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STUDY**

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will cost each Minnesota family \$1,200 per year



THINKING MINNESOTA



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A TALE OF TWO TIMS

It did not take long for Governor Walz to lurch left of the policies endorsed by Candidate Walz.



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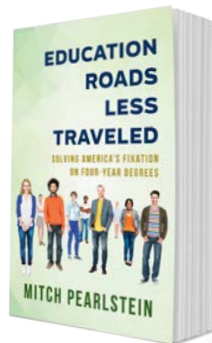
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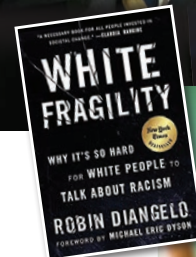
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STAFF

John Hinderaker
President

Mitch Pearlstein
Founder & Senior Fellow

Kim Crockett
Vice President & Senior Policy Fellow

Katherine Kersten
Senior Policy Fellow

John Phelan
Economist

Catrin Thorman
Policy Fellow

Isaac Orr
Policy Fellow

Katie Fulkerson
Communications Director

Tom Steward
Investigative Reporter

Mitch Rolling
Researcher

Micah Olson
Greater Minnesota Outreach Director

Kristen Sheehan
Development Director

Pari Cariaga
Donor Relations & Events Coordinator

Peter Zeller
Director of Operations

Greta Elsholtz
Special Projects Coordinator

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MASON
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
CUSTOM PUBLISHING

Tom Mason
Publisher & Editor

Scott Buchschacher
Creative Director

Jill Stoebe
Ad Sales Executive



NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

COMING TO A GOVERNMENT NEAR YOU

We need real-world teaching tools to combat easy-answer policy solutions.

This issue of *Thinking Minnesota* devotes more than a few pages to revealing how the vacuous popularity of “Green New Deal” politics is blowing across the nation, far beyond Washington, D.C., and taking root like Creeping Charlie in our own political backyards.

In an original new analysis that proves how simple solutions frequently produce far-reaching consequences (p. 38), Policy Fellow Isaac Orr concludes that a proposal to raise Minnesota’s “renewable energy” mandate from 25 percent to 50 percent will ultimately cost each Minnesota family a whopping \$1,200 per year while having virtually no impact on the climate. In another piece (p. 28), Isaac details how first-term Governor Tim Walz surprised many voters in the early days of his term with an abrupt leftward lurch toward the Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez wing of his party. Our *Thinking Minnesota Poll* (p. 34) provides some relief by revealing the skepticism with which most Minnesotans are receiving Walz’s rhetoric-centered policy agenda, especially the 20-cent per gallon increase in Minnesota’s gas tax.

And our superb Senior Policy Fellow Katherine Kersten (p. 20) contributes another in her series of articles about challenges in the Edina School district. This time, she discusses how parents are trying

to regain their district’s academic excellence while the administration continues to emphasize its social agenda.

I spend a lot of time trying to figure out how we got here because it is happening everywhere. And these are truly some crazy and silly ideas. Such proposals would damage our energy businesses so that we go from energy independence to energy dependence. Even our

agriculture industry would be required to counter the ill effects of cow flatulence. As I say, silly and crazy.

We all experienced a head-scratching exhibition of modern progressive politics when Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—and many of her Democrat colleagues—first outlined her initial Green New Deal in the same 24-hour news cycle that the angry Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro had set up troops to block the delivery of

continued on page 4



Ron Eibensteiner

continued from page 3

50 metric tons of humanitarian aid for his starving citizens. Today, his economy is ravaged by a 51 *million* percent inflation rate, and a recent five-day power outage that effectively wiped out what was left of the country's industrial sector. There is no food, no sanitation and increasing anarchy in the streets, yet the thug-president stubbornly sticks to controlling his country through the power of empty rhetoric and strong-armed tyranny—*always* the two fallbacks of failed socialist regimes. And trust me, they *always* fail.

Or could it be that we just lack a **Big Picture** teaching tool?

Still, here was AOC, the internet sensation, standing near the steps of the U.S. Capitol to outline the sweeping components of her vision of a new command economy for the U.S. Her proposal includes an American economy free of fossil fuels but also single-payer healthcare, tuition-free education, and a guaranteed income for every American. These are the same kind of utterly fatuous free-for-all policy proposals which Hugo Chávez first charmed Venezuelans and which Maduro has been trying to repair. From what I've been able to discern, like AOC, they never talked much about who would pay for these policies, or how. And history now tells us they had no idea.

What brings us to a position where so many Americans place a premium on simple political rhetoric over real-world realities? Is it the fact that our internet-based culture has shrunk our attention spans? Could it be that so many of us get our news from screaming-head nighttime cable shows whose contrived rhetoric and predictable melodrama seem to bor-

row heavily from professional wrestling broadcasts? Or, are we victims of our own economic success, in which our need for instant gratification seems to be seeping from consumerism into our politics?

Some analysts point to America's young people, who—through no fault of their own—have spent their impressionable years marinating in a public-school stew of radical ideologies and unrepentant intolerance toward opposing points of view. Too many students today, they say, think about cultural issues and public policies not in terms of societal challenges that must be solved, but as “solutions” that must be imposed. Anyone who questions their approach—or, worse, disagrees with it—is vilified as either stupid or evil. Anyone who has followed Katherine Kersten's Edina series is well acquainted with that point of view.

Or could it be that we just lack a Big Picture teaching tool? In some ways—facetiously only—I sometimes lament the fall of the Berlin Wall. While I consider that moment to be among the most significant hinges of history in my lifetime, I confess to having a twinge of regret—if only facetiously—that the crumbling bricks marked the loss of a powerful teachable moment.

The Wall gave us a useful teaching tool. It effortlessly symbolized the differences between triumphs of free-market capitalism versus the failures of top-down totalitarianism, in which government squelched all in order to serve the needs of the state. With the Wall in place, one did not need to be very analytical to conclude which system was better, which system cared most about its people, and which system was most conducive to human rights. The Wall constantly reminded us all that socialism always fails. We need look no further than the Soviet Union, Mao's China, Cuba, North Korea, Venezuela... and maybe now the Green New Deal. Experience matters. With luck, it will bring us a more reasonable political debate. ★



CAPITOL WATCH

A new newsletter
that calls out
politicians
who waste the
legislature's
time and
taxpayers'
money



The Greater Minnesota Advisory Board

I just received my Winter 2019 issue of *Thinking Minnesota* and read Ron Eibensteiner's "Say What?" editorial. I have to say, your words struck very close to home for me on several fronts.

Having been in the field of Industrial Maintenance and Reliability for over 30 years, I have lived firsthand the talent shortage in areas involving technical



Ron was spot-on in identifying those highly desirable skills that can't be taught: **work ethic, a can-do attitude, and pride and ownership of work and duties.**

skills learned in bygone years from classes taught in technical colleges. As a former hiring manager, I often gave the job to the "farm kid" in the candidate pool. Ron was spot-on in identifying those highly desirable skills that can't be taught: work ethic, a can-do attitude, and pride and ownership of work and duties. I probably have to admit to having some bias as a farm kid myself, but my experience in hiring and promoting employees has taught me it wasn't just bias, it was results.

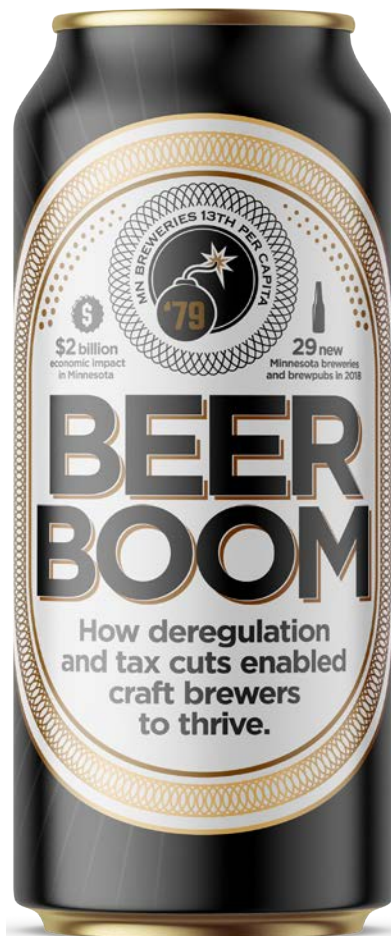
I was also thrilled to read about the creation of The Greater Minnesota Advisory Board. As stated in the editorial, the population density of the Twin Cities has

undue sway on what's believed to be the thinking and priorities of the average Minnesotan. It's time those of us "out in the sticks" feel like someone is hearing that the things we feel are important are different from the large urban population. The true contributors that create wealth—agriculture, mining, and manufacturing—are alive and well in Greater Minnesota. At least, as long as we're able to continue to get the talent to keep those industries alive.

Wonderful, accurate, informative article! Keep up the great work!

—Steve Heimerman, Faribault

Thanks for your leadership with The Greater MN Advisory Board! I read with great interest your "Say What?" article,



and what stood out in particular was your mention of the "farm kid" economy. Like you, I grew up on a farm and, in reflection, that was a family model that needs duplicating in the modern economy.

—Lynn Tharaldson, Lakeville

The Greater Minnesota Advisory Board sounds like a great idea.

—Warren Kapsner, Minneapolis

Just finished reading Issue 14, Winter 2019. Lots of good stuff in your magazine, but I was struck by the amount of space you gave to the Beer Boom and the drinking preferences of Democrats versus Republicans. Two separate articles and many pages to the beer craze. There must be some more hard-hitting topics.

—Wayne Cassibo, Clearbrook

Minnesota History

A friend of mine who is a Minnesota school teacher told me that he is not allowed to teach Minnesota history and cannot teach United States history without violating Minnesota Department of Education rules. I believe him, but I wonder if he or his superiors are properly understanding Department of Education rules. By the way, my friend is teaching a U.S. history class anyway. He's a patriot. Thank you for all the work you do to bring truth about Minnesota politics and social movements. I read your excellent magazine cover to cover.

—Jim Luger, Minnetonka



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For 28 years, Center of the American Experiment has been Minnesota's leading voice on behalf of freedom and conservative common sense. Most often, that voice has been that of Center staff and Senior Policy Fellows.

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

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UP FRONT

Books

GREAT JOBS

Pearlstein's latest book attacks the root causes of America's skills gap.

Education Roads Less Traveled: Solving America's Fixation on Four-Year Degrees (Rowman & Littlefield) emerged from American Experiment's major, multi-year initiative called "Great Jobs Without a Four-Year Degree," which aims to show students and parents there are educational routes to well-paying jobs and fulfilling careers that don't require a baccalaureate degree. Its efforts have made the Center a nexus for communication among industry, government, educators, students and parents. Its activities include original research, digital journalism, video production and public forums. The initiative is led by Mitch Pearlstein, Senior Policy Fellow Katherine Kersten, and Policy Fellow Catrin Thorman.

Pearlstein admits that without the Great Jobs project there would have been no book. "While I had written several things over the last decade about how too many people mistakenly ignored non-baccalaureate routes to solid middle-class jobs and careers, I wasn't sufficiently invested in the topic until John Hinderaker asked me to immerse myself in it via the Great Jobs project," he says.

The idea for the book was born during a chance email exchange two years ago with a former editor, who immediately understood the growing importance of the topic, Pearlstein says.

The book's urgency "is found in the difficulty of picking up a business magazine, or the business section of a newspaper, without reading about how skills gaps in the United States—especially resulting from the retirements of 10,000 Baby Boomers a day—in construction, the trades, and advanced manufacturing are damaging the economy," he says. "Urgency is likewise found in the great numbers of young people who start at a four-year school only to

learn it is not for them. Then, they wind up dropping out, become unemployed or underemployed, and often have big-time college debt, when various non-four-year routes would work far better for them."

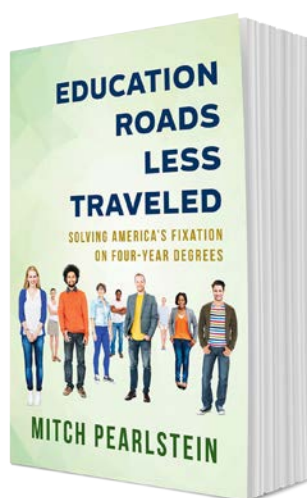
He is fascinated, he says, by universal agreement on the topic. "Never have I pursued a subject in which *everybody* agreed with me; in this instance, that a four-year degree is not for everyone and that a lot of young people are disserved

by cultural, parental, peer, educator, and other pressures and signals," he says. "I don't expect to be bathed in such concurrence ever again."

Pearlstein founded the Center in 1990 and served as its president through 2015. Prior to that role, he worked for two years in the U.S. Department of Education during the Reagan and (first) Bush administrations, where he held three positions, including Director of Outreach for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Before his federal service in Washington, D.C., Pearlstein spent four years as an editorial writer and columnist for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

He has published widely. His books include:

- *Broken Bonds: What Family Fragmentation Means for America's Future* (2014)
- *From Family Collapse to America's Decline: The Educational, Economic, and Social Costs of Family Fragmentation* (2011)
- *Riding into the Sunrise: Al Quie and a Life of Faith, Service & Civility* (2008)
- *Close to Home: Celebrations and Critiques of America's Experiment in Freedom* (2000), co-authored with Katherine A. Kersten
- *The Fatherhood Movement: A Call to Action* (1999), co-edited with Wade F. Horn and David Blankenhorn
- *The Minnesota Policy Blueprint* (1999), co-edited with Annette Meeks
- *Certain Truths: Essays about Our Families, Children and Culture from American Experiment's First Five Years* (1995), editor ★



Center of the American Experiment Founder Mitch Pearlstein published his eighth book in April.

A Rock and a Hard Place

The state of public employee freedom in Minnesota.

In the wake of a Supreme Court decision recognizing the First Amendment right of public employees to decline to fund unions (*Janus v. AFSCME*), employers must comply with the Court's demand that they get an employee's "affirmative consent" before deducting money for a union. The Court recognized that all public-sector union activity, including collective bargaining, is inherently political; thus, no citizen can be forced to subsidize it.

Although *Janus* dealt with non-members who paid a "fair-share" fee to (supposedly) just cover the costs of collective bargaining, the Court's reasoning applies to union members, as well.

Following the June 27, 2018 decision, the State of Minnesota ordered all public employers to stop deducting fair-share fees from non-member paychecks. But the State was silent about union members who had previously signed a union card authorizing the deduction of dues, leaving cities, counties and state agencies between a rock (the State which is under the sway of government unions) and a hard place (government unions).

Employers know that the union dues-authorization cards they are relying on do not meet the Court's requirement of "affirmative consent." Prior to *Janus*, employees could not waive their constitutional rights; you cannot waive a right you do not know you have or that is not recognized under the law. Something new is needed, but what?



The Court said employees had to waive their First Amendment rights before an employer could deduct dues and that "such a waiver cannot be presumed... Rather, to be effective, the waiver must be freely given and shown by 'clear and compelling' evidence..." That clear language means employers must obtain a written, voluntary waiver, not one signed under pressure by the union.

Employees are asking for information, but employers are afraid to talk to employees for fear the union will file unfair labor practice claims against them. According to employees who contacted the Center, employers are refusing to discuss *Janus*, telling people to talk to the union. But the union is not going to tell employees about their Janus Rights.

As a result, the League of Minnesota Cities, and other government associations around the country, are seeking help and legal cover. In its "2019 City Policies for Legislative and Administrative Action," the League urged the state to "provide and disseminate information to

employees about union membership across the state." The state should take the lead, but local employers are not free to ignore their legal obligation to employees.

This is why the League "also urges the Legislature to act to protect public employers against [unfair labor practice charges]... when providing factual information to employees about union membership... [or] when requiring unions to provide original documentation of voluntary

consent to dues deduction..."

Unfortunately, while this thorny issue gets sorted out (most likely in the courts), most public employees remain unaware of *Janus*. Cities, counties and state agencies continue to transfer millions of dollars out of employee paychecks into government union coffers.

Why? Our government answers more to public-sector unions than to the law or its citizens. The Center conservatively estimates that government unions take in at least \$181 million a year in Minnesota alone; only a small percentage is spent on collective bargaining. The rest is spent on electing friendly lawmakers and defeating ideas and people who might curb the growth of government and union power. An AFSCME union card has a check-off box proclaiming, "Elect Our Bosses!" That kind of sums up the problem.

