



Minnesotans trust the police, avoid Minneapolis, and increasingly blame Gov. Tim Walz for rising crime.

THINKING MINNESOTA



ISSUE 24
SUMMER 2021
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State and Twin Cities leaders dither while vulnerable residents live in fear and increasing danger.

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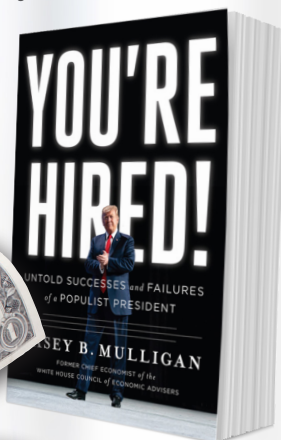
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FIELD OF NIGHTMARES

Remember when baseball was about baseball? The Minnesota Twins and other virtue-signaling elites will eventually reassess their PR rush to embrace Black Lives Matter.

The reason I demanded — and got — a refund for my Minnesota Twins season tickets this year had nothing to do with the team's epic failure against preseason expectations. That has happened before during the 60 years I've enthusiastically followed the team. It's still baseball. It's still the Twins.

Like a lot of Minnesotans of a certain age, I still remember how the arrival of the Twins in 1961 transformed our state's pride, even if the team had to reconstruct itself from the elements of the always woeful Washington Senators. Baseball was America's elite professional sports league. Cities that earned their own franchises entered the upper echelon in the pecking order of American cities.

I can still hear broadcasters Herb Carneal and Halsey Hall describe the heroics of Harmon Killebrew, Earl Battey and Camilo Pascual over our family's little AM radio. Their distinctive voices resonate throughout our farm in Elrosa like the familiar sounds of old friends.

Baseball became America's Pastime for the way it transcended the sometimes-petty political differences that divide its fans. As Thomas Mann says in *Field of Dreams*, "This field, this game: It's a part of our past. It reminds us of all that once was good and it could be again."

The Twins, in particular, seemed to unify Minnesotans from the get-go. We all watched, astonished, as they rose from nowhere to compete in the 1965 World Series. And can anyone dispute the soaring heights of civic pride that evolved as the Twins won World Series championships in '87 and '91?



Ron Eibensteiner

I thought my heart would never lose its soft spot for the Minnesota Twinkies. But as I sat down in my seat this spring at Target Field to watch a game, I nearly dropped my \$7.50 hot dog when I saw a Black Lives Matter sign affixed to the right field fence and a similar sign in left-center field. I almost can't describe the depth of my disappointment in the Twins' management for politicizing America's Pastime.

I eventually stood up, walked up to the team's business office, and got a refund on my season tickets.

I confess that the Black Lives Matter sign on the Twins' outfield wall brought to a boil a number of questions that had been simmering within me

through the spring.

Why do we, the sports fans, tolerate these finger-wagging judgments from self-righteous athletes or suddenly-woke sports executives who feel compelled to tell us what to believe or how to think? And why do media give LeBron James the moral or intellectual authority to lecture us? (LeBron James has spent his entire life getting rich by dunking basketballs. Prior to his recent outburst, I've never heard him voice concern for any other issues.)

For that matter, how could Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred unilaterally move the All-Star Game from Atlanta to punish the state for *proposed* election-day reforms? Why would executives at Coca-Cola or Delta Airlines feel compelled to denounce those same reforms? And don't get me started about the self-righteous heavyweights in Hollywood.

The Black Lives Matter signage on Target Field's right field fence presented me an opportunity to say, "Enough!" And to do something about it, however modest my "punishment."

I can only hope that the management of the Twins, led by the Pohlads family, fully understands the mission and the principal beliefs of Black Lives Matter, an organization that is dedicated to uprooting the foundations of American culture.

Although the BLM website presents a moving target of the organization's aspirations, none seek a cultural unity that will safeguard black communities or promote opportunities for them to live more prosperous or fulfilling lives.

Black Lives Matter continues to push municipal governments to defund and otherwise undermine their police. Led by unapologetic Marxists, the organization renounces capitalism. And by advocating the disruption of the “Western-prescribed” nuclear family, it doubles down on the disintegration of black families.

If Twins executives support these concepts, they should tell us. And for good measure, Glen Taylor, principal owner of the Minnesota Timberwolves, should weigh in as well.

Why do we, the sports fans, tolerate finger-wagging judgments from athletes or suddenly-woke sports executives who tell us what to think?

To give them credit, the Twins have a history of being good corporate citizens. Their recent pledge of \$25 million to the community — along with the potential use of their bully pulpit — could go a long way to securing our streets, improving the outcomes in Minneapolis schools, and working to rebuild black families. However, when there was a need to speak up for public safety and black-on-black violence, we heard not a word from these sports executives or athletes. Or how about a bit of concern for the dismal performance of Minneapolis public schools in giving minority students a quality education? More crickets! They only voice concern for the plight of minorities when it involves a rogue policeman. What hypocrites.

Before they funnel any money into the coffers of Black Lives Matter, they should listen to Rashad Turner, the founder of the St. Paul branch of BLM. Rashad recently

resigned from the organization because, “after a year on the inside, I learned they had little concern for rebuilding black families.” The Twins (and you) should watch his YouTube video, “The Truth Revealed about BLM.” In it, he says, “I believed the organization stood for exactly what the name implies — black lives do matter.” Today, Rashad is president of the Minnesota Parent Union.

They would do well, too, to look at the remarkable progress being made by TakeCharge Minnesota, an organization founded by Kendall Qualls that is working hard to rebuild black communities.

If any organization deserves support from the Twins, Timberwolves and Vikings it is TakeCharge. Far from creating a culture of victimhood, Kendall has modeled TakeCharge to inspire and educate the black community and other minority groups in the Twin Cities to take control of their own lives, the lives of their families and communities as citizens, fully granted to them in the Constitution.

Kendall’s organization wants to embrace the core principles of America — not reject them. These principles are embedded in the belief in hard work, education, faith, family, and free enterprise in the personal pursuit of dreams that can be realized by anyone regardless of race or social standing.

Over time, the Twins, Timberwolves and Vikings should work less on social engineering and more on building a good team. Baseball has the power to unite communities. Just as the Twins will come back as a baseball team (someday, perhaps, after a change in managers), Americans of all colors are going see BLM for the organization of self-serving radicals that it is.

When ego-driven ballplayers and the PR-focused woke sports executives get out of the way, maybe we can once again watch a baseball game together, drink a Coke, or buy a hotdog without fear of being politically lectured. ★

Tom Mason
Editor and Publisher

Ryan Hiraki
Managing Editor

Scott Buchschacher
Creative Director

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STAFF

John Hinderaker
President

Katherine Kersten
Senior Policy Fellow

Peter Nelson
Senior Policy Fellow

Isaac Orr
Policy Fellow

Catrin Wigfall
Policy Fellow

John Phelan
Economist

Martha Njolomole
Economist

Tom Steward
Government Accountability Reporter

Charles Nickoloff
Finance Director

Peter Zeller
Director of Operations

Bill Walsh
Communications Director

Allison Payne
Communications Specialist

Katie Fulkerson
Communications Consultant

Micah Olson
Greater Minnesota Outreach Director

Kristen Sheehan
Development Consultant

Lydia Luciano
Donor Relations Coordinator

Kathryn Hinderaker
Event Coordinator

Mitch Rolling
Policy Analyst

Mitch Pearlstein
Founder Emeritus

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Too late to shut the door?

> Your story, “Bloated Government,” in the Spring 2021 issue of *Thinking Minnesota* was scary but not surprising. Our “trifecta” state “leaders” have opened the door to union monopoly bargaining for local governments and you can guess who is advising local officials on how to proceed. The same type of folks who are staffing your League of Minnesota Cities (LMC)! We are fighting back but... what is the old saying about the barn door?

—Mark Mix, President, National Right to Work

Cult following

> Thank you for your fine work on the Walz administration’s promotion of woke policies in the schools (“Educrats Unleashed”). I don’t know how citizens can make a difference protesting this craziness, especially when so many are either afraid to disagree publicly or just assume that this is some enlightened new way of solving a problem they couldn’t even perceive until now. I truly believe that for many it is a cult, maybe for others just politically correct — which is troublesome enough — but

how can we be effective counter-acting this mania?

—Jan Carpenter, Bloomington

Despite the war?

> The cover story of the spring issue of *Thinking Minnesota*, “Educrats Unleashed,” struck a chord with me. I have been an advocate of community level school boards and district control of curriculum, finance and decision-making that will best allow our schools to produce graduates who are prepared to become good citizens and civic leaders. My own daughters were already being taught “alternative” history in the 1990s.

