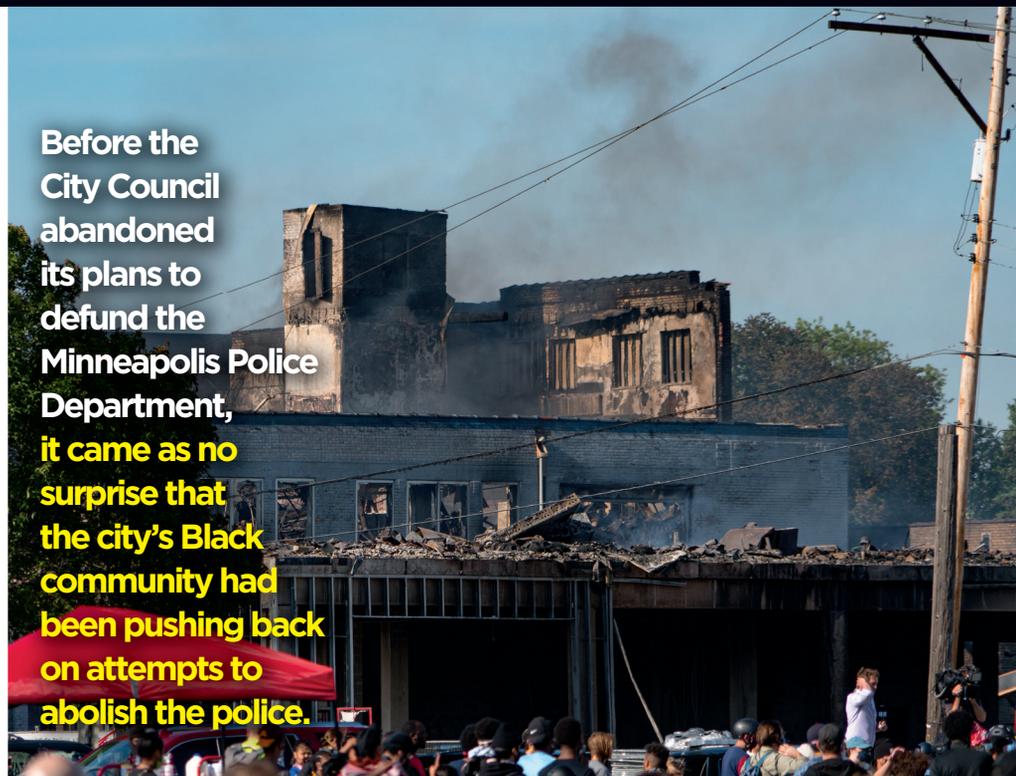


Safety Commissioner John Harrington, asking for “immediate assistance” from the Guard. “The MPD has expended all available resources,” he wrote, “as well as all available law enforcement assistance from our neighboring jurisdictions.” The email specifically requested 600 Guard soldiers for a four-pronged mission that included area security, transportation assistance, and logistical assistance for the overall operation. At 10:55 a.m. on Thursday morning, Frey sent a formal request for the Guard to Walz.

For his part, Walz acknowledges that Frey and Arradondo first requested the Guard on May 27, but he says the Guard did not get a mission from the city with specific objectives. “I don’t think the mayor knew what he was asking for,” Walz explained. “He wanted the National Guard, and what does that mean? I think the mayor said, ‘I request the National Guard, whew, this is great. We’re going to have massively trained troops.’ No, you’re going to have 19 year olds who are cooks, in some cases.”

These “19-year-old cooks” are, of course, the same troops who quelled the riots in short order once they were deployed in the early hours of Saturday. Indeed, many of them are trained for this specific task. During his July testimony, Maj. Gen. Jensen explained: “We train about 700 soldiers in a given year to respond for this particular mission. We can use them for other things, but they receive specific civil disturbance training.” The Minnesota National Guard was repeatedly deployed to Iraq. The 1-125th Field Artillery Battalion deployed there in 2005, shortly after Command Sergeant Major Walz resigned from it.

Reflecting on Gov. Walz’s conduct, both Frey and the Minnesota National Guard have cause to paraphrase the Good Book: greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his colleagues for his career. •



Before the City Council abandoned its plans to defund the Minneapolis Police Department, it came as no surprise that the city’s Black community had been pushing back on attempts to abolish the police.

Carlos Larnard Rogers, Elijah Lamont Whitner, Shanette Alexandria Marable, Abdirashid Omar, Billy Campbell, William R. Baugh, Ronald Junior Smith, Serenity Shief, Charles Ray Mosby, Jr., Eddie George Gordon, and Andrew DeJon Davis.

It comes as no surprise that the city’s Black community has been pushing back on the City Council’s attempt to abolish the police. “When the City Council start talking about abolish and dismantling law enforcement it’s destroying, it’s destroying our community right now,” said Al Flowers, a community activist, at a recent press conference. “With these calls to abolish the police and no real substantive plan to follow, those words have led some folks in our communities to believe that they have a sort of open season on their enemies,” said Alicia Smith, executive director of the Corcoran Neighborhood. “It’s time to stand up in this city,” said Lisa Clemons of A Mother’s Love. “It is time to tell council that utopia is a bunch of BS. We are not in Mayberry, we are in the wild, wild west.”

Such views appear to reflect those of the Black community at large. Last year, a poll for Fox 9 found that while 61 percent of white Minneapolis residents supported expanding the MPD, that number rose to 65 percent among people of

color. While 42 percent of residents overall believed crime in Minneapolis is a serious problem, that number rose to 54 percent for people of color; while 41 percent of residents believed there is more crime in Minneapolis now than a few years ago, that number rose to 49 percent for people of color. Fifty-nine percent of people of color said they feel safer in the presence of police officers. A recent survey by the *Huffington Post* found that, overall, 57 percent of Americans oppose defunding the police and African Americans oppose it by a margin of 49 percent to 29 percent. Indeed, the only group favoring the measure were “self-described liberals.”

The City Council says that the MPD will be replaced by a “new transformative model for cultivating safety,” though nobody, including the councilors, knows what this means in practice. The Powderhorn resident quoted earlier on continued: “People won’t be robbed at gunpoint, because we’ll have started changing systems so people won’t feel the need to rob at gunpoint.”

While Minneapolis officials are chasing these utopian fantasies, African Americans will continue dying in disproportionate numbers. How many Black lives will be sacrificed for this? ★

John Phelan is an economist at Center of the American Experiment.



The
THINKING
MINNESOTA
POLL

FEAR FACTOR

Minnesotans report unprecedented concerns over personal safety in their post-riot communities.

The “George Floyd” riots that tore through the Twin Cities for five days last May have left an unprecedented number of Minnesotans still feeling insecure about their personal safety, according to data revealed in the fall edition of the *Thinking Minnesota Poll*.

Meeting Street Insights, a Charleston, S.C.-based polling company, interviewed 500 registered Minnesota voters between September 1-3, using a mix of cell phones and landlines. According to Meeting Street’s founder Rob Autry who oversaw the project, the survey’s margin of error is ± 4.38 percent.

Political observers are hard-pressed to recall a previous time when “personal safety” occupied the top concern for Minnesotans statewide going into a presidential election. And frustrations

extended beyond worries about safety. By wide margins, Minnesotans also expressed irritation that “rioters, looters and arsonists” have received inadequate punishment for their behavior, rebuking local elected officials for their powerlessness to stop the riots from inflicting excessive damage on the Twin Cities.

Autry’s research also revealed that self-described political independents overwhelmingly agreed with Republican criticism about how public officials handled the riots.

Overall, 53 percent of Minnesotans said “public safety is now more important of a priority than other issues” (Figure 1).

That number jumps to 68 percent among Republican respondents and 64 percent among Independents, while only 33 percent of Democrats expressed worry about personal safety. Younger



FIGURE 1: A MAJORITY OF VOTERS, ESPECIALLY REPUBLICANS AND INDEPENDENTS, SAY PUBLIC SAFETY IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT OF A PRIORITY THAN OTHER ISSUES.

“In the face of another recent round of riots, looting and arson in the Twin Cities, and considering all of the issues facing Minnesota, how important is public safety as a priority in your life? Is it much more important than others, somewhat more important than others, equally as important to others, not as important as others, or not at all important?”

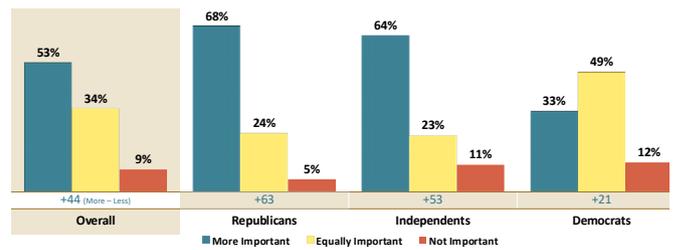


FIGURE 2: THESE “MORE IMPORTANT” PERCENTAGES ARE HIGH AMONG MINNESOTA VOTERS OVER THE AGE OF 35.

Public Safety Priority by Age

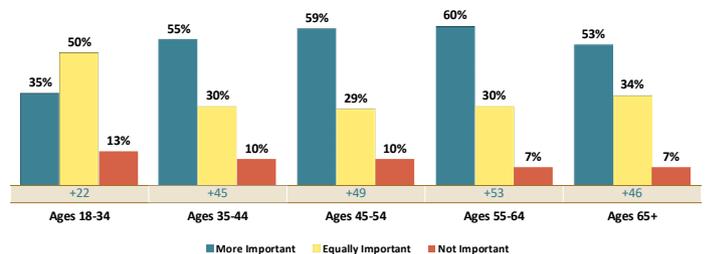
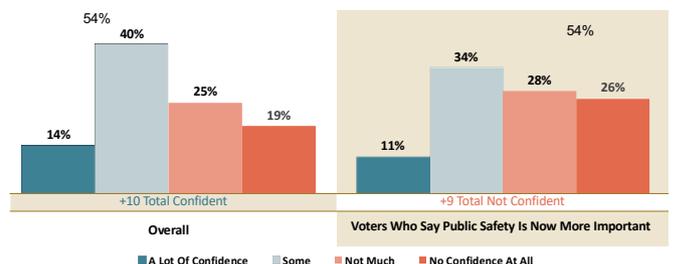


FIGURE 3: VOTERS WHO SAY PUBLIC SAFETY IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT ARE NOT CONFIDENT OFFICIALS CAN SUCCESSFULLY RESPOND TO PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS.

“How much confidence do you have in state and local government officials to successfully take up this challenge and respond to the current public safety crisis?”



residents had less insecurity about public safety, at 35 percent, according to the survey (Figure 2). Otherwise, those concerns generally increased with age, averaging between 53 and 60 percent among older age groups.

John Hinderaker, president of Center of the American Experiment, says it is not difficult to analyze these numbers’ significance.

“All Minnesotans were shocked by the violence of the George Floyd riots, and then the subsequent disorder, including the looting of Nicollet Mall,” he says. “The people of this state have never seen destruction, arson, rioting and looting on that scale.”

About the pollster

Rob Autry, founder of Meeting Street Insights, is one of the nation’s leading pollsters and research strategists.

FIGURE 4: SOLID MAJORITIES BELIEVE THE RIOTERS DID NOT RECEIVE ENOUGH BLAME FOR THE DAMAGE THEY HAVE CAUSED.

“Next, I will read a few statements and after I read each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement.”