If the State is not going to tell public employees about their rights, the Center will. Last year, we launched EducatedTeachersMN.com, a website devoted to informing teachers about their Janus Rights. This spring we launched Employ-

eeFreedomMN.com, a website devoted to the needs of local and state employees.

For example, union members who wish to resign from a government union are constrained by pre-*Janus* union terms; the cards restrict resignations to narrow windows once a year. (The Center expects these windows to be found unconstitutional.)

For teachers, a seven-day window opens at the end of September. But for most public employees, the window is a unique date based on when they signed their union card. The typical language is, “This authorization shall remain in effect and shall be irrevocable unless I revoke it by sending a written notice to both my employer and [the union] during the period not less than thirty and not more than forty-five days before the annual anniversary date of this authorization.”

The challenge is that people do not have a copy of their card and must ask the union for a copy. The Center has heard from AFSCME members trying to resign who received letters saying, “We are in receipt of your request to revoke your membership. Based on the membership card you have signed, this cannot be completed at this time as you are not within your revocation period. To view your card, please access your records by logging into MemberLink...”

Another member who sent a resignation letter to the Teamsters was told she “will continue to pay the full dues amount. However, you will no longer have the right to participate in contract negotiations, bargaining unit votes, receive mailings, attend union meetings, or receive other fraternal benefits...”

Given the power of government unions to “elect their own bosses,” it will take time, perhaps years, for labor laws to be brought into compliance with the high standards required by the Constitution. Our public sector has been corrupted by decades of forced union dues. To help reform our electoral politics, employees need to know about their Janus Rights. ★

—Kim Crockett



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Follow-up

Child Care Welfare Fraud

Easy to perpetrate, difficult to prove.

In May 2018, KMSP-Fox 9 aired a story about \$100 million in child care welfare fraud, some of which allegedly funded terrorists in Somalia and the Middle East. These allegations primarily concerned the Child Care Assistance Program known as “CCAP,” a program meant to assist low-income parents with child care costs so they can work or go to school. In 2017, CCAP spending totaled \$248.2 million, rising to \$254 million in 2018. The source of the fraud allegations was former investigator Scott Stillman of the Minnesota Department of Human Service (DHS).

The Legislature tasked the Office of Legislative Auditor (OLA) with investigating the fraud claims, and on March 13, the OLA released the first of two long-awaited reports. This first report focused on Stillman’s allegations; a follow-up report, due in April, will examine “whether DHS’s oversight of CCAP was adequate to safeguard financial resources of the program.” In a preview of the April report, prosecutors told the OLA that a lack of internal controls “makes fraud easier to perpetrate and more difficult to prove.”

The March report also revealed a “serious rift” between the Office of Inspector General (OIG) at DHS—who is tasked with overseeing the integrity of DHS programs—and its own 14-member CCAP Investigative Unit. The OLA stated the OIG “lacks independence” because it reports to the DHS commissioner (a political appointee of the governor) and recommended that the OIG be independent of management. Moving the investigative unit to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) to improve

the gathering of evidence needed in these “labor intensive” prosecutions was recommended, as well.

The Somalia connection. While the OLA was unable to substantiate Stillman’s specific allegations, the report contained credible sources for the allegations of widespread CCAP fraud centered in the Somali community, as well as CCAP funds going overseas to fund terror. It also outlined a dozen federal and state criminal prosecutions that lend further credibility to the allegations. All the prosecutions involved members of the Somali community overbilling CCAP. Most cases involved kick-back schemes, wire and tax fraud, and substandard con-

ditions at the involved child care centers.

The CCAP Investigative Unit. Jay Swanson, manager of the Investigative Unit for CCAP, sent a lengthy email on August 24, 2018 to Inspector General Carolyn Ham at DHS. The email lays out the case for widespread CCAP fraud. Swanson said his investigative team found “providers using a similar scheme to successfully steal large sums of taxpayer money from this program... It is our opinion that while a significant amount of responsibility for this large scale theft...rests with the sophistication and daring of the criminals exploiting the program, an equal amount of responsibility rests with the lack of internal controls...that dictate how this program operates.”

Swanson said, for example, that besides large-scale overbilling and money laundering, some centers are opened solely to defraud CCAP (operating with 100 percent CCAP families). He said that mothers are recruited as “employees” so

In a preview of the April report, prosecutors told the OLA that a lack of internal controls “makes fraud easier to perpetrate and more difficult to prove.”



their children qualify for CCAP. Centers then falsify employment and attendance records. In a typical case, mothers get cash kick-backs for cooperating and may only be at the centers to pick up the cash. “Providers do this to attract as many parents/children to the center as possible, so that providers can bill CCAP for the largest number of children possible.”

Swanson estimated that the fraud involved more than \$100 million in 2017. “Investigators believe auditors and elected officials should be very concerned about the high number of the highest paid child care centers that

Investigators believe auditors and elected officials should be very concerned about the high number of the highest paid child care centers that display indicators of fraud.

display indicators of fraud.” Swanson said that investigators “believe that the overall fraud rate in this program is at least 50 percent of the \$217 million paid to child care centers in 2017.”

According to the OLA, “Swanson based the 50 percent fraud rate on... concerns [that] involve not only overbilling, but also substandard child care that is so severe that Swanson called these DHS licensed centers ‘fraudulent centers.’”

Federal law enforcement agencies cited. Swanson said bank records obtained by the BCA “clearly show that some owners/controlling individuals have made large wire transfers to banks primarily in the Middle East or Africa, often soon after they receive a large CCAP payment.... [I]nvestigators have been advised by federal officials... that it is a near certainty that at least a

percentage of the fraud proceeds that go overseas are being siphoned off by one or more Designated Terrorist Organizations (DTOs)... [S]ome of these... individuals have purchased or are in the process of purchasing expensive homes in stable foreign countries.” No prosecutions, however, have linked CCAP funds to any terror group.

The Muslim Coalition of ISAIH and Somali child care providers protested at the Capitol following the release of the March OLA report, saying the allegations were “baseless” and calling for “an apology and action from legislators.” Imam Mohamed Omar, executive director of Dar Al-Farooq, a Bloomington mosque, said, “The Republican legislators who perpetuated this rumor irresponsibly fed islamophobia and hatred that leaves my community vulnerable to harassment and attacks every day.”

DHS response. Inspector General Ham, who has been placed on administrative leave with pay, met with other DHS investigative units when she came on the job in 2017 but *never met with the CCAP unit, even after the news story broke.* Instead, DHS paid an outside firm \$90,000 to assess the work of the CCAP Investigative Unit. Ham, calling herself a “scapegoat,” told MPR news, “The reason there was distrust between me and the fraud unit is because I was pushing them on their unsubstantiated beliefs.”

DHS denies the credibility of the allegations made by its own investigative unit, though there have been successful prosecutions. As of May 2018, there were ten other on-going investigations.

DHS does, however, agree that it needs to improve management of CCAP by, for example, replacing paper attendance records with an electronic billing system. DHS called the problem “complex” and asked for “greater state investments” so it can hire an “equity coordinator,” develop “culturally competent practices in our investigation process” and establish a “stakeholder advisory group.” ★

—Kim Crockett



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TOM STEWARD

HIGH COST OF **FREE MONEY**

Silver Bay can't afford to maintain its humble airport. But closing it could require the city to repay \$765,000 in government grants.

The city of Silver Bay can no longer afford the luxury of spending \$35,000 a year to maintain a municipal airport.

"I've got 20 some miles of 50-year-old road," Silver Bay Mayor Scott Johnson said. "Don't you think I should spend some maintenance on that instead of the airport?"

But neither can the small northeastern Minnesota city afford to close the deteriorating airfield, faced with the threat of \$10,000 a day in fines by the Federal



Whenever you take a grant from the state or federal government, there are strings attached.

Aviation Administration (FAA) and a bill for \$760,000 in repaying "free" government grants the feds and state want to claw back.

"I think they (the FAA) are going to have to take the position to put the hammer on us," Johnson said. "Because if we succeed, how many other



Tom Steward

little airports are going to do what we're doing?"

Silver Bay's airport may be small, but the ramifications of the city's attempt to quit the state and federal aviation system could be much larger. It's among 135 Minnesota airports, mostly rural airstrips, in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), comprised of thousands of airfields nationwide.

"The reality is there's no such thing as a free lunch, right?" said Cassandra Isackson, director of the Office of Aeronautics at MnDOT. "Whenever you take a grant from the state or federal government, there are strings attached. Those strings we call grant assurances, and we have certain expectations."

The state calculates the annual local economic impact of the airfield at \$96,000, based on an estimated 60 visitors a year. Yet MnDOT concludes closing the facility "will have a significant impact on the State Airport System," which depends on a network of airstrips for emergency purposes. The closest airport is 21 miles away by air in Two Harbors.

The small airport has been in decline for years, as the city cut back on maintenance. But it wasn't until June 2018 that MnDOT safety inspectors revoked the airport's license and shut it down, declaring the runway unsafe.

"A key reason for the airport closure was the sizable cracks that have opened up," a 17-page MnDOT report states. "They are large enough to cause significant shock to an aircraft, and a small aircraft could become lodged creating a hazard to aircraft."

The city points out that it did not close the airport in hopes of avoiding liability. But MnDOT officials contend Silver Bay owes the government big-time anyway.

"Whether they make a decision (to close) or not, they're in violation of their grant assurances," Isackson said. "Because part of their grant assurance is that they keep the airport open and available to the public and in safe condition. And today the airport is not open or available to the public and is not in a safe condition."

State and federal grants provide most funding for small airports through taxes on fuel, planes and other aviation-

related sources. Local governments typically cover five or ten percent of a project's cost with local matching funds.

Silver Bay has refused to accept airport funding since 2010. But government grants come with a 20-year obligation, leaving Silver Bay on the hook to repay \$761,609.05 on a prorated basis for previous grants, almost all of it to the feds.

"The Legislature and Congress expect when we're taking tax money and saying what it's going to be spent on, they want to be sure that it's actually spent on those things," Isackson said. "And that it's for the long term and not just wasteful spending."

"We and FAA are both prepared to

Silver Bay has refused to accept airport funding since 2010. But government grants come with a 20-year obligation, leaving Silver Bay on the hook to repay \$761,609.05 on a prorated basis for previous grants, almost all of it to the feds.

give them state and federal grants to do that work, but they would have to have some money in order to do that themselves," Isackson said.

Mayor Johnson realizes David probably stood better odds against Goliath than Silver Bay against the FAA and MnDOT.

"We got to the point where we realized the FAA basically is a bureaucratic beast that exists to perpetuate itself," Johnson said. "They are not designed to help somebody in our situation. They have no capacity to help us."

Johnson still holds out hope of persuading state and federal lawmakers to designate a new classification of safe harbor airports without strings attached. But it's a long shot. ★



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Union Dues

Where Do Teachers' Union Dues Go?

Teachers who are newly-freed to reject paying union dues may want to think about where those dues go.

Every year, Minnesota's teachers' union deducts roughly \$800 to \$1,000 from its members' paychecks. Because dues are taken out as a single deduction before the paycheck is received (like taxes), teachers tend to not know the exact amount deducted or how the dues are disbursed. Teachers just know they benefit from paying these dues because, they are told, they go toward a wide variety of benefits including counsel on workplace issues and collective bargaining.

The union's primary function is collective bargaining, and most of the costs associated with this are incurred at the local level. Yet, the local receives the smallest portion of dues revenue.

But these services are performed at the local union level, and the largest proportion of union dues goes toward underwriting the political clout of the mammoth state and national unions. Teachers who are union members must affiliate with these other union organizations and fund their political objectives. In Minnesota, members pay union dues to their local union, their state union Education Minnesota, and the state union's two

national affiliates—the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

While local dues vary among school districts, state and national dues are levied across-the-board and typically increase every year. Local dues tend to hold steady.

Here is a breakdown from one school district for the 2018-2019 school year:

Local Dues: \$150
State Dues: \$478
National Dues: \$247.56
Total Dues: \$875.56

In this example, the local union receives only 17 percent of dues, despite conducting all the representational and day-to-day activities on behalf of teachers. (Other school districts with publicly available dues data range from 17 percent to 20 percent of dues staying local. Information on allocation of dues is hard to obtain because the majority of this data is stonewalled behind union member login requirements.)

The allocation of dues is striking. The union's primary function is collective bargaining, and most of the costs associated with this are incurred at the local level. Yet, the local receives the smallest portion of dues revenue. The bulk of dues, spent at the state and national levels, focuses on funding administrative costs and political objectives.

In the 2016-2017 school year, Education Minnesota's expenditures amounted



to \$66.2 million. Aside from dues disbursements to union affiliates (\$17.9 million) and the money spent on investments and fixed assets (\$10.8 million), the largest expenditures were on union administration costs (\$13.3 million) and benefits (\$8.6 million) and general overhead (\$5.9 million).

Spending on political activities and lobbying increased by about \$1.4 million, from \$1.3 million in 2015-2016 to \$2.7 million in 2016-2017, whereas spending on representational activities only increased by \$193,000 (\$2.7 million to \$2.9 million). The union self-identifies its political activities and lobbying expenditures in its filings, but this is not the only category where political funding occurs, despite the union reporting it as such.

Thanks to the *Janus v. AFSCME* case decided in June 2018, Minnesota teachers have a meaningful choice on whether to financially support a union. The battle is on for their wallets, and the union must convince its members its priorities are worth the money. As teachers weigh their options, it is important for them to know that less than a quarter of their dues go to the local union responsible for most union benefits. The rest gets eaten up in a political maelstrom. ★

—Catrin Thorman

Staff

Strength in Numbers

The Center recruits communications vet Katie Fulkerson from the GOP Senate Caucus. Three others join staff.

Katie Fulkerson has joined the staff of Center of the American Experiment as Communications Director. She replaces Tom Steward, who will devote his time exclusively to investigative journalism.

John Hinderaker, the Center's president, said he was impressed by Fulkerson's reputation for creativity and solid relationships with media statewide. Fulkerson worked for the state's Senate Republican Caucus for six years, where she led media relations and outreach and served as a digital advisor to various legislative campaigns. She also has nearly a decade of agency experience managing interactive projects for Fortune 500 companies.

Fulkerson grew up in Wisconsin and Illinois before earning her B.A. at Indiana University.

The Center has also added three other employees to its mix.

Micah Olson serves as Greater Minnesota Outreach Director, with a

special attention to developing The Greater Minnesota Advisory Board. Olson graduated from the University of Northwestern-St. Paul with a degree in communication studies.

Mitch Rolling is a researcher, assisting policy fellows on projects ranging from energy issues to education. Rolling graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in history and Jewish studies. While attending the University, he wrote for a school newspaper, gaining nationwide coverage for his reporting on college campus issues.

Greta Elsholtz has the role of Special Projects Coordinator. Elsholtz studied public relations and event planning at the University of Northwestern-St. Paul, where she worked in student activities as the Director of Off-Campus Events and actively supported FORCE (Fellowship of Reconciling Cultures Everywhere), an on-campus multicultural student group. ★



Katie Fulkerson, center, is joined by Micah Olson and Greta Elsholtz. The photo was taken in front of the nature preserve that abuts the Center's Golden Valley headquarters. Mitch Rolling is not pictured.



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Protect the Neediest Children

The achievement gap is not a rationale for universal pre-K.

There is an old legal maxim: hard cases make bad law.

One hard case before the Legislature is how to educate children deemed “at-risk” so that one day they can launch themselves into the meaningful world of marriage and work. These children, most of whom are born to single mothers, do not just tug at our heart strings, they increasingly tug at our purse strings, too.

One consequence of family breakdown is the achievement gap between minority and white children. In 2018, the Office of Legislative Auditor (OLA) catalogued 42 early childhood programs aimed at closing the gap, calling them “complex and fragmented.” (The Department of Education just received a \$4.7 million federal grant to try to sort out the mess.)

State intervention ranges from offering subsidies for early learning scholarships and child care (see, “Child Care Welfare Fraud” on page 10) to direct services like family home visits and pre-K programs. The OLA reviewed nine programs that cost \$754 million per biennium, plus millions in one-time funding.

The teachers’ union, working closely with the Dayton-Smith administration, has championed the idea of *universal* pre-K (UPK)—sending *all four-year-olds* to school—as a solution to the



Advocates boldly sell universal pre-K to parents by pointing to the high cost of child care.

achievement gap. It is easy to see how this “solution” would result in thousands of new dues-paying members to government unions, but less easy to determine what it would accomplish for at-risk children. Disappointingly,

Governor Tim Walz picked up the UPK refrain before and after he was sworn into office.