Then I skipped back to “5 Questions with Ryan Hiraki,” and was shocked to see the phrase “Despite the war, the Vietnamese tend to love Americans.” We

fought to deny a Communist takeover there. We sent 2.7 million defenders to South Vietnam, and lost more than 58,000 of our troops.

So what does “despite the war” mean? Why would an American teaching English in Saigon use that phrase? Has the history of Vietnam been rewritten by the Communists ruling from Hanoi? Has the *Deliberate Dumbing Down of America* by Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt from the 1980s been overwritten by the “1619 Project”? If 1619 and Critical Race Theory become the standard, will REAL American history remain as nothing but ashes?

—Burt Buchen, Minneapolis

All politics is bloated

> Having recently served on a city council, I can say Tom Steward’s story “Bloated Government” in the spring 2021 issue is a perfect depiction of the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC). City leadership, including staff, elected officials and legal counsel, often defer to LMC before making important decisions. Everything is about being risk-averse rather than being courageous and doing what is best for their citizens. They scare

you with open meeting law horror stories to the point where you feel like you can’t engage in meaningful conversations with constituents for fear of retribution. Pile on their “big government” DFL influence and you have a recipe for disaster. City government needs common sense, not the partisan garbage spewed at the state and federal levels.

—Bill Flatley, South St. Paul

“They scare you with open meeting law horror stories to the point where you feel like you can’t engage in meaningful conversations with constituents for fear of retribution.”

Not on the same Page

> The Page Amendment is bad. Unfortunately, the idea that “we’ve tried everything else” is highly persuasive. Your campaign would be far more effective if you were to add a POSITIVE proposal to it. The fact is, we have NOT tried “everything.” We have not even tried the “No Child Left Behind” reform enacted 20 years ago. Put simply, it fought the “soft bigotry of low expectations” that continues to tempt us to throw more money at schools with no improvement in achievement.

If you want to improve achievement you should measure and demand THAT, rather than measuring the amount of money thrown at it. Schools should be ranked based on performance and given the flexibility to improve, including the funds to provide specific, measurable improvements. Then failure to improve would require that all students be given the state aid directly, to seek alternative schooling.

—Jerry Ewing, Apple Valley

The leftist machine

> As a Baby Boomer who was raised in a family of Democrats, I am a witness to Minnesota's slide into the abyss of radical left politicians, newspapers, TV news stations, and school systems.

How does society benefit when one party, the American Democratic Party, has so much control over our politics and media? Why does the leftist *New York Times*, *Associated Press* and *Washington Post* have center stage while our own voices are silenced or regulated to small print on the back pages? Why did my children have to go through high school and Minnesota universities with a muzzle over their mouths because they feared for their safety when expressing conservative views or worried about getting bad grades from professors who had no problem pushing a leftist curriculum?

“How does society benefit when one party, the American Democratic Party, has so much control over our politics and media?”

And why are we now seeing corporations applying that same kind of propaganda and mind control in the workplace?

Silencing, ostracizing and trying to manipulate nearly half of the American population into leftist belief systems is a powder keg ready to explode. If we are to survive as a nation, we had better bring back an equilibrium of fairness.

—Corby Peltó, Minneapolis

Teachers make bad governors

> The double taxation of our Social Security benefits has always been a pet peeve of mine. Despite going from a sizable deficit to an even more sizable surplus, plus what our federal government is adding to our coffers, our governor originally wanted to again raise our taxes, focusing on high earners. When is enough enough? I learned while living in Wisconsin before moving here in 2012 (for my kids and grandkids) to NEVER elect a former schoolteacher or educator to the governorship. It's always tax and spend. How about, “Live within your means and listen to your constituents”? It would be admirable to keep our higher earners and Social Security recipients from even considering leaving the state. ★

—Tim Huettl, Ham Lake

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UP FRONT

Education

ROAD WARRIORS

‘Raise Our Standards’ tour draws substantial crowds, support.

The Raise Our Standards tour that challenges Critical Race Theory and revisionist history is mobilizing Minnesotans who oppose the efforts of Gov. Tim Walz and his education officials to favor the cultivation of politically correct attitudes over academic achievement. And support for Center of the American Experiment events has been so overwhelming that future dates are still under consideration.

The tour coincides with the Department of Education’s proposed revisions to social studies standards so history in K-12 schools is taught through a lens of Critical Race Theory. American Experiment, part of a nationwide trend in protesting CRT and revisionist history, began its events on June 8 in Winona and continued them through June 30 in Burnsville. The tour was scheduled for 17 cities, with Policy Fellow Catrin Wigfall the featured speaker at each one.

“The urgency couldn’t be more obvious,” Wigfall says. “Parents, grandparents and concerned Minnesotans must activate on the grassroots level to stand up against the politicizing of our schools.”

The tour stops in Greater Minnesota averaged about 100 attendees per stop. At the time of publishing, the four Twin

Cities events each had more than 200 people signed up to attend.

These gatherings are important, Wigfall says, because they are a way for like-minded Minnesotans to connect, something American Experiment will enhance through online tools that facilitate communication about schools across the state. Wigfall hopes the publicity of the tour will inspire activists to become more involved in education, to review textbooks, attend other meetings and events, and perhaps run for school boards.

The impact has been so great that leftists pressured three venues to back out.

Duluth’s stop was canceled — twice — when the Northland Country Club reneged two days before the event, and then the Holiday Inn backed out after agreeing to take the country club’s place, citing scheduling conflicts.

The Elks Lodge in Hibbing followed suit by canceling less than 24 hours before a scheduled event. This stop was then rescheduled for JJ’s Coffee & Cream.

It was Black Lives Matter and the NAACP who tried to shut down debate via social media by absurdly labeling American Experiment’s opposition



Raise Our Standards SCHEDULE

June 08

Winona
Rochester
Owatonna

June 09

Mankato
Willmar
Hutchinson

June 15

St. Cloud
Alexandria
Moorhead

June 16

Thief River Falls
Bemidji

June 17

Hibbing
Duluth
(RESCHEDULED*)

June 28

Oakdale/Woodbury

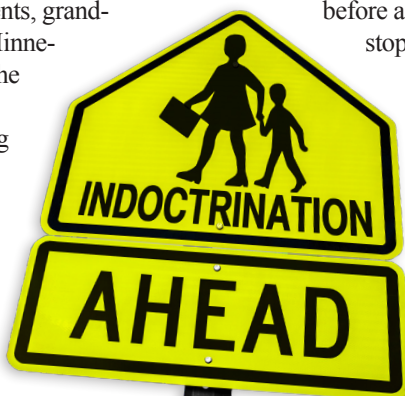
June 29

Maple Grove
Coon Rapids

June 30

Burnsville

*Check RaiseOurStandardsMN.com for time and date.



to CRT as “hate speech” and “overt racism.” And at the Moorhead stop, one woman was arrested for disorderly conduct after getting into a scuffle with an elderly man who was wearing an “All Lives Matter” button.

“The Left in Minnesota are afraid of a free exchange of ideas so they are trying to shut us down instead,” American Experiment President John Hinderaker says. “It won’t work. Many hundreds of Minnesotans have participated in the Raise Our Standards tour, and we will not be deterred by these tactics. We thank the Moorhead police officers for helping us restore order at the Moorhead event and Duluth will be rescheduled as soon as we find a venue with the courage to host the event.” ★

—Bill Walsh



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For 31 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 American Experiment staff and policy fellows.

Sometimes, it has been that of honored guests and world leaders such as George Will, Benjamin Netanyahu, Margaret Thatcher, Sarah Huckabee Sanders and, in May, Laura Ingraham.

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

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Water Cooler Talk

In case you missed it...and what to watch for.

The Minnesota Angle

More than 1,000 people watched Fox News's LAURA INGRAHAM urge conservatives to keep fighting the radical left at American Experiment's Annual Dinner. Ingraham, host of The Ingraham Angle, gave an impassioned speech about how important it is for Minnesota — a state she insists is still winnable for conservatives — to defeat the liberal agenda.

More than 400 people showed up to the Eagan event, while thousands more watched online.

This includes the 50 or so Minnesotans who attended a watch party hosted by American Experiment's Owatonna chapter.

"State of the State"

American Experiment continues to build statewide support. We opened new regional chapters in Duluth and Owatonna this past spring, which were added to the Rochester chapter we created two years ago.

On top of that, we hit the road for other events featuring President JOHN HINDERAKER and Economist MARTHA NJOLOMOLE.

An event in St. Cloud was at capacity, with nearly 80 people; an event in Bemidji later that day generated a crowd of almost 100 — about double our initial expectations.

