

**TYRANNY OF THE
10 YEAR OLDS**

How a suburban elementary school
spiralled into chaos and violence



THINKING MINNESOTA

 CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN
EXPERIMENT

ISSUE 16
SUMMER 2019
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THE WAR ON GREATER MINNESOTA

Metro politicians push an urban agenda
that has real costs for Greater Minnesota.

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THE WAR ON GREATER MINNESOTA

Metro politicians push an urban agenda that has real costs for Greater Minnesota.

ISSUE 16
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NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

NOT BUYING IT

Want to predict the future political pulse of American voters? Look at Canada.

Among the obligations of being married to a politically-astute former Canadian is to stay informed about the political trends of our neighbors to the north. While I normally resist the temptation to share my Canadian punditry (you're welcome!), there is a startling movement in the Great White North that deserves our attention.

Let's start with Alberta. Before its 2015 provincial election, Alberta's voters showed a partisan orientation that was reliably conservative and pro-growth. They had elected center-right majority governments for eight straight *decades*. But in 2015, the liberal New Democrats, led by Rachel Notley, exploited a rift between conservative factions to score a shocking upset victory. Rachel Notley at the time was a charismatic 50-year-old who combined the left-wing policy instincts of Elizabeth Warren with the easy-going charm of Ronald Reagan.

In my own experience, I've never heard or read a single word from a serious person who dislikes her. Her policies, not so much. As Alberta's new premier, Notley quickly introduced an agenda that raised taxes on corporations and high-income earners. She bumped the minimum wage by 50 percent, from \$10.10 to \$15 per hour. And she laid out an aggressive plan

to tackle climate change that included a carbon tax, a cap on emissions from the oil sands, and imposed a 15-year phase-out on the use of coal to produce electricity.

By the next election (2019), Alberta's voters had seen enough. With the economy sinking fast, the province's rural voters (and what I suspect is a growing national annoyance with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau) helped Jason Kenney and

the United Conservatives rout Notley's party with a 55-33 drubbing in the popular vote (with the rest going to minor parties). Notley's loss marked the first time in provincial history that an incumbent premier had lost an election after just one term.

Canada's growing repudiation of liberal policies was even more striking in Ontario, where Doug Ford and his Progressive Conser-

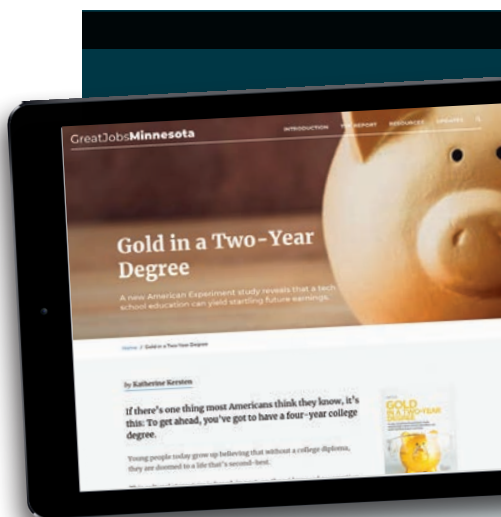
vatives handed liberal premier Kathleen Wynne the worst defeat of a sitting incumbent in the history of the province.

The symbols of Wynne's five years in office had been lavish spending on social programs: a costly expansion of the province's light rail network, an income-based program for free college tuition, a California-esque plan for cap-and-trade, and a government-mandated increase in the minimum wage. As budget deficits

continued on page 4



Ron Eibensteiner



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degree
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continued from page 3

soared, her hopes for re-election evaporated. In the end, her embarrassed party sustained what was said to be the worst showing at the ballot box in its 161-year history, even failing to win enough seats to qualify for official party status.

In Quebec, the liberal government of Philippe Couillard, which had held power for 13 of the last 15 years, was swept from power in a stunning landslide by Coalition Avenir Quebec, a conservative “third” party that won 74 out of 125 seats in the provincial legislature. The Liberals retained only 31 seats.

**Simple solutions, it
turns out, are neither
simple nor solutions.
They are just politics.**

By my lights, the primary lesson from the Canadian experience is that American policymakers who want to have an enduring impact on their country will be well-advised to spread their discussions beyond only people who already agree with them. These echo-chamber “debates” invariably produce policies that are unnecessarily extreme; they aggravate adversarial constituencies by excluding their input, and they cultivate supporters who believe in the incontrovertible certitude about the “rightness” of their policies. None of these outcomes constitutes a winning strategy.

This is well illustrated by the current silly season of American presidential politics. Watch the sharp elbows emerge as today’s army of liberal presidential hopefuls race to secure key voter blocs with policy proposals that are either breathtakingly cynical or embarrassingly naïve (or both).

Medicare for all? *Great idea!* Free

health care for illegals? *Why didn't I think of that?* Free college tuition? *Yes!* Over \$1.5 trillion to pay off student loans? *Perfect!* A \$15 minimum wage? *Screw small business!* Carbon tax? *Right on.* *Screw big business!* Eliminate gas-powered vehicles? *Yes!* And let's take on bovine flatulence!

I understand how this kind of pandering might appeal to the generation of 25-year-old gamers still living in their parents' basements. As they live their lives under the protection of Big Mother, why shouldn't government-by-Big Brother be the next step? But serious adults know otherwise, as Canadian liberals are starting to realize. Shallow promises have no staying power. Simple solutions, it turns out, are neither simple nor solutions. They are just politics.

This issue of *Thinking Minnesota* underscores how these attitudes work in our own state. “The War on Greater Minnesota” discusses how the liberal urban orientation at the legislature is at odds with the rest of Minnesota.

To be fair, conservatives aren't always immune from this behavior. It's just the liberals' turn at bat. Regardless, it all reminds me why organizations like Center of the American Experiment help sustain our democracy, even if in small ways, by recalling that the aspirations of our Founders did not include paying off political constituencies. (That philosophy belonged to Lenin and Marx. And they were liars.)

I say this frequently: Americans built on the Founders' ideology to create a country that enjoys unparalleled freedom and prosperity. We'll make it even better if we continue to reward hard work, personal responsibility and individual initiative; if we continue to create opportunities and incentives for personal growth; if we strive to enable American families to live in environments that are safe and healthy; and if we continue to provide access to jobs—well-paying jobs.

These are valuable promises. ★

UP FRONT

Annual Dinner

THE CASE FOR BLEXIT

Candace Owens uses social media to preach against victimhood.

Internet phenomenon Candace Owens recently logged on to her Facebook account and discovered that some bureaucrat had suspended her page because it violated the company's "community standards."

She was surprised, she said, by the suspension, as smears from mean-spirited internet trolls are posted on the social media platform and somehow stay safely within Facebook's guidelines. As a young black female who also happens to be a conservative, Owens has been called a "sunken-faced demon," "a satanic force," and "America's first black white supremacist." She related her experience to a sold-out audience of 920 at American Experiment's annual dinner in May.

What set off Facebook, she discovered, was her post declaring that "white supremacy is not an issue facing black America." It has been replaced, she wrote, by a "liberal supremacy" that has long duped black Americans into an attitude of victimhood over self-reliance. The message was consistent with her ongoing "Blexit" theme, an effort she founded in 2017 to try to persuade African Americans to reconsider their reliance on the Democratic Party.

"Today 22 percent of blacks live in poverty," she said. "Among married blacks, the poverty rate is just 7 percent. Your success in life is not determined by the color of your skin but by the decisions that you make."

Owens's fearless capacity to take

on the liberal strongholds—the education establishment, feminism, and black families—has enabled her to use social media to become one of the most influential thought leaders in conservative punditry. She counts more than a million political followers on Facebook and Twitter each. Only Donald Trump has more, she said.

After tweeting President Trump about her Facebook predicament, Owens's message amassed 40,000 retweets within

seconds, she said. "Every major conservative player was commenting on it." She then logged back into her Facebook account to find a groveling note of apology: "We're so sorry," it said. "We didn't mean to suspend you. Please accept our sincerest apology."

"Thankfully I can make noise when something like this happens," she said. "But what about the millions of conservatives around the world who are being silenced? Social media companies are silencing people who are effective at getting certain messages out. Those messages always seem to be conservative."

"They say it is about hate speech," she said. "But I'll tell you what it really is: It is just speech that they disagree with."

Until recently, Owens was an execu-



Owens counts more than a million political followers on Facebook and Twitter each. Only Donald Trump has more, she said.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES NETZ



My goal in launching the Blexit movement was to ... help (blacks) realize that our futures are being stolen from us before we even try.

tive at Turning Point USA, an organization that reaches out to students to promote the principles of fiscal responsibility, free markets, and limited government. She also hosts a program on PragerU's YouTube channel.

She credits her grandfather with being a role model of self-sufficiency and the "truest example of the American Dream. If you work hard and refuse to accept the idea that you are a victim, if you stay out of trouble, if you put God and family first, I can guarantee that you will make something of yourself in this country.

"My goal in launching the Blexit movement was to deliver that very simple message to a community that desperately needs it, to help them realize that our futures are being stolen from us before we even try," she added. "The left is constantly telling us that 'we can't.' My grandfather used to tell me that if you believe that you can't, you certainly won't." ★

Workforce

Fewer Minnesota Teens are Working

And that's a problem.

Minnesota's Labor Force Participation rate, at 69.7 percent in 2018, was the third highest in the country after the District of Columbia and Nebraska. It is forecast to fall to 64.6 percent by 2035. Minnesota's participation rate is already down from a peak of 76.1 percent in 2001.

This trend is also forecast both nationally and across the developed world as populations age. But aging populations is not the whole story. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 1999 and 2018 the participation rate for those aged 16 to 19 in Minnesota fell by 19.1 percentage points. By contrast, since 1999, the participation rate of those aged 55 to 64 has risen by 9.6 percentage points, and it is up by 4.4 percentage points for those aged over 65.

These trends are forecast to continue. According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the participation rate for 16 to 19-year-olds is forecast to fall by nine percentage points between 2020 and 2045, while it will rise for every age group above 45.

Outside of an aging population, this is a problem for Minnesota's younger workers themselves. As Greta Kaul wrote for *MinnPost*, "Teens don't just benefit from cash in their pockets every pay period when they work. Research has found working is good for teens long-term—to a point."

A 2014 study in *Research in the Sociology of Work* found that 15-year-olds who worked year-round were more likely to have jobs at ages 17 to 21. Teen workers also had higher incomes a few years later, at ages 17 to 25.

Rarely will you make a living doing



The participation rate for 16 to 19-year-olds is forecast to fall by nine percentage points between 2020 and 2045, while it will rise for every age group above 45.

what you do in your very first job, like those pizza making skills that will soon rust away. But the soft skills you pick up, "things like the ability to resolve conflicts at work, knowing how to conduct yourself as a professional in the workplace," according to Joe Mahon, regional economist with the Minneapolis Federal Reserve, will stand you in good stead throughout your working life. The longer Minnesota workers wait to start accumulating these skills, the bigger disadvantage they will have. ★

—John Phelan



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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.

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Mothers 1, Unions 0

A Win for Home Health Care Workers

The Trump administration ends medicaid dues-skim, tells unions to collect their own dues.

Minnesota Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) won a significant victory when the Trump administration overturned an Obama-era policy that allowed government unions to skim Medicaid payments.

Saying the rule violates plain language in the Social Security Act, Trump's regulators ignored a flood of union comments opposing the change. Center of the American Experiment led efforts to support the change through public comments from Minnesota PCAs and state lawmakers. "Minnesota is diverting Medicaid monies from their intended purpose—paying for care for the disabled—to subsidize political activities conducted by government unions, as well as 'training' used for union recruitment and indoctrination," according to the Center's comment.

Kris Greene and Catherine Hunter, mothers of disabled children, founded MNPCA.org in hopes of decertifying the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). With the help of the Center and labor lawyer Doug Seaton, MNPCA.org collected over 11,000 cards from PCAs who want to vote out the SEIU. The decertification was thwarted at every turn by the Dayton administration, which worked with the SEIU and the trade union AFSCME to bring the dues-skim to Minnesota. Both unions endorsed and funded Dayton's gubernatorial campaign.

"Instead of steady pay raises across the board," Hunter said, "the SEIU has lobbied for paid time off (PTO) and training stipends that are hard to navigate and of little use to most PCAs, especially when we care for a family member. The SEIU has made it hard to get the coverage we need. This rule change from Trump



This rule change from Trump should help focus PCAs on whether the SEIU has helped or harmed the program.

should help focus PCAs on whether the SEIU has helped or harmed the program. We have a choice, and I hope PCAs choose not to pay the SEIU."

Powerful unions such as the SEIU worked with "Blue State" governors starting in the 1990s to turn welfare into revenue by declaring in-home care providers paid under Medicaid "public employees." (The Center worked with in-home child care providers to decisively defeat an attempt by Governor Mark Dayton and

AFSCME to unionize them in 2016.) Currently, the State of Minnesota deducts a portion from Medicaid payments to in-home care providers and gives it to the SEIU. This money is intended to help keep America's disabled out of institutions.

In turn, those same unions finance the election of lawmakers, almost exclusively Democrats, as well as left-leaning lobbying groups such as Planned Parenthood. The rule change means that, while the SEIU will remain certified for now, the union will have to collect its own dues. And Trump's ruling means those dues should be declining rapidly.

In 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (*Harris v. Quinn*) that PCAs paid under Medicaid were not "full-fledged" public employees, so they could not be forced to pay union fees. In 2018, the Court went further, saying that not even bona fide public employees could be forced to fund a workplace union (*Janus v. AFSCME*). The problem is that most PCAs do not follow the Supreme Court; they are too busy caring for the disabled, so they might be paying union dues and not know it.

The SEIU charges its low-income members three percent of gross wages up to \$948 a year, more than other union members are assessed. According to estimates based on federal filings, the SEIU skimmed \$4.7 million from Minnesota PCAs in 2016, with about \$150 million a year being diverted in a dozen states. Since 2014, \$1.4 billion has been diverted

Betty McCollum	2017-18	2015-16	2013-14	2011-12
AFSCME	\$10,000	\$7,000	\$5,000	\$7,500
SEIU	\$5,250	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$10,000

by state governments into union coffers. But what has the SEIU done for PCAs?

Greene, the Lakeville mother of a disabled daughter and a PCA, traveled to the nation's Capital in 2018 to ask lawmakers to end the dues-skimming scheme and is thrilled about the rule change but cautious. "This is great because it protects PCAs who get tricked into paying dues. But the union is still certified and speaks for all PCAs, even people like me who do not belong to the union, at both the state Capitol and in Washington, D.C."

The rule was scheduled to take effect

**The SEIU charges
its low-income members
three percent of gross
wages up to \$948 a year,
more than other union
members are assessed.**

on July 5, 2019, though California and other states (not including Minnesota) have filed suit to stop the rule change. Congressional Democrats, including Betty McCollum (D-4th District), introduced legislation to deprive the administration from spending any money to enforce the rule. Congressional Democrats called it "an attack on women, especially women of color." That was an odd characterization given that caregivers are mostly family and friends of the disabled. McCollum has received substantial contributions from SEIU and AFSCME (see table).

The Center is working to notify PCAs of the rule change and to determine whether states are complying. If Minnesota fails to stop taking money out of PCA paychecks and depositing it in the SEIU's bank account, the Center will ask the Trump administration to withhold Medicaid funds until the rights of PCAs are honored and the Social Security Act is enforced. ★



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From the Editor: Katherine Kersten's "Can Edina's Schools Be Saved?" (Spring 2019) elicited strong reactions, some even nonverbal (see photo). It should be noted, too, that American Experiment mailed the individual article to every mailbox in Edina.

American Values

A recurrent theme throughout the Spring issue of *Thinking Minnesota* is the realization of each Minnesotan that things have gone too far. This is particularly brought to focus by Katherine Kersten's article, "Can Edina's Schools Be Saved?" When well-intended actions yield personal affliction, even the most liberal families question the motives. It is at the school level that Minnesotans' hearts and minds will be won. The push for excellence will always lead to a student's development of personal accountability and deliver a high standard of competitiveness and drive. All leading to a new, young mind open to the bedrock values of hard work, reward and property ownership.

I thank the Center of the American Experiment for its unyielding focus on growing the principles of American values. Fight on. You are making progress at the most important level: the leaders of tomorrow.