Advocates boldly sell UPK to parents by pointing to the high cost of child care. A Dayton administration fact sheet said, “Sending every four-year-old to preschool would not only give our kids a great start; it would help families too. ... Parents would no longer have to pay out-of-pocket for preschool, and they would avoid the high costs of child care while their children attend preschool programs.”

Do not doubt how fast this could catch on. Recall that just a few years ago, most children went to half-day kindergarten; now, almost all children attend full-day kindergarten. With 32 percent of Minnesota children born outside of wedlock and most young parents working, Minnesota could be at a tipping point for shifting the care of young children to already strained public schools.

Current cost estimates from the state range from \$686.9 million with 95 percent of four-year-olds enrolled in *half-day school*, to \$890 million for full-day school. Neither estimate includes year-round costs or capital costs like new classrooms. Plus, what would working parents do the rest of the year if the state wipes out other child care options with “free” preschool? They need a full-day solution (8 to 10 hours a day); so, watch for programs to turn

into full-day, year-round child care.

State Senator Carla Nelson (R-Rochester), chairwoman of the Senate E-12 Education Committee, is leading a bipartisan coalition with a wiser approach. She wants to preserve funding for the neediest families and the existing “mixed-delivery” marketplace so parents from all income levels have quality options. These options include early childhood programs and child care offered in homes, churches, schools, centers and non-profits rather than the state commandeering the marketplace.

**All you have to
do is empower the
parents and let the
market figure it out.**

“By investing in increased access to targeted early learning scholarships, we ensure our youngest learners have the opportunity to grow and thrive in the future,” she says.

“Close Gaps by 5” is a non-profit devoted to preserving limited public funds for at-risk children and their families. It was conceived by Art Rolnick (formerly with the Federal Reserve) and other business leaders. “This is a bottom-up approach; this is using the market,” he says. “We don’t have to try to figure out how many schools we need or teachers we have to hire. All you have to do is empower the parents and let the market figure it out.”

An enthusiastic Rolnick says the biggest return on investment comes from investing in mothers with in-home visits to teach parenting skills. “You give these parents tools, the tools that middle-class families have, and watch out,” he said. “Watch how quickly those kids catch on and how successful they can be.” ★

—Kim Crockett



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5 QUESTIONS

WITH
FRAN
BRADLEY

Fran Bradley, a long-time conservative activist in the Rochester area, recently helped organize an event for Center of the American Experiment's Greater Minnesota Advisory Board. Bradley is an engineer by training, with 30 years of experience at IBM's Rochester facilities. He also served in the Minnesota Legislature from 1995 to 2006.



You became an early adopter in American Experiment's outreach efforts through its "Pioneers" program and The Greater Minnesota Advisory Board. What attracted you to these efforts?

Those of us in Rochester who are big fans of the Center have been very enthusiastic about its outreach activities from day one. I think it was over a year ago that we had dinner here in Rochester and floated the idea of becoming a more involved and proactive force. We'd like to be an extension of the Center, and we have even floated the idea of starting a chapter in Rochester where we actually have some autonomy.

Are you thinking about an independent organization?

No, not independent, but trying to bring the Center's messages to Rochester maybe two to four times a year on topics that are particularly relevant to our part of the state. Beyond that, we'd like to use our strong local voices to take those messages to the public and local media. We would also like to engage the Center in important Rochester-area issues.

There seems to be a thirst in Greater Minnesota for ways to express conservative values that go beyond mere politics. Do you agree?

Absolutely. And sometimes those things can be hard to separate. When the Center takes a fresh, objective, and factual look on an issue like jobs in the Iron Range, it gets discussed in political circles, but the Center stresses it's important for the entire state. I serve on the government affairs committee of the Rochester

Area Chamber of Commerce, and we discussed why Rochester might express its support for jobs on the Iron Range. Because I served in the Legislature, I'm aware how important it is to think of the state as a whole. I do a lot of mentoring with candidates, and I have tried to impress on them the importance of educating the public on many of these issues.

How have politics and public policy changed from the time you served at the Legislature?

To be objective about it, perhaps because the national ugliness spills down to Minnesota, the atmosphere may have become uglier. But partisanship has always been there. I served as both a minority and the majority, and partisanship power is part of the way things work in a republic form of government. But I think it's become a bit shriller. I grew up as a Democrat, I've known Democrats, and I have a lot of respect for mainstream Democrats. I may not agree with them on a lot of things, but we can have civil debates. However, the Democratic party seems to have been taken over by far left extremists who are out of step with common sense Americans. They are the loud voices we hear so often.

Having said that, what's your take on Governor Walz's "One Minnesota" theme?

Who could be opposed to that? I think most of us in Minnesota are proud to be Minnesotans. So concept wise, I think it's great. Implementation wise, I think Tim Walz is far off the mark by wanting more government, more taxes, and more regulation. ★

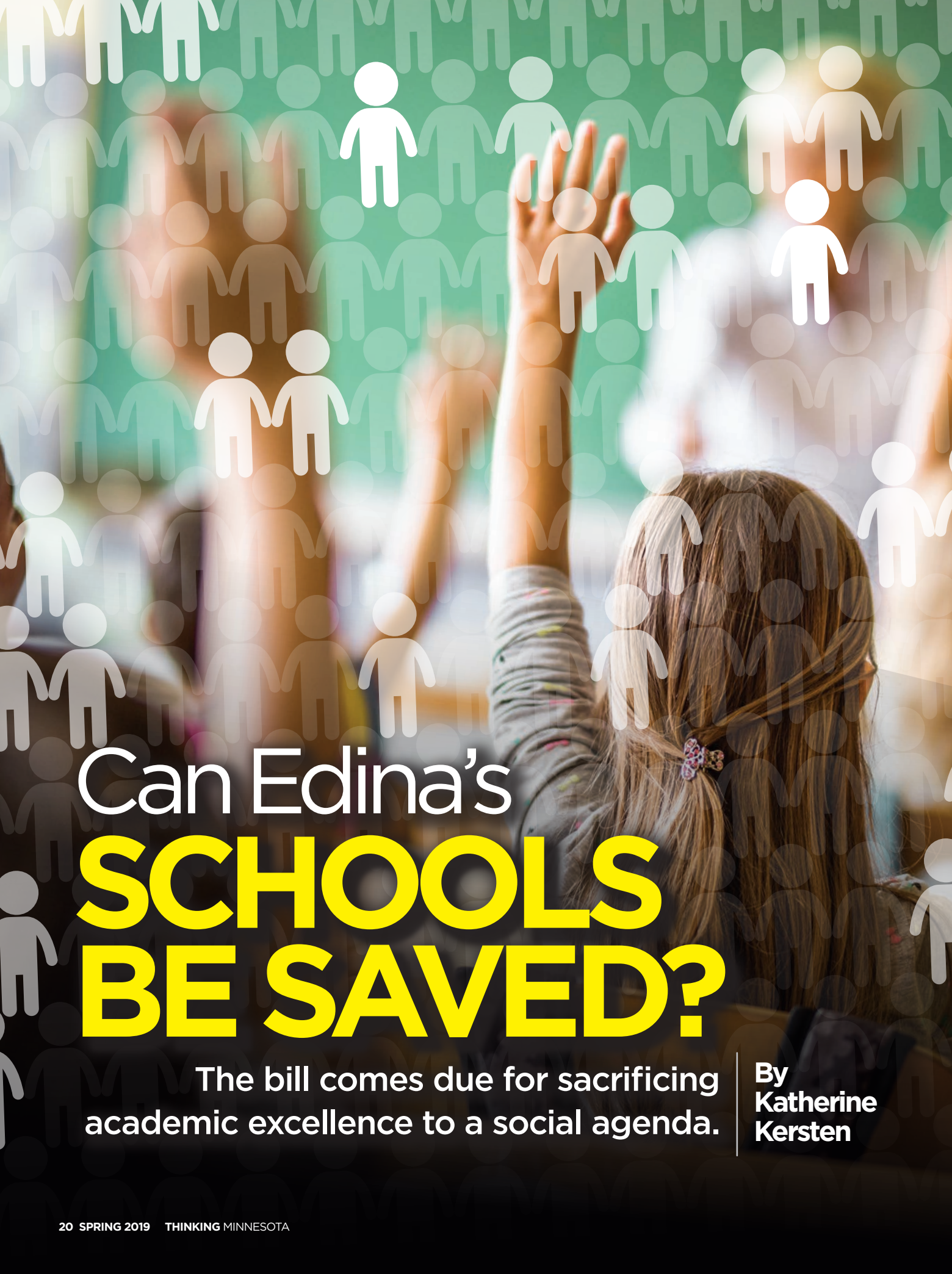
WHY I SUPPORT Center of the American Experiment

“As a conservative first and Republican second, the Center was fundamental to my education on why conservatism works and what conservatism represents.”

Name: AK Kamara

Occupation: Insurance Agent

Alma Mater: University of Minnesota



Can Edina's **SCHOOLS BE SAVED?**

The bill comes due for sacrificing
academic excellence to a social agenda.

By
**Katherine
Kersten**

Six years after officials at Edina Public Schools (EPS) decided to view “all teaching and learning through the lens of racial equity,” it’s clear the district administration has taken its eye off the ball of academic excellence. Today, EPS is experiencing across-the-board test score declines—from third-grade reading to ACT benchmarks in math, reading, and science—along with an exodus of families the district can’t afford to lose.

Edina’s experience provides a cautionary tale of what can happen when a school district renowned for academic excellence embraces a social mission that requires viewing students, first and foremost, not as individuals but as members of racial groups. EPS’s controversial mission shift was adopted in 2013 with the goal of closing the district’s racial achievement gap. That hasn’t happened.

Many Edina parents have found it painful and difficult to come to grips with their school district’s challenges. And no wonder: Most families have made financial sacrifices—including paying a hefty premium for a home—to gain access to the district’s once-fabled schools. Increasingly, however, they are troubled at evidence that a social justice agenda is inconsistent with a quality education.

No one wants to see test score declines. In the past year, parents have come together across political lines to work for the good of the children of Edina. Their goal is to return to EPS’s traditional mission of academic excellence for all students, and to ensure that instruction is designed to enable each child to reach his or her highest potential. Unfortunately, continued resistance by the EPS administration suggests extraordinary challenges will remain, so long as a social agenda takes precedence over instruction in reading, math, and science.

This summer, the Edina School Board will adopt a new five-year strategic plan and in November, the district will hold school board elections. If parents

and citizens demand accountability and transparency, they can build on progress already underway to ensure that Edina schools are once again the gold standard of education in Minnesota.

A brief history

EPS students are 73 percent white, 10 percent Asian, six percent black, six percent Hispanic and five percent two or more races. As in virtually all American schools, EPS’s white and Asian students,

The district’s learning gap has failed to narrow and, in some respects, has widened, despite the fact that white students’ scores are falling.

on average, perform at higher academic levels than black and Hispanic students. With the adoption of the district’s equity-focused “All for All” plan in 2013, EPS leaders made closing this learning gap the district’s highest priority. They defined “educational equity” as “promoting equality of educational results” among all student subgroups and set their goal as “high achievement *without predictable links* to race or income [emphasis added].”

In pursuit of this goal, the district’s statement on “Racial Equity and Cultural

Competence” mandated change of two kinds. First, going forward, EPS must view “all district work and initiatives”—including “all teaching and learning”—through “a lens of racial equity.” Second, it must “interrupt systems of inequity” and “eliminat[e] barriers rooted in racial constructs” to end the racist practices that officials believe to be the gap’s source.

Six years later: What has happened?

Test scores

Edina students’ academic performance has fallen dramatically since the district adopted the All for All plan. The EPS learning gap has failed to narrow and, in some respects, has widened, despite the fact that white students’ scores are falling.

Between 2013 and 2017, EPS lost ground in reading and math proficiency on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs)—which set state standards—in comparison to 1) the district’s own history, 2) the state average, and 3) peer school districts in the Twin Cities metro area. (Peers include historically top-performing districts such as Orono, Minnetonka, Woodbury and Eastview.) White students’ proficiency fell 3.7 points in reading and 3.2 points in math compared to their white peers’ statewide proficiency average. Though EPS administrators often assure parents that Edina is still achieving above the state average, it is losing ground at a troubling rate.

For example, a comparison of Edina High School’s (EHS) 10th-grade MCA reading performance with peer schools



About the Author: Katherine Kersten, a writer and attorney, is a senior policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. She served as a Metro columnist for the Star Tribune from 2005 to 2008 and as an opinion columnist for the paper for 15 years between 1996 and 2013. She was a founding director of the Center and served as its chair from 1996 to 1998.

In the past year, parents have come together across political lines to help return to EPS's traditional mission of academic excellence for all students, and to ensure that instruction is designed to enable each child to reach his or her highest potential. **Unfortunately, continued resistance by the EPS administration suggests extraordinary challenges will remain, so long as a social agenda takes precedence over instruction in reading, math, and science.**

in the Twin Cities metro area reveals that from 2008 to 2014, EHS ranked first or second, and once third. In 2015, however, it fell to 11th place and in 2017 ranked 10th. Between 2013 and 2017, students at EHS fell 10 points in reading and 11 points in math relative to the statewide proficiency average. During that time, at the district's two middle schools and the high school, students in every grade lost ground in reading relative to students across the state.

Test scores in 2017-18 continued this downward trend. The district's achievement gap failed to narrow as EPS officials had hoped, and Edina High School fell to 14th place in reading among peer schools in the Twin Cities area. Academic performance declined across the board—from third-grade reading proficiency to high school seniors' performance on ACT benchmarks in math, reading, and science.

Edina assesses third-grade reading in two ways: State MCAs measure proficiency (the ability to read at grade level), and MAP tests (Measures of Academic Progress) measure individual student growth over time. Last year, the district's goal—set with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)—was to raise third-grade reading proficiency on the MCA by 2.9 points. In fact, proficiency fell 7.5 points to 70.8, the biggest drop in the 10 years for which data are publicly available.

The nationally normed MAP assesses whether a student's reading level has grown as expected, based on his or her previous performance. Edina's 2018 MAP data show significant declines in the percentages of students (grades 3-8) who met nationally normed growth targets in both reading and math. Last year, for example, about 24 percent fewer sixth-graders met growth targets in reading and math than met them as fifth-graders.

Educators agree that the ability to read at grade-level in third grade is of vital importance, because reading is the key to success in all other academic

disciplines. Edina's Strategic Plan Assessment Summary Final Report, dated December 2018, cited a "national study" that demonstrated that "students who do not read proficiently by third grade are *four times more likely* to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers [emphasis added]." "There are other areas in Minnesota that have higher ELL [English Language Learner], poverty, and/or special education program needs," the report continued, "so Edina has reason for concern on this measure."

Last year, EPS also failed to reach other academic performance goals it had set in conjunction with MDE. On the MCAs (which are administered in reading in grades 3-8 and grade 10), the district sought to narrow the racial gap by increasing proficiency rates for all students, while raising them more for black, Hispanic and English Language Learner students. However, overall performance went down, black and English Language Learner students improved slightly (1.5 points), and Hispanic students declined dramatically—by 9.5 points.

On 2017-18 career and college readiness measures, the district's goal—set with MDE—was to have 67 percent of seniors meet ACT benchmarks in English, math, reading and science, up from 64 percent in 2016-17. Instead, the number dropped to 61 percent. EPS did essentially meet its goal of graduating a high percentage of students from all demographic groups, but it is not clear that all graduates are well-prepared.

EPS has failed to significantly narrow its racial achievement gap, despite a six-year investment of time, money and effort, including extra state funding through Minnesota's Achievement and Integration program. Transparency has been lacking in the district's reports on vital MAP scores, which do not make year-over-year comparisons possible. In response to a request for five years of MAP data in the format used for 2017-18 data, EPS communications coordinator Mary Woitte responded that the district "does not maintain data from previous years in the format you are requesting."

Fifteen years ago, EPS annual reports were detailed performance documents. The 2003-04 report, for example, was 97



2017-18 Combined WBWF Summary and Achievement and Integration Progress Report

District or Charter Name: Edina Public Schools

Grades Served: PK-12

A and I Contact: Mary Manderfeld

---for Reception of Equity and Enrollment

WBWF Co-
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RE-EXAMINING EQUITY

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October 4, November 1,
December 6, January 3,
February 7, March 7, and April 4

4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

WHERE
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Room 170
(October 4 & March 7 will be in Room 350)

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**QUESTIONS?
GWEN JACKSON**

pages long. Today, with their limited information on student achievement, these documents resemble promotional brochures. The 2016-17 annual report was a mere four pages. (View these reports at www.edinaschools.org/page/3572.)