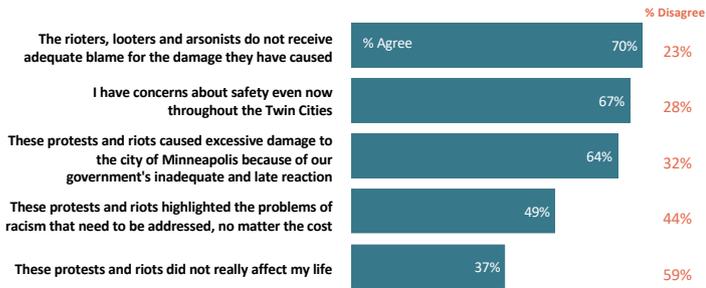
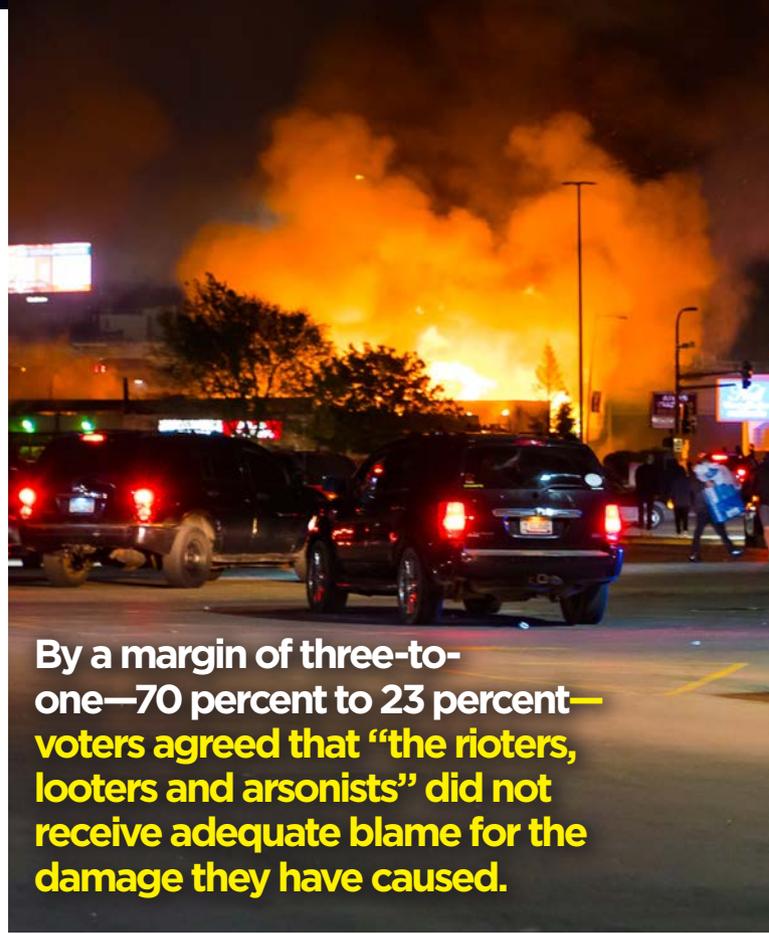


FIGURE 5: INDEPENDENTS ARE MORE IN-LINE WITH REPUBLICAN VIEWS ON THE RECENT PROTESTS AND RIOTS AND SHARE SIMILAR CONCERNS ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE.

% Agree By Party

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
The rioters, looters and arsonists do not receive adequate blame for the damage they have caused	88%	79%	50%
I have concerns about safety even now throughout the Twin Cities	84%	72%	50%
These protests and riots caused excessive damage to the city of Minneapolis because of our government's inadequate and late reaction	88%	69%	40%
These protests and riots highlighted the problems of racism that need to be addressed, no matter the cost	20%	47%	77%
These protests and riots did not really affect my life	39%	27%	39%



By a margin of three-to-one—70 percent to 23 percent—voters agreed that “the rioters, looters and arsonists” did not receive adequate blame for the damage they have caused.

What’s more, 54 percent of Minnesotans who say public safety is of paramount importance do not think state and local government is up to the challenge of responding to the current public safety crisis (Figure 3). Fully 28 percent have “not much” confidence; 26 percent have “no confidence at all.” Overall, respondents showed slightly more certainty in the capabilities of their elected officials. Forty percent cited “some” confidence in them, while just 14 percent reflected “a lot of confidence.”

Strong majorities—consisting mainly of Republicans and Independents—voiced intense disapproval about how the rioters took control of the cities with apparent immunity from punishment (Figure 4). By a margin of three-to-one—70 percent to 23 percent—voters agreed that “the rioters, looters and arsonists” did not receive adequate blame for the damage they have caused. This dissatisfaction is felt even more intensely by Republicans (88 percent) and Independents (79 percent) (Figure 5). Only 50 percent of Democrats thought rioters received inadequate punishments.

Hinderaker says Republicans and Independents have the correct response.

“There has not been the kind of reckoning that Minnesota needs to see. The police were basically told to stand down, at least initially, as the rioters took over the Third Precinct station. Then we saw the same thing with the looting of Nicollet Mall. There were

FIGURE 6: VOTERS OUTSIDE THE TWIN CITIES ARE MORE CRITICAL OF MINNEAPOLIS' HANDLING OF THE PROTESTS AND RIOTS.

% Agree By Region

	Minneapolis – Saint Paul	MSP Suburbs	Northeast Region	South Region	West / NW Region
The rioters, looters and arsonists do not receive adequate blame for the damage they have caused	58%	73%	81%	69%	84%
I have concerns about safety even now throughout the Twin Cities	60%	69%	69%	57%	84%
These protests and riots caused excessive damage to the city of Minneapolis because of our government's inadequate and late reaction	55%	66%	71%	57%	76%
These protests and riots highlighted the problems of racism that need to be addressed, no matter the cost	61%	45%	41%	47%	39%
These protests and riots did not really affect my life	23%	40%	48%	50%	41%

videos of people smashing windows and walking in and out of stores with armfuls of merchandise—with no law enforcement in sight.”

“Minnesotans hold these opinions because they watched it in real-time on their televisions,” Hinderaker continues. “We all saw what happened. We saw the riots begin. We saw rioters meet inadequate resistance early on and then get totally out of control. If our civic authorities don’t learn a lesson from this, they’re very foolish.”

Minnesotans hold other criticisms of the riots by two-to-one margins, and more.

They “have concerns” about safety in the Twin Cities by 67 percent to 28 percent, with a similar agreement between Republicans (84 percent) and Independents (72 percent). These views are not confined to the metropolitan Twin Cities but are shared by respondents throughout the entire state (Figure 6).

Minnesotans blame the excessive damage to the City of Minneapolis on “government’s inadequate and late reaction” by 62 percent to 32 percent, again an opinion primarily shared by Republicans (88 percent) and Independents (69 percent), but shared by strong majorities statewide.

“Riots have never been popular with the public,” Hinderaker says. “The overwhelming majority of people are adamantly opposed to rioting, looting and arson. They always have been, and I assume they always will be. What’s a little surprising is that there’s anybody who is muted in his or her condemnation of these illegal acts.”

School openings

In news related to the pandemic, one in four parents disclosed that they “have looked at alternative schools to provide an in-person learning experience” for their children (Figure 7).

Parents’ view of teachers’ unions also appears to be in decline. Only 36 percent said that they see a “positive impact” of unions on the overall quality of their children’s education (Figure 8).

Minnesota’s budget deficit

As the State of Minnesota contemplates large budget deficits related to shutting down the economy, an overwhelming number of its citizens think the legislature should address the shortfalls through spending cuts (59 percent) rather than raising taxes (20 percent) (Figure 9).

Republicans feel especially adamant on the issue—88 percent support spending cuts, two percent support increased taxes.

Hinderaker hopes the finding is “very compelling” to legislators. “Millions of Minnesotans are going through a very difficult time,” he says. “A lot of people lost their jobs. A lot of small businesses have been devastated. I think most people believe it’s only right that the government should tighten its belt, just like its citizens have had to.” ★

FIGURE 7: PARENTS WANT CLASSROOMS REOPENED AND ONE-IN-FOUR SAY THEY HAVE LOOKED OUTSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO FIND THAT IN-PERSON LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR THEIR KIDS.

“Regardless of what has been decided, if you were advising the Minnesota public education and school leaders, which one of following scenarios do you think your local public school should institute this school year?”

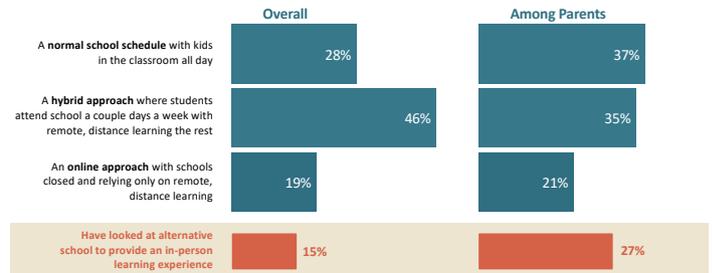


FIGURE 8: PARENTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO SAY TEACHERS’ UNIONS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON EDUCATION.

“Thinking about teachers’ unions, which of the following statements describes how you feel about the impact of teachers’ unions on education? 1) Unions generally have a positive impact on children’s education here in Minnesota. 2) Teachers’ unions generally have a negative impact ...or... 3) They don’t really impact children’s education one way or the other.”

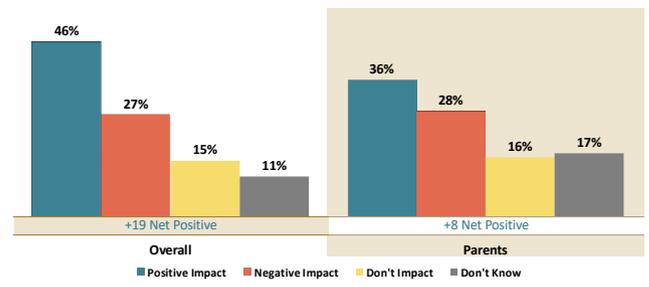
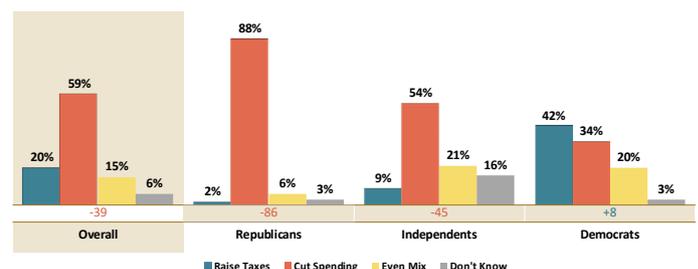
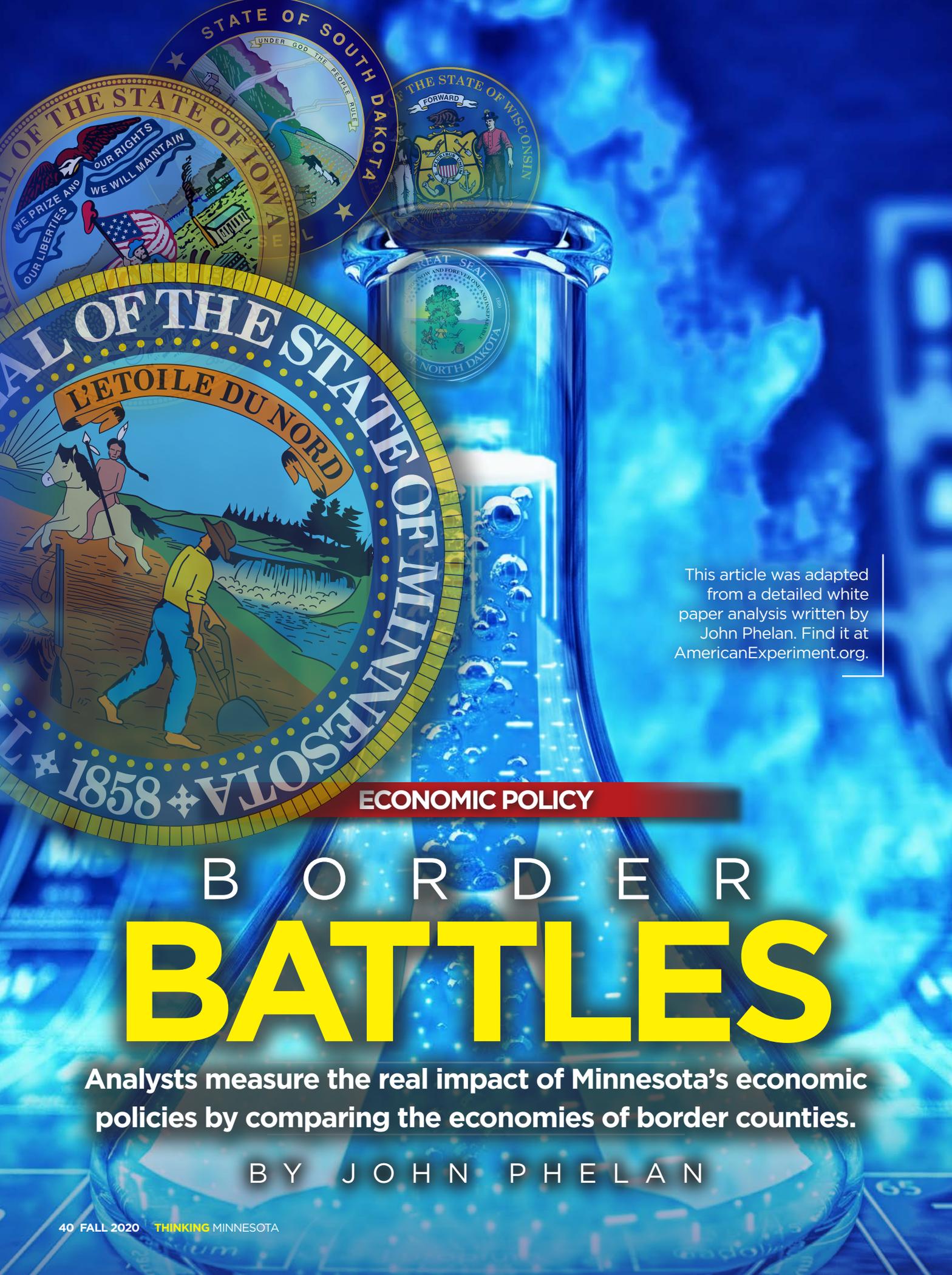