—Bill Hettling, Mesa, Arizona

Diversity is a Way of Life

There is absolutely no place in society for the kind of racist nonsense that your organization distributes to people who have no interest in reading or supporting such garbage! We clearly do not have similar beliefs and cannot be bothered by trash such as the recent "Can Edina's Schools Be Saved?" booklet that arrived

When well-intended actions yield personal affliction, even the most liberal families question the motives.

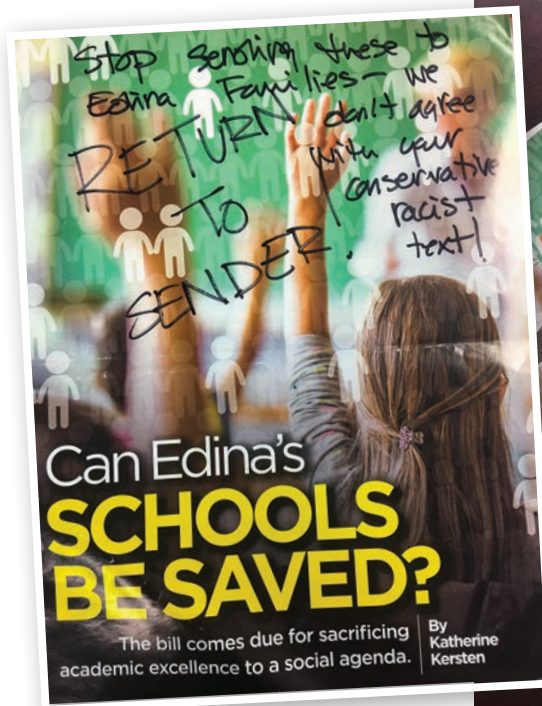
in our mail. The schools in Edina do an exceptional job of education and preparing virtually every single child that goes through their system with all of the tools necessary to be successful both in college and in the years after they have finished with their schooling. Diversity is a way of life, deal with it and lose your extreme racist views.

—Rick & Kristen Swanson, Edina

Educated, Not Indoctrinated

I find your series of articles about the decline of the Edina schools interesting. I note the decline is coincident with the influx of south Minneapolis liberals to the once politically-balanced Edina, which was in full swing in 2012 when we left the state. I would also like to point out that though my new state of Alabama is frequently derided by these same folks as backwards, and an example of what they do not want to become, my (casual) research shows that the average ACT composite score of Edina High School (25.7), which is shown to have been the 2nd highest in Minnesota in 2016, would only have ranked 4th in Alabama, behind Loveless Magnet (31.0), Mountain Brook (27.0), and Vestavia Hills (26.0). I am pleased to report that my children are indeed being educated, not indoctrinated.

—Dave Kingrey,
Vestavia Hills, Alabama



Pathetic

If you want to tell a convincing story, I suggest you assemble some comprehensive statistical analysis rather than random, cherry-picked stats that allegedly support your position. Ever heard of a graph or a chart depicting longitudinal, time-series data? Your claims are pathetic and it seems are likely racist with intent to divide the people who live in our community. I read the entire piece, in an attempt to ensure I'm listening to all views. I regret wasting my time with your Trump-style declarations that lack any real basis in fact and spur divisions. I suppose you will see that as a compliment.

—Steve Burch, Edina

Slippery Slope

Thank you to Katherine Kersten for “Can Edina’s Schools Be Saved?” and to the Center for saying what many

once-loyal Edina residents are thinking. Something evil is happening here. I am a long-time Edina homeowner, a teacher and a parent. For decades I took pride in our schools. In fact, the reputation of the Edina Schools was the reason we chose this suburb the first time we were transferred to the Twin Cities. This reputation for quality in education is no

I agree whole-heartedly with your assessment of the slippery slope the Edina Schools have chosen.

longer the case. I agree whole-heartedly with your assessment of the slippery slope the Edina Schools have chosen. My adult children recently moved from Edina to Excelsior. I have no qualms about making a similar move when it is convenient.

—Judith Rodgers, Edina

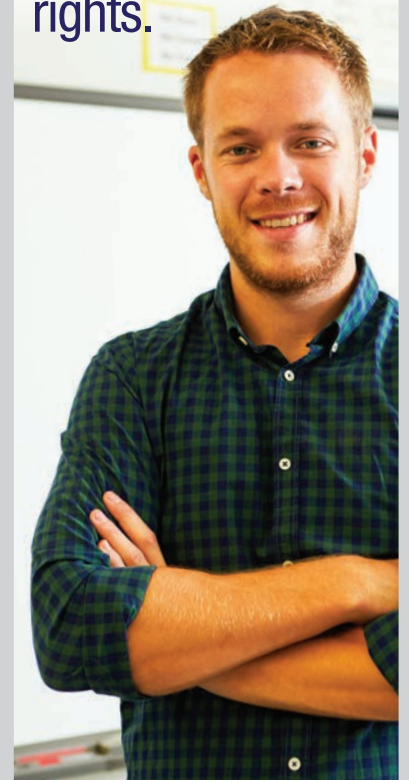
Highly Offended

I received in my mail, distributed by the U.S. Post Office, an extremely biased opinion piece written by Katherine Kersten entitled, “Can Edina’s Schools Be Saved?” The piece lacks citation to sources or facts. It is clearly an opinion piece but is not identified as such. I am highly offended by this unsolicited “mailing.” There is no opportunity for rebuttal of this piece by the very organization Ms. Kersten is degrading. This piece does not identify itself as an extreme, conservative, right-wing organization. This is not a journalistic piece. It does not have any political identification, and it is not verifiable because it lacks any citation whatsoever.

—Sheila Bjorklund, Edina



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TOM STEWARD

GRAVY TRAIN

Amtrak prepares to soak Minnesota taxpayers to operate a train line you've likely never heard of.

Most Minnesotans have likely never heard of the proposed \$550 million Northern Lights Express (NLX) passenger rail line from the Twin Cities to Duluth-Superior. Yet, MnDOT has been quietly laying the groundwork for the line for years with a series of engineering and environmental studies. Meantime, Governor Walz has prioritized the project, requesting \$15 million from the legislature to keep NLX on track.

If NLX becomes a reality, MnDOT has

MnDOT planners estimate passenger fares would likely cover less than half the estimated \$17.5 million annual cost of operating the Northern Lights Express, leaving Minnesota taxpayers on the hook for millions of dollars each year.

made it clear that Amtrak would operate the 152-mile line on behalf of the state. In recent weeks, Amtrak officials have surfaced in meetings with elected officials in Duluth-Superior and the State Capitol, lauding NLX as “one of the most shovel-ready projects in the nation.”

Critics question the cost and viability of



Tom Steward

the proposed line, which would rebrand and revive the failed Northstar passenger service that was scuttled in 1985. MnDOT planners estimate passenger fares would likely cover less than half the estimated \$17.5 million annual cost of operating NLX, leaving Minnesota taxpayers on the hook for millions of dollars each year.

There's also concern that Amtrak could take Minnesota taxpayers for an expensive ride. A sweetheart system established by Congress empowers Amtrak to raise millions of dollars off the backs of states like Minnesota by operating in-state passenger routes like NLX, according to a leading passenger rail consultant.

“Regrettably, what has not yet been put on the table for the public's right to know

is a piece of congressional legislation called PRIIA (Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008),” said Mark E. Singer, who frequently criticizes Amtrak in the journal *Railway Age*.

Singer maintains the millions of dollars Amtrak would charge MnDOT to operate NLX would be tantamount to subsidizing the national rail line's financially struggling commuter line in northeastern states at Minnesota taxpayers' expense. Amtrak lost \$168 million in 2018.

“In essence, this was designed by Amtrak as a means of subsidizing its deficit-ridden Northeast Corridor by charging all other non-Corridor states to operate their corridor trains under 750 miles, based upon Amtrak's own faulty, full-cost methodology,” Singer said.

Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson underscored the national rail line's reliance on state funding under PRIIA at a congressional hearing in February.

“To gain a sense of the scope and importance of our state supported trains, it is worth remembering that Amtrak partners with 21 agencies in 18 states to operate 29 state supported routes,” Anderson told the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

“...Together, state supported [lines] carry 15 million passengers annually, almost half of all our customers. This number has grown by two-thirds over the last 20 years, and this growth shows every sign of continuing.”

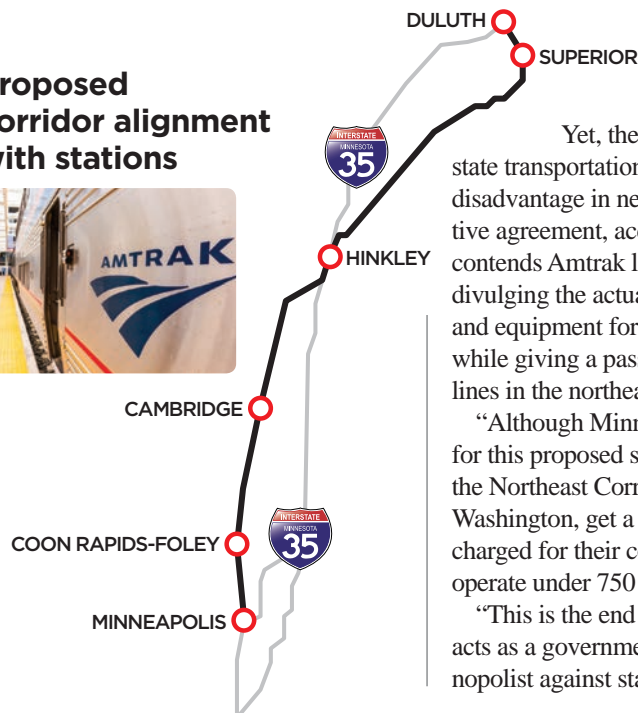
NLX Project Manager Frank Loetterle recently stated in the *Duluth News Tribune* that Amtrak depends on financially favorable agreements with states.

“Any shortfall in revenue is made up for by the state,” Loetterle told the newspaper. “Whatever fares don’t cover, the state pays for.”

In response to an American Experiment inquiry, MnDOT officials insisted they have not yet begun “formal discussions about any operating agreement or fee structure for the proposed NLX line” with Amtrak to date. If talks commence, MnDOT vowed to safeguard Minnesota taxpayers’ interests.

“Should funding be made available, MnDOT would conduct a thorough evaluation of proposals from Amtrak or other potential providers, in consultation with the standards set forth by the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) to ensure transparency and a fair shake for Minnesota taxpayers,”

Proposed corridor alignment with stations



MnDOT said in a statement.

Yet, the 2008 federal law puts state transportation officials at a distinct disadvantage in negotiating a competitive agreement, according to Singer. He contends Amtrak lacks transparency in divulging the actual cost of its services and equipment for routes like NLX, while giving a pass to states on Amtrak lines in the northeast.

“Although Minnesota will be paying for this proposed service, the states along the Northeast Corridor, between Boston-Washington, get a free ride and are not charged for their corridor trains, which operate under 750 miles,” said Singer.

“This is the end result of how Amtrak acts as a government sanctioned monopolist against state interests.” ★



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ACE Inhibitor?

Will the utilities let Trump's ACE rule help Minnesota's miners and manufacturers?

The Trump administration recently finalized the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) rule, which is designed to improve efficiency at coal-fired power plants. As a result, these plants would produce more electricity while simultaneously burning less coal. These efficiency improvements would reduce emissions and lower costs for consumers.

American Experiment's recent report "Doubling Down on Failure" is the only report in the country, that I am aware of, to calculate the potential economic benefits of the ACE rule on a state's economy. Our research found that upgrading Minnesota's coal plants to meet this standard would save Minnesotans \$7.5 billion through 2050 compared to today's prices, making our electric rates about four percent lower than they are today and saving the average Minnesota household around \$112 per year.

This may seem like relatively small potatoes to some, but if we look at the ACE rule savings compared to the alternative of spending \$80.2 billion on wind and solar, the ACE rule saves the state approximately \$88 billion through 2050, the equivalent of nearly \$1,300 per household per year. Furthermore, electricity prices would be 44 percent higher in the high-renewable scenario than they would in the ACE scenario, which will have a massive impact on Minnesota's manufacturing and mining industries.

Manufacturing and mining are enormous consumers of electricity. In fact, industrial electricity use accounts for 25 percent of electricity sales nationally, but this figure is much larger in Minnesota, where 33 percent of the total energy consumed (including imports of hydroelectric and

coal-fired power from Canada and North Dakota) is used for industrial purposes.

U.S. Steel's MinnTac iron mining operation in Mountain Iron uses more electricity and natural gas alone than the entire city of Minneapolis, according to *MinnPost*.

This is why the ACE rule would be such an improvement over our current state of affairs. Minnesota's economy is heavily dependent upon mining and manufacturing; we are making ourselves less competitive in the global marketplace by increasing the cost of electricity at a time when China and India are building more power plants than exist in the entire United States.

Having access to the reliable, affordable energy provided by our existing coal plants is crucial to giving our industries a fighting chance against countries with fewer protections for workers or the environment. Unilaterally foregoing the benefits of our affordable energy could

result in more idled mines and fewer factories running full steam ahead. Unfortunately, foregoing this opportunity is exactly what Xcel Energy wants to do.

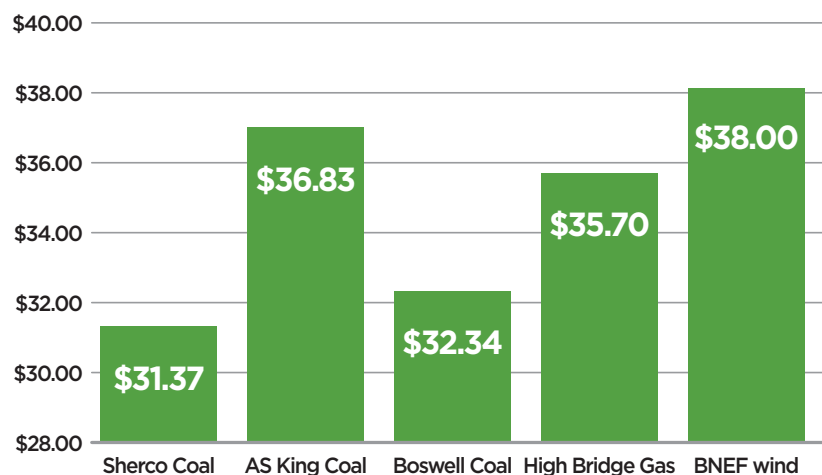
Xcel has proposed to shut down its coal-fired power plants by 2030, ten years before they were previously scheduled to close. This is incredibly unfortunate energy policy because these coal plants, the Sherco and Allen S. King plants, provide some of the lowest-cost electricity in the state, and it is likely these plants would be able to produce electricity for even lower cost as they continue to depreciate.

Rather than closing down affordable, reliable electricity generated by our existing coal fleet, Xcel Energy should embrace the ACE rule and allow the Minnesota families and businesses who paid for these plants a chance to reap the benefits of these investments in the form of lower electricity rates. ★

—Isaac Orr



2017 Plant Cost per MWh



Great Jobs

Tackling the Skills Gap

The Center's project participates in home education conference and will soon release new videos.

American Experiment's "Great Jobs Without a Four-Year Degree" project participated in a home education conference attended by over 700 parents from May 31 to June 1. The annual Minnesota Catholic Home Education Conference and Curriculum Fair was held at the University of St. Thomas and is one of the largest Catholic homeschooling conferences in the country. Attendees came from all across Minnesota and from out-of-state to learn about homeschooling curricula and hear presentations on various education-related topics.

The Great Jobs project facilitated a panel discussion featuring Minnesotans who chose career paths that do not require the traditional four-year degree route, which the Center was asked to focus on, as it is a topic of great interest to home education parents.

Moderated by the Center's Catrin (Thorman) Wigfall, the discussion focused on debunking the myths and stereotypes associated with non-traditional careers and exploring how parents can support their children interested in jobs that don't require a four-year degree. Panelists also shared why they chose the career path they did and how they have found the work meaningful and important.

Audience Q&A was sprinkled throughout the discussion to engage parents and give them the opportunity to ask pressing questions they had on the topic. Parents were most interested in learning about the variety of alternative education paths the panelists took (two-year degrees, certificates, etc.) and how the panelists overcame the stigmas associated with jobs requiring technical skills.