Enrollment declines

Today, families are streaming out of the Edina schools in unprecedented numbers. The district's enrollment report released last October revealed that EPS had a drop of 125 resident students and gained 32 through open enrollment, for a net loss of 93 students between 2017-18 and 2018-19. This was a significant unexpected shortfall: The district's February 2018-19 "Budget Parameters" had predicted "steady enrollment with zero percent to a small amount of growth per year." In 2018-19, 321 students open-enrolled out of Edina into other public schools—a 28 percent increase over the previous year.

Faced with this exodus, the Edina School Board last summer commissioned the district's first-ever survey of "outbound" families to determine why so

Last year, about 24 percent fewer sixth-graders met growth targets in reading and math than met them as fifth-graders.

many are leaving. The "most important factor" cited by parents who enrolled their children in other school districts was that EPS had failed to "meet" their student's "learning needs." Another important reason parents gave was that they wanted "no liberal agenda." The Morris Leatherman Company, which performed the survey, told the school board in November that this survey marked the first time in the company's lengthy experience that Twin Cities metro area parents have named "liberal agenda" as a reason for leaving local public schools.

A significant number among those who departed were high-achieving students. "Gifted students, in particular, suffer from the academic dilution resulting from EPS's changing focus away from academic rigor," one parent commented on the survey performed during the district's strategic planning process. Special education students have also left in large numbers. At school board meetings, parents of dyslexic students have repeatedly expressed frustration at what they describe as the district's failure to provide reading instruction tailored to their children's learning needs.

This exodus has significant financial consequences for the Edina schools. The district is already facing worrisome budget cuts, and the loss of state aid resulting from the recent drop in students is adding to the problem. Making matters worse, the number of kindergartners enrolled in Fall 2018 was 100 fewer than the EHS graduating class of 2018. Edina has a "relatively large aging population that

will likely not provide school-aged students into the future," according to the Strategic Plan Assessment Summary report. Going forward, a continued outflow of students spells trouble for EPS.

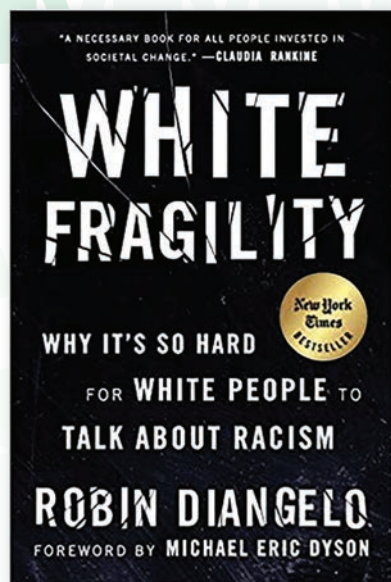
What is going on?

Are EPS's declining academic performance and its growing loss of students related to district leaders' embrace of a social mission in 2013? The goal of the All for All plan was straightforward: to transform the Edina schools. What are the consequences of six years of looking at "all teaching and learning" through the "lens of racial equity?"

One transformative change occurred in 2013 when the district expanded and revised a pedagogical model called "personalized learning" in conjunction with the new equity mission. A district document describes this new approach to teaching and learning as a major shift (and a "core belief") aligned with "three key words that drive the district's strategic work—*All for All* [emphasis in original]." "Only by applying a lens of racial equity to all district work and focusing on personalized learning" will Edina Public Schools "truly advance its core mission of All for All," declared the district's statement on "Racial Equity and Cultural Competence."

EPS's personalized learning model differs greatly from "the structured education system that has been in place for generations," according to EPS's FAQs on the topic. The new approach "redefines the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator of learning rather than a deliverer of knowledge," in the words of the district's statement on personalized learning. "The end goal," it notes, is to give students "voice and choice about what is learned, when it is learned, and how it is learned."

Many school districts have adopted some form of personalized learning. The approach can have beneficial results when its primary goal is to help children thrive individually. But it can undercut student achievement when it is used as a vehicle for engineering demographic balance in every classroom, with attention to



The EPS equity office's online list of "equity resources for families" features books like *White Fragility*—a state of mind said to be marked by emotions like "anger, fear, and guilt" that "prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue."

individual needs taking a back seat.

A prominent advocate of personalized learning is the New York City-based Century Foundation. The foundation believes that minority and low-income students can only learn effectively in “heterogeneous” classrooms balanced by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, and opposes grouping students by academic readiness or ability (or “tracking”). Personalized learning is the central tool in the foundation’s “toolkit” for “reducing segregation among classrooms in a school—whether those divides fall along academic, racial or class lines—and exploring the needs of all students within integrated settings.”

Schools that take this approach, of course, must find a way to use the same curriculum to educate students of widely differing abilities and readiness—some well above grade level and some well below—without undermining individual students’ ability to reach their highest academic potential. The solution the Century Foundation, like other “equity” proponents, advocates is to combine “classroom integration” with “differentiated instruction,” according to a 2019 report entitled “Integrating Classrooms and

Reducing Academic Tracking” on the foundation’s website. In this model, schools can use pull-out sessions or flexible student groups that attempt to offer both “enrichment and support.” They can also use “embedded honors”—an arrangement in which “all students take a class together, but students who choose to may take the class for honors credit by completing extra assignments.”

Since 2013, the Edina schools have devoted enormous resources to personalized learning. The district has promoted heterogeneous classrooms, minimized ability/readiness grouping, and in many cases attempted to differentiate instruction by “embedding” or “deepening” rather than accelerating instruction.

Overall, the district has embraced the pedagogical vision laid out in a book entitled *Detracking for Excellence and Equity*, by Burris and Garrity. This book was distributed in 2012 to key EPS personnel by then-Superintendent Ric Dressen to use as a guide in implementing EPS’s shift to an equity mission. “In a detracked school,” the book explains, “instruction—not curriculum and not standards or outcomes—should be differentiated for learners in heterogeneously grouped classrooms.”

The problem with this

To date, there is little evidence that personalized learning improves educational outcomes. No one has studied personalized learning more closely than the RAND Corporation, *Education Week* reported in 2017. “And RAND is unambiguous about what its research shows,” the magazine stated.

“The evidence base is very weak at this point,” John F. Pane, the group’s distinguished chair in education innovation told *Education Week*. “I would not advise schools to dump massive resources into going fully into personalized learning,” added Laura S. Hamilton, the associate director of RAND Education. “Experiment with some new approaches that might be a good fit for your particular school or district, but monitor it very closely.”

In contrast to this advice, EPS imple-



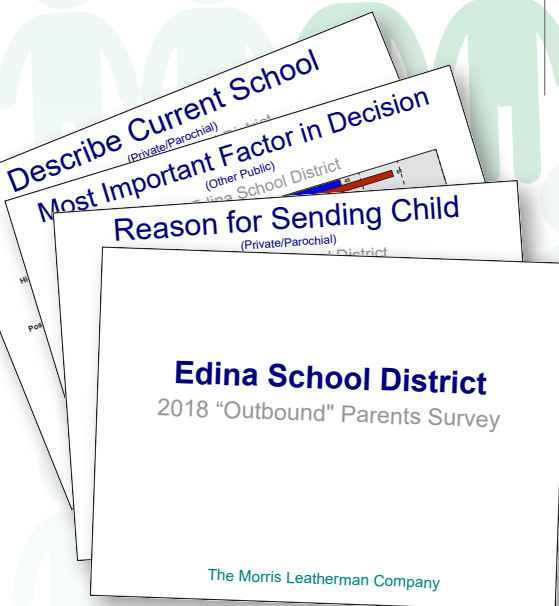
Edina’s approach to personalized learning minimizes “direct instruction” with a teacher and gives students autonomy that many are not ready or able to use productively. This photo is featured on EPS’s online “Flexible Learning Environments” page.

mented personalized learning “throughout” the district, “at all learner levels,” according to the EPS website.

Unfortunately, there is evidence that in Edina Public Schools, personalized learning has led in many cases to inefficient, ineffective use of student learning time. The approach gives students a degree of autonomy that many are not ready or able to use productively. Students can choose, to a good extent, how they wish to “access information,” “engage with” lessons, and “show mastery,” according to EPS promotional materials. Traditional “direct instruction” from a teacher is often minimal, with students working on their own or in small groups unmediated by an educational supervisor. Technology, including substantial screen time, plays a central role. Adding to students’ disincentive to apply themselves, in many classrooms, those who fail a test—or in some cases, even get a sub-par grade—are allowed to take it again.

One parent who has removed her children from the district explained how her middle-school daughter spent a lot of time with her computer in the hallways, “fooling around with her friends. She had to check in with the teacher at the end, but as long as they had done part of the assignment, she was golden.”

EPS’s personalized learning model also risks under-use of teacher talent, a school’s most valuable resource. Its most fundamental shortcoming, however, may be that it promotes a fragmented, rather than an integrated, approach to education. Students learn best when they are taught new information in a way that allows



In Edina’s first-ever “outbound” parent survey, the most important factor cited by parents open-enrolling in other school districts was that EPS had failed to “meet” their students’ “learning needs.”

them to incorporate it effectively into a larger, well-integrated body of knowledge, according to education research. Many critics have pointed out personalized learning's tendency to expose students to new material in "bits and pieces"—one-off projects—which can make understanding and retention much harder.

In EPS's outbound survey, the number one factor parents cited in their decision to leave was that the schools were not meeting their student's "learning needs." The district's embrace of personalized learning likely plays a major role here.

Average students can easily fall through the cracks in EPS's new instructional regime, as teachers struggle to meet the needs of learners at both ends of the educational spectrum. Special education students who need extra time and attention can also lose out. RAND's research "has consistently found that even in the best-supported personalized-learning schools, teachers frequently say there's not enough time to truly tailor the learning experience to each child," according to *Education Week*.

Parents of high-achieving students complain that their children, in particular, seem to suffer in heterogeneous classrooms, where all students must study the same thing at essentially the same pace. Those who finish a unit early get extra work—called "going deeper"—or are expected to help classmates who struggle rather than move ahead themselves.

At the November 2018 school board meeting, one frustrated parent explained how this is holding back her gifted children in elementary and middle school. "There is no acceleration, differentiated curriculum or direct instruction for students who have mastered the material," she said. She called for more rigorous pathways in middle-school language arts, science and social studies, like the one available in math. Her concern, she emphasized, was that "PL is an attempt to make heterogeneous classrooms appear to work for all students."

As Edina's statement on personalized learning makes clear, this is, in fact, the case.

While the personalized learning model often holds back advanced students, it also encourages other students to take de-

manding courses without regard to their academic preparation, in order to achieve demographic balance in the classroom. The All for All plan set an "equity" goal of "no more than a five percent difference" between minority and low-income students and others in gifted programs and Advanced Placement classes. But encouraging academically unprepared students to take such courses can hamper their progress, undermine their self-confidence and waste their time.

It can also harm their high-achieving classmates. In AP classes with a number of less-prepared students, teachers may be unable to cover as many topics, and may find themselves compelled to assign fewer or shorter papers than if all students were high performers.

Nationally, there is evidence that policies aimed at making schools more accountable for improving low-performing students' achievement are hurting the brightest students. For example, a 2011 study by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation found that high-performing students are increasingly losing ground in terms of growth from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school. Often, these students fail to improve their reading ability at the same

rate as their average and below-average classmates. According to *Education Week*, the study "raises questions about whether" the "widespread dismantling of policies that group students by ability" has forced schools "to make a trade-off."

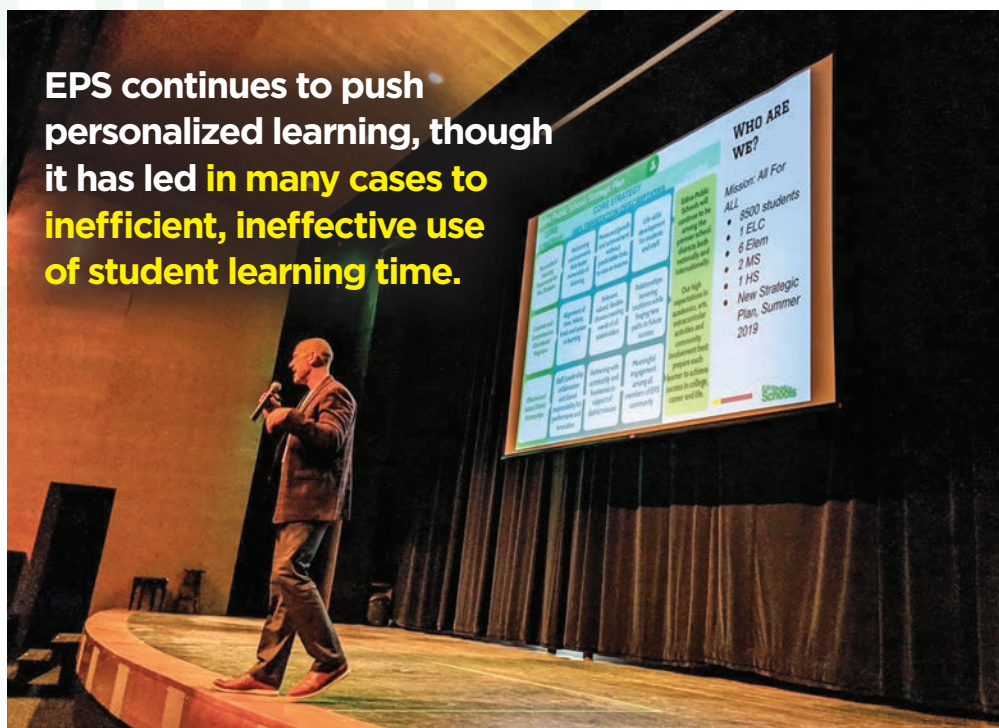
In 2016, Randy Smasal, EPS director of teaching and learning, stated that with EPS's embrace of personalized learning, "outcomes will be consistently high for all students—that is the system we are building." Unfortunately, six years after the adoption of this transformative model, falling test scores confirm that hope is not being realized.

Goal two: Shaping students' beliefs

The second major change the All for All plan brought to the Edina schools was a commitment to give priority to a new social mission: To "interrupt systems that perpetuate inequities" and "eliminate barriers rooted in racial constructs" within EPS. What are the consequences?

In practice, this shift in focus has meant teaching that white racism is a primary cause of the learning gap, and prompting white students to acknowledge their "white privilege" and repudiate "white supremacy." To ensure this,

EPS continues to push personalized learning, though it has led in many cases to inefficient, ineffective use of student learning time.



the district committed in the All for All plan to “recruit, hire and retain” “racially conscious teachers and administrators.”

EPS has woven a “racial identity” narrative throughout its curriculum. At the elementary level, for example, K-2 students at Highlands Elementary School have participated in the “Melanin Project,” which teaches them to view themselves and their classmates in terms of skin color. Edina High School’s Pre-AP English 10 course—required of all sophomores—was designed to “guide students through difficult discussions of race, racism and Whiteness,” according to English teacher Jackie Roehl, a course architect. Students devote the bulk of their class time to topics such as “Social Constructions of Race, Class and Gender,” “Colonization” and “Immigration.”

As a result, academic rigor now often takes a back seat to efforts to shape students’ beliefs on social issues, according to many Edina parents. They cite what they view as a telling example from Fall 2018.

As the 2018-19 school year opened, parents were alarmed and surprised to learn of EPS’s dramatic drop in third-grade reading proficiency. They called on the district administration for urgent action to address this looming academic crisis, including a plan to get teachers the training they need to teach a recently adopted reading curriculum effectively.

Parents were frustrated by what they viewed as the district’s lackadaisical response at school board work sessions and elsewhere, and its failure to mobilize quickly to produce an effective plan of action. They were disturbed to learn, around the same time, of the administration’s plan for an elaborate, seven-part training series “open to all employees” called “Re-examining Equity”—scheduled to run from October 2018 to April 2019. Topics included “White Privilege and White Fragility,” “Implicit Bias and Microaggressions” and “Equity Traps.” Prominent EPS administrators and personnel from the Department of Teaching and Learning were involved, and teachers were informed they would earn Continuing Education credits.