At both events, Hinderaker spoke about leftist attacks on our Constitution, and Njolomole talked about the importance of a free market system.

Economist JOHN PHELAN took his expertise to Greater Minnesota as



Laura Ingraham urged conservatives to take Minnesota back from the Democrats.

well, presenting our latest economy report in Red Wing, emphasizing the way state government is strangling business and commerce.

Riding the radio waves

Education Policy Fellow CATRIN WIGFALL was invited on the nationally syndicated radio program Washington Watch with TONY PERKINS to discuss Minnesota's proposed social studies standards revisions and their new emphasis on "whiteness," equity and gender.

It was one of a handful of appearances Wigfall has made on state and national

media outlets as American Experiment's Raise Our Standards campaign has gained significant momentum throughout Minnesota and beyond for opposing Critical Race Theory and revisionist history.

Young summer

The Young Leaders Council (YLC) — a branch of American Experiment that empowers young conservatives by connecting them with business leaders, policy experts and political voices at the local, state and national levels — hosted more than 60 guests and members this spring at an Edina networking event.

Both John Hinderaker and Catrin Wigfall spoke briefly about the importance of young people getting and staying involved in the conservative movement as the Left becomes more and more radical. Stay tuned for more YLC events this summer.

The Minnesota-Florida connection

Minnesotans who make the Sunshine State their part-time or new full-time home learned about American Experiment's mission from John Hinderaker, who talked about the staff and experts behind our conservative campaigning and messaging. Among the hosts were former Minnesota Sen. NORM COLEMAN as well as TED and JENNIFER RISDALL.

From Malawi to Minnesota

Policy Fellow Martha Njolomole also made multiple appearances this spring,

including the **LACY JOHNSON Podcast**, where she talked about **growing up in Malawi**, a poor, small country in Southeast Africa, and her **journey to America**, supporting free enterprise.



Martha Njolomole

She admitted that at one time she believed government was the solution to poverty, but she changed her mind after **studying economics at Troy University** and continuing her research into topics such as **taxes, regulation and innovation**.

Energy merit badge

Policy Fellow ISAAC ORR continues to trigger renewable energy advocates, drawing a shot in a *Duluth News Tribune* op-ed by **ERIC ENBERG**, a doctor who leads the **Citizens' Climate Lobby**. "Unfortunately, **Isaac Orr** of the conservative **Center of the American Experiment** once again is straining to hold back the electric vehicle."

In his March 13 column in the *News Tribune*, "**Walz can pump the brakes, too, on electric vehicles.**" Orr argued that **electric vehicles are too expensive, have poor range, and are a poor fit for rural Minnesotans.**

Expect Orr to double down on these points as part of American Experiment's "**Say No to CA Cars**" campaign.

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Choice Words

State leaders again ignore school choice advocates.



The fight for school choice that ramped up this past spring is just the beginning of a movement that continues to gain traction, but it faces an uphill battle against state leaders' apparent lack of interest in expanding educational opportunity.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) died at the hands of Democrats during last month's special legislative session, not much of a surprise when you consider Gov. Tim Walz's indifference to school choice advocates.

More than 100 of them, mostly parents and students, gathered in May outside the governor's residence to encourage Walz to support ESAs. Walz's response? A form letter filled with platitudes.

"How frustrating," said Kofi Montzka, a mother of three and a key organizer of the rally.

Montzka is a founding member of The Exodus Minnesota, an organization

started by five black mothers who believe expanding school choice is a must to ensure all students receive a quality education.

The moms gave a state patrol officer a letter that highlighted the need for greater school choice in Minnesota, emphasizing that COVID-19 and widening academic achievement gaps have made this need more evident than ever before.

Walz's response letter showed his disconnect with addressing the moms' concerns: "Thank you for taking the time to contact our office." Standing outside of Walz's home is not contacting his office.

Walz, a former teacher and union member, did not use the terms school choice or ESAs anywhere in his letter.

Efforts to urge Walz and state leaders to include ESAs in the final education bill of the 2021 legislative session didn't let up, though. Parents and other advo-

cates used a June press conference to again focus on the need to help families find alternatives to the failing status quo, calling out Education Minnesota (the state's teachers' union) and Democrat leadership for not putting kids first.

"If we are saying Black Lives Matter, that needs to start with a quality education," said Rashad Turner, executive director of the Minnesota Parent Union and former leader of the St. Paul chapter of Black Lives Matter. "How many times do we need to show up to talk about how important our children are before folks like Education Minnesota and the Democrats in the Capitol understand? Quality education should not be political. You are on the side of children, or you are on the side of the status quo. My ask is that you get on the side of children and families."

Benito Matias, principal of Ascension Catholic School in north Minneapolis, called on state leaders to act on behalf of Education Savings Accounts.

"Here is an opportunity to deliver some justice and some equity" through ESAs, Matias said. "We are asking politicians to listen to what families are saying, to what scholars are saying, and help us provide voice, choice and agency for all families in Minnesota."

Senate Education Committee Chair Roger Chamberlain said the only way ESAs wouldn't be included in the final bill "is if House Democrats and Gov. Walz block it. They can no longer just sit behind the doors. They will have to face the public, face parents, and tell them they don't deserve equality."

A March poll from Morning Consult shows that 69 percent of Minnesotans support ESAs. ★

—Catrin Wigfall

Update

The Return of Columbus?

Thousands of Minnesotans petition the state to return his statue to the Capitol.

A committee of Minnesota residents and public officials will finalize a process this year that will determine Christopher Columbus's return to the Capitol, because the statue was illegally torn down last summer.

Paul Mandell, executive secretary of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, said a task force is revising its rules to include removal procedures for commemorative pieces such as the bronze statue of Columbus. The key will be defining and refining the draft language, especially the part that reads "sustained, overwhelming and documented public objection" is required for the removal of Columbus and anything similar. Quantity of signatures is likely to

be a big part of the discussion.

"From our standpoint, Columbus has not been taken down," he says, so there will need to be an application and approval for this to become official.

The bronze statue was torn down on June 10, 2020, during an American Indian Movement (AIM) protest, part of a statewide and nationwide trend of denouncing historical figures as racist or oppressive. Center of the American Experiment responded with a campaign that collected 4,755 signatures demanding the return of the explorer's likeness. This led to the realization that there is no process in place for the removal of statues, only for the addition of them.

Should the removal never become official, the legislature will have to find \$154,000 to repair the Columbus statue and put it back in its rightful place. A bill to return Columbus to his granite perch passed the Minnesota Senate but died in budget negotiations.

The 10-foot statue, built by Italian American Carlo Brioschi, was erected in 1931.

—Bill Walsh



The bronze statue was torn down on June 10, 2020, during an American Indian Movement (AIM) protest, part of a statewide and nationwide trend of denouncing historical figures as racist or oppressive.

Ben Hovland / Shutterstock.com



Why are 85% of predators convicted of possessing images of child rape, torture and sexual abuse, receiving no jail time in MN?

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UPFRONT

Local Politics

Total Recall

Red Wing residents fight to remove the entire city council.

A Google News search on “recall entire city council” ranks Red Wing in the top two because residents want to kick every councilor out of office — and these elected leaders are choosing to ignore their voters’ recall petitions.

The council voted 6-1 in May against a special election that could have forced them to update their resumes sooner rather than later. Councilor Kim Beise was the lone dissenting vote. He argues that the charter and state’s open meeting laws were violated during a closed session when another councilor broached a topic not related to that meeting, and that city residents collected enough signatures to force a recall election.

“It’s ludicrous that we voted on this,” Beise says. “We should send it to a charter commission.”

George Hintz, leader of the Recall City Hall Committee, says this conflict — the only one that pops up on Google in which residents want to recall their entire city council — stems from the dismissal of Police Chief Roger Pohl-

man in February. The council’s letter to Pohlman cites a failure to communicate effectively with the council and respond to citizens.

Hintz feels this is one of a handful of occasions in which the council decided city business privately, and violated the charter and the state’s open meeting laws in the process. And no matter the outcome, the fight is sure to drag on for most of the year, if not into next year and beyond, especially with city officials standing their ground.

Red Wing City Attorney Amy Mace delegitimizes the recall effort by claiming it doesn’t meet state standards. The councilors must be found guilty of three violations of the open meeting law, and no court has made that decision, she says.

“She’s wrong,” says Greg Joseph, the Recall City Hall Committee attorney. “Charter cities have a lot of autonomy.”

His clients, he argues, knocked on doors and gathered the requisite signatures to force a special election, based on the city charter. And Joseph has not only been in this kind of fight before, he’s won. Twice.