Panelists included the Center's Mitch Pearlstein, Amanda Phillips, a carpenter instructor at the St. Paul Carpenter's Training Center, Dan McGee, a direct sales engineer for Manitowoc Tool and Manufacturing, and Robert McLain, an HVAC service technician.

The panel discussion was well received by attendees and concluded with parents asking the Center to come back and share more on the great jobs available to young Minnesotans interested in working with both their hands and their minds.

NEW VIDEOS

The "Great Jobs" effort is about to release a new round of short videos that highlight Minnesotans who chose careers that don't require the traditional four-year degree route. The new round of videos highlight the energy, health care, IT, and agriculture industries and capture the positive experiences of underrepresented demographics in these fields.

Many young people and their parents have deeply engrained misconceptions about these alternative occupations: They are "dark, dirty and dangerous"; they are "for dummies"; they are "financial dead-ends." These negative stereotypes have proven extremely difficult to change through traditional means, which is why the Great Jobs project has utilized the digital revolution to dispel such stigmas before viewers' eyes. The Minnesotans featured in the videos are articulate, likable and smart. The venues



The new round of videos highlight the energy, health care, IT, and agriculture industries and capture the positive experiences of underrepresented demographics in these fields.

they work in are cutting edge and exciting. These are lucrative jobs that can establish financial independence at a young age, and above all, help people avoid crippling student debt.

The Great Jobs videos and social media initiative is key to modernizing and humanizing great jobs in the public's mind and helping young people see these jobs as exciting prospects for their own futures. Sign up for the Great Jobs newsletter at GreatJobsMN.com to receive updates on the videos and more information on the empowering career opportunities young people have to choose from. ★

Missing the Point

Energy Industry Should Produce Energy, Not Jobs

The point should be about productivity: How much energy are these workers producing?

Gregg Mast of Clean Energy Economy Minnesota recently wrote in the *Duluth News Tribune* about “a great economic story in our state: clean-energy job growth.”

“The fact is,” he claimed, “the number of clean-energy jobs has grown every year since the release of the first Clean Jobs Midwest-Minnesota report in 2016, and these good-paying jobs have been added at a faster pace than the statewide average.”

This might sound like great news, but there is something missing from this celebration, something vital. Indeed, from an economic point of view, it is the most vital thing of all: How much energy are these workers actually producing?

Increasing productivity—the ratio of outputs produced to inputs used—is key to economic growth and raising living standards. As economist Paul Krugman put it: “Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run it is almost everything. A country’s ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker.” This, of course, applies to states like Minnesota.

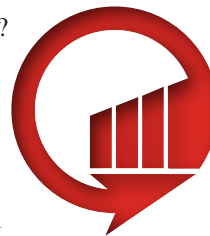
Krugman is dead right. The point of economic activity is not simply to pile up inputs like workers, but to generate output. And to raise productivity—with the resulting increase in economic growth and living standards—we need to increase the amount of output each worker produces with a given amount of inputs.

So, how productive are these new clean-energy workers? How much

energy does each produce? Sadly, the answer seems to be “not much.”

In 2017, the 412 workers employed in Minnesota’s natural-gas sector produced an average of 16,281 megawatt hours of electricity each, according to the Energy Information Administration and figures for employment in each sector from the U.S. Energy and Employment Report. For coal, the figure was 13,230 megawatt hours produced for each of the 1,722 workers employed in the state.

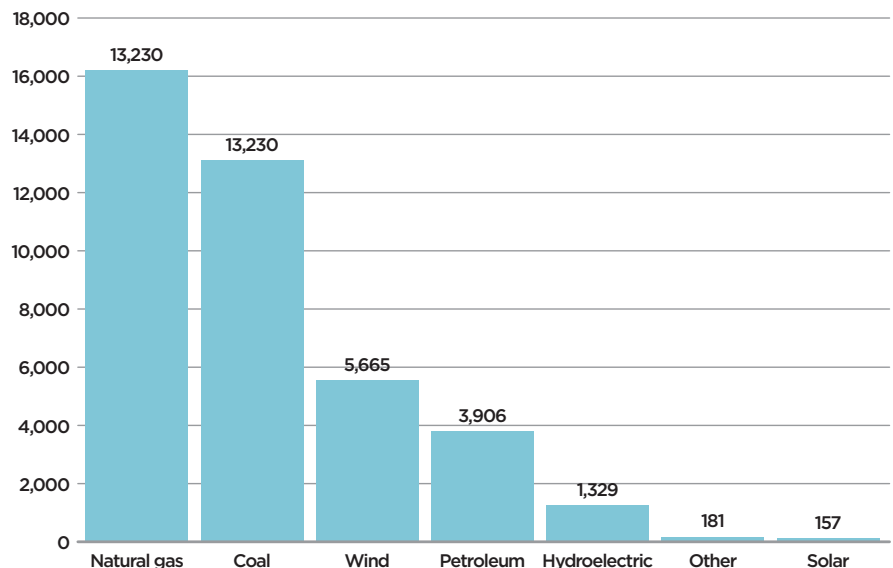
But for renewable wind and solar, the numbers are far less encouraging. In



The Economist’s View

terms of megawatt hours produced per worker, Minnesota’s wind sector came in a somewhat distant third. Each of the 1,966 workers here generated an average of just 5,665 megawatt hours in 2017. This was just 43 percent of the amount of electricity a Minnesota coal worker produced annually and 35 percent of that produced by a natural-

Megawatt hours of electricity generated per worker, 2017



Source: Energy Information Administration and U.S. Energy and Employment Report

gas worker.

The numbers are even worse for solar. In 2017, each of Minnesota's 3,800 solar-energy workers produced an average of just 157 megawatt hours. This was just 1.2 percent of the energy produced by a coal worker and only one percent of that which a natural-gas worker produced.

In terms of that vital ratio of outputs (energy generated) to inputs (number of workers), wind energy is a low-productivity sector compared to natural gas and coal. Again, solar is even worse. Piling more inputs into these sectors when they could be more productive in

The point of economic activity is not simply to pile up inputs like workers, but to generate output.

other sectors lowers productivity and economic welfare. This is certainly not something to be celebrated—from an economic point of view, at least.

Mast and Clean Energy Economy Minnesota need to remember that the point of an energy industry is to generate energy, not to generate jobs. If it was the other way around, we could hire people to stand in front of wind turbines blowing at them to make them turn faster. The effect on energy generation would be practically non-existent, but the effect on employment would be limited only by how many blowers could fit in a field. Clean Energy Economy Minnesota's jobs numbers would be through the roof. But ask yourself: Would our state be any better off? ★

—John Phelan

A version of this article first appeared in the Duluth News Tribune.



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Supreme Court
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2019 Legislative Recap

Center of the American Experiment pushed back against far-left policies like the 100% green energy mandate, 70% gas tax hike, and 9% increase in the state budget. Conservative legislators stopped the most radical ideas, but conceded a 6% budget increase. In a surprise victory, a middle-class income tax cut was also passed.



TAXES AND SPENDING

✓	Income tax cut	Enacted into law	The legislature cut the second-tier income tax bracket by 0.25% beginning in tax year 2019. It's a baby step, but a step in the right direction. Minnesota income taxes are high at every income level; even our lowest income tax rate of 5.35% is higher than the highest tax bracket in 23 states.
✓	Gas tax increase	Defeated	The proposal to increase the gas tax by 70% (20 cents per gallon) also included a budgeting gimmick that would roll back some existing funding for roads.
✗	State budget increase	Enacted into law	The state budget increased by 6% to \$48.5 billion for FY 2020-21. The budget increases faster than inflation every budget cycle, but millions of tax dollars are lost to fraud and mismanagement. Instead of assuming current spending is appropriate, the legislature should build the budget from zero every cycle.
✓	State tax conformity	Enacted into law	The state's tax code is now compliant with the federal tax code, which will significantly reduce compliance costs, particularly for small business who currently must keep two sets of books. Individual tax filers will also notice a reduction in paperwork and fewer steps required to file.
✓	Corporate tax increase	Defeated	Minnesota's corporate income tax rate is already the third highest in the country at 9.8%, but this proposal would have made it the second highest. Corporate income taxes are ultimately paid by consumers through an increase in the cost of goods and services.
✓	Estate tax increase	Defeated	Minnesota already has one of the highest estate taxes in the country, and this proposal would have increased it more. The estate tax is a net revenue loser for the state; we lose more overall tax revenue from those who leave than we collect in estate taxes from those who stay.

EDUCATION

✗	Tax-deductible education scholarships	Defeated	"Opportunity Scholarships" provide alternative education options for low-income Minnesota families by offering a tax credit for those who wish to donate toward education scholarships.
—	Public Pre-K funding	Enacted into law	The legislature did not increase funding for public pre-K, but extended current funding for another two years. The expansion of public pre-K is a huge burden for taxpayers, and it undermines existing preschool options by forcing them to compete with "free" public programs, often forcing them out of business.
✓	Pre-K teacher licensing	Defeated	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 demands pre-K teachers be licensed because it would increase their dues revenue and expand their power.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

✗	Sick tax continuation	Enacted into law	The 2% sick tax on most medical services was scheduled to sunset in 2020, but will now continue at a rate of 1.8% indefinitely.
—	Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding	Enacted into law	The CCAP program provides child care assistance for low-income parents who are in school or working, but fraud is prevalent and difficult to quantify. The legislature funded the program, but implemented new anti-fraud measures like tougher recordkeeping requirements.
✓	Socialized medicine	Defeated	The socialized medicine proposal ONEcare would have undercut the traditional health insurance most Minnesotans have now, forcing people off of their current plans and reducing health insurance options. It would also pay providers pennies on the dollar compared to traditional insurance, putting many hospitals and clinics out of business.
✓	External audit of DHS budget	Enacted into law	A new Blue Ribbon Commission will audit the Department of Human Services' budget and propose a way to reduce spending by \$100 million.
✓	Family child care task force	Enacted into law	A new task force will analyze regulations for in-home child care providers and propose ways to alleviate unnecessary burdens that have contributed to the child care shortage.
✓	Plain language child care handbook	Enacted into law	The Department of Human Services will write a plain language handbook for in-home child care providers that clarifies licensing requirements and regulations, making it easier to stay in business or enter the industry.

TRANSPORTATION

✗	DMV fee increases	Enacted into law	Drivers will pay more in fees at the DMV, including approximately \$4.50 for driver's license renewals and \$2.00 for license plate renewals. A \$2.25 technology fee plus a \$1.00 filing fee on every transaction will go toward fixing problems created by the nonfunctional MNLARS software system.
✓	MNLARS software rebuild	Enacted into law	The nonfunctional MNLARS DMV software system built by the state's IT agency will finally be scrapped. New software will be built by a private company with experience creating comparable systems.
✓	Vehicle miles traveled study	Defeated	This study would have looked at the feasibility of instituting a tax on vehicle miles traveled, including installing a tracking device in every vehicle.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

✓	Pension bailout for local governments	Defeated	Since 1997, the state has provided aid to local governments to defray pension costs. The amount of state aid paid in 2019 was \$13,919,000. A proposal would have extended this aid to 2048, essentially making it permanent.
✓	Equal Rights Amendment	Defeated	Adding an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the state constitution is unnecessary, as both sexes are already equally protected. It would have had unintended consequences, like eliminating women's sports and requiring teachers to use students' "preferred pronouns" or face discipline or firing.

ENERGY

✓	100% green energy mandate	Defeated	The Minnesota version of the Green New Deal would have led to devastatingly high energy costs for families, with virtually no impact on the global climate. The proposal pushed wind and solar, but excluded new nuclear power and large hydro, the most reliable, efficient sources of carbon-free electricity available.
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PUBLIC SAFETY

✓	Sexual harassment legal definition change	Defeated	In current law, objectionable conduct must be "severe or pervasive" to be legally actionable as sexual harassment. The proposal to eliminate those words would have broadened the definition so even one instance of rude conduct could be deemed sexual harassment, and employers could be held financially responsible.
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Green Rules

Minnesota's pollution agency throws cold water on summer amusements.

Summer time and the living isn't easy, at least not in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's world. The latest edition of the state agency's "Living Green 365" newsletter warns that ordinary summer activities many Minnesotans have enjoyed all their lives are actually bad for the environment.

The good news from our state pollution controllers is that you can take steps to mitigate your environmental footprint this summer. The not-so-good news is these steps pretty much take the fun out of whatever you're doing.

"These festivals and fairs are valuable and fun experiences, but can have a significant environmental impact, from the transportation it takes to get there, the amount of waste festivals produce, the energy it takes to power the festivals, and much more," the newsletter said.

The good news from our state pollution controllers is that you can take steps to mitigate your environmental footprint this summer. The not-so-good news is these steps pretty much take the fun out of whatever you're doing.

Imagine poring over this checklist right before running over to the

Basilica block party to meet up with your friends.

- Bring your own mug or reusable water bottle
- Always separate your waste into compost, garbage and recycling
- Bring your own bag—plastic bags never fully biodegrade
- Car pool, take public transit, or cycle to your next festival
- Ask food vendors for compostable plates and cutlery
- Whenever possible purchase local and organic food and beverage options
- Use mobile apps and websites for information instead of printed brochures

There's more, but you get the idea. And how about that stylish summer outfit you had your eye on? MPCA fashionistas say it's more sustainable to shop for recycled threads, borrow someone else's outfit or make your own.

"While it's tempting to buy this season's newest festival looks, this 'fast fashion' has a huge environmental impact," MPCA said. "Textile dyeing is the second highest contributor to global water pollution behind agriculture, and 10.5 million tons of textiles ended up in U.S. landfills in 2015 alone, with only a 15.3 percent recycling rate."

The agency also uses pollution fun facts to guilt you into taking a bike, public transportation or going vegetarian.

In 2017, trans-

portation contributed 29 percent to the United States' total greenhouse gas emissions, the most of any other greenhouse gas producing sector. Besides the environmental impact, parking is often hard to find and usually quite expensive at summer festivals and fairs. Taking alternative methods to get to your summer festival not only helps the planet, it saves you money and stress.

But the agency goes too far when urging Minnesotans to reject freebies handed out at festivals and fairs.

Think twice before taking free giveaways. Summer festivals are full of opportunities to get free giveaways like pens, bracelets, etc. Many of these items will eventually end up in our waste stream. It's great if you know you are getting something that you will use but think twice before taking every free item vendors and festival hosts offer to attendees.

I doubt even the "Living Green 365" staff could follow its own advice to turn down free stuff this summer. It may be green, but it's just not right. ★

—Tom Steward



2019 Fall Briefing

WSJ columnist to provide 'The View from Washington.'

The Wall Street Journal columnist Kimberley Strassel will headline American Experiment's Fall Briefing, 7 P.M. Monday, October 7 at the Ordway Theater in St. Paul.

Strassel is a Washington, D.C.-based member of the *Journal's* editorial board. She writes editorials, as well as the weekly "Potomac Watch" political column. A graduate of Princeton,

Strassel joined Dow Jones & Co. in 1994, working in the news department of *The Wall Street Journal Europe* in Brussels and then in London. She moved to New York in 1999 and soon thereafter joined the *Journal's* editorial page, working as a features editor and then as an editorial writer. She assumed her current position in 2005.

Strassel, a 2014 Bradley Prize recipient, is a regular contributor to Sunday political shows, including CBS's "Face the Nation," Fox News Sunday, and NBC's "Meet the Press." She is the author of *The Intimidation Game: How the Left Is Silencing Free Speech*, which chronicles recent attacks



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Education

Killing the Unicorn

How the St. Paul Public Schools and the teachers' union attacked a black teacher in the name of racial equity.