FIGURE 9: SOLID MAJORITIES OF VOTERS PREFER TO CUT SPENDING RATHER THAN RAISE TAXES (OR A MIX OF BOTH) IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THE STATE’S PROJECTED BUDGET SHORTFALL.

“Minnesota’s state government projects a budget shortfall for the next biennium of several billion dollars. What do you think is the best way to address a budget shortfall?”





This article was adapted from a detailed white paper analysis written by John Phelan. Find it at AmericanExperiment.org.

ECONOMIC POLICY

B O R D E R
BATTLES

Analysts measure the real impact of Minnesota's economic policies by comparing the economies of border counties.

BY JOHN PHELAN

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously described the states of the union as “laboratories of democracy” where a “state may, if its citizens choose...try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.”

State governments have done just that. Comparisons between Minnesota and its neighbors—Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and North Dakota—offer rich examples of how tax rates and regulatory burdens differ significantly among states. As of January 2020, the top rate of state income tax ranged from 0 percent in South Dakota—it levies no state income tax—to 9.85 percent on income over \$164,400 in Minnesota, the fifth-highest top rate in the country. Likewise, state corporate income tax rates range from 0 percent in South Dakota—it levies no state corporate income tax—to 12 percent on income over \$250,000 in Iowa, the highest top rate in the United States. Finally, state sales tax rates range from 4.5 percent in South Dakota to 6.875 percent in Minnesota, the sixth-highest rate in the United States, albeit with many exemptions. These five states are spread widely

across rankings of state tax regimes. The Tax Foundation’s 2020 State Business Tax Climate Index ranks Minnesota 45th, Iowa 42nd, Wisconsin 26th, North Dakota 16th, and South Dakota 2nd.

Table 1 shows the variation in major tax rates among Minnesota and its neighbors in 2010 and 2018. Over this period, corporate tax rates and brackets in the states remained unchanged except for in North Dakota, where rates fell. The sales tax rate changed only in South Dakota, with a 0.5 percentage point increase. There is more variation when it comes to state income taxes. South Dakota’s remained unchanged at 0 percent, and lawmakers increased the thresholds for Iowa’s brackets largely to guard against inflation. North Dakota retained five brackets but sharply reduced the rates, and Wisconsin both lowered rates, albeit by less than North Dakota, and reduced the number of brackets. At the other end, Minnesota added a new top tax rate above its former top rate. Overall, while South Dakota and Iowa saw little or no change in income taxes, Wisconsin and North Dakota both cut them and Minnesota increased them on the highest earners. It is also worth noting that Minnesota taxes its lower-earning residents at a comparatively high level. It levies a 5.35 percent tax on the first dollar of taxable income, a

rate that, in 2018, Wisconsin didn’t levy until the resident earned \$11,230, Iowa didn’t levy until the resident earned \$14,382, and North Dakota levied on nobody at all.

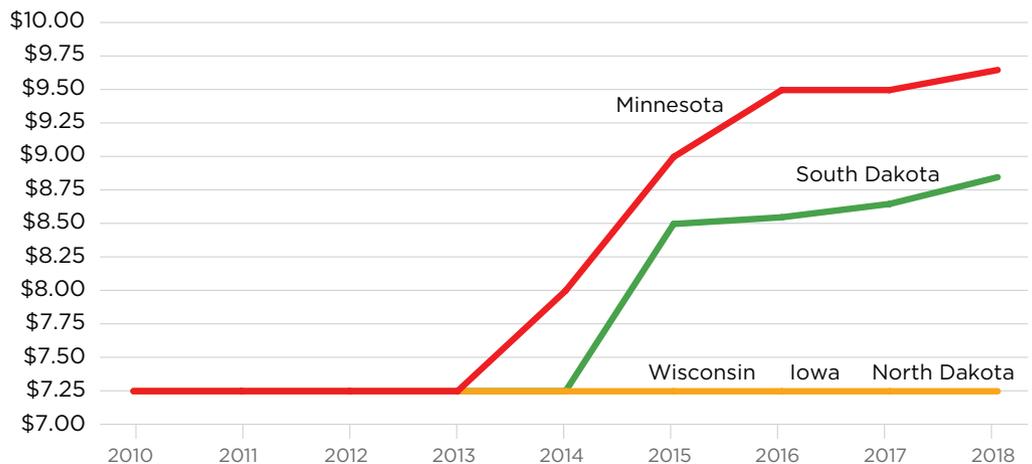
Analysts find it more challenging to quantify the overall burdens of government regulations. First, merely counting the number of regulations yields an imprecise analysis at best. Businesses, for example, might find it easier to comply with 10 precisely worded regulations than one with vague wording. Second, the burden of a regulation can also be tied to how zealously it is enforced.

We can, though, quantify some specific regulations, such as the minimum wage. A state can impose its own, or use the federal rate. As Figure 1 shows, three of Minnesota’s neighbors—Wisconsin, Iowa, and North Dakota—use the federal minimum wage as the effective in-state minimum wage. This was the case in Minnesota until 2014 and in South Dakota until 2015, when the two states raised their minimum wage rates above the federal level.

The drawbacks of state-to-state comparisons

The “natural experiments” that such variations create allow us to assess the impacts of particular economic policies on economic performance.

Figure 1: State Minimum Wage Rates



Source: Department of Labor

Table 1: Income and Corporate Tax Rates and Brackets—Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and North Dakota (2010 and 2018)

	Minnesota				Wisconsin				Iowa				South Dakota	
	2010		2018		2010		2018		2010		2018		2010	2018
Income tax	5.35%	\$0	5.35%	\$0	4.60%	\$0	4.00%	\$0	0.36%	\$0	0.36%	\$0	0	0
	7.05%	\$22,770	7.05%	\$25,890	6.15%	\$10,220	5.84%	\$11,230	0.72%	\$1,407	0.72%	\$1,598		
	7.85%	\$74,780	7.85%	\$85,060	6.50%	\$20,440	6.27%	\$22,470	2.43%	\$2,814	2.43%	\$3,196		
			9.85%	\$160,020	6.75%	\$153,280	7.65%	\$247,350	4.50%	\$5,628	4.50%	\$6,392		
					7.75%	\$225,000			6.12%	\$12,663	6.12%	\$14,382		
									6.48%	\$21,105	6.48%	\$23,970		
									6.80%	\$28,140	6.80%	\$31,960		
									7.92%	\$42,210	7.92%	\$47,940		
									8.98%	\$63,315	8.98%	\$71,910		
Corporate tax	9.80%	\$0	9.80%	\$0	7.90%	\$0	7.90%	\$0	6%	\$0	6%	\$0	0	0
									8%	\$25,000	8%	\$25,000		
									10%	\$100,000	10%	\$100,000		
									12%	\$250,000	12%	\$250,000		
Sales tax	6.875%		6.875%		5.00%		5.00%		6.00%		6.00%		4.00%	4.50%

Analysts frequently attribute the economic outcomes in Minnesota and Wisconsin to the differing policies of the two states. After the November 2010 gubernatorial elections of Democrat Mark Dayton in Minnesota and Republican Scott Walker in Wisconsin, the Economic Policy Institute wrote: “The two states’ geographic proximity—as well as their similarities in population, demographics, culture, and industry composition—make comparing outcomes in Wisconsin versus Minnesota a useful natural experiment for assessing how state policy is affecting economic outcomes and residents’ welfare.”

But policy analysts should not push these arguments too far. Minnesota and Wisconsin differ in ways beyond economic policy that could account for at least some of the disparate outcomes.

One difference can be the positive contributions of big cities as engines of economic growth. Urbanization—as labor moves from agriculture to industry and services—reduces the per capita

costs of providing infrastructure and government services; knowledge spillovers and specialization enhance worker productivity. So, Minnesota’s economic advantage over Wisconsin might be due to its large urban areas more than the state’s economic policies.

The Twin Cities, for example, comprise the 15th largest Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in the United States by Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The next largest MSA by GDP in Minnesota and its four neighbors is Milwaukee, which ranks 37th nationally. While Minnesota derives 80 percent of its GDP from five MSAs, Wisconsin gets 80 percent of its GDP from 12 MSAs. The Twin Cities MSA accounts for 71 percent of Minnesota’s GDP; Milwaukee provides 31 percent of Wisconsin’s GDP.

True, state policy can contribute to the rise or fall of cities, but this tends to happen over a term too long to be driven by a particular administration—the Twin Cities have been among America’s most

populous metropolitan areas since 1880.

The benefits of border county comparisons

Economists can most accurately assess the impact of state economic policy by excluding all possible non-policy factors that help determine economic outcomes. In *Why Nations Fail*, economists Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson illustrated the importance of institutions in driving economic outcomes by comparing living standards in Nogales, Arizona in the United States with those in Nogales, Sonora in Mexico. The town is divided by an arbitrary line with economic outcomes, such as wages, household incomes, or per capita GDP, vastly different on either side. Variables such as “geography, climate, or the types of diseases prevalent in the area” can be assumed to be the same on both sides of the line and, so, can be excluded as causes of observed differences. What remains is simply what side of the line you are on, which determines the institutions you live under.

This situation illustrates the value of comparing border counties. As with Nogales, we can assume that factors such as geography or demographics are fairly uniform between, say, Washington County in Minnesota and St. Croix County on the other side of the I-94 bridge in Wisconsin.