The administration’s response to the third-grade reading crisis stood in stark contrast to the enthusiasm with which it

promoted “Re-examining Equity,” parents say. At the school board’s November 2018 meeting, Donna Roper, EPS director of research and evaluation, seemed to downplay the troubling implications of the drop in reading scores, describing it as “not a surprising thing.” She said the new reading curriculum, implemented in 2016-17, might have played a role. “When you do a large-scale implementation with new resources and new pedagogy, just a lot of complexities to that whole thing,” she said.

In its report to MDE on its 2017-18 progress on “World’s Best Workforce and Achievement and Integration” measures, EPS acknowledged that teachers did not receive the training necessary to implement the curriculum effectively. It also stated that teachers need time to review relevant data with colleagues. But “trying to make time for these kinds of professional development sessions becomes very difficult,” according to a statement the administration sent to the Edina *Sun Current*. Why? The statement cited a “statewide shortage of substitute teachers,” who may be required to fill in during such training. Many parents regarded the district’s response as complacent, irresponsible and unacceptable.

EPS officials cancelled the “Re-examining Equity” training shortly before it was to begin. Not enough teachers signed up, according to EPS communications coordinator Mary Woitte. If so, this suggests that many teachers, like parents, believe that academically focused professional development should be the district’s top priority. Parents believe pressure from a community letter-writing campaign also played a role.

Parents have worked for reform

The 2018 EPS Strategic Plan Assessment report, prepared by Tampa-based MGT Consulting Group, reached a clear-cut conclusion: As the district prepares to adopt a new, five-year strategic plan, “Maintaining high academic standards is ‘Mission Critical.’” Today, parents who agree are coming together to demand accountability and transparency. “I don’t care about people’s politics,” one explained. “I care about them as a parent,

a neighbor and a citizen. We all care about our kids.”

“Sometimes it feels like the administration against the rest of us,” the parent added.

Parents have held community meetings, called for curricular reviews, challenged data put forward by the administration, and taken their concerns directly to school board members. One important tool, they say, is EPS Policy 606, which requires that students hear “all sides” on controversial issues and bars teachers from using their position to advance their personal politics.

“We tell parents to ‘Keep your eyes out for 606 violations, in assignments, hall displays, wherever,’” a parent explained. “When you see a violation, speak to the teacher, file a policy violation form, report it to administrators and copy school board members. It’s not just rumors when you can attach a document or photo.”

But monitoring what goes on in the classroom can be challenging. Parents of middle-schoolers and high-schoolers often don’t see assignments, tests, papers or teachers’ instructions because so much is now done electronically through students’ password-protected school portal. A key, parents say, is to “get your kids’ passwords and monitor on a daily basis.”

Parents say they are sometimes accused of not supporting teachers when they report violations. “We support our teachers,” a parent emphasized. “We have many wonderful teachers in Edina who want to focus on academics. But when the administration prioritizes a social mission over academics, I fear we may lose some of them.”

The administration’s response

As a result of parents’ efforts, school climate has improved in the 2018-19 school year, parents say. “There is less overt political correctness; the hallways are much better,” observes one parent. “I don’t see Black Lives Matter posters, Valley View Middle School’s display of biased political cartoons and caricatures is gone, and there are American flags in the classrooms.” Several teachers who were involved in partisan political advocacy in 2016, including high school English teachers Tim Klobuchar (who is on leave) and Sally Larkins, are no lon-

ger teaching in the district.

But the administration's allegiance to its social mission remains deeply entrenched. The EPS equity office's online list of recommended "equity resources for families," for example, is a cornucopia of political advocacy. The following are typical:

- A book entitled *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, by Robin DiAngelo. According to Amazon's description of the book, "White fragility" refers to "the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially," and is "characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence" that "prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue."
- An essay by Minneapolis middle-school teacher Tom Rademacher, entitled "Everyone Keeps Talking About Implicit Racial Bias But What Is It?" "Implicit bias" is "all the ways that we are racist, even when we are super sure we're not," writes Rademacher. "We all have some racist-ass shit crawling around in our heads.... That racism, the sneaky hidden shit... is killing our kids of color."
- An essay from the United Church of Christ's "New Sacred" site entitled, "So you say you've got white privilege. Now what?" The piece lists "10 ways you can actively reject your white privilege" and advises white readers to "recognize that you're still racist. No matter what."
- Two YouTube videos, both named "Black Parents Explain/How to Deal with the Police," in which parents reduce two young girls to tears of despair by assuring them they are in great danger from the police.

The challenges parents face

The challenge parents face in making their voices heard is illustrated by events in connection with EHS's Pre-AP English 10 course. EHS 10th-grade MCA reading scores have dropped

substantially since the new course was adopted in the 2012-13 school year, in conjunction with EPS's equity focus. All students are required to take the course, which replaced two previous language arts options for sophomores: regular and enriched. Classrooms are homogeneous; all students use the same core curriculum and texts. The curriculum includes little complex writing, grammar or emphasis on vocabulary, and deals largely with contemporary political themes.

In 2017-18, a group of parents spent several months analyzing Pre-AP English 10's syllabus and curriculum. They reviewed Common Core and College Board standards, and AP and ACT requirements, as well as peer district curricula, and even purchased a textbook for EHS's Department of Teaching and Learning to consider. In the process, they determined that texts used in Pre-AP English 10 were, on average, at the fifth-grade reading level, using data from Lexile.com, the website of the organization that developed the Lexile Framework for Reading. District officials agreed to review their concerns after a meeting attended by more than 70 parents, and asked several of them to participate.

The "study group" to which the parents were invited included 10 parents and 10 students, along with five or so EHS English teachers who never attended, according to people familiar with the process. The district hired a lawyer/facilitator, Paula Forbes, to run the group. When asked why teachers did not attend, EPS communications coordinator Mary Woitte responded, "We do not retain data responsive to your request[s]."

The review Forbes facilitated did not focus on the objectives and standards appropriate to a 10th-grade English course, or consider research data. Instead, it resembled a 1960s-style, feelings-focused "encounter group," according to those familiar with the process. Participants were told there was no need to prepare or bring any materials to meetings. They sat in a circle—an "ancient form of meeting," says a hand-out—and were told comments should move to the left, since "that's the flow of the heart." Attendees were invited to place an object in the center—such as "flowers, a bowl or basket,

a candle"—to "represent the intention of the circle," according to the hand-out. Speakers who felt a need to be "grounded" were invited to pick up a rock, while those who wished to talk could pick up a "talking stick," according to those familiar with the process. To "rest in a space of silence," the hand-out says, participants could request the "group guardian" to ring chime-like bells.

Parents strongly objected to district officials and the school board about the study group's unprofessional nature and lack of analytical rigor. In July 2018, the board approved the district's plan to redesign certain elements of Pre-AP English 10, in reliance on the district's assurance that it would add an "embedded honors" component by January 2019. A pilot is now underway; students who participate will not receive honors designation on their transcript. The Department of Teaching and Learning is currently in the process of revising the course. While writing, grammar and vocabulary instruction may be enhanced, it appears that core texts will remain largely the same.

A return to excellence?

EPS administrators are currently attempting to address some aspects of the district's declining academic performance. For example, there are plans to develop an accelerated middle-school class that would compact science standards into a two-year sequence, and a compacted algebra course for 8th grade, according to a "Secondary Course Design Framework" dated December 6, 2018. The district is also taking steps to enhance early reading instruction. Overall, however, the steps being considered to address high-achieving EPS students' needs include standard "equity"-inspired differentiated instruction, such as "tiering" courses and embedding honors, and so may not bring the rigor that is sought.

In Summer 2019, the Edina School Board will adopt a new five-year strategic plan, and school board elections will take place in November 2019. Both offer an opportunity to demand accountability and transparency from the EPS administration, which appears to be seriously out-of-sync with the citizens of Edina. ★



A TALE OF TWO TIMS

**It did not take long for Governor Walz
to lurch left of the policies
endorsed by Candidate Walz.**

By Isaac Orr



It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the time Minnesotans elected Tim Walz, who seemed like the likeable, flannel-wearing dad next door, whose “One Minnesota” campaign slogan conveyed a left-leaning, but moderate, message that although disagreements would be inevitable, the new governor would listen to all sides of the debate and look for ways to bridge the divide with a fair compromise.

Minnesotans were justified in believing this version of Tim Walz would be their future governor. As a congressman, he consistently ranked among the most moderate members of House Democrats, according to the nonpartisan site GovTrack, and in 2008 he earned an “A” rating from the National Rifle Association.

It did not take long for Governor Walz to part ways with Candidate Walz. More importantly, the Governor has lurched left of the policies endorsed by Candidate Walz.

An article in MinnPost detailed how Democrats and Republicans alike spoke to his reputation for being sincere, straightforward, and, generally, pretty likeable: “Jeff Blodgett, a political operative who runs the Democratic organizing group Wellstone Action, says Walz is ‘pretty forthright about his positions, doesn’t play a lot of games—even people who don’t agree with him,



folks like that in their politicians,' he said. "That authenticity really stands out for him."

This is likely the version of Tim Walz many Minnesotans voted for. Unfortunately, this is not the Tim Walz they now have in the Governor's office.

Walz lurches left

It did not take long for Governor Walz to part ways with Candidate Walz. More importantly, the Governor has lurched left of the policies endorsed by Candidate Walz.



The gas tax

"The majority of Minnesotans support a modest gas tax increase, because they know it is a way to repair our crumbling infrastructure while protecting our state's fiscal stability," Walz's spokeswoman Kayla Castaneda told the *Pioneer Press* in December 2018.

Candidate Walz campaigned on a pledge to raise the gas tax, but he was careful never to disclose how much he wanted to raise it, stating only that the

increase would be "modest." Most Minnesotans probably assumed a "modest" increase in the gas tax meant a few cents per gallon, something that was probably worth it, even if they would grumble a little about it.

However, the increase in the gas tax proposed by Governor Walz is anything but modest. The proposed 20-cent increase would propel Minnesota from having the 28th-highest gas tax to fourth-highest, representing a 70 percent increase in Minnesota's gas tax. The proposed increase in the gas tax, along with increases in vehicle registration fees, would cost the average Minnesota household approximately \$300 per year.

Time will tell if Minnesotans feel a 70 percent increase in the gas tax is "modest," but they should demand a number the next time a candidate for office pledges to raise taxes.

The Enbridge Line 3 pipeline

On the campaign trail, Candidate Walz said he supported the replacement of the Enbridge Line 3 oil pipeline, which was built in 1968 and is operating at half capacity due to safety concerns. In late October 2018, Candidate Walz told the *Star Tribune* he was satisfied with the Public Utilities Commission's (PUC) decision to allow the project to move forward. "The PUC did rule. We need to follow the process in place," said Candidate Walz.

Fast forward to February 2019, and Governor Walz has changed his tune. Instead of allowing Enbridge to begin construction on the pipeline replacement

project, Governor Walz instructed his Commerce Department to file a petition for the state Public Utilities Commission to reconsider its unanimous decision to approve the pipeline project.

In announcing his decision Walz said, "When it comes to any project that impacts our environment and our economy, we must follow the process, the law, and the science." However, the Governor also said projects like Line 3 "don't only need a building permit to go forward, they also need a social permit."

**Candidate Walz
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wanted to raise it.**

Delaying the replacement of a corroded oil pipeline that has been under review for four years based on subjective criteria of needing a "social permit" in addition to a building permit is the exact opposite of "following the science."

Governor Walz's decision to move the goalposts on a project that has completed an exhaustive environmental review is not the kind of common-sense or fair compromise Walz's "One Minnesota" theme conveyed.

Enacting Walz's energy policy would be **massively expensive and environmentally inconsequential.**

Energy policy

Candidate Walz campaigned on enacting a 50 percent renewable energy mandate in Minnesota, which would require at least 50 percent of the electricity generated in the state to come from wind or solar by 2030. Enacting this policy would be massively expensive and environmentally inconsequential (see, “Doubling Down on Failure” on page 38), but Governor Walz has again lurched to the left of Candidate Walz, recently unveiling his plan for 100 percent “carbon free” by 2050.

Here too, Governor Walz seeks to appear more moderate while not, in fact, embracing moderate policy positions. For example, Governor Walz paid lip service to nuclear power in his press conference for his energy initiative, but House File 1956, the bill associated with his plan, does not count existing nuclear power as “carbon free,” and it does not lift the state’s ban on building new nuclear power plants that has been in effect since 1994.

Governor Walz’s hollow reference to nuclear power appears to be a bait-and-switch: Nuclear is okay, just not existing nuclear or new nuclear.

What does this mean for PolyMet and other copper-nickel mining projects?

Candidate Walz said he would “follow the science” regarding copper-nickel mining projects in Minnesota. Prior to the election, this statement was en-

couraging because the Department of Natural Resources had granted PolyMet Mining Company a permit to mine, stating the company had satisfied all of the conditions designed to protect the environment.

Now, Governor Walz’s pledge to “follow the science” is worrisome. In March 2019, the Army Corp of Engineers issued PolyMet Mining the final permits needed for the project, removing the last regulatory hurdle the company needed to clear to start the first ever copper-nickel mine in Minnesota.

However, the Governor’s decision to flip-flop on Enbridge’s Line 3 pipeline and his decision to appoint Sarah Strommen as Minnesota’s DNR commissioner—who previously worked as a policy director for Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, a group that has opposed PolyMet and the proposed Twin Metals Minnesota mine—could mean the nebulous “social permit” excuse might be used to obstruct PolyMet’s path to mining.

One Minnesota?

The about-face of Governor Walz on the gas tax, Line 3, renewable energy, and mining disproportionately harms residents of Greater Minnesota. Residents of Greater Minnesota must

drive further to get to the grocery store or the doctor’s office. By appealing Line 3, Governor Walz is depriving northern Minnesota schools of tax revenue. And his “social permit” is worrisome to those who live on the Iron Range and support expanded mining.

Minnesota elected a Governor who cared about the corn fields, the iron mines, and all Minnesotans—not the Governor who takes selfies with freshman Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and caters only to the desires of the hipster North Loop.

Many Minnesotans wanted to give Governor Walz a chance to show he was serious about his One Minnesota message. That ship has now sailed. ★





≡ ANNUAL DINNER

Why Nigel Farage

DESERVES YOUR ATTENTION

On May 18th, the Center welcomes Nigel Farage to Minnesota as the guest speaker for our Annual Dinner. Why should you come? Well, he's actually behind something pretty big. Without him, Britain would not be leaving the European Union.

A brief history of Britain and the EU

There had been schemes to unite the peoples and countries of Europe under a single federal government kicking around for decades. These schemes were given a new impetus by World War II. For the second time in 50 years, Europe had plunged into the biggest war then known and taken much of the rest of the world with it. In the aftermath, it was thought, one way to stop this from happening again would be to put vital war making industries under international control. So, in 1952, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany signed the Treaty of Paris, which established the European Coal and Steel Community.

Supporters of federalism pushed on. They drew support from the United States and a shared fear of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe. On top of this, European countries were losing their empires and worried about the impact of this on their economic and political standing. These fears drew the countries' governments closer and, in 1957, the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC).

Britain wasn't one of the six signato-



ries; it still saw itself as strong enough to stand on its own as a nation and different enough from its European neighbors to be a bad fit. But by 1961, Britain was feeling less sure of itself and applied to join. Its application was vetoed by French President Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle similarly vetoed a second application in 1967. A passionate anti-American, he worried that British membership would be a means for the U.S. to control the EEC. He died in 1970, and Britain became a member in 1973, at the third time of asking.

Edward Heath, the Conservative Prime Minister who took Britain into the EEC, said “there are some in this country who fear that in going into Europe we shall in some way sacrifice independence and sovereignty. These fears, I need hardly say, are completely unjustified.” Then, the Labour Party supported withdrawal from the EEC. Elected in 1974, they held a referendum on membership in 1975. Remain won with 67 percent of the vote.

Over the years, Heath’s promise proved to be hollow. The European federalists pushed for still deeper integration. The Maastricht Treaty of 1993 established the European Union—a very different organization from the trading bloc Britain joined. The EU began to take more power from national governments. Fortunately, the UK escaped the worst excess of this push for a United States of Europe—the disastrous single currency—but still found itself ever less sovereign, with the power of the British people residing with unelected

bureaucrats in another country.

The main parties all supported this. Margaret Thatcher’s successor as Prime Minister, John Major, rammed Maastricht through the House of Commons despite the bitter opposition of a large part of his own party. Conservative Party membership cratered and has never recovered. The Labour Party saw the increasingly friendly attitude of the EU to regulation and increased taxation, and ditched its old policy of withdrawal. The Liberal Democrats, eager for any issue to be distinctive on, were the most federalist party of all. Bizarrely, Britain’s nationalist parties, the SNP in Scotland and Plaid Cymru in Wales, also supported increased control of their countries by European bureaucrats.