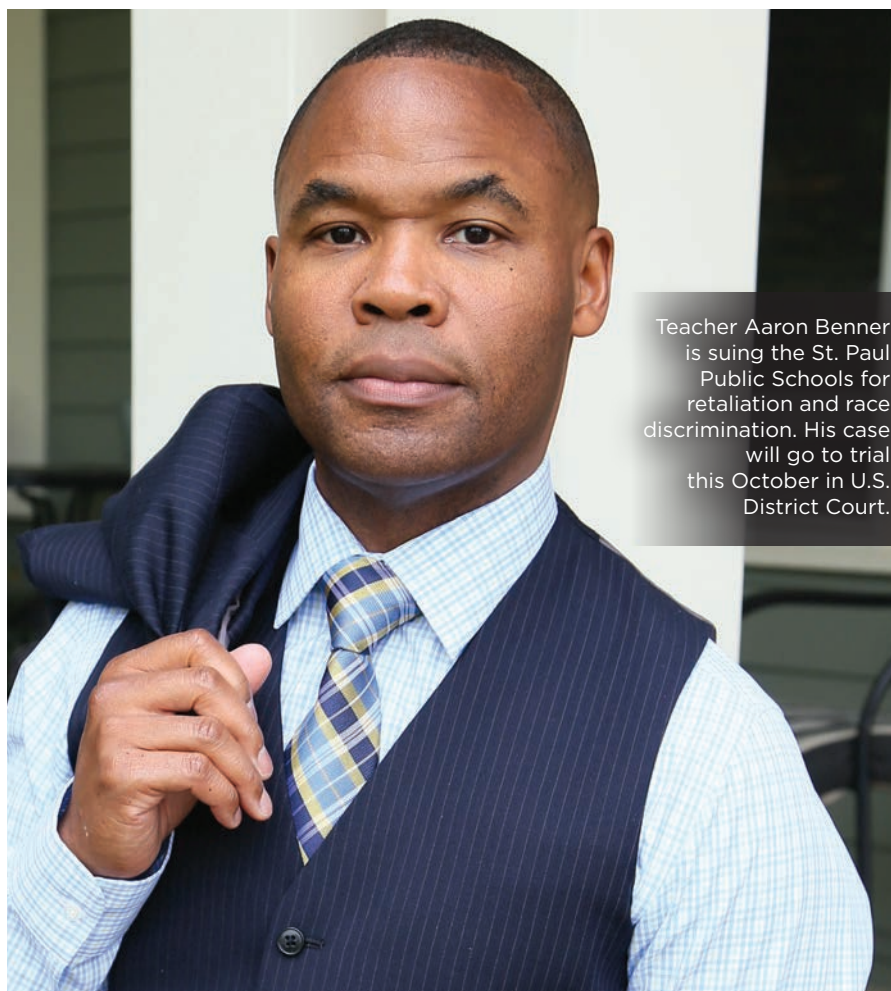
A unicorn: "something unusual, rare, or unique."

—Merriam-Webster

In 2014, Aaron Benner, a teacher with an impeccable 20-year career, spoke out against the St. Paul Public Schools' (SPPS) new "racial equity" policy, a plan intended to reduce racial disparities in student graduation rates and academic performance by confronting "institutional racism." Benner, who is black, found himself sharply at odds with his employer and his labor union over implementation of the policy, which included letting students get away with violent behavior against teachers and other students based on their race.

His objections were not just philosophical; he felt the policy undermined his authority as a teacher and his ability to teach. During that traumatic year, Benner was punched by a student, targeted for termination and left defenseless because, he said, his union conspired with the district to get rid of him. He eventually left his job and sued SPPS for retaliation and race discrimination. His case goes to trial this October in U.S. District Court.

Benner's lawyer, J. Ashwin Madia, summarized his client's traumatic year in pleadings: "St. Paul hounded one of the best teachers in the state out of its school district because he told the truth about the tragic impact on both students and teachers of its discriminatory disciplinary policy." During that single school year, Madia added, Benner endured an onslaught of attacks that included four district-led investigations and three disciplinary actions.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAULA PRIMEAU

The district "papered his file for termination, disregarded its own due process mandates, demanded he transfer, placed disruptive students from other grades in his class, fired his teaching assistant, tried to coax a child into alleging violence by Benner, and forced him to resign," Madia said.

Benner has compared himself to a

"unicorn" because he was "one of the few black male teachers in St. Paul." Black teachers are arguably the most sought-after teachers in the country, so why is Benner not teaching in SPPS anymore? (He got snapped up by a charter school and is now at a private, Catholic school.) Why did he find himself in this position?

Falsification of Data and Making Teachers Wrong. Although the district had already embraced a race-focused, “social justice” approach to educating children, SPPS adopted a formal “racial equity” policy in 2013 after the Obama administration directed public schools to lower suspension rates for minority students. The administration issued financial bonuses to districts that submitted data showing lower suspension rates (irrespective of actual behavior) and provided extra funding for “restorative justice” programs if violence increased following the adoption of the new policy.

Teachers, who risk losing their jobs if they do not comply with the program, are required to reduce the number of behavioral referrals made about minority students—even though the data creates a false impression. “We stopped disciplining black kids, and our data looks great,” Benner said. “But how is that equity? It’s not equity. It’s fraud.”

Just as bad, Benner said, teachers who make referrals are now suspected of “triggering” black student misconduct. “I was questioned as to what I did to set this behavior off.”

The policy does not just manufacture false data, according to critics; it promotes unsafe schools. After Benner was punched by a black student, the principal almost immediately returned the student to the classroom. Benner witnessed students assault other students, damage school property, and even run in and out of his classroom while he was teaching. When he tried to refer them for discipline, he found himself in trouble with his employer and, much to his surprise, unprotected by his union.

Veteran teacher Rebecca Friedrichs, the California school teacher who challenged forced union dues, devoted an entire chapter in her book *Standing Up to Goliath* to Benner’s story. “The most vital ingredient in creating an atmosphere of safety is discipline,” she wrote. “Aaron and other great teachers

know this instinctively. In fact, running a structured and well-disciplined classroom is about 90 percent of a teacher’s job, and without it, chaos and fear ensue and learning stops.”

Caught between what was best for his students and policies he viewed as illegal, Benner went public in a big way. He had previously expressed concerns about setting and enforcing high standards for minority students and did so again before the St. Paul School Board in 2014.


This fall, Benner will argue in court

“We stopped disciplining black kids, and our data looks great. But how is that equity? It’s not equity. It’s fraud.”

that he posed a unique threat. Here was a black man arguing forcefully and eloquently that the school’s policy, which he characterized as “the separate but equal new illegal policy in St. Paul,” was not only misguided but would harm students, especially minority students, and teachers alike.

Aside from a financial recovery, which is vital given that teacher pay and pensions are based on years of service, Benner’s upcoming hearing is an opportunity to put the “racial equity” approach to education on trial. Again, it is not just SPPS that has adopted this errant theory of education. The ideas and policies, pushed hard by the national teachers’ unions, have corrupted the nation’s educational system from teachers’ colleges to the classroom.

On top of that, say his allies, if a gifted black educator like Benner can be taken out for standing against policies that hurt minority students, where are teachers, especially white teachers, supposed to turn? ★



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COVER STORY

THE WAR ON GREATER MINNESOTA

Metro politicians push an urban agenda that has real costs for Greater Minnesota.

Picture Minnesota. Do you think of lakes, farm fields, and winding country roads, or busy city streets framed by the Minneapolis skyline? The answer depends a lot on which part of our diverse state you call home.

Most multigenerational Minnesotans can trace their roots back to ancestors who made their living on the land in small rural towns, either as farmers or miners. Now, more than half of Minnesotans live in the seven-county Twin Cities metro area, and many don't have backyards to grow a garden, much less know anything about farming. In a practical sense, the urban-rural divide in Minnesota is very real.

If the prevailing attitude among Metro dwellers was "live and let live," these differences wouldn't matter. Unfortunately, it's not.

In Minneapolis, every resident is

forced to build his or her life around a justice agenda adopted by countless leftist institutions that run the city, starting with City Hall. Environmental justice demands bicycling or taking public transit everywhere you go. Economic justice demands redistributing wealth via government programs. Social justice demands feeling guilty about your privilege. Racial justice demands accommodating protests in the middle of the highway.

It doesn't matter what you believe; the government will tell you how you're allowed to live. If you don't like it, move out.

Residents of Greater Minnesota are watching, warily. The justice brigade is coming for them, too.

For rural Minnesotans, it's not just jobs or a small-town way of life at stake, it's their very identity. Farm families take pride in the fact their relatives have cultivated the same land for generations, surviving and thriving through the good and bad years. Iron Rangers know their grandparents

worked backbreaking 16-hour shifts in the iron mines during World War II to make sure America had enough steel to produce the tanks, battleships and rifles that allowed the Allies to win the war. Close-knit communities came together in times of hardship to weather the storm, rather than depending on aid from strangers.

These stories aren't contrived or quaint; they have been passed down through generations and are a source of deep-seated pride for many. When urban liberals who know nothing about living in rural communities attempt to reshape people's lives to fit their own vision of justice, it constitutes a declaration of war on Greater Minnesota's very existence.

Green New Deal

It's hard to think of a more straightforward assault on rural communities than freshman Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal. For the benefit of a slight reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, her

BY ISAAC ORR &
KATIE FULKERSON





When the enormous economic costs of Green regulations are compared to their small environmental benefit, few Minnesotans think they are justified. But such practical concerns are not enough to derail the environmental justice agenda.

proposal would cost Americans trillions of dollars, dramatically restructure the economy, and do away with some of the most important innovations of the past century. For starters, the Green New Deal proposes to eliminate all fossil fuel use by 2030, which means eliminating gas- and diesel-powered cars and trucks. Even cattle are in the crosshairs, due to their methane emissions.

The impact of this policy on rural Minnesota is so absurd it's laughable. The Green New Deal would impose outrageously high costs on energy-heavy industries concentrated in rural areas, destroy the agriculture industry, and make it virtually impossible to live anywhere that doesn't have public transit options.

Despite this, urban liberals in the Twin Cities immediately embraced the Green New Deal hysteria and quickly tried to enact their own policies that promise to make life more difficult in Greater Minnesota. When the enormous economic costs of these regulations are compared to their immeasurably small environmental benefit, few Minnesotans think they are justified. But such practical concerns are not enough to derail the environmental justice agenda.

Health care for some

While the left claims to want affordable, easily accessible health care for all, the

policies pushed by liberal politicians, like Obamacare, have resulted in the opposite. Now, new proposals threaten to further exacerbate the health care provider shortage, leaving rural Minnesotans without local access to doctors or hospitals.

A recent analysis by consulting firm Navigant found one in five rural hospitals in Minnesota is in high financial distress and in danger of closing. Most of those hospitals are considered "essential" to their communities because of a shortage of beds or trauma care in the region.

Tellingly, the report cites "under-compensated care" by government programs like Medicare and Medicaid as a main contributor to rural hospitals' financial distress. The ONECare plan proposed by Governor Walz works exactly this way. Rather than reducing the cost of health care, ONECare would simply pay hospitals less. The consequences of passing it would be devastating to Minnesotans who would lose access to care within a reasonable driving distance.

Even when hospitals don't close, they stop offering important services that then leave rural Minnesotans stranded without basic care. In recent years, for example, several rural hospitals have stopped providing labor and delivery services. In 2000, 15 counties in Minnesota had no in-hospital obstetrics care. In 2015, that number had nearly doubled, to 28.

Mining

Mining contributes \$2.4 billion to the state's economy, but it could be \$5.9 billion more. New mineral resource data show non-ferrous mining could create a total of 14,851 new jobs. Adding the 5,300 people who currently work in taconite, Minnesota's mining industry has the potential to employ 20,000 Minnesotans and contribute \$8.3 billion to the state's GDP every year.

However, the mining industry is under constant attack by environmental activists who file endless lawsuits and pressure lawmakers to propose strict renewable energy mandates. Abiding by these energy mandates would cost existing mines and paper mills hundreds of millions of dollars per year and impair the economic viability of future mining projects in Minnesota. The Iron Range, which produces just two percent of global iron, faces an even tougher challenge to stay competitive in the global marketplace.

Environmental groups—whose headquarters are almost always located



One in five rural hospitals in Minnesota is in high financial distress and in danger of closing. New proposals threaten to further exacerbate the health care provider shortage, leaving rural Minnesotans without local access to doctors or hospitals.

in Minneapolis and St. Paul—argue that people living on the Iron Range should get low-paying jobs in the tourism industry instead of supporting more mining by responsibly developing Minnesota’s vast copper, nickel, titanium, cobalt, and iron reserves. It is hard to think of a sentiment that could be more insulting to Iron Range residents. Mining isn’t just a high-paying job; it is part of Minnesota’s heritage. America needed the Range in WWII, and the Range delivered. The Range would like to deliver a whole lot more.

It’s telling that Congresswoman Betty McCollum of St. Paul is perhaps the most outspoken critic of copper-nickel mining in the state, and Congressman Pete Stauber, who represents northeastern Minnesota, is one of the industry’s biggest champions.

Transportation

The 70 percent gas tax increase championed by Governor Walz and the House DFL Majority this year wasn’t just about raising additional funds to fix the roads. If it was, the proposal wouldn’t have included a budgeting gimmick that diverted existing road funding toward other programs.

The purpose of the gas tax increase was twofold: to raise additional revenue from the gas tax so general fund money could be diverted elsewhere, and to make driving more expensive, thus incentivizing alternatives to gas-powered cars and reducing emissions.

If this idea seems far-fetched, consider that reducing emissions was the exact justification used by French President Emmanuel Macron when he proposed a tax increase on diesel fuel. The historic unpopularity of this gas tax increase resulted in hundreds of thousands of French residents rioting in the streets.

In France, it was rural residents who rose up against the gas tax, not the urban population in Paris. Likewise, a gas tax increase might not have bothered people living in Minneapolis or St. Paul, but it would have disproportionately harmed people living in Greater Minnesota because they generally have farther to drive than residents of the Twin Cities.

Using the Center’s “No New Gas Taxes” web page, Laurie T. of Warroad sent an email to Governor Walz that makes this point: “I don’t believe that you have Greater Minnesota’s best interest in mind. Where I live, six miles from the Canadian border, we do not have buses or light rails. We have cars and trucks that get us to our jobs that can be anywhere from one to 90 miles travel—one way. How will the people YOU represent be able to afford fuel to get to work, food and clothing for their families, and child care?”

While the gas tax increase, by itself, may not have been an existential crisis to most rural Minnesotans’ family budgets, it certainly would have constituted a diminishing of means for the amenities many in the metro take for granted. When the grocery store and ballet lessons are 30



The gas tax increase would have constituted a diminishing of means for the amenities many urban Minnesotans take for granted. When the grocery store and ballet lessons are 30 miles away, 20 cents a gallon adds up fast.

miles away, 20 cents a gallon adds up fast.

If the Walz administration had sincerely attempted to fund the roads with a modest increase, and didn’t try to divert existing road money toward other expenditures, it might have been able to pass a gas tax increase. But knowing that revenue from higher gas taxes would go toward subsidizing \$2,500 rebates for wealthy urbanites to buy electric cars doesn’t instill much confidence in the other half of the state.

Under my (green) thumb: Micromanaging agriculture

Leftist environmentalists have little, if any, idea how life works on a farm, or how food makes it from the fields to their table. However, this hasn’t stopped them from imposing burdensome mandates on farmers (such as buffer strips and ditch mowing rules) or viewing the carbon footprint of agriculture as a problem they must solve.

The *Star Tribune* chose to feature an op-ed that correctly identified farming as an energy intensive industry but went on to propose subsidizing electric tractors. Such a proposal is completely out of



Environmental groups—whose headquarters are almost always located in Minneapolis and St. Paul—argue that people living on the Iron Range should get low-paying jobs in the tourism industry instead of supporting more mining by responsibly developing Minnesota’s vast copper, nickel, titanium, cobalt, and iron reserves.



Despite their desire to shop local and “know their farmers,” absurd proposals that increase the cost of energy and impose expensive mandates make life more difficult for farmers—especially small farmers.

touch with the reality of life on the farm. Only an urbanite could see this as a viable idea.

For instance, the John Deere electric tractor referenced in the *Star Tribune* op-ed costs \$634,000 and can run for up to four hours before it must be recharged for three. In contrast, a nearly new Case IH Magnum tractor retails for \$264,000 and can run for up to eight hours before it must take 15 minutes to refuel.

Even if cost were not an issue, the four-hour battery life would be. It is not unusual for farmers to spend 12 to 16 hours per day behind the wheel during planting season to prepare fields, plant crops, apply fertilizer, etc. There simply isn't time to wait three hours for recharging, especially if there is a late or exceptionally wet spring (like this year), when planting is significantly behind schedule. Despite their desire to shop local and supposedly “know their farmers,” absurd proposals by urban liberals actively make

life more difficult for farmers—especially small farmers—to stay in business and keep food on our tables.