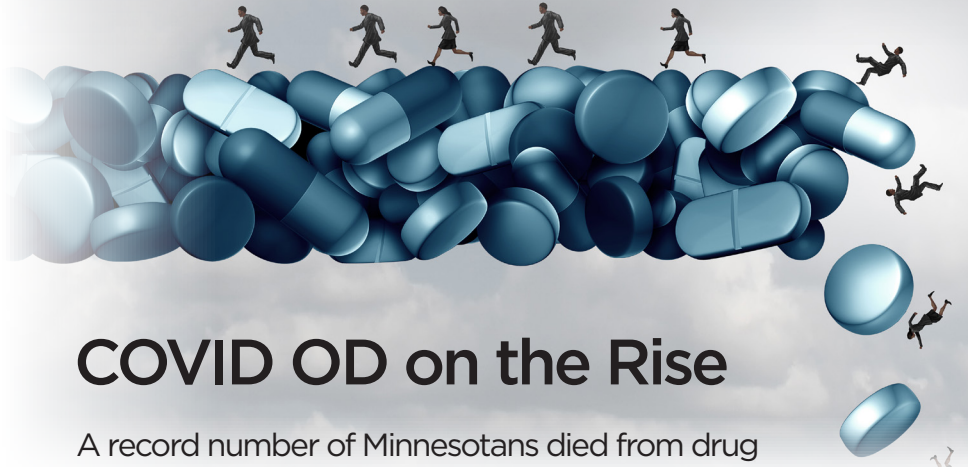
The Minnesota Supreme Court sided with him and his clients in similar cases in both Bloomington and St. Paul, two of the state’s five biggest cities. ★

—Tom Steward



Robert H. Ellis / Shutterstock.com

Collateral Damage



COVID OD on the Rise

A record number of Minnesotans died from drug overdoses during the pandemic. Youth were hit hardest.

Data on 2020 overdose deaths show that Minnesota and America experienced soaring drug fatalities as COVID-19 restrictions took hold.

The latest federal numbers cover October 2019 to October 2020, a one-year stretch with a 28 percent increase in fatal overdoses and 88,990 overall deaths, according to data from the National Vital Statistics System. In Minnesota, the Department of Health data cover all of 2020 and reveal a 27 percent increase in overdose deaths, much of it attributed to young people, despite being COVID's lowest-risk demographic.

In 2020, 274 individuals aged 25 to 34 died from an overdose, while only 15 died from COVID-19. To put it in perspective, individuals aged 25 to 34 were 18 times more likely to die from overdose than from COVID-19. The biggest discrepancy in risk is among individuals aged 15 to 24 — they were 40 times more likely to die from an overdose than from COVID-19. “With COVID there’s this terrible storm about lack of access to treatment medications, housing and treatment facilities,” said Dr. Ryan Kelly, an assistant professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

Overdose deaths spiked to record levels in March 2020; monthly deaths grew

around 50 percent between February and May, to more than 9,000, according to estimates from the Commonwealth Fund, a policy group that aims to make health care more efficient. U.S. monthly overdose deaths had never before risen above 6,300.

Opioids accounted for about 75 percent of overdose deaths during the early months of the pandemic. Around 80 percent of those included synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.

Individuals aged 25 to 34 were 18 times more likely to die from overdose than from COVID-19.

The Commonwealth Fund estimated back in March that, based on weekly estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020 overdose deaths could top 90,000, which “would not only be the highest annual number on record but the largest single-year percentage increase in the past 20 years.” ★

—Martha Njolomole

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An Aspirational Pipedream

Why the Page Amendment hurts students.

For years, Minnesota schools have been striving to shrink our state's stubborn racial learning gap. The frustration that's resulted may explain recent interest in the proposed Page Amendment, which would alter our state's constitution to make a "quality" education a "fundamental right."

The amendment's language is uplifting and aspirational. Unfortunately, the easy fix it promises is a pipedream.

Amendment proponents claim that changing a few words in our constitution would — as if by magic — solve a problem that has vexed us for decades. But these words are empty. The promise they offer is like guaranteeing every child a "right" to be a top high school athlete or get an A in chemistry class.

Page supporters claim their amendment would "put K-12 education in the hands of parents, where it belongs." In fact, by creating an unprecedented "positive" right to an undefined "quality" education, it would shift control of education policy and funding from parents, school boards and legislators to Minnesota lawyers and courts.

Courts are inexperienced in education reform. They know how to do one thing: Hand out money.

The amendment would open a Pandora's box of lawsuits, massively increase spending, and seriously erode democratic control of education — with little or no academic improvement to show for it.

Page Amendment supporters offer the slimmest of evidence to support their call for constitutional change: They claim that amendments in two states, Florida and Louisiana, led to academic improvements by minority and low-income students. But gains in Florida did not flow from, or require, the state's 1998 constitutional

amendment. They were the fruit of a comprehensive K-12 reform plan that Gov. Jeb Bush initiated in 1999. Louisiana's gains resulted, not from revising the state's constitution, but from the enhanced school choice that followed Hurricane Katrina.

Virtually no state has produced enduring academic gains or significantly narrowed the racial gap by turning education over to the courts.

In New Jersey, for example, in the late 1980s the state Supreme Court ordered lavish funding in low-income districts

Virtually no state has produced enduring academic gains...by turning education over to the courts.

for reforms ranging from universal pre-K to massive new construction and social services, funded by the largest sales- and income-tax hike in state history. Today some districts spend as much as \$34,000 per student. Yet a recent study revealed that academic performance has not significantly improved, and in some cases has fallen. The story is similar in state after state.

Here in Minnesota, the Page amendment would spawn a host of lawsuits. For example, parents who believed their children weren't "fully prepared to participate in the economy" after high school graduation, as the amendment requires, could sue the state for failing to meet its constitutional obligation.

Other plaintiffs could sue to compel their own vision of "quality" education, ranging from universal public pre-school for the very youngest children, to comprehensive sex education, to racial quotas for students and teachers in every classroom. The fate of charter schools, private schools and homeschools under the amendment is unknown.

Improving academic achievement and shrinking the learning gap are goals all Minnesotans share.

How can we do better? Mississippi, of all places, is showing the way. In 2019, it ranked No. 1 in the country for gains in fourth-grade reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Mississippi spends far less per pupil than Minnesota, and 75 percent of its students — vs. 37 percent of ours — get free or reduced lunch. Yet today, its low-income students are third in the nation on fourth-grade reading, while Minnesota's are 40th.

Mississippi owes its progress largely to an intense early reading policy of identification, intervention and monitoring. As a last resort, third-grade students who can't read are retained for a year of enriched, individualized instruction.

Giving the courts control of K-12 policy — as the proposed amendment would do — would work against innovative approaches like Mississippi's. In fact, imposing rigid, top-down control of this kind would stymie effective reforms.

There is no magic bullet for effective K-12 reform. Meaningful reform requires the leadership of elected officials who have high standards, make tough choices, demand accountability, support robust school choice and push back relentlessly against the special interests that stand in the way.

Find more information at OurVoiceOurChoiceMN.com.

—Katherine Kersten

A version of this article first appeared in the Faribault Daily News.

Taxes

Nothing to Brag About

Minnesota didn't raise taxes. But why not lower them?

Minnesotans escaped higher tax rates from the latest state budget — but they deserved to save more of their money because Minnesota has at least a \$1.6 billion surplus.

The state has a \$52 billion budget overall for the next biennium, a total that will be boosted by billions of dollars in federal money coming from COVID-19 relief packages.

“Minnesota did it again,” Gov. Tim Walz boasted at a press conference to announce the budget deal. “We found commonality amongst ourselves.”

Not amongst everyone. Millions of Minnesotans would benefit from tax cuts and Democrats have proved they were never serious about them. Last July, Walz's budget office released a projected shortfall of \$4.7 billion for the 2022-23 biennium. Walz's response? Raise taxes. The big ones were in the form of corporate and income tax hikes.

The suggested increase in the corporate rate was from 9.8 percent to 11.25 percent, a dangerous proposition. Corporations use tax savings to provide good-

paying jobs, crucial as everyone bounces back from the COVID-19 recession. And every state around Minnesota has lower rates other than Iowa, which used to have the nation's highest corporate taxes — 12 percent — as recently as a few years ago and today matches the rate in Minnesota.

That means our corporate taxes would have jumped to third in the nation after Iowa trended toward our Upper Midwest neighbors, creating a big incentive for our businesses to relocate.

Walz also wanted to surpass our top income tax rate, 9.85 percent, by creating a fifth tier of 10.85 percent. This would have bumped Minnesota from having the fourth-highest rate in the country into the top three. Once again, overtaxing high earners gives them reason to leave for low-tax states as nearby as South Dakota or as far away as Florida. A 2016 Center of the American Experiment report found that former Gov. Mark Dayton's tax hikes led to billions of dollars of lost income from Minnesotans on the move.