The rise of UKIP and Nigel Farage

There was a demand for a party dedicated to getting Britain out of the EU, and the political market supplied it. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was founded in 1993. It quickly became a home for disaffected Conservatives but struggled to make much impact, as Tony Blair’s Labour Party swept the Conservatives from office in 1997.

British discontent with the EU continued to grow as more power shifted away from the British government. In the 2004 European Parliament elections, UKIP came third with 12 members of the European Parliament (MEPs) elected.

In 2006, Nigel Farage became UKIP’s leader. He sought to broaden the party’s appeal beyond the single issue of EU membership. The Conservatives had just elected David Cameron as leader, and he called himself the “Heir to Blair.” He copied Blair’s liberal, metropolitan world view and fatuous style. He went to the North Pole to ride a sled in front of TV cameras to make some point about climate change. In response to rising crime, he urged the public to “Hug a hoodie.” Unsurprisingly, this had little appeal to most conservatives. Farage spotted a gap in the market for a small “c” conservative party which would reduce taxes and spending, be tougher on law and order, and try to get control of immigration as Britain’s population

surged. Cameron described these people as “fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists, mostly.” But voters responded. While UKIP continued to struggle in domestic elections, in the 2009 European elections, ironically, the party came second with 16.5 percent of the vote and 13 MEPs.

Between 2005 and 2010, Cameron’s strategy was that if he annoyed the Conservative right enough, he would attract enough “center” ground votes to more than compensate. This strategy failed. At the 2010 general election, amid the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and against one of the worst Prime Ministers in British history, the Conservatives failed to win. They only entered government in coalition with the Liberal Democrats. In the election, UKIP polled 3.1 percent of the vote (919,471 votes), an increase of 0.9 percent on the 2005 general election. In the 2014 European Parliament elections, UKIP received the greatest number of votes (27.49 percent) of any British party and gained 11 extra MEPs for a total of 24. UKIP won seats in every region of Great Britain, including its first in Scotland. It was the first time in over a century that a party other than Labour or Conservatives won the most votes in a UK-wide election.

Thanks to the rise in UKIP’s popularity, in large part a result of Farage’s leadership, the Conservative Party came to wonder how it could ever win another election. The idea developed that they needed to “shoot UKIP’s fox” by holding a referendum on EU membership. In the general election of 2015, the Conservatives ran on a manifesto promising such a referendum. To the surprise of most, they won. Committed to a referendum, it was held in 2016.

The rest is not yet history. Britain was due to leave the EU at the end of March. This has been delayed. EU federalists in the UK continue to try to ignore or overturn the result of the 2016 referendum. They may yet succeed.

But that result will not go away. It will remain a British declaration of independence. And the role of our Annual Dinner speaker, Nigel Farage, in securing that, was vital. ★

—John Phelan

Nigel Farage

≡ BUDGET



The **DOA** **AGENDA?**

Walz's policy agenda faces
stiff opposition.

By Rob Autry

A sleight of hand may have to outmaneuver popular policy as Governor Tim Walz tries to pull several legislative rabbits out of his hat. Minnesotans resoundingly reject key components of the controversial legislative agenda of his first term in office, according to the most recent *Thinking Minnesota Poll*, a quarterly statewide survey of Minnesotans sponsored by Center of the American Experiment.

Walz's budget, gas tax, and energy mandate all appear to be under deep water in terms of public opinion.

Meeting Street Research conducted phone interviews with 500 registered Minnesota voters (including 30 percent by cell phone) on March 11-13. There is a 4.38 percent margin of error in the data.

Most endangered seems to be Governor Walz's attempt to impose a 20-cent per gallon gas tax on drivers, giving Minne-

Perhaps most alarming for Walz's legislative strategists is that Independents reject the gas tax by 59 percent to 34 percent. It is the rare policy initiative that can survive the intensity of such opposition.

sotans the fourth highest gas tax in the country. Our data reveal that voters statewide reject the tax by a margin of 60 percent to 35 percent, with 45 percent expressing "strong" disapproval.

Minnesotans oppose the gas tax in every geographical part of the state and in every population demographic. The core Twin Cities offer the closest margin, with opponents eclipsing supporters by 47 percent to 45 percent; women aged 18 to 54 appear most sympathetic to the idea, while still rejecting it by a margin of 52 percent to 43 percent. All other regions and demographic groups reject the notion by large margins.

In partisan terms, Walz's gas tax is popular only among so-called "base Democrats." Base Democrats (those who say they are "strongly Democratic" in their partisan affiliation) support the measure by 67 percent to 26 percent, but "soft Democrats" give only lukewarm support (51 percent to 44 percent). Not surprisingly, Republicans reject the idea by stratospheric

About the pollster

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

FIGURE 1: MOST VOTERS OPPOSE INCREASING THE GAS TAX OR INCREASING THE STATE BUDGET.

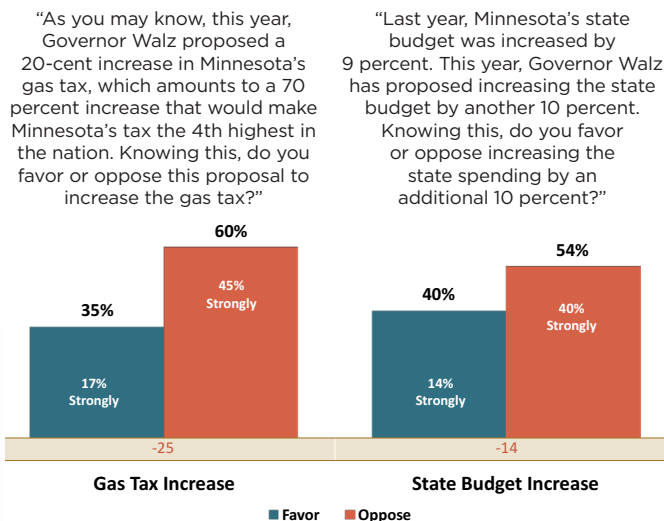


FIGURE 2: REPUBLICANS AND INDEPENDENTS DISAPPROVE OF THE GAS TAX INCREASE.

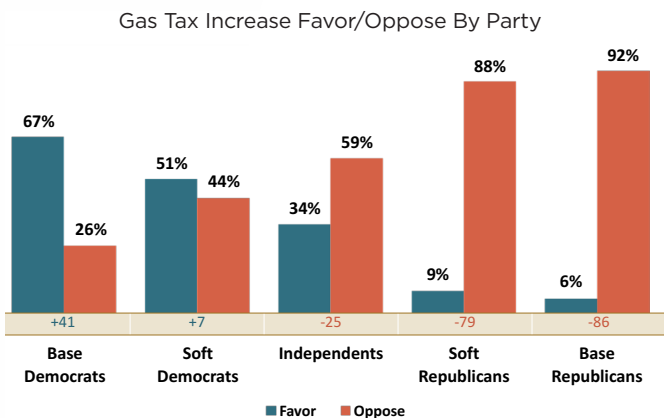


FIGURE 3: REPUBLICANS AND INDEPENDENTS DISAPPROVE OF THE STATE BUDGET INCREASE.

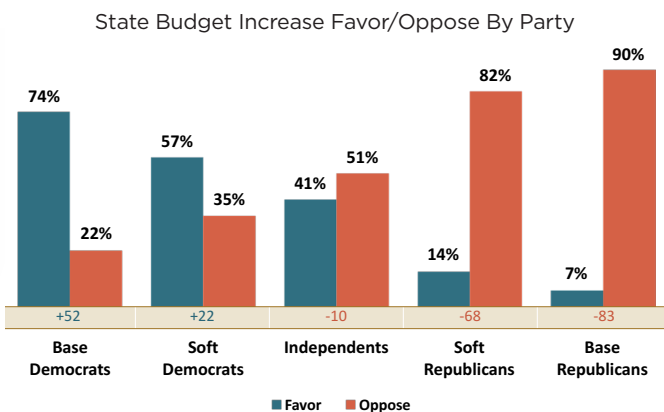


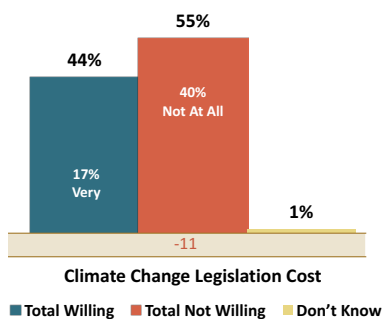
FIGURE 4: MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL VOTERS ARE MIXED OVER THE GAS TAX AND BUDGET INCREASES; OTHER MN VOTERS ARE MOSTLY OPPOSED.

| | Gas Tax Increase | | State Budget Increase | |
|----------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|
| | Favor | Oppose | Favor | Oppose |
| Minneapolis/St. Paul | 45% | 47% | 51% | 42% |
| Suburbs | 32% | 63% | 35% | 60% |
| Northeast | 28% | 65% | 30% | 68% |
| South | 24% | 70% | 41% | 47% |
| West/Northwest Twin | 33% | 67% | 35% | 62% |
| Cities | 40% | 53% | 45% | 49% |
| Rest | 29% | 68% | 34% | 61% |
| Men 18-54 | 40% | 55% | 44% | 52% |
| Men 55+ | 33% | 65% | 29% | 68% |
| Women 18-54 | 43% | 52% | 55% | 36% |
| Women 55+ | 24% | 68% | 31% | 63% |

FIGURE 5: TWO IN FIVE VOTERS ARE NOT AT ALL WILLING TO PAY THE COST OF THE PROPOSED CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION.

"A recent study revealed that Governor Walz's proposed climate change legislation would cost each Minnesota family at least \$1,200 per year in additional expenses. With that in mind, how willing would you be to pay that amount annually to combat climate change?"

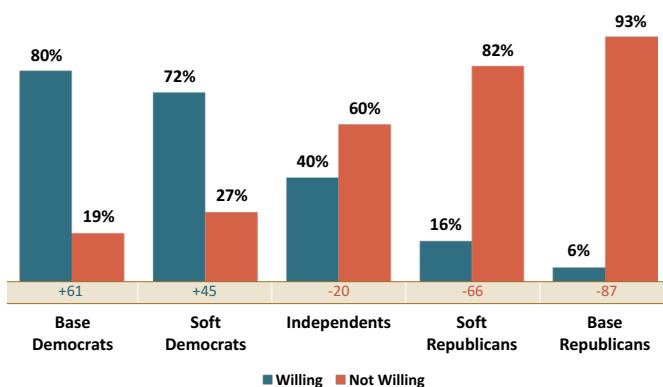
"And, how much would you be willing to pay annually to combat climate change?"



| | Among Total Not Willing |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| \$1,000 + | 1% |
| \$500-\$999 | 6% |
| \$100-\$499 | 11% |
| < \$100 | 9% |
| Nothing | 61% |

FIGURE 6: INDEPENDENTS AND REPUBLICANS SAY THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO PAY THE COST OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION.

Climate Change Legislation Cost Willing/Not Willing By Party



margins. Base Republicans oppose the gas tax 92 percent to 6 percent; soft Republicans 88 percent to 9 percent.

Perhaps most alarming for Walz's legislative strategists is that Independents reject the gas tax by 59 percent to 34 percent. It is the rare policy initiative that can survive the intensity of such opposition.

State Spending

Walz also faces steep and widespread opposition to his proposal to increase the state budget by 10 percent, which is in addition to the nine percent increase in last year's state spending. Minnesotans oppose his spending proposal by a margin of 54 percent to 40 percent. And even that number shows little flexibility, as 40 percent "strongly" disapprove and only 14 percent "strongly" approve of his proposal. Again, base Democrats and soft Democrats provide his base, with support margins of 52 percent and 22 percent, respectively. Republicans reject his spending plan by wide margins.

In terms of geography and demographics, Walz's spending plan is favored only in the core Twin Cities (51 percent to 42 percent) and by women aged 18 to 54 (55 percent to 36 percent). His greatest opposition is in northeast Minnesota and among women aged 55-plus, where he is opposed by two-to-one.

Energy Mandates

DFL lawmakers are pushing legislation that would compel 50 percent of Minnesota's electricity to come from renewable resources by 2030. The Walz agenda includes his own version of the Green New Deal that has proposed mandating a 100 percent carbon-free electric grid by 2050. A study by Center of the American Experiment (see, "Doubling Down on Failure" on page 38) concluded that the 50 percent mandate will cost each Minnesota family \$1,200 per year through 2030 and would result in no measurable decrease in global warming.

In all, 55 percent of Minnesotans surveyed said they were not willing to pay that premium. Sixty one percent of those not willing said they would pay "nothing" annually to combat climate change. While Democrats were generally supportive of the effort, Republicans adamantly spurned it. Independents also spurned the personal cost by 20 percentage points, 60 percent to 40 percent. While voters in the Twin Cities endorsed the concept 59 percent to 41 percent, voters elsewhere rejected the idea by wide margins.

Voters increased their dislike for the legislation when confronted with the Center's conclusion that a 100 percent energy mandate would only reduce climate change by 0.00073 degrees C by the year 2100. Armed with that information, 63 percent of Minnesotans said they would be less likely to support the mandate. Even more—71 percent—of respondents said they would reject the legislation when told that one local school district would have to lay off 10 teachers to make up for the resulting higher electrical prices from the legislation.

Wind

While generally supportive of wind energy (92 percent), a whopping 63 percent changed their minds when told that a local utility had “required residents to set their thermostats to 60 degrees and stop using hot water because the wind wasn’t blowing.”

Minnesotans are more positive about the direction of the state, although the “wrong track” sentiment has risen 12 percentage points.

“Right Direction/ Wrong Track”

Minnesota voters are diametrically opposed in their optimism about the country and their opinions about their state.

The country, they say, is on the wrong track, by a margin of 59 percent to 36 percent. The partisan split is wide: Republicans are considerably more bullish (79 percent “right direction” to 13 percent “wrong track”) than either Independents (21 percent

to 75 percent) or Democrats (7 percent to 89 percent). The Twin Cities (28 percent to 67 percent) and suburban women aged 18 to 54 lead the pessimists (24 percent to 71 percent). Residents of southern Minnesota are most optimistic (59 percent to 37 percent).

Minnesotans are more positive about the direction of the state, by a margin of 57 percent to 38 percent, although the “wrong track” sentiment has risen 12 percentage points from March 2018. Republican attitudes are far more negative (28 percent to 69 percent), while Democrats register dramatically more optimism about the state (85 percent to 12 percent). Independents come in at the middle (37 percent to 55 percent). Residents of the urban Twin Cities and women aged 18 to 54 are the leading “right direction” exponents about Minnesota, at 71 percent to 23 percent and 71 percent to 24 percent, respectively.

Tim Walz

First term Governor Tim Walz is generally well-known and well-liked by voters, although many describe him as being less conservative than themselves. Fifty percent have a favorable impression of Walz (22 percent “strongly”), while 28 percent think of him unfavorably (15 percent “strongly”). His strongest base of support is in the urban core of the Twin Cities (78 percent to 5 percent favorable/unfavorable); women aged 18 to 54 give him the highest marks among demographic groups (55 percent to 18 percent).

Most voters say Walz is less conservative or more liberal than voters’ own ideology. Sixteen percent say he is “more conservative”; 22 percent say he is “the same”; while 46 percent say he is “less conservative.” ★

FIGURE 7: ONLY MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL VOTERS ARE WILLING TO PAY THE COST OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION.

Climate Change Legislation Cost Willing/Not Willing By Region

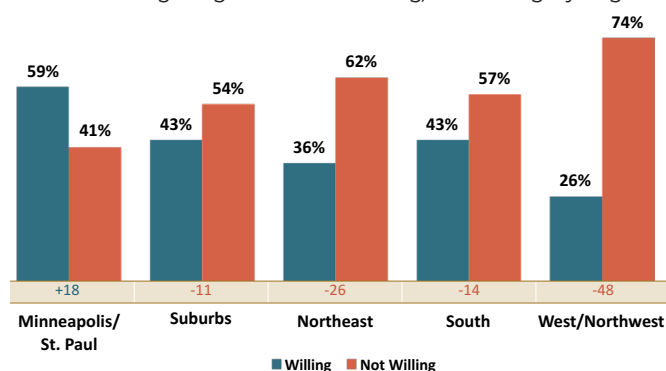


FIGURE 8: BOTH OF THESE MESSAGES AGAINST THE CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION TEST WELL.