Analyzing border counties enables us



John Phelan is an economist at Center of the American Experiment. He is a graduate of Birkbeck College, University of London, where he earned a BSc in Economics, and of the London School of Economics where he earned an MSc. John has written for *City A.M.* in London and for *The Wall Street Journal* in both Europe and the U.S. He has also been published in the journal *Economic Affairs*.

North Dakota			
2010		2018	
1.84%	\$0	1.10%	\$0
3.44%	\$34,000	2.04%	\$38,700
3.81%	\$82,400	2.27%	\$93,700
4.42%	\$171,850	2.64%	\$195,450
4.86%	\$373,650	2.90%	\$424,950
2.10%	\$0	1.41%	\$0
5.30%	\$25,000	3.55%	\$25,000
6.40%	\$50,000	4.31%	\$50,000
5.00%		5.00%	

Source:
Center of the
American
Experiment

to filter out some of the distorting effects like the presence of the Twin Cities. North Dakota illustrates this. Its economy has recently generated the highest real GDP growth in America, increasing by 40.3 percent between 2010 and 2018. But 34.3 percent of that growth comes from just two counties, McKenzie and Williams, in the heart of the Bakken oil fields. True, choosing to develop natural resources is an aspect of state policy—as Minnesota’s hesitance to develop its non-ferrous mining demonstrates—but geology, not policy, drives the allocation of such resources. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to attribute North Dakota’s superior GDP growth—Minnesota grew by 17.2 percent between 2010 and 2018—to superior state policy.

Because McKenzie and Williams counties are on the opposite side of North Dakota from its border with Minnesota, economists won’t attribute differences in economic outcomes between Cass County in North Dakota and neighboring Clay County in Minnesota to the geological windfall of the Bakken oil fields. The economies of Minnesota and North Dakota might be too different to compare too closely on a statewide basis, the same cannot be said about the economies of Moorhead and Fargo.

Comparing the economies of neighboring border counties provides an excellent way to assess the impact of state economic policy on economic outcomes.

My analysis compares the relative performance of border communities from 2010 to 2018.

The outcomes fall into three broad categories: where people want to be, where businesses want to be, and how people’s living standards are impacted.

To look at where people want to be, we use data on resident population from the Census Bureau. To get some idea of whether people are moving to or remaining in these areas because they anticipate opportunities, we look at Census Bureau data on median age of the population. To understand how these movements are likely to impact the productivity of the labor force, we use data on the share of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher, again from the Census Bureau.

To see where businesses want to be, we look at data on the number of private

A consistent research finding is that high taxes have significant negative effects on economic growth.

establishments from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). We look at how successful these businesses have been at expanding using data on total employment and the composition of employment, again from the BLS.

Finally, to measure people’s living standards, we look at per capita Personal Income data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Personal Income contains income from three categories: labor income, capital income, and transfer income, and we also look to see which of these categories has driven changes in total per capita Personal Income. We also look at Census Bureau data on the number of people in poverty.

We look primarily at growth rates and changes over the period 2010 to 2018. *Levels* of something like Personal Income can, as the size of the Twin Cities or the Bakken oil fields show, reflect policy choices or natural resource endowments of long ago. Rates of change, on

the other hand, are more likely to reflect the impact of the particular policies we wish to assess.

Conclusions

No single one of these measures on its own explains how state policy affects the economy. What we need to do, having pulled the data together, is to step back and see the big picture.

We see that Minnesota performs best against Wisconsin. The picture is somewhat different when we look at the other borders, where the distorting effects of a large MSA are mostly absent and where the borders are more porous. Minnesota loses to Iowa and North Dakota and fairly comprehensively to South Dakota.

What do we see when we compare these observed results to state economic policies, particularly the tax policies in Table 1? Minnesota fares best against Wisconsin, which ranked as a lower tax state and which, over this period, lowered its income tax rates and reduced the number of brackets. This statistic might seem to contradict the consistent research finding that high taxes have significant negative effects on economic growth. But bear in mind that the Twin Cities MSA—a legacy of past development, not of current policy—straddles this border and drives much of Minnesota’s strong performance here. Also, a lesser factor, the rivers Mississippi and St. Croix run along much of it, expanding the “policy space.”

The other comparisons support that consistent research finding. When we compare the performance of Minnesota—where taxes are high on all and the top rate was increased—to Iowa, where a lighter tax burden was largely held, Minnesota loses. Minnesota’s performance loses handily to North Dakota, where taxes were lower and were cut. Minnesota loses very badly when compared to South Dakota, which maintained its light tax burden throughout this period. Taken together, these results suggest a reasonably strong effect of state economic policy on economic outcomes, and in particular, they support the consistent research finding that high taxes have a significant adverse impact on economic growth. ★



≡ ESSENTIAL
BACKGROUND

THE FUTURE OF ENERGY

By Isaac Orr

Wind and solar are the energy
past, not the energy future.

Many people seem to think the future holds an inevitable shift away from fossil fuels toward solar panels and wind turbines, but this perception is incorrect. As California demonstrated in mid-August, these technologies are not up to the task of powering our lives, and pretending otherwise is both naïve and dangerous.

California politicians spent decades passing legislation mandating ever-increasing amounts of wind and solar onto the electric grid. On August 14 and 15, these policies came back to bite them in a big way.

That weekend, more than two million Californians experienced rolling power outages during a record-breaking heatwave because there wasn't enough electricity on the grid as the sun set, rendering the state's solar panels useless for electricity generation.

The California politicians who patted themselves on the back for shuttering coal, nuclear, and natural gas power plants had killed off the sources of electricity that weren't reliant upon the weather. The results were tragic, but predictable. Thankfully for Minnesotans, similar results are preventable.

To help Minnesotans understand why wind and solar are not the future, it helps to understand the history of energy. When we do, we find that solar and wind are the energy past, fossil fuels are the energy present, and nuclear power is likely the energy future.

The history below is an abridged version of our energy history, but if you're interested in the long version, I suggest the book *Energy and Civilization* by Vaclav Smil.

What is energy?

What is energy, exactly? In its most basic form, energy is the ability to perform work.

For almost all human history, energy was scarce. Humans were an energy-starved species constantly thirsting for more and more-useful forms of energy. Doing so enabled us to do more work and raise our standard of living.

The energy past: Solar, biomass, water, and wind

It might come as a shock to Freshman Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, but nearly all the energy used by humans until a few hundred years ago was renewable, and life was not a heaven on Earth.

The graph nearby shows the amount of

energy used by humans from 1800 through the present. In 1800, humanity used 452 times less energy than humans in 2019, and nearly all of it came from biomass.

The “Low Energy” world humans lived in was no paradise. Average life expectancies were less than 40 years. In Germany, every second child died. People’s statures were shorter because poor nutrition and illness limited human growth.

Life was indeed nasty, brutish and short, and it remained this way until humans began using coal at scale in the 1800s.

Solar power, the original energy

Solar power was the first form of energy used by humans. The sun energized plants through photosynthesis, allowing them to grow and store that solar energy. Humans ate those plants, or we ate the animals that ate plants and other animals to provide the energy we needed. We performed work by using the energy obtained from eating food to power our muscles. We used our muscles to hunt, gather, build shelters, and get to our destinations.

This was the state of human energy consumption for much of human history. Then came fire.

Fire changed the game by expanding access to solar energy that had been stored in plants that were not readily edible. With fire, humans could use the energy stored in inedible woody plants by burning them for heat, light, and cooking.

Heat from fire increased the number of climates humans could live in, light scared away predators and allowed humans to work at night, and cooking food increased the efficiency of digestion, allowing our bodies to get more energy out of the food we ate.

Domesticated animals

Human energy consumption was amplified again when we domesticated animals. Humans were able to harness and control more solar energy by raising animals who could eat a wider variety of plants such as grasses, which human stomachs are unable to turn into useful energy, to perform useful work.

At first, this increase in available animal energy went straight to our stomachs, as sheep, goats, and cattle were domesticated and raised for their meat. Later, draft animals such as cattle, donkeys, and horses were used for plowing fields, grinding grain at mills, and riding for transportation.

Adding animal energy to our portfolio exponentially increased the amount of energy humans could harness, leading to increasingly productive work. For example, a human can work at a rate of about 0.13 horsepower, meaning a horse can perform about 7.5 times more work than a human over the course of a day.

Hydropower

The invention of the waterwheel added the kinetic energy of rivers to the human energy arsenal. Water was first used by the ancient Greeks to mill grain. By the 1500s, waterpower was the most important source of motive power in Europe, with as many as 20,000 watermills by the 19th century.

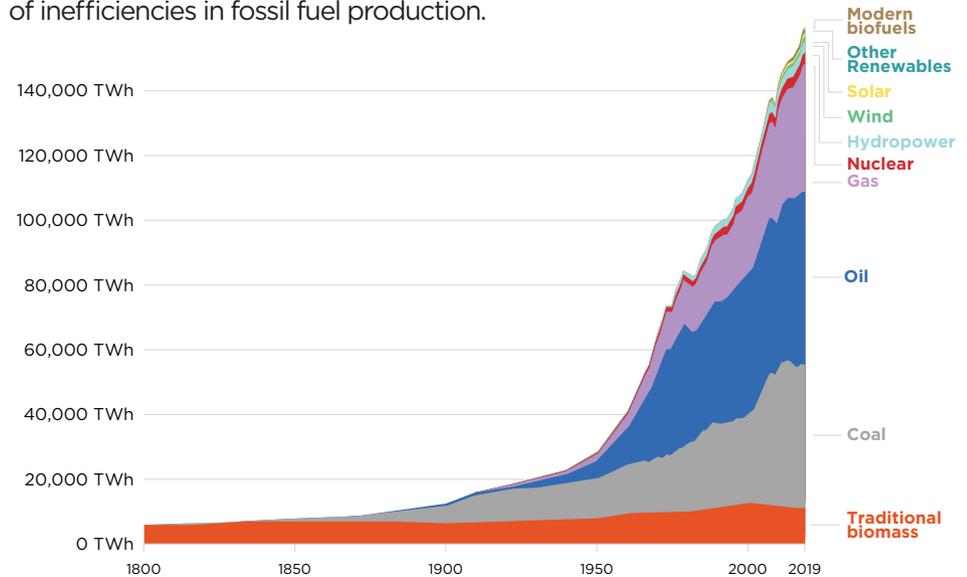
The waterwheel freed humans and animals to perform other work, and hydropower offered distinct advantages over animal labor.

Unlike a waterwheel, animals require feed. Draft animals performing work use more energy than nonworking farm animals. Animals can only work so many hours in a day before they need to be rested. Animals also get sick and die unexpectedly.

As is the case with all increases in energy use, hydropower increased the amount of work that could be performed by fewer people. For example, even early medieval watermills replaced 30-60 people from the task of grinding flour. Later, the uses of hydropower expanded to running sawmills, mining operations, making textiles, and eventually generating electricity.

Global Direct Primary Energy Consumption

Direct primary energy consumption does not take account of inefficiencies in fossil fuel production.