The wealthiest ones aren't the only ones who suffer. Those charged the lowest rate, 5.35 percent, still pay more than the highest rates in 25 other states.

Even more discouraging was the fact that Walz refused to back off his tax hike proposals when the expected deficit shrank from \$4.7 billion to \$1.2 billion. Worse yet, he continued his push for more taxes when deficits turned into the \$1.6 billion surplus we have today.

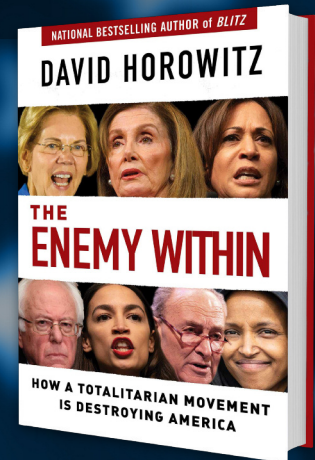
Fiscal conservatives, who believe that lower tax rates raise prosperity for a maximal number of Minnesotans, called for spending cuts when forecasts were at their worst and feel even more strongly now as the state has a lot of cash to play with.

They are frustrated to hear Walz brazenly declare the legislative session a success. ★

—Martha Njolomole



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TOM STEWARD

FUNNY MONEY

Cities get 'creative' in a rush to spend federal COVID relief largess.

Local government officials meeting by Zoom, under a tight deadline with a mandate to dole out billions of dollars as quickly as possible. What could go wrong?

As cities were proclaimed the front lines of COVID-19 relief, the feds did what they do best — hand out tons of money to make it better. Some \$841 million in federal pandemic funding from the CARES Act fell into the laps of mayors, city managers and councilors across Minnesota last year.

The timeline for distributing the windfall was short and cities were restricted, initially, in how they could spend it. Common sense measures like tax cuts to help homeowners were off the table from the start. So was offsetting city losses due to the pandemic, such as revenue from shuttered driver's license service centers.

Guidelines allowed city hall to bill for COVID-related costs like plexiglass dividers, laptops for employees working from home, protective masks, hand sanitizer and O.T. for police and fire. But that still left many municipalities with tens or even hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars burning a hole in their pockets.

"City councils are comfortable talking about streets, curbs and gutters, not handing out hundreds of thousands of dollars to businesses and families," said one local elected official.

The pressure to rush dollars out the door and potential for reckless spending led the city of McIntosh to decline CARES funding altogether. One of just 12 cities to opt out, officials in the small northwestern Minnesota community concluded the program was a waste.

"We had masks donated to us and I



Tom Steward

already had hand sanitizer in my office for years," said McIntosh City Clerk Melissa Finseth. "If the city needed to look for reasons to have COVID expenses, personally as the city clerk, I felt it would be a disingenuous expenditure. That is wasteful spending of taxpayer money. It isn't free money, it's taxpayer money."

After scratching and clawing for every last allowable COVID expense, some cities got creative in how they allocated their bonanza by the Nov. 15 deadline, later pushed back to Dec. 31.

Maple Grove directed \$53,360 to deploy park ambassadors who were "educating, informing folks about the best way to use the park system." Lake Wilson's fire department got a \$9,443 washer and dryer "for when on accident scenes with COVID patients." Anoka

invested an unspecified sum on "utility carts for golf courses to keep one employee per cart" that led to "additional wear on the course and additional fertilizer was required to maintain courses with excessive cart use."

There's more...

Hector traded in a used John Deere along with \$30,500 in CARES Act funds to procure a Bobcat for "emergency situations to assist ambulance crew with clearing out snow to get COVID patients out of their homes." Bethel plowed most of its \$38,000 into park improvements and bike trails because residents "only have one park right in town. We needed additional parking and improved the bathrooms for touch free facilities."

These examples merely scratch the surface. Yet the Minnesota Department of Management and Budget (MMB) told American Experiment it "has not flagged any city" over CARES expenditures.

Lake St. Croix Beach City Hall got a \$42,449 makeover with a "new HVAC system, touchless faucets, flushers and electrical switches, and a water bottle fountain installed." Nearly all of Hanska's \$27,801 pandemic handout went to updating the muni bar. And Forest Lake took wasteful spending even further, with a \$150,000 addition to the golf course clubhouse, something the city later rescinded following a public outcry.

"This money was earmarked from the federal government to help businesses and cities survive this pandemic," said Blake Roberts at an Economic Development Authority meeting. "Not increase city facilities and amenities. That in my eyes is just plain wrong. That's not what this money was intended for."

UPFRONT

About 22 percent of CARES Act funds spent by cities ultimately flowed to small businesses and nonprofits. Some communities went above and beyond. Chokio directed 100 percent of CARES funding — \$29,307 — to small businesses, while Hutchinson passed on two-thirds of its allotment, nearly \$700,000.

Many cities also provided financial assistance to food shelves, nursing homes and individuals in need. Moreover, dozens returned unspent funds to the county with Deer Creek sending back every cent of its \$24,486 share.

McIntosh City Clerk Melissa Finseth: “If the city needed to look for reasons to have COVID expenses, personally as the city clerk, I felt it would be a disingenuous expenditure. That is wasteful spending of taxpayer money. It isn’t free money, it’s taxpayer money.”

In the end, the biggest beneficiaries were cities themselves. Cities banked more than one-third of their stash — \$311 million — by collecting for the payroll of public health and safety employees already accounted for in their annual budget. Austin banked its entire federal allotment of \$1,927,882 for “payroll costs related to public safety employees (fire and police) even if budgeted.”

COVID may be winding down, but the pandemic of government bailouts continues to spread. MMB will begin distributing a second round of local government funding from the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act this summer. ★

The Courts

UMLC Trumps Keith Ellison — Twice

Triumphs vs the state bring hope for small businesses.

Minnesota congregations can rejoice about a big win over Gov. Tim Walz’s COVID-19 emergency orders, while energy advocates scored a significant victory that will force Attorney General Keith Ellison to make documents public regarding climate change lawyers embedded in his office. And now small business owners have more reason to hope that they can someday celebrate as well.

The state settled with Northland Baptist Church and Living Word Christian Center after a federal judge refused to dismiss the case. No damages were paid. The churches simply wanted the state to respect their First Amendment rights and allow them to gather in person. Now all religious settings around the state must be treated the same way as grocery and retail outlets, as well as sports and entertainment venues.

The churches, represented by the Upper Midwest Law Center, are the first entities to defeat Walz and Ellison with regard to their “emergency” orders. About 50 others saw their cases dismissed. And it was Ellison’s second big loss in less than a month to the UMLC as the Minnesota Court of Appeals sided with Energy Policy Advocates, a public interest group seeking transparency in nationwide energy policy.

The court mandated that the attorney

general stop withholding data from the public by hiding behind broad and general claims of privilege. Ellison’s critics bash him for allowing outside special interests such as former presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg to fund “climate warrior” lawyers in his office. It’s a hypocritical move when you consider Ellison bemoans the American Legislative Exchange Council’s lobbying legislators to pass pro-business policies — well within ALEC’s First Amendment rights.

The UMLC can now turn to the other half of its case that includes the churches: Fighting for small businesses — such as 18/8 Fine Men’s Salons in Wayzata and Maple Grove — who believe the



U P P E R M I D W E S T
L A W C E N T E R

differentiation between their work and that of the bigger corporations is arbitrary and unlawful.

UMLC Founder and President Doug Seaton is hoping the Federal Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals will reinstate this case. And the outcome with the churches reinforces his faith that they can find victory here too.

“We already won half this case and now we’re going to go win the rest of it,” Seaton says. ★

—Ryan Hiraki



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More with Less

Getting out of the way of the economy.

The Trump administration was punctuated by a string of “explosive” books — mostly composed of unsourced tittle-tattle — which were published, “exploded,” and disappeared. *You’re Hired! Untold Successes and Failures of a Populist President* by Chicago University Economist Casey B. Mulligan, who served as chief economist of President Trump’s Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) from September 2018 to August 2019, is, thus, a rare thing: A serious book about the Trump presidency.

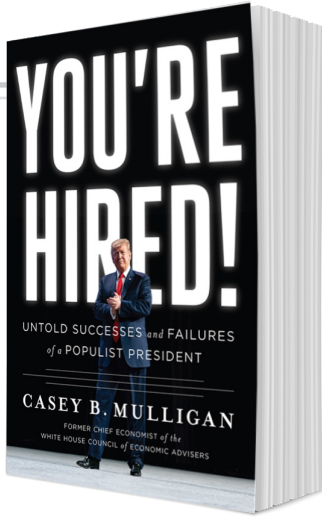
Mulligan gives an insider’s view of how the administration made economic policy. That policy was successful. It

might be hard to remember now, among the economic ravages of COVID-19, but President Trump’s boastfulness about the American economy under his watch had some justification.