Do as I say, not as I do

The next time you drive through southern Minnesota, take note of the wind farms. Then try to think of the last time you saw a wind turbine in the Twin Cities metro area. It's difficult, because none exist within the inner circle of I-494/I-694. There are only seven wind turbines in the entire seven-county metro, compared to more than 2,500 spread across the rest of the state.

Twin Cities liberals feel righteous because some of their electricity is produced—however needlessly and inefficiently—by wind turbines. But it is residents of Greater Minnesota who have to live with the daily presence of ugly, vibrating, bird-killing, 50-story-high turbines. And all Minnesotans foot the bill for hundreds of millions of dollars in transmission lines to carry the electricity from Greater Minnesota to where it is consumed, in the Twin Cities.

The same concept applies to public transit. Construction is about to begin on the new light rail project that will cut through the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, and the first step is to cut down beautiful, established trees on the popular Kenilworth Trail. Wealthy elites who live near the train's path, and support it in concept, have fought against its construction because they don't want their own landscape disfigured. They ignore the fact that their policies have forced residents of Greater Minnesota to live with a disfigured landscape.

CoeXist?

Tim Walz shrewdly ran his campaign for governor under a banner of unity; a hopeful message focused on finding common ground. His “OneMinnesota” campaign slogan was nice, but it lacks substance.

Leftist politicians who represent the metro area continue to push for policies that fulfill their agenda-driven dreams but have tremendous real-world costs for Greater Minnesota. In their arrogance, they feel justified in telling everyone else how they should live.

This attitude is incredibly insulting. The people of Greater Minnesota do not

live and work at the pleasure of people who live in more densely-populated areas. They do not exist to scoop ice cream on the weekends for people who live in Minneapolis. They are proud people, good people, who are tired of being portrayed as backward, bigoted, or unenlightened.

Greater Minnesotans don't need any more lip service from politicians and urban elites who nod and pretend to understand their way of life but express contempt for it through their actions. It will take more than platitudes to repair the decades of mistrust.

Maybe there is an honest lack of understanding between rural and metro Minnesota, and we just need to get to know each



Governor Walz's “OneMinnesota” campaign slogan was nice, but it lacks substance.

other better. That's the optimistic take. The more cynical view is that we understand each other fine; some people just don't like what they see, preferring to view their rural neighbors as “deplorables” and “bitter clingers.” Not too long ago, Governor Walz dismissed rural Minnesota as “mostly rocks and cows.”

At this point, residents of Greater Minnesota just want to be left alone. Can't we all just CoeXist? ★

Isaac Orr is a policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. Katie Fulkerson is its communications director.



2019

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The View from the 'Other' Minnesota

The interests, values and policy preferences of most Greater Minnesota residents are at odds with the liberal agenda coming out of St. Paul.

The most recent *Thinking Minnesota Poll*, a quarterly research project carried out by Center of the American Experiment, accompanies this issue's cover story on the urban elites' war on Greater Minnesota. This quarter, for the first time, the poll focuses exclusively on Greater Minnesota. It confirms that the interests, values and policy preferences of most Greater Minnesota residents are at odds with the liberal agenda coming out of St. Paul.

Meeting Street Research, a polling company based in Charleston, South Carolina, employed a mix of cellphones and landlines to interview 500 registered Minnesota voters, all outside the metro area, between June 15 and June 17. The margin of error for a sample size of 500 is +/- 4.38 percent.

The survey finds that Greater Minnesotans are significantly more apt to describe themselves as conservative than residents

Greater Minnesotans are not in an angry mood.

of the Twin Cities metro area. A plurality of 41 percent say they are conservative, compared to only 19 percent who describe themselves as liberal. Consistent with that orientation, Greater Minnesota voters are likely to view much of state spending as wasteful. In this poll, the median voter estimated that 35 percent of state spending is wasted.

Still, Greater Minnesotans are not in an angry mood. By 51 percent to 38 percent, they think things in Minnesota are on the right track—a smaller margin than in the metro area, but still positive. By 48 percent to 37 percent, they approve of the performance of Minnesota's legislature, while by 53 percent to 31 percent they approve of Governor Tim Walz's first year in office.

But when we turn to specific issues, the *Thinking Minnesota Poll* finds that Greater Minnesotans generally reject the current DFL agenda. That rejection suggests that the governor's first year in office was deemed a success because, in contrast with the Dayton era, there was little drama: St. Paul Democrats and Republicans compromised, no radical legislation passed, and there was no shutdown or serious threat of a shutdown. In order to achieve that perception of cooperation, it can be argued that the governor abandoned most of his party's policy priorities, at least

About the pollster

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

FIGURE 1: GREATER MINNESOTANS OPPOSE THE GAS TAX INCREASE AND THE MAJORITY OF THEM OPPOSE IT STRONGLY.

"As you may know, this year, Governor Walz proposed a 20-cent increase in Minnesota's gas tax, which amounts to a 70 percent increase that would make Minnesota's gas tax the 4th highest in the nation. Knowing this, do you favor or oppose this proposal to increase the gas tax?"

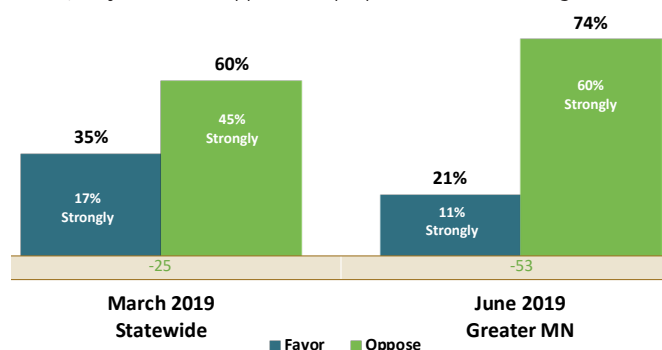


FIGURE 2: HEALTH CARE, INFRASTRUCTURE, TAXES AND SCHOOLS ARE THE TOP ISSUES.

"Thinking now about some issues, which TWO of the following issue areas do you believe should be the top priorities for the Governor and State Legislature here in Minnesota?"

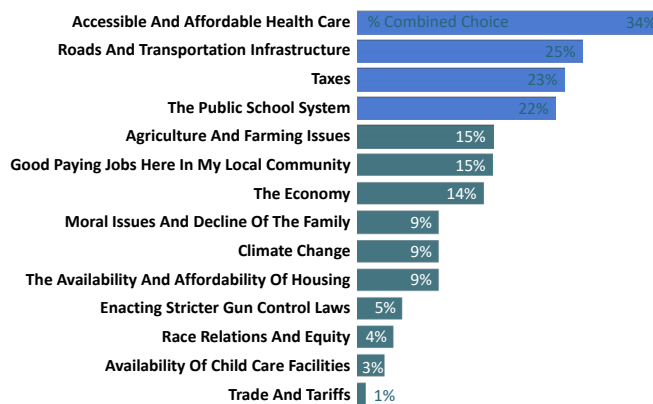


FIGURE 3: A PLURALITY OF GREATER MINNESOTANS WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO PAY ANYTHING ANNUALLY TO HELP CLIMATE CHANGE.

"How much would you be willing to pay annually to reduce Minnesota's impact on climate change?"

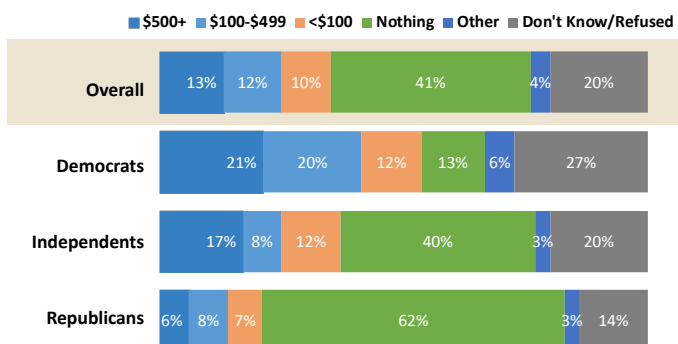


FIGURE 4: GREATER MINNESOTANS OVERWHELMINGLY SAY IT'S IMPORTANT ENERGY IS REASONABLY PRICED.

"How important is it to keep the price of energy here in Minnesota reasonable? Would you say it is extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?"

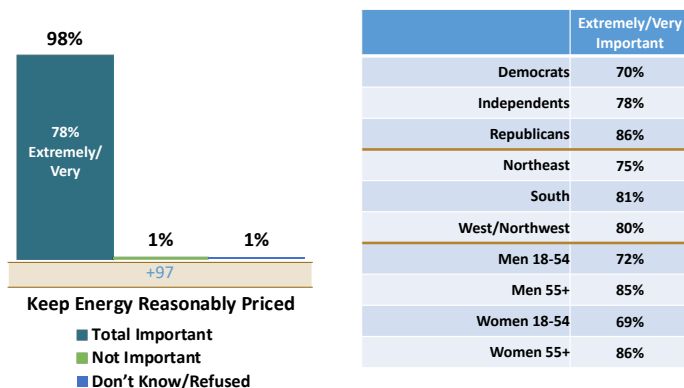
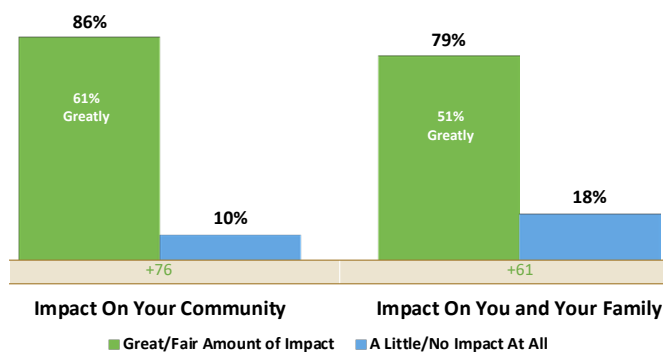


FIGURE 5: GREATER MINNESOTANS SAY THE IMPACT OF HIGHER ENERGY COSTS WOULD BE FELT IN THEIR COMMUNITY AND THEIR OWN FAMILY.

"If energy costs in Minnesota doubled as a result of new green energy requirements, how much of an impact would that have on your community?"

"And, if energy costs in Minnesota doubled as a result of new green energy requirements, how much of an impact would that have on you and your family?"



for now. There was no increase in the gas tax, only a modest increase in spending compared with last year's session, a small personal income tax cut, no imposition of additional "green" energy mandates, and so on.

But those policy priorities will soon be back on the table in St. Paul. How do they play in Greater Minnesota? The *Thinking Minnesota Poll* finds that they play poorly.

In this year's session, the governor and his party in the legislature proposed a 70 percent increase in the gas tax. They abandoned the proposal at the end of the legislative session,

but Governor Walz says it will be back next year. Such an increase in the gas tax is wildly unpopular outside the metro area, with only 21 percent in favor, while 74 percent oppose it.

In Minnesota, as in other states, "green" energy mandates are being pushed as a purported means of combating global warming. In the 2019 session, DFLers first introduced legislation that would have raised the state's wind and solar electricity mandate from the current 25 percent to 50 percent. That proposal was then withdrawn and replaced with a demand for 100 percent wind and solar, which is not technologically feasible but would, if attempted, exponentially increase the price of electricity.

These "green" initiatives have little support in Greater Minnesota. The *Thinking Minnesota Poll* finds that climate change ranks near the bottom of voters' priorities, while traditional bread and butter issues—health care, roads and highways, taxes, jobs, public schools and agriculture—are at the top. It seems clear that the liberal agenda that often dominates conversation in the Twin Cities fails to resonate with a large majority of non-metro Minnesotans.

Consistent with those priorities, most respondents are not willing to spend more than \$100 annually to reduce Minnesota's impact on climate change, while 41 percent say they would spend nothing at all.

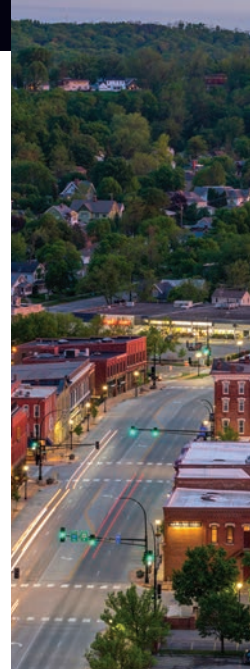
Conversely, the price of energy is critically important to Greater Minnesotans. An overwhelming 98 percent say that maintaining a reasonable price of energy is important, with 78 percent saying it is extremely important or very important.

The prospect of a doubling in the cost of energy is appalling to most Greater Minnesotans. Eighty-six percent say that a doubling of energy costs due to new "green" requirements would hurt their communities, with 61 percent believing their communities would be greatly damaged.

Similarly, 79 percent say that a doubling of energy costs due to "green" initiatives would hurt their families.

The industries that would be most damaged by higher electricity costs—agriculture, mining and manufacturing—are concentrated in Greater Minnesota. As one would expect, these industries are considered important by almost everyone in Greater Minnesota. Mining, being concentrated in the northeastern part of the state, directly impacts fewer communities than agriculture and manufacturing, but it is still considered important to local communities by around half of Greater Minnesotans.

As the poll responses show, agriculture is the industry that pervades nearly all of Minnesota outside the Twin Cities. And yet, most residents of Greater Minnesota do not believe that the state's legislature has been helpful to Minnesota's signature industry. Only 26 percent think that Minnesota's government has been helpful to agriculture, while, remarkably, 17 percent





think that the state's government has actually damaged it. There is obviously plenty of room for Minnesota's policymakers to prioritize agriculture in a positive way, rather than demonizing the industry as so often happens on the left.

The key to Minnesota's future, like that of any state, is the ability to create large numbers of high-quality, well-paying jobs. Here, the picture in Minnesota has been mixed. If we compare Minnesota's metropolitan statistical areas (as defined by the federal government) with all of the nation's MSAs, we find that

economic growth in the Mankato and Rochester areas has been above average in the 21st century, compared with the U.S. as a whole, while GDP growth in the Duluth and St. Cloud areas has been below average. (Economic growth in the Twin Cities has been below average, as well.)

The economic picture varies considerably around the state of Minnesota. A concern that is specific to Greater Minnesota is the exodus of young people to regions that provide greater job opportunity. While that worry is not universal, it is widespread. The *Thinking Minnesota Poll* finds that 65 percent of Greater Minnesotans are concerned—31 percent either “extremely” or “very”—“that many of Minnesota’s young and talented residents are leaving your community because of the lack of opportunity.”

Climate change ranks near the bottom of voters' priorities, while traditional bread and butter issues—health care, roads and highways, taxes, jobs, public schools and agriculture—are at the top.

These findings would appear to offer strong guidance to Minnesota's policymakers and politicians. Our political class should not take Greater Minnesota for granted. Rather, politicians should forgo policies that might be popular with urban millennials, like discouraging driving with a high gas tax and raising the cost of energy through initiatives that purport to benefit the environment. Instead, they should focus on the issues of immediate import to voters around the state: tax, regulatory and educational policies that will make it easier for the manufacturing, mining and agriculture industries to prosper and create jobs.

It is a simple formula, and politicians who adopt it will get a warm reception in Greater Minnesota. ★

FIGURE 6: GREATER MINNESOTANS SAY THE AGRICULTURE AND FARMING AND MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO THEIR COMMUNITY.

“Now, I would like to read you a list of different industries here in Minnesota. After you hear each one, please tell me how important each one is to your community. Would you say it is extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not at all important?”

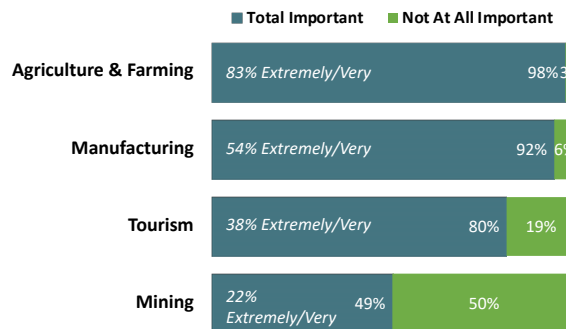


FIGURE 7: MORE THAN A THIRD OF GREATER MINNESOTANS SAY THE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD NO IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE.

“Generally speaking, has the state government here in Minnesota been helpful or hurtful to the state's agricultural industry or has it not really had an impact one way or the other?”