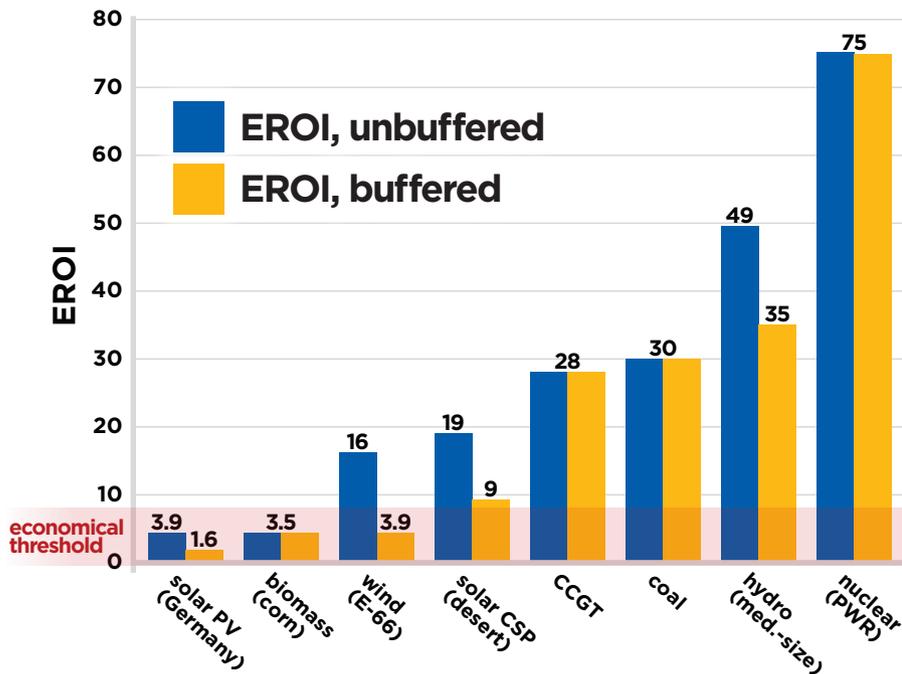
Source: Vaclav Smil (2017) and BP Statistical Review of World Energy

The biggest problem with hydropower is that there isn’t nearly enough of it. Rivers are powerful, but they are in limited supply, and only a certain number of rivers are large enough to perform useful work, which is one reason why the invention of windmills increased human access to energy once again.

Wind

Wind had first been used for sailboats in Mesopotamia, and until the first windmills were invented by the Persians to grind grain and pump water between 500 and 900 A.D., wind was primar-

Energy Return on Investment



EROIs of all energy techniques with economic “threshold”. Biomass: Maize, 55 t/ ha per year harvested (wet). Wind: Location is Northern Schleswig Holstein (2000 full-load hours). Coal: Transportation not included. Nuclear: Enrichment 83% centrifuge, 17% diffusion. PV: Roof installation. Solar CSP: Grid connection to Europe not included.

ily used for transportation. Windmills became widespread in Europe in the 17th century, and approximately 200,000 windmills operated at the peak of the technology.

Windmills increased the amount of energy humans were able to harness to perform work because new development could occur in more areas, and it could creep away from riverbanks.

Of course, the disadvantages of wind we experience today were still present back then.

Because wind power cannot be stored, this energy source was used primarily to

mill grain into flour, pump water into livestock tanks, and saw lumber into boards.

Wind is also dependent on the weather, meaning it cannot be relied upon to provide energy at all hours of the day. In fact, horses were used as “backup” sources of power for milling grain during calm stretches in Europe, similar to how natural gas power plants “back up” wind turbines for generating electricity when the wind isn’t blowing.

While each of these sources of “renewable” energy increased the human standard of living, they also had limited availability and reliability. However, the discovery and widespread use of coal enabled humans to access vast supplies of reliable energy on demand. This energy powered the industrial revolution.

The energy present: Coal, oil, and natural gas

Coal is considered a fossil fuel, but it is really a form of long-term solar

energy storage. Ancient plant life in swamps accumulated over millions of years and was eventually buried by sediment and exposed to geological heat and pressure. This process converted plants, which store solar energy, into coal.

Coal was used as far back as the cave people, but it gained widespread adoption in the 1800s for cooking and home heating. Coal offered several advantages over wood because there is about 42 percent more energy in the best coals than hardwood. As a result, coal lasts longer, produces less smoke when burned, and requires less material.

The invention of the steam engine near the start of the 1700s turned coal into the most important fuel in industrializing societies, allowing humans to turn millions of years of stored solar energy (coal) into useful work.

Unlike water or wind power, coal could be transported and used anywhere. Also, coal can be burned at all hours of the day, rain or shine, giving humans around-the-clock energy, which increases industrial capacity at mines, manufacturing facilities, steelmaking sites, and mills.

Steam-powered trains—which revolutionized transportation—are the type of steam engine most people conceptualize. These engines used coal to heat water. The boiling water produced steam. Steam created an enormous amount of pressure, pushing the pistons to drive the train.

Soon, steamships replaced sailboats, and railroads hauled more freight faster and farther than wagons pulled by draft animals would allow. The Pony Express gave way to Thomas the Tank Engine.

Oil, natural gas, and electricity

Coal’s reign at the top of the energy pyramid was relatively short-lived because natural gas, oil, and electricity offered superior value in terms of energy density and in ease of transportation. Both natural gas and oil had been used in limited capacities in ancient China but did not become widely used in Europe or North America until the 1800s.

Natural gas was used to produce light in Baltimore around the 1830s, but gas



Isaac Orr is a policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment where he writes about energy and environmental issues, including mining and electricity policy.



The California politicians who patted themselves on the back for shuttering coal, nuclear, and natural gas power plants had killed off the sources of electricity that weren't reliant upon the weather.

use remained limited until after World War II because it is more difficult to transport than oil. Oil became widely used after it was discovered in Pennsylvania in 1859, touching off the first oil boom in the United States.

Oil has about twice the energy density as bituminous coal, and its liquid form allowed it to be used in many different capacities. Kerosene became the fuel of choice for lamps, displacing expensive whale oil and doing more to save the whales than the environmental organization Greenpeace ever has.

The invention of the internal combustion engine in the late 1800s transformed transportation by allowing for smaller, personal vehicles to be built and fueled, rather than relying on big bulky railroads. This led to a revolution in personal transportation, farming, mining, and other industrial uses, replacing the steam engine and animal labor.

Oil is now the largest source of energy for Americans, powering most of our transportation sector and also heating our homes.

The electric era

The widespread use of oil for lighting was short-lived, however, because in 1882, Thomas Edison built his first commercial electricity plant, ushering in the era of electricity. When it comes to energy, nothing is as powerful, versatile, safe, easy to use, or clean as electricity.

Lighting was the first thing to become electrified. Edison's lightbulbs were 10 times brighter than lamps and 100 times brighter than candles. They also produced no soot and were safer. By the early 1900s, the use of electricity had been expanded to washing machines, water heaters, refrigerators, kettles and sewing machines. Obviously, we have found exponentially more uses for this energy since then and the possibilities for the future are limitless—if we don't screw it up.

The perils of bad public policy

Most of the energy policies crafted today are aimed at changing the way we generate electricity.

Unlike other forms of energy, electricity is not a source of energy by itself. Instead, electricity must be generated by converting primary energy sources (such as coal, natural gas, oil, uranium, water, solar, or wind energy) into electric power.

Coal and hydroelectric power became the early favorites for generating electricity. Coal was burned to heat water, creating steam, which caused turbines to spin. In hydroelectric dams, water spins the turbines. These two generating sources provided about 80 percent of U.S. electricity in 1950.

Attempts to kill off the coal industry during the Obama administration were quite successful. Coal is largely being replaced by natural gas, and to a much lesser extent, non-hydro renewables (i.e., wind and solar).

Wind and solar don't produce much power because they are unreliable and because they are the exact opposite of energy dense, requiring vast buildouts to produce only a small amount of electricity. As a result, they have an exceedingly

low energy return on investment (EROI). The EROI is the ratio of the amount of useable energy delivered by an energy source compared to how much energy it took to obtain the resource.

In the graph nearby, the blue bars indicate the EROI if we don't consider the energy needed to store energy produced by intermittent renewables, and the yellow bars take this into account. For an energy source to be economically viable, it must have an EROI above eight. As you can see, solar, biomass, and wind all fall below this threshold, and therefore cost more energy to produce than is returned once storage is considered.

The energy future: Nuclear power

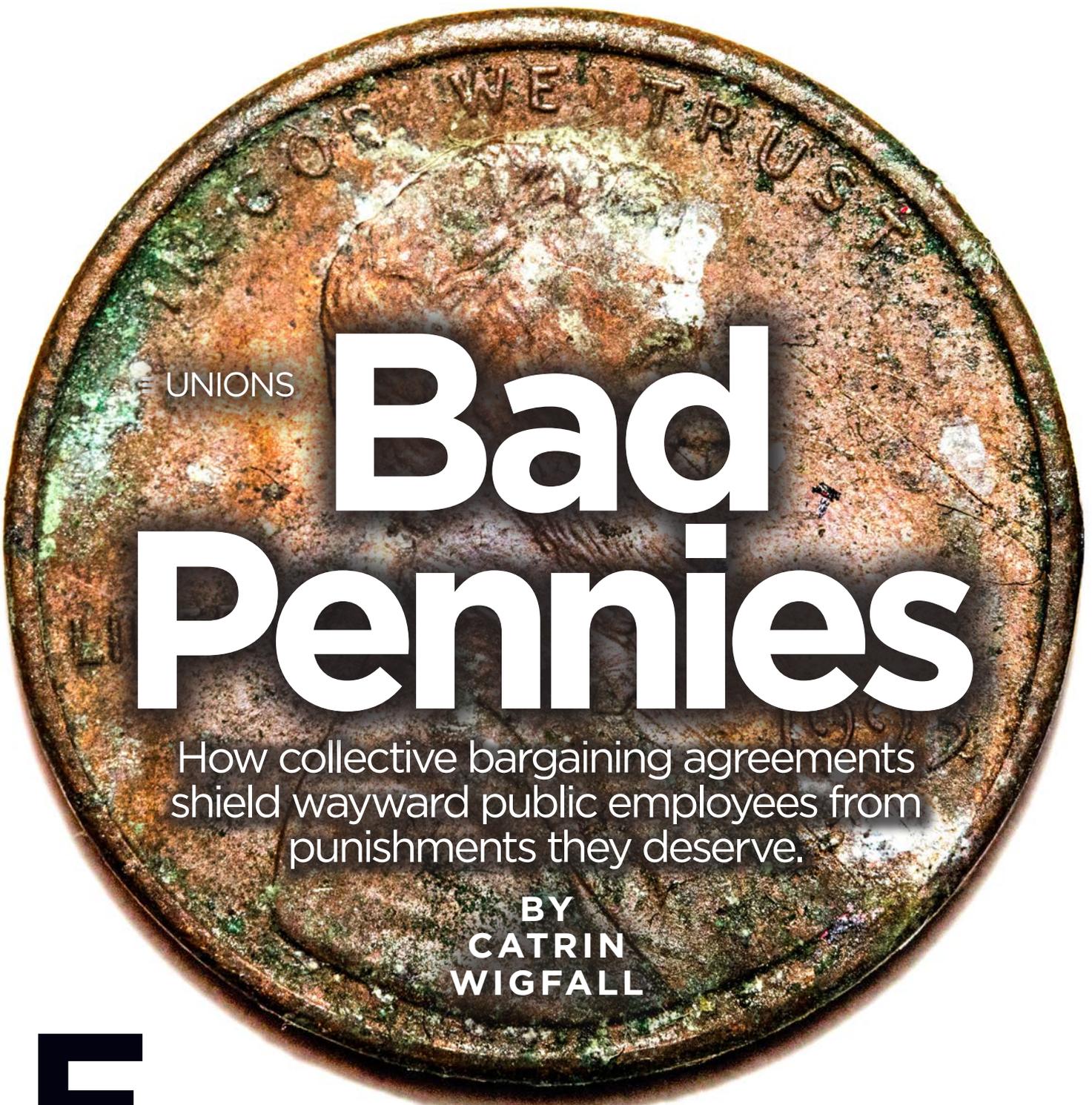
As you can see in the EROI graph, nuclear is the clear winner, and this is why the future of energy is almost certainly nuclear power. Nuclear power is the only source of energy that is denser than fossil fuels.