Remember how, the day after Trump’s election, economist turned columnist Paul Krugman said: “[W]e are very probably looking at a global recession, with no end in sight.” But when the Census Bureau’s “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2019” report was released, it showed that median household income was \$68,703, up 6.8 percent from 2018, to reach the highest level, adjusted for inflation, since the bureau began measuring

it this way in 1967. The official poverty rate was down 1.3 percentage points from 2018 — that’s 4.2 million fewer Americans living in poverty — to reach 10.5 percent, its lowest level on record.

True, these numbers continued trends which began under President Obama’s administration and credit should be given where it is due. But some trends ticked up when Trump took office. The Census Bureau numbers show that in his first three years in office median incomes for all households rose by more than \$6,000. And these gains were widely shared. Black Americans saw their incomes rise by \$3,389 under the Trump administration, Hispanics by \$5,322, women by \$3,029. Every group saw a larger income gain in three years under Trump than in the 16 years under George W. Bush and Barack Obama (\$3,000). This explains why a Septem-



Black Americans saw their incomes rise by \$3,389 under the Trump administration, Hispanics by \$5,322, women by \$3,029. Every group saw a larger income gain in three years under Trump than in the 16 years under George W. Bush and Barack Obama (\$3,000).

ber 2020 Gallup survey found that 56 percent of registered voters believed they were better off then than four years before. They actually were.

Indeed, when COVID-19 hit, the American economy fared comparatively well. OECD data show that, from the fourth quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2020, real GDP fell by 10.1 percent in the United States compared with 11.5 percent in Germany, 13.4 percent in Canada, and 15.1 percent for the eurozone. This is a testament to the underlying strength of the American economy.

Key sources of this strength were the Trump administration's tax cuts and deregulation. The passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act pre-dates Mulligan's time in the CEA so it gets relatively little coverage here, though Mulligan speaks very positively of the act. Mulligan's focus is on deregulation, particularly in health

care. Regulation is the economic policy arm most often ignored, perhaps because it cannot be as easily quantified as fiscal and monetary policy, so this discussion is particularly interesting.

It wasn't all good, of course. President Trump's trade war with China imposed costs on the American economy which offset some of the positive impact of fiscal and regulatory policy. Like most economists, Mulligan opposed these policies, but he goes too far in looking for a secret sense hidden behind them. A look at Trump's statements, going back to his criticisms of Japan in the 1980s, shows that he isn't just pretending to be a mercantilist. He actually is.

President Trump's style, too, could impose economic costs. Major policy changes were sometimes announced on Twitter, seemingly with little prior consultation. This policy uncertainty also acted as a headwind to growth. Here too, I think, Mulligan goes too far in exculpating President Trump. His characterization of the president's use of Twitter as the crafty utilization of a massive focus group stretches credibility. Indeed, it is something of a paradox that, despite his ceaseless tweeting, President Trump's supporters — his real audience — were the sort of people least likely to be reached using social media.

If the economy does well we credit the president. If it does badly we blame him. In truth, the control of presidents over economic outcomes is less complete than we — or they — would like to think. Presidents can do a lot of harm with misguided policy, but, on the positive side, they often do best when they do least. As time progresses and the heat hopefully dissipates from the debate regarding the Trump administration, we will get analysis that accounts for this nuance. Mulligan's book will be a valuable part of that. ★

—John Phelan



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Eternal Sunshine

Why a transportation committee senator should stay in her lane.

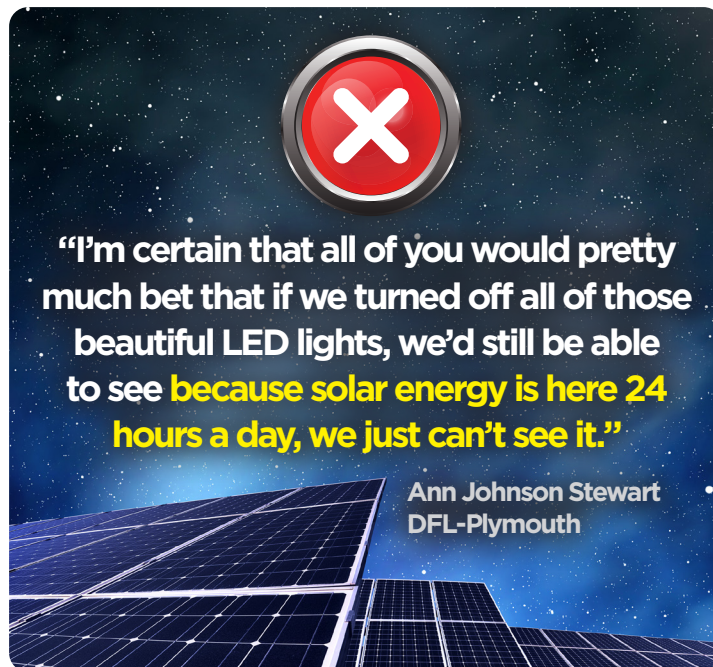
The Republican-led Minnesota Senate sought to legalize new nuclear power plants this spring because they are the most reliable and affordable source of energy that create no emissions. From an energy policy standpoint, this should be a layup. But liberal DFL politicians voted against it despite claiming to believe that climate change is, in their words, “an existential crisis.”

What began as a serious debate on the merits of nuclear power quickly devolved into a series of inaccurate claims about the benefits of solar power, demonstrating that the DFL’s “follow the science” mantra is meaningless.

“Solar energy actually does work, even when the sun’s not shining,” said Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart, DFL-Plymouth. “Today we have a cloudy day. I’m certain that all of you would pretty much bet that if we turned off all of those beautiful LED lights, we’d still be able to see because solar energy is here 24 hours a day, we just can’t see it.”

This is not how solar energy works. Solar panels turn sunlight into electricity. When the sun sets, solar panels stop producing electricity. As a result, solar panels produce energy for about 13 hours per day, not 24 hours per day.

Johnson Stewart’s experience as a civil engineer might qualify her to speak about transportation issues, but her background has made her overconfident on energy



— a topic on which she still has a lot to learn. She joined all but two of her party colleagues in voting against the legalization of nuclear power plants in Minnesota, making more inaccurate claims in the process.

Small modular reactors would cost \$10 billion, she said. But the actual cost of the 720-megawatt (MW) small, modular nuclear power plant that NuScale Power is planning to build at the Idaho National Laboratory site is \$6.1 billion, according to *Power Magazine*. This sum is the “all-in cost” of the plant over 40 years, including inflation, financing, and decommissioning — a hefty sum, but much less than the price tag cited by Johnson Stewart.

It also bears mentioning that Minnesota has spent more than \$15 billion on

wind turbines and solar panels, sources of electricity that produce less electricity than nuclear power, even though there is 2.3 times more wind capacity than nuclear capacity in Minnesota.

Battery storage would also be required to back up wind and solar. However, one day’s worth of storage in Minnesota would cost approximately \$38.7 billion at today’s cost. This could build 4,567 megawatts of small, modular nuclear power capacity, which could provide much more electricity than a single day of battery storage. In fact, this new nuclear power capacity, in addition to our existing nuclear plants, would generate enough electricity to make Minnesota’s electricity mix 92 percent carbon-free.

Johnson Stewart also asserted that Minnesota could not build a new nuclear power plant because she would not want one in her backyard, and that she is “pretty certain” none of the

other 67 senators would want one in their backyard either.

There are two issues with this statement: One, it assumes other communities would not want a new nuclear power plant; and two, it does not account for strong opposition to wind turbines and solar panels in rural areas.

Both nuclear power and renewables such as wind and solar draw opposition, so the best course of action is picking the one that makes the most sense. Nuclear plants produce far more energy on much less land. This means finding willing communities in which to build new nuclear facilities could run into less local opposition than thousands of megawatts of solar spread throughout the state. ★

—Isaac Orr



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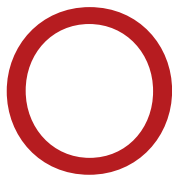
Center of the American Experiment's mission is to build a culture of prosperity for Minnesota and the nation. Our daily pursuit is a free and thriving Minnesota whose cultural and intellectual center of gravity is grounded in free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, and other time-tested American virtues. As a 501(c)3 educational organization, contributions to American Experiment are tax deductible.