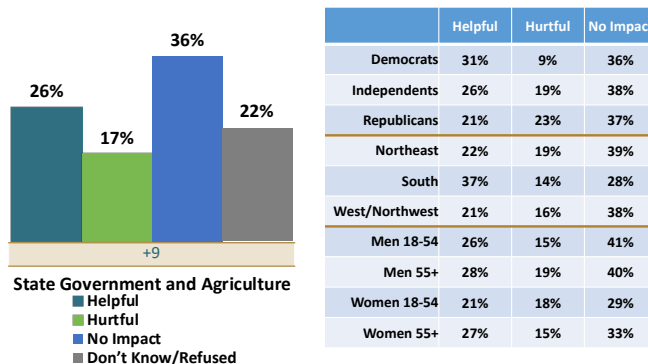
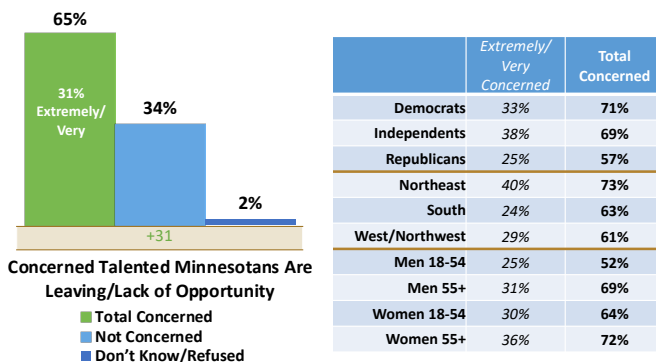


FIGURE 8: GREATER MINNESOTANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT RESIDENTS LEAVING BECAUSE OF A LACK OF OPPORTUNITY.

“Generally speaking, how concerned are you that many of Minnesota's young and talented residents are leaving your community because of the lack of opportunity?”



A wooden door with a black metal sign that reads "PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE" and "DO NOT ENTER". The sign is made of two pieces of black metal. The top piece has "PRINCIPAL'S" and "OFFICE" in raised, silver-colored letters. The bottom piece has "DO NOT" in yellow spray paint and "ENTER" in raised, silver-colored letters. The door is made of vertical wood planks.

PRINCIPAL'S
OFFICE

DO NOT
ENTER

Tyranny of the 10 Year Olds

Critics say an educational philosophy called ENVoY and a tone-deaf principal have enabled a suburban elementary school to devolve into a culture of chaos and violence.

By Catrin Wigfall

This past winter, a group of elementary students at Ramsey Elementary School were participating in gym class. Shortly into the class, a student with a history of disruptive behavior melted into a tantrum that quickly escalated into an emotional explosion. The student started loudly berating other children and even began kicking at them.

As he showed no signs of letting up, the two gym teachers leading the class and one paraprofessional grew alarmed.

Help from the school's administrative office was radioed for. No one answered.

The student then turned to one of the teachers and began swearing at her and threatening to "slap the shit outta her." He flung a trashcan at her, followed by another. Several pieces of gym equipment were grabbed next and thrown while staff continued to radio for help.

Still, no response.

The teacher, fearing for the safety of her students, tried to escort the student out of the gym where she thought she could calm him down. But the student responded by punching, kicking, and scratching the teacher.

Another plea for assistance was radioed out. Again, radio silence.

The incident lasted an excruciating 20 minutes before the student started to run out of gas. No one from the school's administrative office showed up to help or even acknowledged the panicked teachers' appeals for help. Nor did they show up to help during past violent episodes involving the same student.

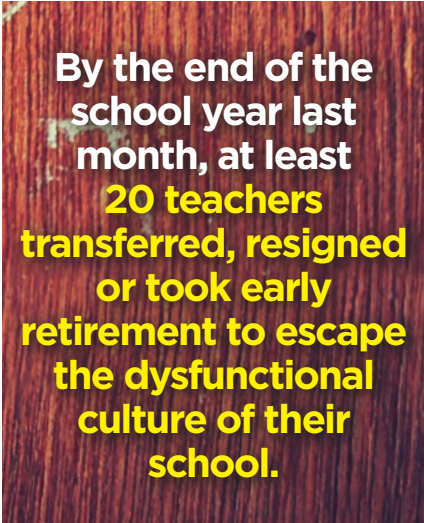
Students returned to their classroom. Incredibly, a school policy focused on decreasing office referrals and keeping disruptive students in the classroom allowed the boy to spend a tense remainder of his day with his class, even after assaulting a teacher. His outburst drew no penalties. There were no consequences for his behavior.

It took three hours for someone from the school's administrative office to check on the beaten teacher.

This scene, described by a Ramsey Elementary teacher who requested anonymity, invites some obvious questions.

Why was this behavior tolerated? Why did no one from the school's administrative office respond or acknowledge repeated calls for assistance? And what kind of educational policy disdains consequences for aberrant behavior?

Critics say the incident illustrates how an educational philosophy called ENVoY and a tone-deaf principal have enabled the culture of this 1,200-student suburban elementary school to devolve into chaotic violence in which classroom teachers fear for their own safety, as well as for their students. By the end of the school year last month, at least 20 teachers transferred, resigned or took early retirement



By the end of the school year last month, at least 20 teachers transferred, resigned or took early retirement to escape the dysfunctional culture of their school.

to escape the dysfunctional culture of their school.

For the record, much of the information in this report was gathered from teachers and staff at Ramsey Elementary School, most of whom requested anonymity out of fear of workplace reprisals. Each fact was verified by at least two sources. Amy Reed, Ramsey's principal, referred questions from *Thinking Minnesota* about her school's tumultuous school year to Jim Skelly, Anoka-Hennepin School's director of communication and public relations.

Background

The gym incident was one of many that occurred within the early stages of Dr. Amy Reed's new term as principal. Reed

transitioned to Ramsey from a previous administrative role at another elementary school. Part of her mission, according to Skelly, was to improve Ramsey's academic performance and enact a district-wide transition to a system that mainstreams special education students and has teachers handle behavior issues in class.

Ramsey Elementary is a first through fifth grade school that started in 1978 in Ramsey, a middle-class suburb 22 miles northwest of downtown Minneapolis. Its student body is about 79 percent white, nine percent black, four percent Hispanic, and four percent two or more races.

Reed arrived at Ramsey Elementary last fall after serving as principal at Eisenhower Elementary since 2015 and prior to that as assistant principal at Rum River Elementary, both located in the Anoka-Hennepin school district. While at Rum River, Reed learned a new approach to discipline called the ENVoY model—Educational Non-Verbal Yardsticks. Teachers within the Anoka-Hennepin school district wanted more support with behavior issues, according to Skelly, and selected ENVoY as one system to help with classroom management. The district started using ENVoY in 2013 and has been working to implement the program at various levels district-wide. By the time Reed was delivering her 2018 doctoral dissertation on ENVoY, all 24 elementary schools in the district had been exposed to the program.

Developed in 1993 by a Seattle-based educator, ENVoY teaches non-verbal skills and strategies to minimize the effects of behavioral classroom disruptions. Implementing ENVoY is expected to raise test results, lower discipline referrals, and help a school's culture become calm and safe.

Educators are taught "Seven Gems" that help them use their body, gestures, facial expressions, breathing, and voice to "manage their classrooms and build relationships with students" with respect to the "diverse learners" in each classroom, according to a presentation on ENVoY to the Anoka-Hennepin school board by Jen Mares, an ENVoY coach. The

Seven Gems are: Freeze Body, ABOVE (Pause) Whisper, Raise Your Hand vs. Speak Out, Visual Exit Directions, Most Important Twenty Seconds, OFF/Neutral/ON, and Influence Approach.

After teachers learn the non-verbal techniques, they are observed by ENVoY coaches and given feedback on how well the skills are being implemented throughout a daily lesson.

The district recognized Principal Reed for successfully implementing the ENVoY techniques in her previous administrative positions, where the program apparently led to lower suspension and dismissal numbers and higher test results. ENVoY was introduced to Ramsey in 2013, the district's spokesperson Jim Skelly said, but Reed's past experience with the program led her to put more emphasis on its use and build it out at an accelerated pace.

There was also interest in improving Ramsey's lower academic performance when compared to other elementary schools with similar demographics in the district. Test scores at Ramsey had dropped in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, and student proficiency was trending downward.

It didn't work

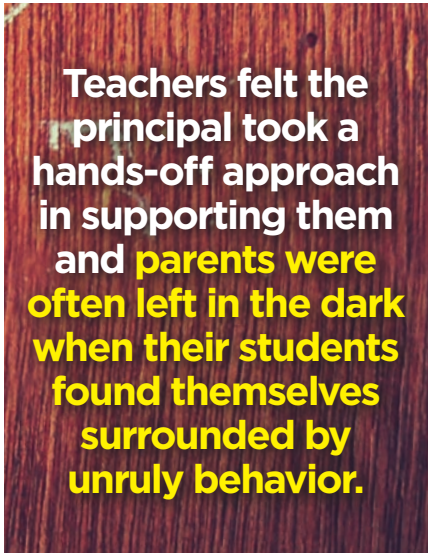
But these strategies and changes didn't work at Ramsey, according to parents who reached out to *Thinking Minnesota* and communications with teachers. They pointed out that an alarming increase in in-class disruptions and playground altercations had led to chaotic classrooms, which was a change to the school's climate. Teachers felt the school's principal took a hands-off approach in supporting them and parents were often left in the dark when their students found themselves surrounded by unruly behavior.

Under the ENVoY model, teachers are given strategies and best practices to resolve behavior issues in class so students don't leave the classroom and lose out on learning opportunities, according to the district's spokesperson Jim Skelly.

However, ENVoY's goal of reducing time students spend out of the classroom often led to classroom evacuations and interrupted learning time, according to reports from teachers and parents. Carrie

Mock, a parent of a Ramsey third grader, was told by her daughter that her class had to evacuate its classroom because a student was throwing chairs. The student remained in the classroom the rest of the day, and the teacher was left to wait out the student's behavior before bringing the rest of the class back in, Mock said.

Spokesman Skelly countered that teachers who effectively used ENVoY techniques viewed the approach in a "positive way." But the teachers not adapting to it, he said, "are the ones who maybe don't see it as a positive for deal-



Teachers felt the principal took a hands-off approach in supporting them and parents were often left in the dark when their students found themselves surrounded by unruly behavior.

ing with their classroom."

In addition to ramping up ENVoY, Ramsey used 2018 to begin mainstreaming special education students as part of a new district-wide plan.

Mainstreaming means special education students spend as much time as possible in the general education classroom with peers who do not receive special education services. It is part of determining the "least restrictive environment" or LRE for a student to learn in as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Some teachers worried that IDEA does not spell out the LRE for each type of disability. And because there isn't necessarily one "right" learning environment for all kids, it may better serve a student to learn separately.

Principal Reed directed that all special education students would spend their entire days within the mainstream set-

ting, according to one teacher at Ramsey with an extensive special education background, who is also a parent of a student who has received special education services. Students learn at different rates, she said, with differing abilities or disabilities that impact their learning. "For the administration to say that all students will benefit from spending the entire day learning within a classroom is not accurate."

Along with keeping all students in the general classroom, Reed implemented a "push-in" teaching model in which special ed students are joined in their classroom by another teacher with other students for small group instruction. Besides the additional bodies in the classroom, which were distracting, some of the push-in groups contained students with disruptive behavior tendencies, according to a current third grade teacher.

Poor communication

The uptick in behavior issues at Ramsey was not communicated to parents, and when parents asked for more information, responses were vague and unclear, parent Carrie Mock said. "My child came home with a story nearly every day, but we did not get emails about those incidents from Principal Reed. Parents are begging for better communication from administrative leadership either by email or phone or even when we meet in person, and all we are told is it's being looked into."

Because parents did not receive phone calls or written notifications about behavior incidents, parents were forced to rely on their children to tell them about the fights and classroom evacuations, according to Jennifer O'Connor, parent of a Ramsey fifth grader.

"My son was punched in the face at recess, and I heard nothing about it from the school," O'Connor said. "I asked him if he told anyone he was punched. 'No,' he said. 'Everybody gets punched at recess. It's normal.'"

Parents step in

In February, a group of around 15 Ramsey parents realized they had all been hearing from their children and their children's teachers similar stories of stu-

dent violence and no corrective measures being taken. Parents of special education students were concerned by the school's decision to change special education services and keep their student in the regular classroom full-time.

Parents voiced their concerns about violence and student safety at a February 25 school board meeting. They requested better communication and discipline follow-through for behaviors that warranted consequences, and asked for better support to meet the individualized needs of their students requesting special education services, since those services had been changed at the beginning of the school year.

Dustin Reeder, a father of a fourth-grader, told the board he was at Ramsey to eat lunch with his son one Friday. When his son came in from recess, he had a bruised face, bloody lip and his shirt was ripped. Reeder's son had been tackled from behind by another boy and responded by pushing the boy. Immediately, six other boys jumped on Reeder's son and began kicking his body and landing blows to his face.

Reeder took his son to the principal's office and was told she was "unavailable," but when Reeder began explaining the fight, Principal Reed immediately stepped out of her office. She asked the fourth grader in two different ways whether he felt safe at Ramsey.

"No" was his response both times. He didn't feel safe at recess; he didn't feel safe at lunch; he didn't feel safe in the hallways.

Reed punished all the boys involved—including Reeder's son—by keeping them from recess the following Monday.

In March, School Board Chair Todd Heidemann responded to the parent testimony in writing, listing "steps" that were being taken "to support the staff, students and families at Ramsey," which included district leadership "visiting" with parents and community members and holding staff meetings to review the concerns. Additionally, Heidemann stated Ramsey was reviewing and updating its "crisis response plan" so staff understood the "process for requesting support."

But parents continued to hear from their children about aggressive behav-

ior—and physically see evidence it was still happening.

"It took my daughter coming home with bruise marks on her neck for me to find out she had been strangled four different times," a parent of a third grader said. No call home, the other girl involved just had recess taken away.

Administration responds

Reed emailed parents and guardians the beginning of April to say she was "very sorry to hear" parents had the perception there was a lack of administrative response to their concerns about school safety and the overall climate at Ramsey.

She pledged to improve. "As a parent, you should expect to be notified by a teacher, case manager, or administrator when your student is involved in a disruptive or violent incident," she said.

Reed said Ramsey had added weekly support from a district elementary behavior-and-discipline specialist and brought in a current principal at another elementary school to "assist." She also promised more information about the school's behavioral guidelines and interventions.

Parent Carrie Mock said the follow-up communication never arrived. Frustration over no improvement in communication from the school and lack of support for teachers struggling to handle student behaviors on their own led a group of around 100 teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and students to hold a "walk-in" outside Ramsey in the middle of April.

The walk-in was organized by Ramsey parents and supported by the local teachers' union. Parents brought gifts of school supplies for teachers as a sign of support. They carried signs that said, "Anoka-Hennepin students deserve leadership."

During a May PTO meeting, an additional promise from Reed was made to "improve communication going forward" after parents spoke out against the administration's handling of a knife being brought to school. Parents were not informed of the incident but found out through third parties.

Next steps

The challenging and chaotic school year has caused many Ramsey teachers to reconsider their time at the school.

According to one staff member's unofficial count, at least 20 teachers have left through retirement, new schools, termination or leaves—not including the paraprofessionals and other staff members who have already left. District spokesperson Jim Skelly said the start of a new elementary school this fall in Ramsey, Brookside Elementary, is contributing to staff turnover. "There will be 450 students transitioning from Ramsey to Brookside next year, so some of the staff movement is because students will be moving, too."

A veteran teacher of 27 years chose early retirement because the 2018 school year at Ramsey was her "hardest. I can no longer be treated as I have this year, nor can I condone the way many of my colleagues have suffered."

She was forced to evacuate her classroom numerous times due to chairs being thrown, bookcases toppled, and desks being flipped, she said. One chair-throwing instance became so intense the teacher only had time to quickly tuck students under tables and desks near the front of the classroom to keep them safe.

"Almost every year you have some of 'those kids,' but this year was different," the teacher said. "How? Lack of administrative involvement and consequences."

The district confirmed no leadership changes at Ramsey will be forthcoming. "It appears Principal Reed has been responsive to all these concerns. Whether staff fully accepts that doesn't mean attempts to address concerns aren't being made," spokesperson Skelly said.

But parents will continue standing up for the safety of students and teachers at the school, despite being told that "school leadership has said they just need to wait us out until the end of the year and we'll go away," parent Jennifer O'Connor said.