For example, the energy density of 2.2 pounds (1 kilogram) of coal contains about 33 units of energy (megajoules), but 2.2 pounds of uranium has 3.9 million. One pellet of uranium—about the size of a pencil eraser—has the same amount of energy as 149 gallons of oil or 1 ton of coal.

In fact, if all the electricity you used for 70 years was generated at nuclear facilities, the amount of uranium used would fit inside a soda can.

The high energy density of uranium is why nuclear power has the potential to someday generate electricity at a lower cost than fossil fuels and is why it is most likely the future of electricity generation. Unlike wind and solar, it produces carbon-dioxide free electricity around the clock, so a grid powered by nuclear power won't experience California-style blackouts.

The low reliability and high cost of wind and solar are deal breakers. There is no inevitable shift toward these energy sources. I predict that they will soon go the way of the Beanie Babies—here today and “huh?” tomorrow. Nuclear power will likely fill the void. ★



UNIONS

Bad Pennies

How collective bargaining agreements shield wayward public employees from punishments they deserve.

BY
CATRIN
WIGFALL

Former Minneapolis Police Officer Blayne Lehner was fired in 2016 for violating the police department's use of force policy. Lehner was accused of using excessive force when he twice pushed a woman to the ground in an incident that occurred two years prior. But an arbitrator decided termination was "a step too far," according to the Bureau of Mediation Services' arbitration records,

and reduced the discipline to an unpaid suspension of 40 hours.

Fast forward to 2019: Lehner was still on paid administrative leave and was fired a second time for an excessive use of force case that happened six years earlier. He was accused of using unauthorized force in 2013 when he kicked a handcuffed man in the back seat of a squad car, breaking

the man's nose and jaw and knocking out two teeth, according to arbitration records. With six use of force violations on his record over a three-year period, an arbitrator denied Lehner's appeal and his termination remained in effect.

Minnesota's arbitration process is not limited to the police profession. Other public employees, such as teachers or state workers, can also challenge

terminations and other discipline through arbitration. But what is often overlooked is another layer of insulation that protects “bad apple” public employees from accountability: collective bargaining agreements.

In Minnesota, the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA) has statutorily allowed collective bargaining between state and local government employers and representatives of public employees (public-sector unions) since it was passed in 1971. PELRA was enacted to regulate labor relations between public employers and employees through a collective bargaining agreement (CBA). A CBA is a legal contract negotiated between an employer and the union to determine terms of employment, including pay, benefits, hours and working conditions. Also included in CBAs are disciplinary procedures and standards that state law requires must include a grievance procedure providing for compulsory binding arbitration.

The majority of public employees who serve our communities do so with honor and dignity, but those who discredit their professions are too often protected by

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that, nationwide, the layoff and firing rate of government employees (state and local) is only one-third the rate in the private sector.

contract provisions and state law that may look innocuous on their face but can cause serious consequences when it comes to transparency and accountability.

Arbitration and collective bargaining agreements

Minnesota’s private sector adheres to “at will” employment doctrine, which (with few exceptions) allows employers to discipline or fire an employee for any reason—or no reason at all—as long as

no federal or state anti-discrimination statutes are violated.

For government employees, PELRA requires public employers to meet and negotiate with public-sector unions on “terms and conditions of employment.” This phrase often serves as a catch-all, allowing negotiations over procedures used in disciplinary proceedings to be included. Coupled in these union contracts in Minnesota are grievance procedures and a binding arbitration clause that requires government employers to allow all discipline to be appealed to arbitration. For example, in the case that a public employee is fired, binding arbitration is required if that employee appeals the termination. A union represents the employee and attempts to negotiate for a reduced disciplinary sentence or to get the discipline overturned altogether.

The state’s Bureau of Mediation Services administers the arbitration process, providing a list of arbitrators who act as a third party to resolve contract and grievance disputes between an employer and employee. Arbitrators only rule on information that they are presented with by either party. Once an arbitrator decides to either uphold the disciplinary action or reverse it, the decision is irrevocable. And public disclosure regarding the decision is not always a given. “A disciplinary action does not become public data if an arbitrator sustains a grievance and reverses all aspects of any disciplinary action,” according to the Bureau of Mediation Services.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that, nationwide, the layoff and firing rate of government employees (state and local) is only one-third the rate in the private sector. Private-sector employees have the responsibility to make good choices and maintain good order; public employees should be held to the same standard.

Conflict of interest

The combination of state law and collective bargaining provisions regarding discipline procedures creates a dangerous conflict of interest. Allowing government unions the power to approve employment

contracts—which are often worked out in secret negotiation sessions—that include disciplinary rules adds to the layers of barriers that thwart legitimate discipline and paves the way for punishments to be overturned. This goes beyond preserving due process.

Research Fellow Rachel Greszler with The Heritage Foundation recently wrote that labor contracts “often include provisions that obstruct discipline, erase



By including discipline policies in CBAs, unions—**unelected, unaccountable third parties**—are able to craft discipline provisions that interfere with basic accountability.

discipline records, and insert elevated standards of review that shield rogue police officers from justice.”

For example, a recent *Wall Street Journal* analysis of data from the past 15 years found that collective bargaining provisions and arbitration practices have led to half of Minnesota law enforcement officers who were fired for misconduct being reinstated. Seven out of nine officers terminated for violating use of force policies were reinstated, including two from the Minneapolis police department. And half of Minneapolis police officers who faced criminal charges are still working for the department today. A five-year analysis by the *Pioneer Press* in 2019 found that in 17 of 37 instances, arbitrators blocked Minnesota officials’ attempts to terminate law enforcement or corrections officers.

The right to appeal disciplinary actions before an arbitrator also often protects bad teachers from being fired for incompetence or even egregious

behavior. Union-negotiated employment policies in accordance with state statute grant tenure—or, in the legal jargon, due process—to teachers after a probationary period of typically three years. Tenured teachers are not beyond reproach, but the process to fire an ineffective tenured teacher remains difficult and complicated, and the union is likely to intervene and file a grievance against these grounds for dismissal, citing it as a possible violation of the union bargaining agreement.

Jefferson Fietek, a former theater teacher in the Anoka-Hennepin school district, came under investigation in June for sexual assault allegations involving two former male students. According to the *Pioneer Press*, Fietek had three complaints in his personnel file while he was teaching at the school, but because none of them led to discipline and did not involve alleged sexual misconduct, the nature of the complaints was protected under data privacy law. A recent national survey commissioned by NPR found that over 60 percent of both unionized and nonunionized teachers agree that unions make it harder to fire bad teachers.

A former teacher who wished to remain anonymous out of fear of retaliation expressed concerns to writer Maureen Kelleher about the ways in which unions protect their members at the expense of the people they serve:

When police officers or teachers are accused of wrongdoing, it is the union that supplies the public relations spin, the lawyers and the defense. ... It is not the union's job to protect students; their job is to help teachers keep their jobs. Sadly, this is still the teacher union's job, even when teacher members are sexual molesters and otherwise abusive. ... Both teachers and police officers work with the public when they are at their most vulnerable.



Catrin Wigfall is a policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. She is the director of Educated Teachers MN and Employee Freedom MN. Catrin spent two years teaching 5th grade general education and 6th grade Latin in Arizona as a Teach for America corps member before using her classroom experience to transition back into education policy work.

Changes are needed

Reformers say legislators should re-evaluate Minnesota's public employment statutes to narrow the scope of bargaining in the public sector. We need to get government unions out of the business of being able to negotiate discipline policies in collective bargaining agreements and put the process of holding police officers, teachers, and other public employees accountable into different hands. The Legislature could make this a reality by prohibiting collective bargaining over discipline. PELRA prohibits contract bargaining over pension benefits, which are established in other law, and a similar prohibition for discipline would eliminate self-inflicted obstacles to accountability and transparency.

More pressure on employers and unions posting their complete collective bargaining agreements online is another way to leverage accountability.

While employees should be protected from frivolous complaints, there are problems with the arbitration process that allow too many public employees to escape consequences for poor choices. State law allows unaccountable arbitrators instead of elected officials to have the last word when it comes to holding individual public employees accountable and deterring bad behavior.

Additionally, disclosing discipline records would elevate standards of accountability. The instances of problem-prone employees who get terminated and then

reinstated are trackable if they go through the arbitration process—which is often a small percentage of total terminations. What about the public employees who get terminated for misconduct but don't challenge the disciplinary action through arbitration? Their discipline records are not publicly disclosed because the union often lobbies to shield these records from the public, which impedes accountability and transparency. If an officer or a teacher is fired but doesn't lose certification, he or she can get rehired somewhere else without the new employer being aware of previous red flags. Minnesota communities need to believe that misconduct among public employees in professions we trust to keep us safe and educate our students will be investigated and handled appropriately.

More pressure on employers and unions to make their complete collective bargaining agreements available online is another way to leverage accountability. While ratified union contracts are supposed to be publicly available, they aren't always posted by the employer or union for public inspection. This leaves taxpayers uninformed of the disciplinary policies and rules that apply to the government employees who work for them.

Thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the 2018 case *Janus v. AFSCME*, public employees no longer have to financially support a union in order to keep their jobs. But exclusive representation rights for unions to collectively bargain on behalf of all public employees within the union's bargaining unity create rigid monopoly structures that have "made state and local government bigger, costlier and more complex," *The Washington Post's* Charles Lane recently noted.

Neighboring states Wisconsin and Iowa have limited collective bargaining for most public-sector employees to base wages. In Wisconsin, this led to over \$5 billion in savings for the state's taxpayers within five years. According to Iowans for Tax Relief, collective bargaining reform makes it easier for cities, counties, school districts, and state government to "reward good employees, remove poor performing employees, and allow more control over their budgets."

Minnesota has the opportunity to follow suit and demand greater oversight



and accountability regarding public-sector collective bargaining in general. Will we take advantage of it?

Conclusion

Union collective bargaining agreements spanning public service professions have evolved into much more than standard labor contracts. By including discipline policies in CBAs, unions—unelected, unaccountable third parties—are able to craft discipline provisions that interfere with basic accountability.

Paired with issues in the state’s arbitration process, it is expensive and time-consuming to hold public employees accountable for poor performance or misconduct. As long as unions have power over contracts and provisions that involve disciplinary hearings and procedures, they can not only intentionally increase the burden of proof that employers have to show before they can discipline or fire bad apple public employees but also undermine or counteract any disciplinary effort to begin with.

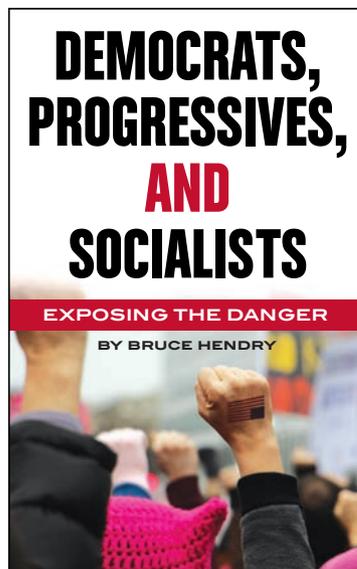
The most important thing to unions is their members. Any type of reform that the union interprets as a threat to its members or the union’s own existence, regardless of the reform’s overall impact in the community, union officials will oppose. Researcher Rachel Greszler with The Heritage Foundation recently compared the union’s involvement with discipline policies to product safety: “If we wanted to ensure the safety of companies’ products, we would not allow organizations that represent the individuals who produce those products to set the safety standards and control the consequences of violating those standards.”