≡ ESSAY

NO-GO FREEFALL

State and Twin Cities leaders dither
while vulnerable residents live in
fear and increasing danger.

By Jenna Stocker



ver a year after the intersection at East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue was blocked off from traffic, creating a makeshift autonomous zone in the heart of Minneapolis, Mayor Jacob Frey ordered city crews to dismantle the barriers. The area has become notorious for nightly shootings and lawlessness that imprisoned the people who live and work there. But just hours after the barriers came down at the hands of city crews, the “gate-keepers” of George Floyd Square erected new ones, ignoring the toothless warnings of the mayor. Less than one week later, city crews repeated the effort. Again, the barriers were re-erected.

And the mayor could only claim this is part of a “three-phase reopening” plan.

The scene at 38th and Chicago is a small part of the larger dystopian wasteland that Minneapolis is quickly becoming. Residents and business owners are subject to nightly terror. None of the destructiveness comes at the hands of police or as a manifestation of systemic racism in law enforcement, as many radical activists like to claim. It’s the consequence of too few police on the streets, of politicians defending criminals instead of victims, and of unconditioned vilification of the law enforcement officers who pledge to protect the communities they serve.

On May 30, just over one year after George Floyd died on the street outside Cup Foods in Minneapolis, hundreds of disgruntled citizens gathered to demand justice and an end to the violence. This wasn’t a demonstration against the police. It was a call for peace in a city ravaged by bloodshed. Record-high carjackings and violent assaults, more illegal firearms on the streets, innocent children brutally gunned down, road racing killing innocent bystanders: The criminals now control the streets of Minneapolis, and spineless, ineffectual political leaders will not stop them.

The untenable violence destroying the Twin Cities is the result of a failure of civic leaders to protect their citizens and support our law enforcement. And it’s only going to get worse.

It has been a stunning fall for a metro area that was once named by *Forbes Magazine* as America’s Safest City. Now, in the midst of its self-destruction, three children under the age of 10 were shot within weeks of each other. Two — 9-year-old

Trinity Ottoson-Smith and 6-year-old Aniya Allen — died from their injuries. Their deaths symbolize the chaotic violence in many urban neighborhoods with a cycle of lawlessness and hopelessness from which they might not return. Trinity was at a birthday party, jumping on a trampoline. Aniya was eating a Happy Meal in the backseat of her mother’s car. Aniya’s grandfather, longtime community activist K.G. Wilson, says defunding the police is “the craziest thing I’ve ever heard...if I was a criminal, I would support it. I would love it.” He told the *Daily Mail* on May 27, “We are here to tell you today that we need police. We need the sheriff... That’s why I got one murdered

grandchild and I’m at the hospital right now for two families of two children who’ve been shot.”

People from across the metro area voice concern about the downward trajectory of Minneapolis. Diane, a Bloomington resident, used to frequent Hennepin Theater District restaurants. She doubts that she’ll ever return. “Why would I go downtown now?” she says, declining to provide her last name because of cancel culture as much

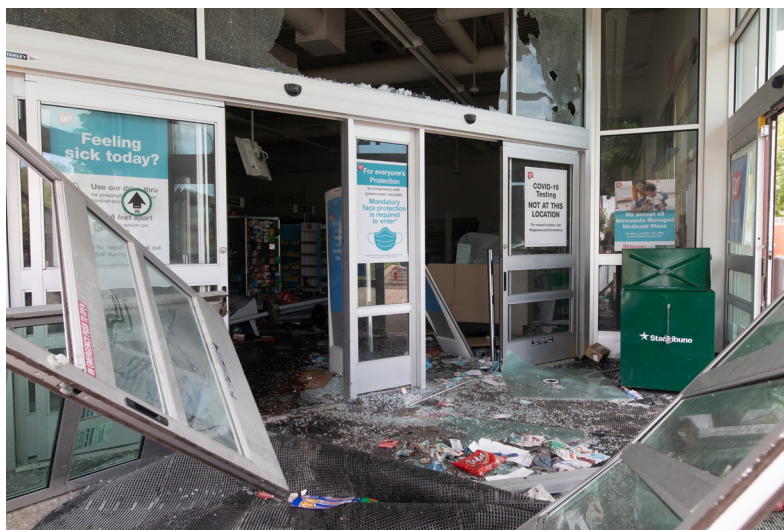
as safety issues. “A night out is supposed to be a fun experience, but how much fun is it to worry about getting back to your car safely or what might be going on in the street outside the restaurant?”

A June *Thinking Minnesota* Poll showed that only four percent of respondents visited Minneapolis more frequently over the past

year, while 58 percent did so less often. This majority likely won’t change this habit anytime soon, as 54 percent of Minnesotans believe Minneapolis won’t feel safe again for at least a year or two, while 19 percent say the city will never be safe enough again for them.

Crime tsunami

The violence shows no signs of slowing down. A shooting outside a downtown nightclub left two people dead and eight injured. Charlie Johnson, a mechanical engineering student at the University of St. Thomas, died just hours before he was scheduled to walk the stage at his graduation ceremony. The Memorial Day weekend more closely resembled the battlefields of soldiers we traditionally honor. From Saturday night into



Justin Berken / Shutterstock.com

It has been a stunning fall for a metro area that was once named by *Forbes Magazine* as America's Safest City.

Sunday, seven people were shot, caught in the crossfire of gang-related disputes. One man died of his injuries at North Memorial Medical Center. With a police force reduced by nearly 300 officers from plunging morale, overwhelming stress and lack of political support, the city is surrendering its civility.

Police strain to keep up with the chaos. They continue to put their lives on the line while being accused of wholesale racism. Civic leaders repeatedly accuse them of having nefarious motivations, with no means of defending themselves. No one is surprised the police force is depleted. Many took early retirement; others are on leave to cope with traumatic stress and other mental health issues. More quit, deciding the price of putting their lives on the line to keep criminals off the street, only to see the courts release them from jail in the following days, was not worth the risk. Brian Peters, Executive Director of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association, explains that Minneapolis and St. Paul have already been defunded by failing to support a police force unable to keep up with the size of its population, outside of high-priority 911 calls. “We see departments with decreasing morale, with city leaders demonizing the very people that seek to serve and protect its citizens. Clearly defunding is not the answer to our crime waves. It’s exactly the opposite. We need more law enforcement officers, and certainly not less.”

This is not a manufactured crisis, nor one of sensationalized stories. The statistics are staggering. According to a May 20 meeting with local leaders, year-to-date homicides in 2021 have more than doubled compared to 2020. The police department has seized 100 fewer guns this year — approximately 300 total — compared to last year. Gun thefts from vehicles are up more than 100 percent. The atrophied police department simply lacks the resources to chase

them down. As a result, street criminals use these weapons to take aim at each other, with horrific consequences. The Minneapolis Police Dashboard reveals that violent crimes have increased from 1,696 during the first five months of last year to 1,940 through the same period this year. Homicides have increased from 18 to a stunning 35, putting the city on a trajectory that could well surpass the record-setting number of 97 in 1995,



With a police force reduced by nearly 300 officers...the city is surrendering its civility.

when national media regularly referred to the city as “Murderapolis.”

By contrast, the city experienced just 11 homicides during this same period in 2019. The 35 homicides through May 31 represent a 94 percent increase from 2020, and a two-year increase of 218 percent from 2019’s total of 11 homicides. Robberies in the city are up 31.4 percent over last year, and 82.2 percent over 2019. Aggravated assaults number 1,034 so far this year, an 8.5 percent increase over 2020 and an 18.7 percent increase over 2019.

Bad for business

But numbers on a page can’t fully

convey the human toll. Brian Ingram, the owner of multiple restaurants in St. Paul, including The Gnome and Hope Breakfast Bar, survived the government-imposed COVID shutdowns only to face a more perilous threat: The repeated burglaries and property damage occurring at his businesses on a weekly basis. Mr. Ingram spent thousands of dollars on security cameras and equipment. They just don’t do any good when perpetrators of these crimes are back on the streets — sometimes the very next day. With the amount of money spent on the damage to doors and windows from break-ins, he says, “it’s almost better to just leave the doors unlocked.”

Ingram is a life-long restaurateur who’s lived in New York City and Chicago. He never dreamed the Twin Cities would become such a crime-ridden metropolis. “This is home. I have my family here, raised my kids here. But things look

pretty hopeless,” he continues. He was walking from his home to one of his establishments and gunshots rang out about 10 feet from him. It was three o’clock in the afternoon. He recounted his pleas to Mayor Melvin Carter, which seems to be a waste of time. “He’s useless in terms of stopping crime. He repeats his press quotes but he hasn’t a care in the world for people like me or my fellow business owners.”