Parents and teachers are concerned Ramsey is headed in a fast, downward spiral. The reign of distrust and disorder at the school will take time to heal, and faith in leadership will take time to be restored. Changes are needed, they say, and for the sake of student and teacher safety, these changes cannot wait. ★

Catrin Wigfall, a former teacher, is a policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment.



INTERVIEW

Heather Mac Donald
and the

DIVERSITY DELUSION

The fearless observer of American society tells
American Experiment President **John Hinderaker**
why she looks at our universities with
'sorrow and rage.'

John Hinderaker:

The title of your book is *The Diversity Delusion*. What is the delusion?

Heather Mac Donald:

It involves three principles. The first is that race and gender are the most important things about an individual; second, that discrimination based on race and gender is the defining characteristic of American society; and third, that any disparity in race and gender proportionality in any American institution is by definition the result of race and gender discrimination. Differences in academic skills, in behavior, in culture, or in career preferences are not allowed to be noticed, though they in fact drive such disparities today.

You have described yourself as a pessimist. How do you see things going, first of all, in America's universities?



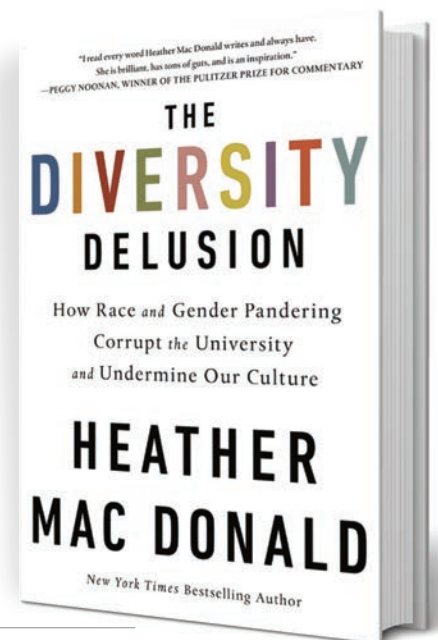
I wish I could be optimistic because I know people want hope. Having observed universities for the last 40 years, however, I am left only with sorrow and rage. The spinelessness of college administrators in the face of phony claims of racism gets worse by the year, as does the determination of those same administrators to teach students to think of themselves as victims. The curriculum has been decimated. Ideally, curriculum should provide students with the greatest privilege in the world: the opportunity to immerse oneself in the pinnacles of Western civilization, to absorb works of unparalleled insight, sublimity, wit, and irony.

Instead, students are being taught to read everything through the lens of race and gender oppression, to reject authors based on the triviality of gonads and melanin. These are students who know nothing about Periclean Athens, the Renaissance, or the Enlightenment. Yet, they are being given a license by their professors to reduce such thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, and Kant to the know-nothing caricature of being oppressive “dead white males.”

This divisive focus on race and gender would be bad enough if it were only despoiling our institutions of

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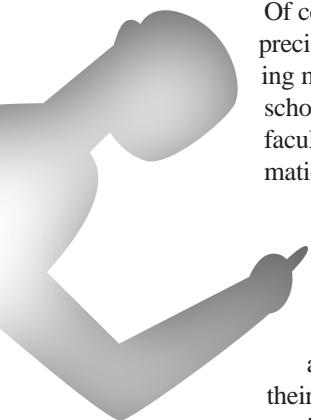


Heather Mac Donald recently spoke at a Center of the American Experiment quarterly lunch forum. She is the Thomas W. Smith Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a contributing editor of *City Journal*, and a *New York Times* bestselling author. Her work at *City Journal* has covered a range of topics, including higher education, immigration, policing, homelessness and homeless advocacy, criminal-justice reform, and race relations. Her writing has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Criterion*.



higher education, but unfortunately, those institutions are turning out cadres of indoctrinated young people who are starting to take over our other institutions.

They certainly are. Meritocracy is on life support in the United States. I don't know of a single mainstream institution, whether it's a corporation, a bank, a law firm, government, or a nonprofit institution, that is not obsessed with diversity hiring. To be a white male in those institutions is to labor under an enormous handicap. This is most worrisome in the science fields. The optimists long thought that the STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and math—would indefinitely maintain color- and gender-blind hiring because, as we thought we all knew, there's no such thing as “female math” or “black math.”

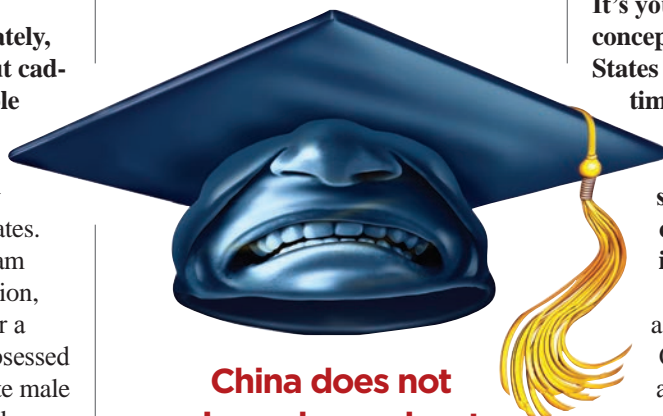


Of course, that is precisely the claim being made in education schools and now college faculties. Some mathematics professors claim that math is a heteronormatively, white-privileged space designed to keep females and minorities in their place. Big tech

companies in Silicon Valley—Google, Microsoft, Apple, you name it—are discriminating against the best talent if it comes in the wrong race and gender.

Unfortunately, some of our international rivals don't have this same obsession with diversity, at least when it comes to science. They are meritocracies.

We're putting our competitive edge at risk. The United States still dominates in scientific research and in its entrepreneurial applications, but that may not last. China does not give a damn about gender and race. It cares only about one thing when it comes to the sciences and that is whether you are the best engineer



China does not give a damn about gender and race. It cares only about one thing when it comes to the sciences, and that is whether you are the best engineer out there who will help bury the United States with Chinese technological advances, whether it's weapons systems or communication systems. They are ruthlessly and properly meritocratic.

out there who will help bury the United States with Chinese technological advances, whether it's weapons systems or communication systems. They are ruthlessly and properly meritocratic.

The Asian students who come to the United States are stunned by our identity politics. They're scratching their heads and saying, “What is going

on here?” They must be laughing all the way back to China. They're taking their PhDs and going to an environment hellbent on giving China the lead. If the best Alzheimer's or AI research lab is all-female, so be it. But if it's all-male, that, too, does not matter to the Chinese authorities.

It's your view, I think, that the whole concept of meritocracy in the United States is under serious threat. We old-timers might say that the idea of succeeding on merit—hard work, initiative, skills—is so deeply ingrained in American culture that it's hard to imagine it being supplanted.

It's already happening. Here is a sense of how pervasive this is: Classics—*i.e.*, the study of Latin and Greek literature and culture—was a field that people also thought would be immune to identity politics. Were they wrong! Classics is now considered a white supremacist redoubt—by its own participants! A major Classic conference in January focused on the alleged racism of the field, particularly during the 19th century.

When a black Classics professor at Princeton complained about his alleged victim status, an independent researcher suggested that he may have been helped, not hindered, by his race in getting his academic position. She is now banned from ever publishing in the field and from showing up at any Classics conference.

Yet, that same Princeton professor went on to write an article for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* titled, “My Blackness is my Merit.” In other words, I *should* be hired because I'm black, not necessarily because of any superior knowledge I may possess of, say, Euripides or the Roman Empire.

YouTube and Google have been sued over their anti-meritocratic diversity policies. An employee in YouTube's human resources department was ordered by his managers to hire only females and so-called underrepresented minorities for entry-level engineering jobs. It didn't matter whether a white or Asian male was the most qualified engineer.

YouTube would rather hire on the basis of gender and race than get the most accomplished scientists.

Schools across the country are seeing students vote with their feet. They don't want to sit in class and listen to crazed diatribes about race, class and gender. We are seeing humanities majors and social science majors, with the exception of economics, dwindling. I can only think that's a good thing.

Short term, it's a good thing. In the long term, of course, it's heartbreaking because the universities are the natural place to carry on the humanistic tradition. If we stop reading Milton, Trollope and George Eliot (Eliot maybe gets grandfathered in because of her gender), their books will die. It is on our shoulders to keep them alive.

A society needs to honor its accomplishments. The only precedent I can think of for what we're going through now is the Chinese Cultural Revolution, in which a society declared everything in its past to be a source of injustice. That didn't come out so well. We're in a similar moment now. Students are being taught to think of their own extraordinary inheritance only through the lens of grievance. How a society goes on without any sense of deserved pride, without respect for its traditions, I don't know. We're in a very weird place right now.

After your talk at our Center of the American Experiment lunch forum we drove to St. Olaf for another presentation in the evening. It struck me when a couple of foreign students got up and started talking about oppression. There's something very strange about that, isn't there?

I'm sorry if this sounds blunt, but if they feel so oppressed, why did they come here? Why didn't they stay where they were? One student was obviously from Africa. He stood up with his carefully selected factoids (several incorrect) that allegedly showed America is still racist and, by extension, that he is oppressed to be in this country.



It's really odd that this investment in the racism narrative has become our national religion. It is just stunning to see these self-righteous students who believe they have the right to shut down anything they disagree with, which they define as hate speech.

Meanwhile, the defining characteristic of the 21st century so far is the international migration from the Third World to the First World. Boatloads of people from North and Sub-Saharan Africa are doing everything they can to get into Europe and the U.S., regardless of border law. If the West is so oppressive you would think that the Left—the ACLU, the immigration rights groups—would be telling these Third-World people of color, “Stay in your home countries. Avoid this tsunami of hatred.”

Instead, those same left-wing groups whose morning message is about American racism turn around in the afternoon and say, “There shall be no immigration control. We need open borders. Anybody who wants to come into this country should be allowed to come, whatever the American people think.” If they really believe that to come here is to subject yourself to life-threatening

bigotry, those are completely contradictory messages.

You made the point at St. Olaf that around the world there are thousands of young people who are studying night and day in hopes of being admitted to an American college or university. Yet, if they're talented and fortunate enough to find their way to an American university, the first thing that their professors will tell them is that they are being oppressed.

Yes. It's insane. It's absolutely counterfactual. The racism narrative has become our national religion. Institution after institution is engaged in this frenzied self-flagellation, saying, “We are racist. The only thing that explains the lack of racial proportionality in this law firm or in this university is the bigotry of our own white employees.”

Nobody's willing to entertain the actual answer, which is a huge academic skills gap. The average black 12th grader reads at the level of the average white eighth grader, and the gap between blacks and Asians is even larger. Until that gap is closed and others like it—the rate of single parenting, for example, or crime, gang, and drug involvement—it is blinkered to insist that any absence of racial proportionality is by definition the result of racism. Peter Salovey, the president of Yale, regularly rants about Yale's discrimination and bigotry. The truth is this: Every faculty search at Yale is one desperate effort to hire from the paltry supply of remotely-qualified, underrepresented minorities or female candidates who have not already been snapped up by colleges that are willing to pay an even higher premium to get them. Every other college is involved in the same diversity

chase, yet those college presidents, like Salovey, flagellate their own institutions for not caring enough about minorities.

Many conservatives couch the issue on college campuses in First Amendment terms. They believe the major issue on campuses is that conservative speakers are not being allowed to speak.

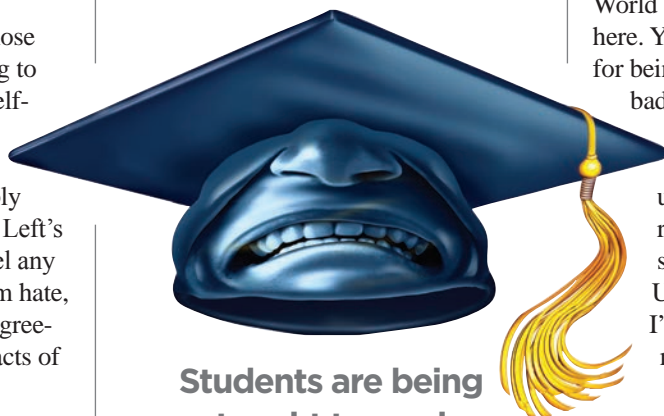
Yes. I was targeted by one of those mobs, and it is absolutely sobering to face such irrationality head-on. Self-righteous students believe they have the right to shut down anything they disagree with, simply by defining it as hate speech. The Left's biggest reflex these days is to label any political opposition as arising from hate, rather than from a good-faith disagreement about how to interpret the facts of our world.

That having been said, though, I would argue that the free speech problem is a mere epiphenomenon of victim ideology, and that the latter is more consequential. The demand to shut down what is called hate speech will be unrelenting until we have the courage to stand up and say that American institutions are not places of endemic, life-threatening bigotry.

Conservatives have responded to the free speech crisis by arguing that the point of education is to debate opinion. I think that's wrong. The essence of education is cramming as much knowledge as possible into the empty noggin of undergraduates within a fleeting four years. There are huge domains of knowledge for which debate is simply irrelevant. Nobody is going to debate the periodic table or the laws of thermodynamics, and no undergraduate knows enough to debate the causes of the spread of civilization across the early Mediterranean. Those are facts students should absorb and memorize.

The other problem with the dialogic model of education is that it tends toward things of the moment: Is it transphobic to insist on male and female bathrooms? Is Trump a fascist? Should we abolish ICE? The fact that there is only one answer to such questions allowed on a college campus is itself a

problem, of course. But those are not the questions that should occupy students' minds. Whence the strangeness and the terror of Aeschylus' great dramatic trilogy, *The Oresteia*? What is the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy? How do I unpack the syntax of *Paradise Lost*? Those are the matters with which stu-



Students are being taught to read everything through the lens of race and gender oppression, to reject authors based on the triviality of gonads and melanin.

dents should grapple, not with whether Bernie Sanders should win the Democratic primary.

At St. Olaf you were saying it's ridiculous to call St. Olaf a racist institution or say its minority students are subject to some kind of racial oppression or abuse because its professors are some of the most humane people you'll find anywhere. They want all their students to succeed, and, in fact, they especially want their minority students to succeed. Here you are defending and sticking up for St. Olaf, while at the same time, there was an alternative event being held sponsored by the St. Olaf Student Government, which saw your views as being anathema.

There is nothing more insulting you can say to a college today than you are not a place of bigotry. You will infuriate people. I was at the University of Colorado-Boulder and made a similar point: "I can assure you, students, that you are surrounded by the most tolerant people in human history. Every trait that may still lead to death in many Third-World countries is actively celebrated here. You can still be stoned in Brunei for being homosexual. Here, it is a badge of honor."

A diversity bureaucrat in the back of the room got up at the end of my speech and retorted angrily, "How dare you say that there is no bigotry at the University of Colorado-Boulder. I've been discriminated against myself."

The fact is this: The race and gender of that diversity bureaucrat were pluses at every point of her career.

It seems to me that you are engaged in a battle to preserve Western civilization. I know that sounds grandiose, but that really is your mission, isn't it? I hope it's not a lonely battle, but I'm afraid it may feel that way sometimes.

I feel privileged that in college I still got to read some of the greatest works (though not anywhere near as many as I should have) without a chip on my shoulder, because I was in school before identity politics crashed in. But if we do not pass on this inheritance, not only are our own lives impoverished, but we have fallen down on a responsibility to keep these ideas alive. It is very unusual for a civilization to be so filled with self-hatred. I think this will lead to some very dangerous, destructive instincts in the future. One of the greatest human virtues is gratitude. The purpose of a college education—the main responsibility of the faculty—is to help students understand why they should be down on their knees in gratitude for the beauty and sublimity of the Western tradition. And also for its patent accomplishments. No other civilization compares. ★



BUILDING LIVES THAT INSPIRE



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THE RIGHTEOUS LOSERS

Liberals hate to lose. Instead they **blame the Russians**, or worse, they **blame the voters**.

Another shocking election result. Another roomful of sobbing activists. It could have been the headquarters of the “Remain” campaign the night Britain voted to leave the European Union in June 2016. It could have been the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center the night Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton in the November 2016 presidential election. But this time it was Melbourne the night of the Labor Party’s (ALP) shocking defeat in Australia’s May 2019 general election.