State law and collective bargaining provisions should be adjusted so that unions do not have the power to hamstring attempts at accountability and discipline. And while critics may argue that public employees have a right to due process, that shouldn’t entitle them to undue processes that shield them from accountability. Most civil servants serve our communities well, but we shouldn’t allow unions to make it difficult to weed out the rotten. When a bad cop, teacher, or state worker gets his or her job back, we all lose. ★

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Bruce’s analysis is spot on, crystal clear and comprehensive. A must read that should be made mandatory in every school and college across the board. —Bach

We will see that the ideology of the Democrats is more like a religion than a political party and how human nature, jealousy, anger and group think psychology plays into their agenda. —Stephen

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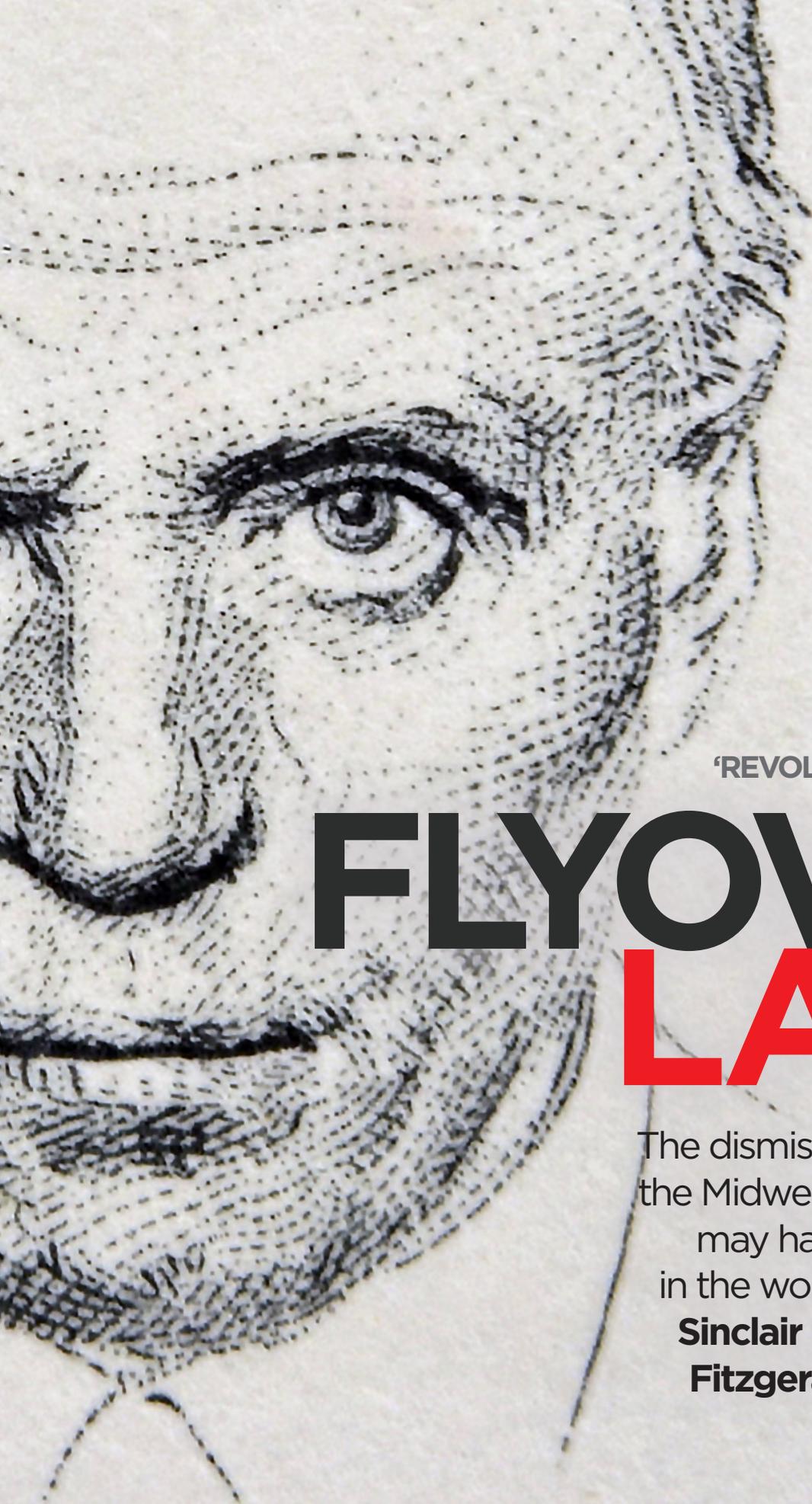
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Sinclair saw Minnesota as a microcosm of America.

“To understand America,” he wrote, “it is merely necessary to understand Minnesota. But to understand Minnesota you must be an historian, an ethnologist, a poet, a cynic, and a graduate prophet all in one.”

‘REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE’

FLYOVER LAND

The dismissive assessment of the Midwest by Coastal Elites may have its literary roots in the works of Minnesotans **Sinclair Lewis** and **F. Scott Fitzgerald**. Or maybe not.

By John Phelan

In 1920, Minnesota writers stood at the pinnacle of the literary world. In March, St. Paul's F. Scott Fitzgerald published his debut novel *This Side of Paradise*. The *Chicago Tribune* said it "bears the impress, it seems to me, of genius." In October, Sinclair Lewis, born and raised in Sauk Center, published *Main Street*, which contributed significantly to his becoming the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930. Both writers were popular sensations.

Such adulation then was not unusual for Midwestern writers. During the first years of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, 1918 to 1929, eight of the 11 winners were Midwesterners—one, Booth Tarkington, won twice. Indeed, Midwesterners led American life in a number of fields. In politics, Midwesterners won the presidency six of seven times after 1860. Economically, the Midwest's share of manufacturing employment rose from 13 percent in 1860 to 30 percent in 1947. The publication of *This Side of Paradise* and *Main Street* represented a peak of the Midwest's cultural influence in America.

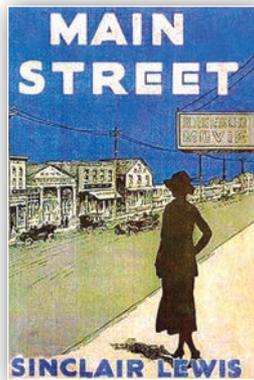
The 'revolt from the village'

But peaks are followed by troughs. Today, cultural elites frequently dismiss the Midwest as "flyover country." Far from the position of cultural leadership it occupied a century ago, they see it as a reactionary backwater. This is a key ingredient in the bitter division between "Red" and "Blue" America.

How did this happen? Historian Jon K. Lauck outlines one popular explanation that argues that writers like Fitzgerald and Lewis played a significant role in the decline of the Midwest in the American imagination.

Lauck's excellent book, *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge: The Erosion of Midwestern Literary and Historical Regionalism, 1920-1965*, begins with an essay written in 1921 by Carl Van Doren, a Columbia University English professor. Van Doren argued that for half a century American literature had been "faithful

to the cult of the village." The "essential goodness and heroism" of the village had been "sacred." It was a doctrine whose pillars included, in Lauck's words, "an appreciation of little white churches, corner groceries, decent and wise ministers, faithful local doctors, diligent farmers, and picturesque country scenes." Now, though, Van Doren—who grew up on an Illinois farm—discerned an emerging attitude in American literature, evident in the pages of *This Side of Paradise* and *Main Street*. This attitude revealed the supposed



***Main Street* and *This Side of Paradise* became key texts in the denigration of Midwestern culture by elites increasingly concentrated in urban areas on the coasts. But is this interpretation really justified?**

realities of the "slack and shabby" village, exposing its closeted skeletons, secrets, sexual escapades, degeneracy, "grotesque forms," "subterfuges," "pathos," "filth," "illusions," "demoralization," "rot," "complacency," "stupidity," and "pitiless decorum which veils its faults" and conceals an "abundant feast of scandal"—quite an indictment. These books, Van Doren argued, represented a "revolt from

the village" in which Midwestern authors broke from the "patterns" and "traditions which once might have governed them." Thus freed, they would, while "laughing," pursue "their wild desires" among "the ruins of the old."

This "revolt from the village" interpretation quickly became conventional wisdom. Historian Richard Hofstadter wrote that these novels showed "the mean, stunted, starved lives, the sour little crabapple culture of the American small town, with its inhibitions and its tyrannies." A growing class of coastal urban elites used *Main Street* and *This Side of Paradise* to denigrate Midwestern culture. But is this interpretation justified?

Lewis and Sauk Center

The case is much stronger for *Main Street*. Its protagonist, Carol Kennicott, is a "progressive" graduate from the Twin Cities who marries a doctor, moves to the small town of Gopher Prairie—Sauk Center, in effect—and is duly suffocated by the place.

Carol's first look around Gopher Prairie is grim. When she "had walked for thirty-two minutes she had completely covered the town, east and west, north and south; and she stood at the corner of Main Street and Washington Avenue and despaired." One walk along Main Street and Carol is "within ten minutes beholding not only the heart of a place called Gopher Prairie, but ten thousand towns from Albany to San Diego"—a sentence from which the concept of "flyover country" might originate.

Main Street presents many inhabitants of Gopher Prairie as intolerable snobs and busybodies, but they are only symptoms of a problem that is, to borrow modern terminology, "structural" or "institutional."

And why, she began to ask, did she rage at individuals? Not individuals but institutions are the enemies, and they most afflict the disciples who the most generously serve them. They insinuate their tyranny under a hundred

guises and pompous names, such as *Polite Society*, *the Family*, *the Church*, *Sound Business*, *the Party*, *the Country*, *the Superior White Race*; and the only defense against them, *Carol beheld*, is unembittered laughter.

But this isn't Carol's only view of Gopher Prairie. A few pages on:

Her active hatred of Gopher Prairie had run out. She saw it now as a toiling new settlement. With sympathy, she remembered [Doc] Kennicott's defense of its citizens as "a lot of pretty good folks, working hard and trying to bring up their families the best they can." She recalled tenderly the young awkwardness of Main Street and the makeshifts of the little brown cottages; she pitied their shabbiness and isolation; had compassion for their assertion of culture...for their pretense of greatness, even as trumpeted in "boosting." She saw Main Street in the dusty prairie sunset, a line of frontier shanties with solemn lonely people waiting for her, solemn and lonely as an old man who has outlived his friends. She remembered that Kennicott and Sam Clark had listened to her songs, and she wanted to run to them and sing.

"At last," she rejoiced, "I've come to a fairer attitude toward the town. I can love it now."

She was, perhaps, rather proud of herself for having acquired so much tolerance.