“And if you knew that this legislation would only reduce climate change by 0.00073 degrees C by the year 2100, would that make you more likely or less likely to support Governor Walz’s proposed climate change legislation?”

“And, if you knew one metro school district projects it would have to lay off 10 teachers to make up for higher electricity prices as a result of this legislation, would that make you more likely or less likely to support Governor Walz’s proposed climate change legislation?”

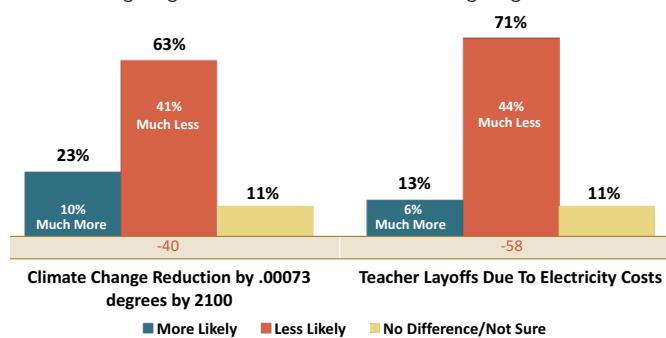
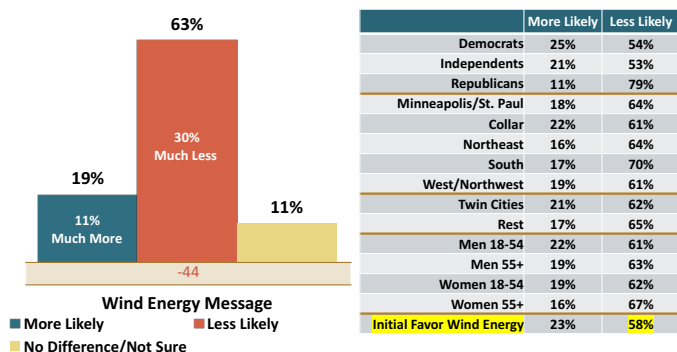


FIGURE 9: AFTER HEARING ABOUT THE IMPACT WIND ENERGY HAD ON CENTRAL MINNESOTA, VOTERS ARE LESS LIKELY TO SUPPORT IT.

“And, if you knew that in central Minnesota, local energy officials required residents to set their thermostats to 60 degrees and stop using hot water because the wind wasn’t blowing, would that make you more likely or less likely to support wind energy?”



≡ SPECIAL REPORT

DOUBLING DOWN ON FAILURE

How a 50 percent renewable energy mandate
would cost Minnesota \$80.2 billion.

BY ISAAC ORR

That's \$1,200
per year for
every MN
family

If you thought Governor Walz's proposed gas tax was going to be expensive, buckle up, because you ain't seen nothing yet.

DFL lawmakers in St. Paul have introduced legislation that would require 50 percent of Minnesota's electricity to come from renewable energy, primarily wind and solar, by 2030. Governor Walz, who called climate change an existential threat, is seeking to go even further, and has proposed mandating a 100 percent carbon-dioxide-free electric grid by 2050.

But a new study released by American Experiment demonstrates that these energy mandates would be all pain and no gain.

Many people believe that shifting away from fossil fuels to wind and solar power to generate electricity will be economically advantageous, relatively easy to achieve, and result in substantial environmental benefits. This belief could not be more wrong.

In fact, even the 50 percent mandate would force each Minnesota household to spend an additional \$1,200 per year, every year through 2050. Furthermore, this mandate would fail to make a measurable dent in global greenhouse gas emissions, or future temperatures, despite its enormous cost.

Such a misunderstanding will have far-reaching, negative impacts on Minnesota families, schools, and our economy. Such a misguided mandate would harm industries that are crucial to our state, such as farming, manufacturing and mining, the most.

The study

The Center's study examines the cost and energy mix of Minnesota's energy grid under a 50 percent renewable energy mandate, achieving 100 percent of our electricity from wind, solar, and batteries would be exponentially more expensive, if possible at all. Our study also details three alternative scenarios—a Short-Term Nuclear, Long-Term Nuclear, and Affordable Clean Energy (ACE)—that provide an alternative vision for Minnesota's energy future.

Essentially, we created the nuclear and ACE scenarios because we believe complaining without proposing a solution is called whining. Each of the nuclear scenarios would dramatically reduce carbon dioxide emissions at a much smaller cost than wind and solar.

The 50 percent Renewable scenario includes, in addition to wind and solar, 23 percent of electricity from nuclear power, 17 percent from natural gas, and the remainder from hydroelectric and biomass. At a cost of \$80.2 billion through 2050, this scenario is by far the most expensive.

The two nuclear scenarios could achieve the same reductions in carbon dioxide emissions for far less cost. The Short-Term

Nuclear scenario, which phases out coal by 2030 in favor of nuclear power, would cost \$58.2 billion by 2050. The Long-Term Nuclear scenario, which replaces coal-fired power plants with nuclear plants by 2050 (as the coal plants naturally reach their retirement ages) would cost an additional \$27.7 billion through 2050, compared to current costs.

The ACE scenario is based upon the proposed Affordable Clean Energy rule devised by the Trump administration as a replacement for President Obama's Clean Power Plan. This scenario would require existing coal plants to make upgrades to emit less carbon dioxide, while still allowing them to continue operation. This plan would *reduce costs* by \$7.5 billion compared to current costs, through 2050.



In essence, wind
and solar force
Minnesotans to pay
twice for electricity
they can only
use once.

Aren't wind and solar cheaper?

Think again. Would you be willing to go without electricity if the wind wasn't blowing or the sun wasn't shining? Probably not. So, it is important for people to understand that the grid is not a giant bathtub where electricity sloshes around until it is needed. Electricity must be delivered at the exact moment it is needed, and it cannot be stored economically.

Think of what happens to a fan when you unplug it from the wall. The need for supply to carefully meet demand at all times is why wind and solar cannot compete with nuclear, coal, or natural gas. Wind and solar can produce electricity only if the wind is blowing or the sun is shining. Wind turbines produce electricity around 40 percent of the time. In contrast, humans control when, and how much, electricity is generated by nuclear, coal, and natural gas plants.

These concepts may seem unrelated to cost, but they are the chief reason why wind and solar cannot currently reduce our electricity

costs—and probably never will. None of us would be willing to go without electricity at night (when it isn't sunny), and we wouldn't roll the dice with wind during a polar vortex. We still need to have coal, natural gas, or nuclear power plants available to generate electricity, no matter how many wind turbines or solar panels we build. No matter how cheap wind and solar may someday get, they will still be an additional cost on the electric grid, and therefore, will still increase your electric bill.

It's true that electric companies may save some money by burning less coal or natural gas to generate electricity, but these "savings" are overstated. Power plants have many fixed costs—such as the mortgage on the power plant, maintenance costs, paying for staff, insurance, and taxes—and these costs must be paid whether or not the power plants are generating electricity.



Wind and solar can only offset certain costs of a power plant that burns fuel to generate electricity.

Think of it this way: Let's say you decide to leave your car in the garage and ride your bike to work. You may be saving the cost of gasoline for your commute, but you still have to pay your car payment, interest on the loan, licensing, insurance, and maintenance. In this case, wind and solar still cost more per unit of electricity produced, and we still need enough dependable electricity sources to be available to generate 100 percent of our electricity.

In essence, wind and solar force Minnesotans to pay twice for electricity they can only use once.

What will it cost *me*?

To understand how Minnesota families would be impacted under each of these scenarios, it helps to understand what \$1 billion is, more generally. Minnesota has 2.1 million households, so if we assume the cost of the government spending \$1 billion is shared equally among these households, each will have to pay an additional household burden of \$476. The same concept applies to electric bills.

At \$80.2 billion, the Renewable scenario would cost each household around \$37,000 through 2050, or roughly \$1,200 per year. Switching to nuclear power to reduce CO₂ emissions would still be expensive, but it would be far less expensive than relying on wind and solar. The total cost of the Short-Term Nuclear scenario would cost each household nearly \$27,000 through 2050, or \$867 per year. The Long-Term Nuclear scenario would cost each household \$12,700, or \$410 per year. Lastly, the ACE scenario would save each household approximately \$3,500, or \$112 per year.

The savings from the ACE scenario are not a world changer, but they are better than shelling out an extra \$1,200 per year, every year, for 31 years. Minnesota households will experience this increase in the form of higher electric bills and higher prices for goods, services, and taxes, as other entities raise their prices to make up for higher electricity bills due to renewable energy mandates.

Electric bills: Prepare to pay more

Increasing Minnesota's renewable energy mandate to 50 percent will cause electricity prices to rise by about 4.18 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh), or 40 percent compared to today's prices. As a result, the average Minnesota household can expect to pay \$375 more every year for electricity under the Renewable scenario. Bills would rise by \$272.33 every year under the Short-Term Nuclear scenario, and \$129.61 under the Long-Term Nuclear scenario. Each household would save \$35.10 under the ACE scenario.

It's not just families who will pay higher electricity prices due to wind and solar mandates. Schools will, too.

Impacts on education

Energy costs are the second largest expense incurred by schools throughout the country after the salaries of teachers, administrators, and support staff. As a result, high electricity prices represent a very real opportunity cost for school districts, forcing them to spend money on electric bills that should be spent on students.

For example, Edina Public Schools district uses 13.8 million kWh of electricity every year, according to Edina's Electricity Action Plan. Increasing the price of electricity by 4.18 cents per kWh would result in increased electricity costs of approximately \$576,400. Edina would have to lay off 10 teachers making \$56,000 per year to pay these higher electric bills, or raise property taxes to keep them on staff. In contrast, the ACE scenario would save Edina schools nearly \$54,000, allowing them to hire one additional teacher or offer other programs.

School districts in Greater Minnesota would be hurt even more, as they are already facing teacher shortages. Starting salaries for licensed teachers in some rural areas are as low as \$31,000 per year, a key reason why rural districts are unable to compete for teachers with more affluent urban and suburban districts. One of the most effective means rural school districts have to address teacher shortages is to increase wages in an attempt to lure teachers, but rising electricity prices will limit their ability to do so.

There is a growing coalition of high school students lobbying for 100 percent renewable energy in Minnesota. Do you think they would still want this outcome if they were aware of the costs involved with their position?

But it will save the planet, right?

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Minnesota currently emits 28.3 million metric tons (0.0283 gigatons) of carbon dioxide from power plants per year. This amount sounds like a lot, but according to the Global Carbon Budget, global emissions

were 37.1 gigatons in 2018, which means Minnesota represented only 0.0007 of global carbon dioxide emissions. If we pursue the Renewable, Short-Term Nuclear, or Long-Term Nuclear scenarios, our share of global carbon dioxide emissions would fall by 0.0006.

The impact on future global temperatures would be equally small. Even under the climate models used by the Obama administration, which have been criticized for "running too hot," future global temperatures will only be reduced by 0.0006 degrees C by 2100—an amount too small to be accurately measured with even the most sophisticated scientific equipment.

Even under the climate models used by the Obama administration, which have been criticized for "running too hot," future global temperatures will only be reduced by 0.0006 degrees C by 2100—an amount too small to be accurately measured with even the most sophisticated scientific equipment.



High electricity prices represent a very real opportunity cost for school districts, forcing them to spend money on electric bills that should be spent on students.

Interestingly, Governor Walz and DFL lawmakers have been mum on how much global warming their policies would avert. Given the massive costs for minuscule benefits, it's not hard to imagine why. And because greenhouse gases mix evenly in the atmosphere, Minnesota would still incur all the greenhouse gas emissions from China, India, and other states and countries that give this issue scant attention. Given the enormous \$1,200 per year cost, and immeasurably small benefits to the environment, most Minnesotans would probably prioritize that money for other expenditures.

Isn't renewable energy creating a jobs boom?

Renewable energy advocates often tout "green" energy as a major engine of job creation, but using the economic modeling software IMPLAN, we calculated that 20,950 Minnesota jobs would be lost due to higher electricity prices in the Renewable scenario. The Short-Term Nuclear and Long-Term Nuclear scenarios would reduce employment by approximately 13,900 and 6,750 jobs, respectively, and lower electricity prices in the ACE scenario boosts employment, creating 1,500 jobs.

Furthermore, 82 percent of the jobs created by the wind and solar industry were temporary construction jobs in 2017. Rather than building a broad base of employment for a sustainable jobs future, renewable jobs disappear once the project is finished.

Aside from the temporary construction jobs created, increasing electricity prices will destroy more-permanent jobs in important Minnesota industries like mining.

Mining

Mining is an indispensable pillar of Minnesota's economy. With annual average wages exceeding \$80,000 per year, mining jobs are some of the best jobs in the entire state. They are especially critical for northeastern Minnesota, where average annual wages

are approximately \$42,000.

But because mining operations use enormous quantities of electricity, high electricity prices put these jobs at risk. The cost of electricity constitutes roughly 25 percent of the cost of iron ore produced in Minnesota. The cost of electricity for Minnesota's iron mines has already increased more than 60 percent on average since 2007, when Minnesota enacted its 25 percent renewable energy mandate.

Iron ore mines and paper mills in northern Minnesota used 4.77 billion kWh of electricity in 2016, which was 8 percent of the electricity used in the entire state. This figure could reach 6.1 billion kWh if iron mines operate at a higher capacity.

By increasing electricity prices 4.18 cents per kWh, a 50 percent renewable energy mandate would increase the cost of electricity for the mining and paper mill industries between \$199.2 million and \$254.8 million every year. This increase is the equivalent of 2,490 to 3,185 high-paying mining jobs. Minnesota policymakers need to understand their actions are actively undermining industries crucial to our state's economy and our nation's security.

Under the ACE scenario, iron mines and paper mills would save between \$18.6 million and \$23.8 million, on average, every year through 2050 relative to 2016 prices. The gulf between the Renewable scenario and the ACE scenario is \$217.9 million and \$278.6 million, the equivalent of 2,723 to 3,482 mining jobs.

Renewable energy advocates often cite increasing demand for steel, copper, nickel, and cobalt as a reason why Minnesotans on the Iron Range should support more renewable energy mandates. There is no doubt that doubling the renewable energy mandate will increase Minnesota's demand for these metals, but we won't be able to afford to mine them here.

Conclusion

If DFL lawmakers are truly concerned about reducing CO₂ emissions, they must lift Minnesota's ban on new nuclear power plants, which has been in place since 1994. Otherwise, they are advocating for expensive and ineffective solutions to the issue they claim is an existential threat to "the children."

I've noted several times on AmericanExperiment.org that wind speeds were too low to generate electricity during the polar vortex, and some wind turbines were shut down because it was too cold. Not only would nuclear power plants be essentially guaranteed to run in -24 degree weather, but our study also found that new nuclear power plants would achieve a lower emissions rate by 2030 and save Minnesota at least \$22.3 billion through 2050.

Minnesota can show true leadership and provide reliable, affordable, and safe electricity by legalizing new nuclear power, not by doubling Minnesota's reliance on intermittent "green" power (and natural gas).

Turns out, wind energy is *not* the answer. ★





FALSE FEMINISM

The #MeToo movement

has made one thing incontrovertibly clear: Contemporary America is confused and conflicted at the deepest level about sex, sexuality, and social norms that should guide men's and women's intimate relations.

By Katherine Kersten

As the #MeToo movement has spread from the upper echelons of Hollywood to the halls of Congress, what has most struck me is the startling disconnect between the movement's feverish sensitivity to sexual impropriety, on the one hand, and women's eager embrace of our nation's sex-drenched popular culture, on the other.

For example, in 2017—the year #MeToo came to public attention—hip-hop/rap surpassed rock for the first time as the most widely consumed genre of pop music. Americans are now avid consumers of a form of music that demeans and hyper-sexualizes women. Yet far from protesting, Hillary Clinton agreed to appear at the 2018 Grammy awards in a video mocking President Trump that featured raunch-rappers Snoop Dogg and DJ Khaled.

Movies, television shows, and video games routinely depict women as male playthings, and women willingly buy into it. Indeed, the world's best-selling women's magazine, *Cosmopolitan*, coaches them in how to project sexual desirability and availability to men—how to make themselves “hot.” In 2012–13, E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*—written for a female audience—burst onto the publishing scene. *Fifty Shades* glamorized sadomasochistic abuse of a vulnerable young woman by a powerful man. James earned \$95 million by “selling more copies” of her book “faster than any other author in

history,” according to *Forbes*.