As with Brexit and Trump, Australia’s election results were unexpected. According to the *Guardian*, the conservative Liberal Party’s offer “boiled down to personal tax cuts, targeted at low- and middle-income earners in the short term, but offering an additional \$230 billion of tax relief to higher income earners over the next decade. . . . The plan would improve the household budgets of many families, but it would also make Australia’s tax system less progressive.” The party’s leader, Scott Morrison, had guy-next-door appeal and resisted plans to sharply cut carbon emissions.

By contrast, the ALP was offering “unashamedly progressive” tax policies, “with slightly more generous short-term tax cuts for low- and middle-income earners and a firm rejection of the Coalition’s bigger future cuts for workers higher up the income scales.” More importantly, it would meet “the rising clamor from the electorate” for more action to fight

climate change with “a higher target for emissions reductions” and boosts for renewables, more electric cars, and strengthening of national environment laws. The ALP had been ahead in every opinion poll since mid-2016.

But the anticipated clamor hadn’t risen that high, and it was ALP leader Bill Shorten giving the concession speech. Brigid Delaney of the *Guardian* painted a bleak picture of that election night scene. “The woman checking my name off the list around 8pm is angry and crying and saying, ‘I don’t get it, we went in with policies, they went in with nothing.’” People openly sobbed when Shorten spoke. “No one is consoling anyone, because each person here seems to be in the middle of their own unique and terrible pain,” Delaney added. “Shorten says he did his best and tried his hardest—and someone shouts out from the crowd, ‘It’s not you Bill, it’s the country.’”

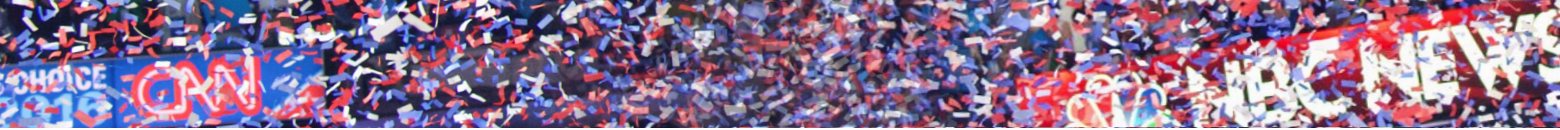
It’s not me, it’s you

Every election has a loser. Losing elections is an unavoidable part of democratic politics. Given this, democratic politicians should have methods in place to cope with loss. They can ask, “Were my policies wrong?” or “Was my campaign inept?” Supporters of Remain or Clinton in 2016 or the ALP may want to ask themselves similar questions.

In the early 1990s, both the Demo-

BY JOHN PHELAN





crats in the United States and Britain's Labour Party decided, after election defeats in 1988 and 1992 respectively, that they had to change tack, or at least make a good show of doing so, if they were ever going to win again. The cry from the floor as Michael Dukakis or Neil Kinnock conceded might have been, "It's not the country, it's you."

This sort of self-examination concedes the possibility that you might be wrong. It has to. But what if you can't concede that? If you are completely convinced that staying in the European Union is necessary, that Donald Trump is a fascist, or that only Bill Shorten can save Australia from being destroyed by climate change, you will struggle to even entertain the possibility that you might be wrong. If you were so certainly right, how did you end up a loser?

The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!

Conspiracy theories have long been a favorite way of reconciling deeply held beliefs with an unaccommodating world. Hitler, unable to reconcile Germany's strength and righteousness with defeat in the First World War, found an explanation in a supposed Jewish conspiracy.

The Righteous Losers of 2016 did something similar. Following Donald Trump's election victory, the theory developed that it was a Russian plot. In a bid to destabilize the United States, Vladimir Putin had, we were told, decided to make the guy from *The Apprentice* president, and did this by hacking into Hillary Clinton's emails, posting conspiracy theories about pedophile rings in pizza parlors on 4chan, and spending a few hundred dollars on Facebook ads.

This theory has been utterly demolished by the Mueller report, but the wonder is that anyone believed it in the first place. Indeed, if someone proposed this as a plan to swing a school board election, let alone a presidential election, your reply would be, "No chance."

Britain's Righteous Losers saw the hand of the Kremlin behind the Brexit vote. But look at North East England, a strongly pro-Brexit area. British Steel has about 5,000 employees there and is about to go into liquidation. The British government might consider bailing it out but is prevented from doing so by EU rules. Yet, Remainers believe that it isn't restrictive rules, nor the EU's destruction of the region's fishing industry, which drove the Brexit vote. This would be to admit that their opponents have a case.

Instead, they blame a few dozen Russian bots on social media.

After Hillary Clinton said, "We're going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business," you didn't need to conjure up a new Red Scare to see why she lost West Virginia and Pennsylvania. But then, when *Star Trek* actor turned Twitter activist George Takei was accused of sexual assault, he claimed that this, too, was part of a Russian attempt to subvert American democracy. No doubt, someone in Australia is currently blaming the Kremlin for Bill Shorten's defeat. Joe McCarthy was never this fevered.

The classes against the masses

The Righteous Losers have a second option: blame the voters. Shortly after the 2016 presidential election, President Obama allegedly mused, "Sometimes I wonder whether I was 10 or 20 years too early." In other words, "It's not me, it's the country."

The Righteous Losers frequently express their distaste for their fellow citizens in more robust terms than those of President Obama. Following the votes of 2016 in Britain and the U.S. and, now, in Australia, there has been an outpouring of vitriolic hatred from the Righteous Losers at the

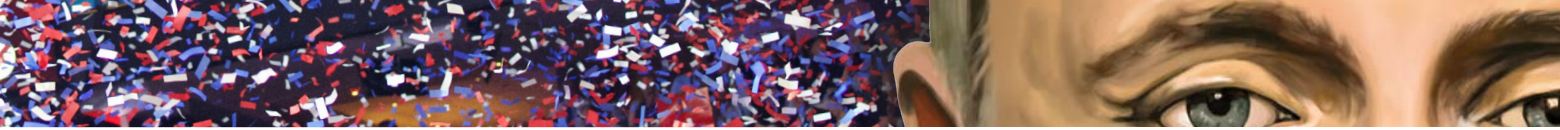


With existence itself at stake, the Righteous Losers will not go gentle into that good night.

voters who spurned them. In Britain, we have the nauseating spectacle of Remainers celebrating the deaths of elderly Leave voters. In the U.S., wearing a MAGA hat can get you punched. Indeed, when anyone to the right of Corey Booker is considered

a Nazi, "It's okay to punch a Nazi" gives you a very broad remit for political violence. And this from the people who tout their compassion most loudly and tell you that "Love Trumps Hate." Their views might more accurately be summed up as, "A smack in the mouth Trumps Debate." As Eric Hoffer wrote in his classic *The True Believer*, "Even when men league themselves mightily together to promote tolerance and peace on earth, they are likely to be violently intolerant toward those not of a like mind."

The Righteous Losers feel alienation from their compatriots. This is seen most clearly in Britain. If you're a Remainer who thinks the average Brexit supporter is a Nazi, the EU offers an off-the-shelf alternative nationality. Remainers disdain any display of British patriotism and claim to be against "nationalism." But they drape themselves in and daub their faces with the flag of the EU. This eager embrace of the crudest paraphernalia of nationalism shows that, in fact, they are not against nationalism. On the contrary, they are enthusiastic EU nationalists. What they are against is



Conspiracy theories have long been a favorite way of reconciling deeply held beliefs with an unaccommodating world.

British nationalism specifically, because Brits have the nasty habit of sometimes voting in ways they don't like. To paraphrase George Orwell, it is a strange fact, but it is unquestionably true, that almost any Remainer would feel more ashamed of standing to attention during "God Save the Queen" than stealing from a poor box. But they would spring to their feet in a nanosecond for "Ode to Joy."

Here you see the birth of tribalism in western politics. Shortly before the Brexit referendum, the BBC asked people in northern England whether they felt British or European. Without exception, they said, "British." They then asked people in London the same question. Without exception, they said, "European." This goes beyond party politics; this is about identity. These two groups of people do not even see themselves as being part of a common polity anymore. Do "Red" and "Blue" America increasingly feel like two separate countries? Do they feel like "Blue" and "Gray" America?

We had to destroy liberal democracy in order to save it

The Righteous Losers believe they are playing for existential stakes. Endorsing the ALP, the *Guardian* wrote, "With just 12 years to limit the global climate catastrophe, citizens here and around the world are demanding governments stand up to vested interests and act."

With existence itself at stake, the Righteous Losers will not go gentle into that good night. When he was defeated in the 1968 presidential election, Hubert Humphrey said, "I have done my best. I have lost. Mr. Nixon has won. The democratic process has worked its will, so now let's get on with the urgent task of uniting our country." You cannot imagine Humphrey's "liberal" heirs saying that today. The Brexit vote has been followed by a concerted attempt, which may yet be successful, to have it overturned or ignored. Since President Trump was elected there has been one investigation after another, all with the purpose of removing him from office without waiting for an election.

In their rearguard action, the Righteous Losers, who would tell you how liberal they are, pose more of a threat to liberal democratic norms than do the likes of Nigel Farage or Donald Trump. In America, senior officials of organizations that are supposed to be politically neutral, such as the FBI, have worked hand in glove with the Democratic Party to topple a legitimately elected president. In Britain, the Electoral Commission, which describes itself as "the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK," has become an openly partisan operation, raiding the offices of Farage's Brexit Party two days before the European elections with no evidence whatsoever of any wrongdoing to justify this.

But what of their opponents? If people are not able to affect political change at the ballot box some will feel entitled to affect

it in other ways. Today's "liberals" seem to believe they have to destroy liberal democracy in order to save it. They may end up just destroying democracy.

The European future and the Soviet past

The EU is the ideal for the Righteous Losers. There, votes are not opportunities for electorates to make decisions but for them to agree to decisions their leaders have already taken for them. If they do agree, fine. If they don't, it doesn't matter.

In 2005, voters in France and the Netherlands voted against adopting an EU Constitution. Then-EU President Jose Manuel Barroso said, "They must go on voting until they get it right." In the event, the Constitution was rebranded the Lisbon Treaty, and both countries signed up without consulting their voters. Ireland had a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in 2008, voted No, and was made to vote again. You never need to worry about the country's voters letting you down if you can just ignore their votes.

Democracy used to be a good thing. When the West took on the Nazis and then the communists in the Cold War, the fact that we were democracies, that our people shaped their own destiny peacefully at the ballot box, was one of the things which, we claimed, made us better than them. When countries like Poland and Hungary held their first free elections after their liberation from communist dictatorship, it was cause for celebration.

Increasingly, however, self-proclaimed liberals see democracy as a weakness. It lets ill-informed rubes, easily swayed by Russian social media posts, vote against things which are obviously right. They cannot be allowed to make these choices. Democracy has become an obstacle to doing what "needs to be done."

The Righteous Losers might consider themselves "progressive," but there is nothing new in this. In 1953, the people of East Germany rose up against their communist leaders. Upon hearing of this, the playwright Bertolt Brecht wrote his famous satirical poem, "The Solution."

*After the uprising of the 17th of June
The Secretary of the Writers' Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
Stating that the people
Had forfeited the confidence of the government
And could win it back only
By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
And elect another?*

You can hear an Australian accent calling, "It's not you First Secretary Ulbricht, it's the country." ★

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

FINAL WORD

AT THE LEGISLATURE

American Experiment leaves an imprint in St. Paul.



John Hinderaker

We identified the 70 percent gas tax hike as a key issue that would be resolved in the session's closing days.

Minnesota's conservatives did quite well in the 2019 legislative session. The legislature increased spending by six percent—too much, but less than it went up last year with Republicans controlling both houses. While the two percent tax on health care wasn't allowed to expire, it was reduced to 1.8 percent. Otherwise, there were no tax increases, and the legislature cut the state's second-tier income tax rate by 0.25 percent.

Meanwhile, many bad ideas were defeated. Socialized medicine (ONEcare) went nowhere. Proposals to increase Minnesota's corporate income and estate taxes were defeated—American Experiment's economist, John Phelan, testified against both—as was a move to bail out state and local government pension obligations. And some needed legislation became law, including: conformity with the federal tax code, a rebuild of nonfunctional MNLARS software, and an external audit of the Department of Health and Human Services' budget.

American Experiment weighed in on many of these issues, and were especially active in two areas: opposing the governor's proposed 70 percent increase in the gas tax, and opposing legislation to raise Minnesota's 25 percent wind and solar electricity mandate to 100 percent.

We identified the gas tax hike as a key issue that would be resolved in the session's closing days. So, we set up a web page, NoNewGasTaxes.com, which laid out the facts on the proposal. We pointed out that the 70 percent increase would give Minnesota the fourth highest gas tax in the country; that we already have \$8 billion in road and highway spending appropriated but unallocated; and that the proposal actually was a bait and switch. Along with hiking the gas tax, the plan would have reversed the two-year-old dedication of one-half of sales tax receipts on auto parts to roads and highways. So, the higher gas tax would have been used largely to enhance the general

fund, not to pay for highways.

We bought billboards on highways around the Twin Cities, urging motorists to oppose the gas tax increase and directing them to NoNewGasTaxes.com, where visitors could, in just seconds, email to Governor Walz to oppose the tax increase. More than 2,500 Minnesotans used our web page to send such emails. On local radio, we argued against the gas tax increase and also placed anti-gas tax increase ads.

Behind the scenes, we encouraged legislators who opposed the tax increase to stand firm. And that is what happened: the gas tax hike was defeated in the Senate.

When the session began, DFL legislators introduced bills to raise the "green" (wind and solar) power mandate from 25 percent to 50 percent. But before long, liberal legislators and Governor Walz came out in favor of a 100 percent "green" electricity requirement.

The Center's recent paper, "Doubling Down on Failure," analyzed the impact of a 50 percent mandate. Our policy analysts found that generating half of our electricity with wind and solar power would cost over \$80 billion, raise electricity rates by 40 percent, destroy 21,000 permanent jobs, and devastate industries like mining, manufacturing and agriculture. Getting 100 percent of our electricity from wind and solar can't be done—those energy sources are too unreliable—and attempting to do so would be exponentially more expensive.

Isaac Orr testified against the heightened mandate six times before House and Senate committees. The upshot was that the 100 percent wind and solar bill went down to defeat, even though it was backed by both environmental groups and utilities that looked to have their profits increased by more "green" mandates.

All told, the 2019 legislative session was a good one for conservatives, and the Center played a major role in promoting good bills and arguing against bad ones. ★

Discover An Easy Way to Live Pain Free Naturally!

There are plenty of pain relief creams out there that make promises about effectiveness for controlling pain. What makes them work? There are two natural ingredients-comfrey and arnica that are clinically proven to relieve aches and pains. When comfrey is used as a topical cream, it works great for joint and muscle pain, as well as arthritis, sprains and bruises. Arnica has anti-inflammatory properties. It can be used to treat muscular aches, joint pain and arthritis. Both of these natural pain relievers are found in Steuart's Pain Formula.

Rose Johnson of Hazleton, Iowa, uses Steuart's Pain Formula to relieve the tissue pain caused by fibromyalgia, a disorder characterized by widespread pain and tenderness in joints, muscles, tendons and other soft tissues. In addition to pain relief from Steuart's Pain Formula, she appreciates that the product causes no side effects.



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Joe A. Slabaugh, from Highland, Minn., had this to say: "As a carpenter, I put a lot of strain on my lower back, which caused a ruptured disc. I needed something to relieve pain. After the second day of using Steuart's Pain Formula, my lower back pain was gone. I use it every morning and night, it has no burning sensation or odor, and it works!"

Thomas Lindberg, Two Harbors, Minn., says, "I have arthritis pain in my shoulders and back and was having trouble sleeping through the night because of the pain. I read about Steuart's in FARM SHOW and was a bit skeptical at first but thought I'd give it a try. I was absolutely amazed at how well it worked and now use it every day. It works better than anything on the market."

Tom Donelson says, "I give samples to everyone I meet that complains of joint or muscle pain. I've had minor knee surgery and a torn meniscus, as well as a degenerating disc. I originally used to take 2 to 3 ibuprofen a day. But now, after using Steuart's, I'm down to 2 to 3 a week. This product is great for anyone that doesn't want to or can't take drugs to manage pain.

Steuart's first product - an udder ointment containing comfrey - was introduced in 1982. Today, the company manufactures and markets more than a dozen herbal and natural-oil healing and pain products for both human and animal use.

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