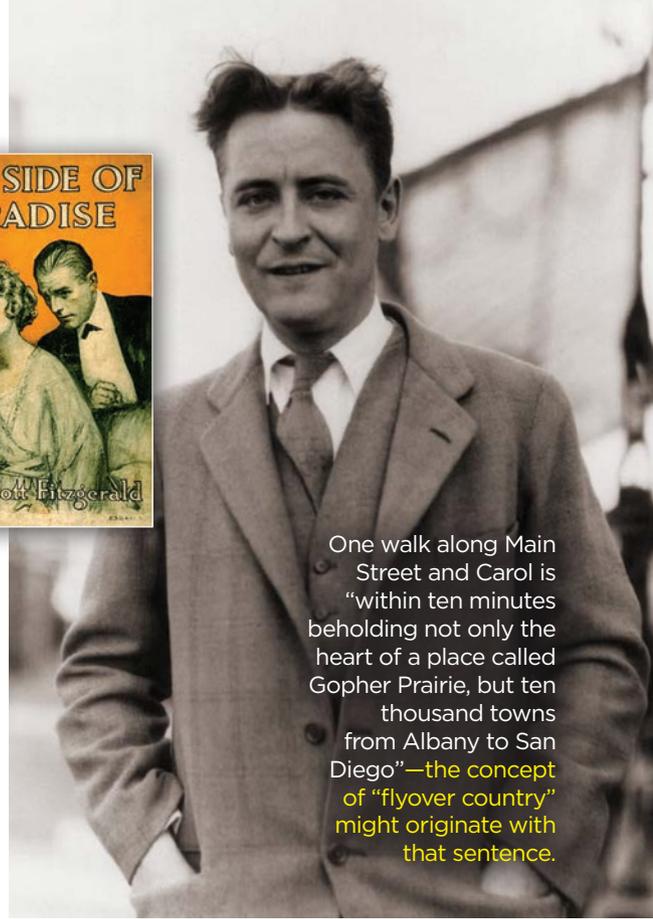
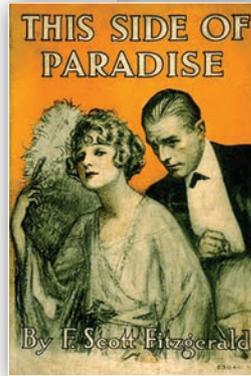
This last, acid comment suggests that Lewis does not offer Carol as an observer uncritically. We are told that "though she was Minnesota born, Carol was not an

intimate of the prairie villages," growing up first in Mankato—"which is not a prairie town, but in its garden-sheltered streets and aisles of elms is white and green New England reborn"—and later in Minneapolis. At college she studies sociology and reads "a book on village-improvement—tree-planting, town pageants, girls' clubs." Thus inspired, she decides, "That's what I'll do after college! I'll get my hands on one of these prairie towns and make it beautiful."

Bully for the folks of Gopher Prairie. Not for the last time they would be putty in the hands of a "pointy headed" planner who knew them only from textbooks. Carol is as ignorant a busybody as any of the town's natives. Today, she would work for a Twin Cities-based NGO that lobbies the Department of Natural Resources to regulate rural life more stringently.

While Lewis's sympathies clearly lie with Carol, he often offers competing views of Gopher Prairie and its inhabitants. "The people—they'd be as drab as their houses, as flat as their fields. She couldn't stay here. She would have to wrench loose from this man, and flee." This is Carol's opinion on the train going to Gopher Prairie, before she has even set foot in it. By contrast, when Swedish farm girl Bea Sorensen arrives the same day, she meditates that:

...it didn't hardly seem like it was possible there could be



One walk along Main Street and Carol is "within ten minutes beholding not only the heart of a place called Gopher Prairie, but ten thousand towns from Albany to San Diego"—the concept of "flyover country" might originate with that sentence.

so many folks all in one place at the same time. My! It would take years to get acquainted with them all. And swell people, too! A fine big gentleman in a new pink shirt with a diamond, and not no washed-out blue denim working shirt. A lovely lady in a longer dress (but it must be an awful hard dress to wash). And the stores!

Not just three of them, like there were at Scandia Crossing, but more than four whole blocks!

Lewis's real attitudes toward Gopher Prairie defy easy categorization. He was, in Sally E. Parry's words, "a dreamer in a practical land" and longed to leave Sauk Center. Aged 13, he walked out of town to enlist as a drummer boy in the Spanish-American War, but his irate father dragged him back. In his earliest published story with a Minnesota setting, "A Theory of Values" from 1906, the young protagonist writes: "I want to do something in and for the world; not rot away in this dull, little town, and die unheard of."

But Lewis explicitly rejected Van Doren's interpretation of *Main Street*. It was, he said, "unsound, one of those theories put forth by critics who thereafter tend to look away from any evidence to



John Phelan is an economist at Center of the American Experiment. He is a graduate of Birkbeck College, University of London, where he earned a BSc in Economics, and of the London School of Economics where he earned an MSc. John has written for *City A.M.* in London and for *The Wall Street Journal* in both Europe and the U.S. He has also been published in the journal *Economic Affairs*.

the contrary.” Later in life, he said of his youth in Sauk Center: “It was a good time, a good place, and a good preparation for life.” His literary universe was forever dominated by the Midwest, and Minnesota specifically. In part, this was because Lewis was savvy enough to give his audience what they wanted. But he also saw the state as a microcosm of America. In a 1923 essay for *The Nation* titled, “Minnesota, the Norse State” he wrote:

To understand America, it is merely necessary to understand Minnesota. But to understand Minnesota you must be an historian, an ethnologist, a poet, a cynic, and graduate prophet all in one.

Fitzgerald and the Twin Cities

By contrast, it is hard to see how *This Side of Paradise* is part of a “revolt from the village” at all. For one, its protagonist Amory Blaine—a thinly veiled and admirably unattractive self-portrait—doesn’t come from a village but, after extensive foreign travels, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and Minneapolis, the 18th most populous city in America in 1920. Second, he seems rather fond of the place:

“Tell me about you Amory. Did you have two horrible years [in Minneapolis]?”

Amory considered lying, and then decided against it.

“No, Beatrice, I enjoyed them. I adapted myself to the bourgeoisie. I became conventional.”

Later, a suitor introduces him to a rival, a limp fellow named Gillespie.

Gillespie: I’ve met Mr. Blaine. From Lake Geneva, aren’t you?

Amory: Yes

Gillespie: (Desperately) I’ve been there. It’s in the-the Middle West, isn’t it?

Amory: (Spicily) Approximately. But I always felt that I’d rather be provincial hot-tamale than soup without seasoning.

Gillespie: What!

Amory: Oh, no offense.

Fitzgerald wasn’t always so complimentary. In 1934, he wrote to a friend: “I no longer regard St. Paul as my home, any more than the Eastern seaboard or the

Riviera.” He meant “no disloyalty,” but:

...my father was an Easterner and I went East to college and I never did quite adjust myself to those damn Minnesota winters. It was always freezing my cheeks, being a rotten skater, etc.—though many events there will always fill me with a tremendous nostalgia.

Even so, as Patricia Hampl notes, “there are no Fitzgerald ‘Baltimore stories,’ no rhapsodic evocations of Maryland in his fiction, as St. Paul is rhapsodized and returned to again and

It was in 1920 when the Census showed that a majority of Americans—51 percent—for the first time lived in urban areas. That number is now up to 81 percent. To a degree, this made the cultural eclipse of the Midwest inevitable.

again.” And it isn’t just the “street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow” of St. Paul that Fitzgerald rhapsodized. In his most famous work, 1925’s *The Great Gatsby*, Minnesotan Nick Carraway returns from World War One “restless. Instead of being the warm center of the world the middle-west now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe—so I decided to go east and learn the bond business.” There, he seeks to rid his “restless” soul of “provincial inexperience,” “interior rules,” and “provincial squeamishness” and meets Jay Gatsby, an enigmatic multi-millionaire who hosts dazzling parties. But Gatsby is revealed to be a fraud—he is plain old “James Gatz of North Dakota” whose tragic end results from the “constant, turbulent riot” of his heart, his break from the poor “farm people” of his

youth, and his rootlessness. Ultimately, Carraway returns to the Midwest, noting:

That’s my middle west...I am part of that, a little solemn with the feel of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family’s name. I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.

The eclipse of rural America

It was in 1920 when the Census showed for the first time that a majority of Americans—51 percent—lived in urban areas. That number is now up to 81 percent. To a degree, these demographics foretell the inevitable cultural eclipse of the Midwest.

But this in itself presents something of a puzzle. Given the inevitability and decisiveness of this shift in power, why the continued bitterness toward rural/small-town/“Red State” America, as the Midwest largely is?

We can get an idea by returning to Carl Van Doren’s 1921 essay. In it, he decried not only the dominance of “the village,” but the values associated with it. Historian James Shideler describes those values as “a conventional certainty about good and evil, with staunch adherence to the values of hard work, thrift, and self-denial.” Therefore, elites revolted not so much against “the village,” but its typical values. As the village declined, the suburb became the new target for assault by *bien-pensant* intellectuals as the locus of stultifying conformity in novels such as Richard Yates’s *Revolutionary Road* or *Couples* by John Updike.

A century on, we ought to say that the work of Lewis to some extent and Fitzgerald to a large extent are misrepresented by “revolt from the village” characterizations. In Lewis’s case, his view was certainly more nuanced and affectionate than this interpretation allows. In Fitzgerald’s case, it doesn’t fit at all. Sadly, in its century of dominance, this view has done much harm. ★

MEDIA SILENCE

Mainstream media soft-pedal or ignore a grotesquely vile speech by a DFL house candidate. Would they have applied the same standard to a conservative?



John Hinderaker

One wonders whether our “mainstream” news media are more interested in covering the news or covering it up.

On August 15, a group of Minnesotans experienced one of the most shocking events in recent political history. A caravan of left-wing activists occupied the street outside the Hugo home of Bob Kroll, president of the Minneapolis police union. They screamed threats and insults toward Kroll, his family and neighbors, and the town of Hugo.

They were led by John Thompson, the endorsed DFL candidate for the Minnesota House of Representatives in District 67A in St. Paul. Using a microphone, Thompson launched into a profane and violent tirade during which he shouted “f*** Hugo, Minnesota” and threatened to burn down the town. In addition to bellowing an endless stream of obscenities, Thompson called Officer Kroll a “Klansman” and a “Grand Wizard.” Thompson even targeted his rage at several teenage girls who were standing in a neighbor’s driveway by denouncing them as “racists.”

Not content with his verbal onslaught, Thompson and his cohorts produced an effigy of Officer Kroll’s wife, which Thompson bashed repeatedly and violently with a large stick.

No Minnesota politician has engaged in such a grotesque display in living memory. Yet the incident almost didn’t come to light. A reporter from Alpha News attended the planned demonstration and published her videos on Alpha News’s Twitter feed and website. They quickly gained nationwide attention. But one wonders: Where were Minnesota’s “mainstream” news outlets? Alpha News is a small, independent operation that repeatedly breaks local news stories that get overlooked by other, better-funded media organizations. If not for Alpha News, the appalling scene outside Bob Kroll’s house would have gone unreported.

Even after the fact, local news media soft-pedaled the incident. The *Star Tribune* wrote about it on August 17, referring to “two videos

circulating on Twitter” but not crediting Alpha News. Its editorial page gently chided Thompson (“Thompson’s background is as an activist, so we can understand his tornadic style”), suggested that he didn’t really mean his outrageous threats, and even complimented him on his apology—an apology that never would have been forthcoming, but for Alpha News.

Minnesota voters deserved to know about Thompson’s unhinged performance, but our *Thinking Minnesota Poll* found that most have heard little or nothing about it.

Twelve percent said they had heard “a lot” about the Hugo incident, 22 percent “some,” and 11 percent “not much.” A full 50 percent—half of Minnesotans—were completely unaware it occurred. Even in the Twin Cities, 48 percent of poll respondents had heard nothing about Thompson’s violent tantrum. Those numbers make one wonder whether our “mainstream” news media are more interested in covering the news or covering it up.

It does not appear that Thompson will suffer any serious repercussions. He remains on the ballot with a strong endorsement from Governor Tim Walz. Following the Hugo episode, Walz tweeted a mild rebuke—so mild that it didn’t even mention John Thompson by name or even acknowledge that the “threatening behavior and rhetoric” was coming from his own party, and from a candidate whom he had endorsed. “We cannot accept the threatening behavior and rhetoric we’ve seen recently in our political discourse,” Walz wrote.

We hear a lot of talk these days about the coarsening of political debate. But even in these times, shouting vile, profane threats and smashing an effigy of a political opponent’s wife with a stick are far from normal practice. It appears that our civic life will sink to as low a level as voters are willing to tolerate. ★



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