No one would dispute the fact that some men use positions of power and influence to assert sexual dominion over women, committing reprehensible acts and causing real misery. But the #MeToo movement has made one thing incontrovertibly clear: Contemporary America is confused and conflicted at the deepest level about sex, sexuality, and social norms that should guide men's and women's intimate relations. Sometimes these schizophrenic tendencies are on vivid display in the same person.

Model and actress Emily Ratajkowski, for example, made news when she was arrested at the U.S. Senate Building during an anti-Kavanaugh demonstration. “Today I was arrested protesting the Supreme Court nomination of Brett Kavanaugh, a man who has been accused by multiple women of sexual assault,” she tweeted. “Men who hurt women can no longer be placed in positions of power.” Yet Ratajkowski launched her career by dancing nude in an R&B music video, arousing the male libido that fires the “rape culture” she deplors.

Nowhere is the current confusion more evident than on American college campuses, where administrators tolerate the hook-up culture—in which young people engage in casual sex with no intention of emotional connection—as a matter of course. “Casual sex was happening before in college,” according to Indiana University psychologist Debby Her-



benick, “but there wasn't the sense that it's what you should be doing. It is now.”

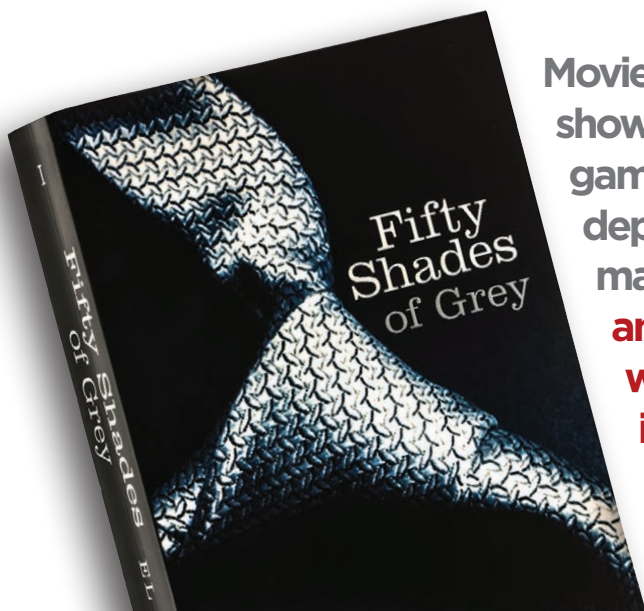
Joanna Coles, former editor of *Cosmopolitan*, reports in a new book on what has become a way of life for some female students. A friend's daughter, she says, gave this description of a typical weekend at her liberal arts college: “My friends and I all go out on Friday nights, get drunk and hook up. And on Saturday morning, we go down to the health center together to get Plan B.” Some feminist commentators regret how women's own behavior is contributing to an apparent epidemic of sexual harassment. “I've noticed a weird pattern, in fiction and life, about sexual encounters,” *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd wrote recently. “Women decide they're not attracted to a guy they're nestling with... But they go ahead and have sex anyhow.” Why? she asks.

Jessica Bennett, who was appointed the *Times*'s first “gender editor” in October 2017, thinks she knows. Bennett openly admits that she and her friends often say “yes when we really mean no” to a sexual encounter. They wish to avoid hurting men's feelings, having to argue, or appearing inexperienced.

Sex today, she explains, often falls into a “gray zone.” By this, she means that

murky gray area of consent; begrudgingly consensual sex, because, you

Movies, television shows, and video games routinely depict women as male playthings, and women willingly buy into it.



know, you don't really want to do it but it's probably easier to just get it over with; lukewarm sex, because you're kind of "meh" about it; and of course, bad sex, where the "bad" refers not to the perceived pleasure of it, but to the way you feel in the aftermath.

Many women now believe they are *supposed* to—expected to—have casual sex with men who don't respect or care for them.

This was not supposed to happen. The sexual revolution promised to lead to more natural and equal relations between men and women. By draining sex of moral content and stripping it of the context of a loving relationship, however, it made the very idea of consent problematic. After all, theologian Angela Franks asks, if an act has no

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content, how do you know if you want it? "Without a sense of a true good in relationships," she says, "we don't know to what we *should* consent. We are left with an arbitrary act of the will." As a result, women faced with potential sexual encounters today must contend with what Franks calls "the default of the yes." While a woman may turn down any given opportunity for sex for idiosyncratic reasons, she can no longer invoke socially supported ways to say no.

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article likewise confirms that women face pressure to engage in sex even in the most fleeting of encounters. The article—titled "Saying OK to Sex? There's an App for That"—advises women to



"decide what you want in advance," including "the type of sex" or "whether you want it to be casual or part of a continuing relationship." Then, it suggests,

If you have a date but don't want to have sex that night, tell the person beforehand. And give a reason. "I am eager to go out with you tonight but have to get home early." This will make sure everyone is on the same page.

In other words, a woman who doesn't want to have sex must not only expect to apologize for but to defend her decision. She can't even tell a man the truth about why.

Technology (of course) is coming to the rescue of men and women who want to get their consent on record. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that phone apps, such as the recently introduced uConsent, "allow potential sexual partners to tell each other what level of physical intimacy they are comfortable with and record their eventual agreement so there is no misunderstanding." The process works this way:

One person types what he or she is requesting into the app...[and] the other person...then types into his or her phone what he or she will agree to, and a bar code is generated. The two people then hold their phones together and the app captures the bar code and makes sure that what was requested matches what was granted.

The next frontier in 21st-century romance: trying to find the magic moment to pop the cell phone app question.

The #MeToo movement has revealed the treacherous nature of a central tenet of the sexual revolution—that women can enjoy casual sex with men who want their bodies but don't care about their welfare. The *New York Times's* Bennett points out, for example, that men and women have "wildly different understandings of consent." In one study, 61 percent of men said they rely on nonverbal cues to indicate whether a partner consents, while only 10 percent of women said they actually give consent through body language. And since persuasion is part of the sexual game,

just as the sexual revolution was rearranging our social architecture, a parallel and sometimes contradictory transformation was underway. Allan Bloom described the dynamic this way. Change in sexual relations “came over us in two successive waves”—the sexual revolution and feminism:

The sexual revolution marched under the banner of freedom; feminism under that of equality. Although they went arm in arm for a while, their differences eventually put them at odds with each other, as Tocqueville said freedom and equality would always be.

As Maureen Dowd has pointed out, while today's women “can Lean In” in the boardroom, they “can’t Walk Out” of the bedroom.

The sexual revolution presented itself as an embrace of nature, a liberation from social convention, and a “bold affirmation” of doing what comes naturally, Bloom wrote. Feminism’s watchword, by contrast, was “biology should not be destiny.” Feminism presented itself as a “liberation from nature,” which required “not so much the abolition of law but the institution of law and political activism.”

Put simply, you might say that when a woman goes upstairs with a young man after a frat party, she’s acting under the

influence of the sexual revolution. The next morning, when he doesn’t call and she feels violated, feminism kicks in.

Feminist ideology undermines women’s ability to grapple with the consequences of sexual freedom. Its defects are threefold: It holds out a utopian vision of equality; it promotes rights without responsibilities; and it predisposes women to view themselves as victims incapable of ensuring their own interests.

Feminism’s utopian vision of equality springs from its ideological roots. The movement reduces male/female relations to a power struggle, and it denies the importance of the physical, sexual, and emotional differences between men and women, including the unique nature of women’s vulnerability in the face of the aggressive male libido. Feminist ideology denounces fundamental social institutions as the products of a patriarchal culture and views them as intentionally designed to oppress women. From this perspective, the edifice of social norms that protected today’s college girls’ great-grandmothers is cast as an instrument of domination—an intentional denial of equality.

Susan Faludi captured feminism’s utopian vision in her 1992 best seller, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. She spoke of feminism as bringing salvation, as ushering in what she called “the promised land of equality.” By this measure, women cannot be truly equal unless their outcomes on every front are identical to men’s. That includes the ability to engage in sex of any kind without heartache or regret. Such expectations are unrealistic, given the limitations of the human condition. On the other hand,



About the Author: Katherine Kersten, a writer and attorney, is a senior policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. She served as a Metro columnist for the Star Tribune from 2005 to 2008, and as an opinion columnist for the paper for 15 years between 1996 and 2013. She was a founding director of the Center and served as its chair from 1996 to 1998.



The sexual revolution marched under the banner of freedom; feminism under that of equality. Although they went arm in arm for a while, their differences eventually put them at odds with each other.

they ensure that women will always have cause for anger and grievance.

Feminism also hobbles women’s ability to navigate complex male-female relations by framing them in terms of “rights.” Such “rights talk”—a phrase coined by Mary Ann Glendon—is political and can never exhaust the richness and nuance of the age-old dance between men and women. It refuses to acknowledge that rights bring responsibilities, and it precludes the notion of contributory negligence by women in any social conflict, including sexual encounters gone wrong.

Finally, feminism undermines women’s ability to cope with the challenges of today’s sexual free-for-all by conditioning them to think of themselves as victims—weak, bewildered, and lacking in moral agency. By portraying women as pawns of patriarchal forces beyond their control, feminism suggests they cannot advance, or even grasp, their own interests.

Notions of this kind seem out-of-date in a world where women make up

56 percent of college students and a majority of medical and law students, and serve as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, such as General Motors and IBM. But the idea of women as victims is a pervasive theme in the works of second-wave feminism's founding mothers. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan's 1963 best seller, women of the 1950s are portrayed as "empty" and "infantile" creatures, "anonymous biological robot[s] in a docile mass" who marched glassy-eyed into their comfortable suburban "concentration camps." In 1983, Gloria Steinem described women as "psychic colonies... half-people who labor confusedly under a derived identity." By 1992, despite the remarkable gains of preceding decades, Susan Faludi still maintained that women—no matter how prominent and successful—remain "blind to their own interests and abilities," groping "in the dark for purpose and direction," and making the most important decisions of their lives on the basis of the "whispers" and "cajolings" of the patriarchy.

Today, the narrative of woman as hapless victim remains central to the #MeToo movement. It is the theme of "Cat Person," a 2017 *New Yorker* story that went viral as the movement was gathering steam. The main character, a twenty-year-old college student named Margot, meets a man and initiates sex, but is then revolted by his body after he undresses. Nevertheless, she takes a swig of whisky and hops into bed with him, submitting without protest to his porn-inspired moves. At one point, she "almost floats above her body—watching herself perform the sex act almost as if she's a third party," as the *Times's* Bennett put it. Two lines of the story, which describe a text Margot sends the man afterward, capture the tenor of the entire tale: "Why did I do that? And she truly didn't know."

Margot and women like her—including Schneiderman's four lovers—are the spiritual granddaughters of Friedan, Steinem, and Faludi. They lack both a sense of their own dignity and the qualities of character necessary to preserve it,

including prudence, wisdom, courage, and self-reliance.

Feminist ideology facilitates the irresponsible behavior of Margot and her like-minded sisters. It maintains that when sexual tension or conflict occurs, women—as victims of patriarchal oppression and false consciousness—bear no responsibility. In such situations, it insists, an evidence-based search for the truth amounts to "blaming the victim." This is the source of the #MeToo movement's simple-minded mantra, "We believe survivors." Or as a sign I once saw in a university women's bathroom said: "Sexual assault, dating/domestic violence or stalking are never the victim's fault."

Instead of liberating men and women, the sexual revolution and feminism—in lethal combination—have bred anger

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and distrust that are driving them apart.

The resulting cultural upheaval has changed men as well as women. Today, our society lectures men about "toxic masculinity" instead of encouraging virtues long associated with manliness, such as self-mastery, delay of gratification, and protection of the vulnerable. Gone are the days when Jimmy Stewart, in the 1940 film *The Philadelphia Story*, chastely put a tipsy Katharine Hepburn to bed and then explained to her later why their "affair" hadn't gone further: "You also were a little the worse—or the better—for wine, and there are rules about that."

Men of good will increasingly fear women, thanks to the #MeToo movement's lynch-mob mentality and repu-

diation of due process. They hesitate to enter relationships, worrying that a woman may interpret an overture as harassment, and that her disappointment after an encounter may lead to charges of non-consensual sex that can ruin their lives.

Pornography makes it easier for men to distance themselves from women. It drenches men in graphic images of sexual exploitation that grow more lurid every year. A laptop never says no, won't get a man fired, and makes no emotional demands.

For their part, women are increasingly giving up on men. Many say it is becoming harder and harder to find a man who is respectful, kind, and considerate. That's no surprise, says sociologist Mark Regnerus. For American men, sex has become "cheap."

In the past, sex was expensive, notes Regnerus—women demanded a lot in return for it. Generally, the price was marriage, with its promise of love and fidelity. Today, women give sex away without expecting much in terms of time, attention, respect, or faithfulness, and "men, in turn, do not feel compelled to supply these goods as they once did." In other words, Regnerus concludes, women "are hoping to find good men without supporting the sexual norms that would actually make men better."

When women make themselves more available and less "expensive," they lose one of the fundamental social processes that made men grow up and act responsibly. By decoupling sex from the institutions of marriage and family—with their guardrails of mutual care and fidelity—the sexual revolution eliminated men's incentive to redirect their powerful sexual impulses to pro-social ends.

#MeToo is the wrong response to a serious problem. It blames sexual indignities on toxic masculinity and rape culture, when it ought to look at the very premises of sexual liberation. ★

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FINAL WORD

CAPITOL WATCH

The Center's new newsletter calls out politicians who waste the Legislature's time and taxpayers' money.



John Hinderaker

The public generally believes that state government involves a considerable amount of foolishness, and the public is right.

In February, the Center launched a new project called Capitol Watch. This project is our effort to keep an eye on what our elected representatives are doing in St. Paul and to hold them accountable. It includes a website, MNCapitolWatch.com, and a weekly email. (If you are not already getting Capitol Watch emails, you can subscribe by emailing Pari.Cariaga@MNCapitolWatch.com.)

The website and email have three sections. The first is “just the facts.” It includes headline legislative news and information about important bills that are working their way through committees.

A few examples of what we have reported on include Governor Walz’s proposed budget and its “war on cars,” featuring a 70 percent increase in the gas tax; the Office of Legislative Auditor’s explosive report on fraud in the Child Care Assistance Program; the extraordinary costs and ineffectiveness (from a climate change perspective) of proposed “green” legislation; Governor Walz’s effort to block the environmentally friendly Enbridge pipeline project; and much more.

The second section is called Capitol Follies. It documents, and mocks, foolish things that go on at the Capitol. These include pointless legislation—one of my favorites was a resolution urging President Trump not to start a nuclear war—wasteful spending, and so on.

Capitol Follies have included bills for tax credits for installing a sauna; government payments for damage done by beavers and wild turkeys; and a requirement that the annual budget forecast include, along with the forecast of economic growth, a “genuine progress indicator.” Also to be computed are “the value of services from social capital, including the value of leisure time, unpaid labor, and internet services,” “the value of services from built capital, including the value of transportation, water, and household infrastructure,” and “the social costs of economic activity, including

the costs of homelessness, underemployment, crime, commuting, and vehicle accidents.” The University of Minnesota would be paid \$200,000 annually to puzzle over how to come up with those numbers.

The public generally believes that state government involves a considerable amount of foolishness, and the public is right. At Capitol Watch, we name names and call out politicians who waste the legislature’s time and taxpayers’ money.

Capitol Watch concludes with A Little Birdie Told Me. Here we include stories that Capitol insiders are talking about that have not (yet) attained the status of news. “Little Birdie” items have included, for example, evidence of a distressing lack of civility in legislative committee hearings; a change in committee structure under the new DFL House leadership that confers vast power on the House Ways and Means Committee; an apparent rift between Governor Tim Walz and the DFL’s biggest supporter, Education Minnesota; and a change in the legislative calendar to include weekend sessions in response to the fact that almost midway through this year’s session, only two bills had actually reached the governor’s desk.

We have long been critical of the manner in which Minnesota’s legislature operates. Legislators generally begin each session without a meaningful plan. Much time is wasted in the session’s early months, leaving important decisions to be made—if at all—in the middle of the night during the session’s last days.

Voters and taxpayers need a gimlet-eyed third party to follow what goes on in St. Paul, critically evaluate the work of both political parties, and expose inappropriate procedures and useless or damaging legislation to the light of day. This is what the Center does through Capitol Watch. We hope you will find our bulletins both informative and, occasionally, amusing. ★

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