People used to flee Chicago and New York for the safety and security of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Today it isn’t safe to ride the Metro Transit buses, says Ben Anderson, a lifelong St. Paul resident who recently quit his job in Bloomington to work closer to home. “I feel like a sitting duck at my transfers and I see the same people night after night doing drugs, flashing weapons.”

That isn’t deterring the progressive left from pushing policies it considers reform or “reimagining,” an exercise in futility that has been tried — and led to spectacu-

lar failures in cities such as Baltimore and Ferguson, Missouri. The Twin Cities area now faces a choice: Respond to the needs and concerns of its residents living with the threat of violence and lawlessness, or acquiesce to civic leaders entrenched in an ideology that wants to gut our police forces, leaving communities vulnerable to escalating violence and perpetual fear.

Police support (or lack thereof)

The fear and violence that paralyze our cities are caused by the utter failure of our city leaders to support the police departments that want to restore peace and order to our streets. Leaders such as Walz, Frey and Carter would rather poison the relationship between the community and law enforcement by making police the enemy, rather than the criminals who target innocent children. They would rather give the impression of action by speaking in platitudes and slogans against the police — the very people trying to build trust in communities already grossly underserved by those very politicians. Walz, Frey and Carter are setting the stage for a reckless trend of defunding and demoralizing the only people who each and every day stand between us and criminals who wish to do us harm.

When activist groups and national organizations act in their own self-interests instead of those of the people who actually live, work and raise families in broken communities, “reforms” usually reflect the political agenda of such organizations and activists. Adding layers of bureaucratic red-tape and unresponsiveness doesn’t solve problems. It compounds them in ways that deepen the divide between civic leaders, police and the community. We only need to look to Baltimore, in which a federal consent decree, implemented in 2017 and used as a layer of oversight on BPD policies and operations, led to the city’s second-highest number of homicides (348) in 2019 while the population actually *decreased*. Total crime in Baltimore is 148 percent above the national average, with property crime 104 percent above the national

average. Ferguson has seen similarly dire results in its attempts at reforms. Unfortunately, a city that mirrored the riots and explosive violence in Minneapolis after George Floyd’s death, as happened in the aftermath of Michael Brown’s death, serves as a premonition to unhealed racial animosity, a depleted and demoralized police force, and a community still at the mercy of street violence.

A charter amendment to replace the Minneapolis Police Department might be on voters’ ballots in November after activists submitted their petition to city officials. Yes 4 Minneapolis, a coalition of community groups, wants to replace the MPD with a new Department of Pub-

The fear and violence that paralyze our cities are caused by the utter failure of our city leaders to support the police departments that want to restore peace and order.

lic Safety and shift authority over police from the mayor to the City Council. The group received \$500,000 from George Soros’ Open Society Police Center. But does Yes 4 Minneapolis, or the other, highly visible activist group in the metro area — Black Lives Matter — really act on behalf and in the best interest of the community? Do they actually believe dismantling the police force will solve the nightly violence in the streets of the city or will it add to the aura of fear and lawlessness reaching into neighboring communities?

Wild Wild (Mid)West

As recruitment falls below levels that can replenish a proper police force, criminality fills the void. Over Memorial Day weekend, officers responding to reports of gunshots and vehicles racing just south

of Columbia Heights had rocks thrown at them, damaging a squad patrol vehicle. According to Minnesota Crime Watch, the crowd was “extremely hostile” and officers cleared out, saying they didn’t have enough resources to deal with the situation. A similar incident occurred in the early hours of May 23 in Uptown at Lake Street and Lyndale Avenue South. Bystander video reveals how a group of drivers shut down the intersection for burnouts and street racing while hundreds of onlookers prohibited police from stopping the dangerous event. One car lost control and hit a pedestrian. The MPD doesn’t keep official records of these events, but Minnesota Crime Watch reported that this was at least the third pedestrian struck during one of these illegal events during that week. Nicholas Enger, 17, and Vanessa Jensen, 19, were shot and killed when stray bullets hit them while they watched illegal street racing in two separate events in Minneapolis in the early morning hours of June 6. The MPD reports street racing and burnouts surging over the past 14 months, and says that shootings are commonplace at the events.

The results are already in. Longer response time and reactive policing results in poorer service to law-abiding citizens in high-crime areas. Officers without backup lack the tools to handle confrontational situations and become overworked and overstressed and more prone to making poor decisions and risky mistakes. Budget cuts reduce training and pay scales, resulting in less qualified candidates and skilled officers. This is a cycle that must stop immediately. According to City-Data Crime Index, Minneapolis has a crime index of 529.4 compared to the national average of 270.6. Minnesotans have an opportunity to learn from these already ominous precedents and avoid being another metropolitan area that fails its residents through hollow platitudes and terrible policy. ★

Jenna Stocker is a Twin Cities-based freelance writer whose work has been published in The Federalist. She is a former United States Marine Corps officer and a University of Minnesota graduate.



The
THINKING
MINNESOTA
POLL

WHEN PERCEPTION MATCHES REALITY

The *Thinking Minnesota* Poll reveals that Minnesotans trust the police, avoid Minneapolis, and increasingly blame Gov. Tim Walz for rising crime rates.



In *Thinking Minnesota*'s cover story this month, author Jenna Stocker refers to Minneapolis as a “dystopian wasteland” with an “aura of lawlessness.” The latest *Thinking Minnesota* Poll shows that most Minnesotans agree. Fifty-eight percent of state residents polled last month say they are visiting Minneapolis less frequently, while 73 percent predict it will take at least a year before they feel safer in the city, 30 percent say it will be three years before they visit Minneapolis again and a shocking 19 percent say they will never come back.

That's not good news for Minnesota's largest city and the

economic engine that drives its economy. These safety concerns impact more than the 120 nights a year when downtown Minneapolis hosts a Twins or Timberwolves game, or when people want to attend concerts or theater productions, or are just looking for a night out. Concern over crime continues to hinder occupancy in Minneapolis's commercial buildings, and the list of restaurants and bars closed for good continues to grow in 2021.

The poll was conducted for American Experiment by Meeting Street Insights, a nationally recognized polling operation based in Charleston, South Carolina. Using a mix of cell phones and



AlMueller / Shutterstock.com

landline phones, the company interviewed 500 registered voters across Minnesota from June 2 to 6. The margin of error is $\pm 4.38\%$.

The poll also reveals that worries about public safety have spilled beyond the borders of Minneapolis. Eighty-one per-

About the pollster

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

FIGURE 1: MOST MINNESOTANS, INCLUDING REPUBLICANS AND SUBURBANITES, SAY THEY ARE VISITING MINNEAPOLIS LESS FREQUENTLY THAN THEY NORMALLY DO.

“Over the past year, would you say you have visited Minneapolis more frequently, less frequently, or about the same amount as you usually do?”

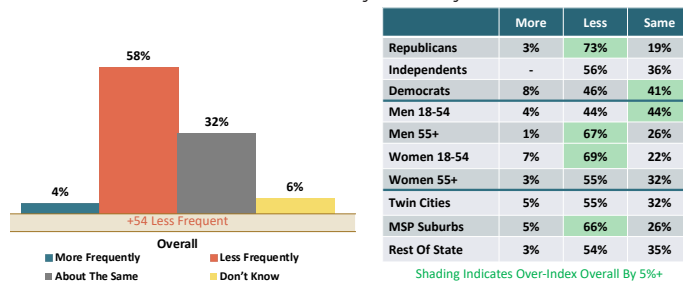


FIGURE 2: MOST MINNESOTANS SAY IT WILL TAKE AT LEAST A YEAR FOR MINNEAPOLIS TO FEEL SAFE.

“Looking ahead, when do you think Minneapolis will feel safe again?”

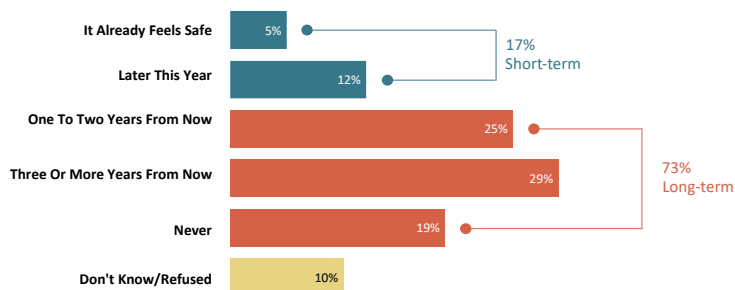


FIGURE 3: CONCERN OVER CRIME IN MINNESOTA IS VERY HIGH ACROSS THE STATE, ESPECIALLY IN THE SUBURBS.

“How concerned are you personally about the level of crime here in Minnesota?”

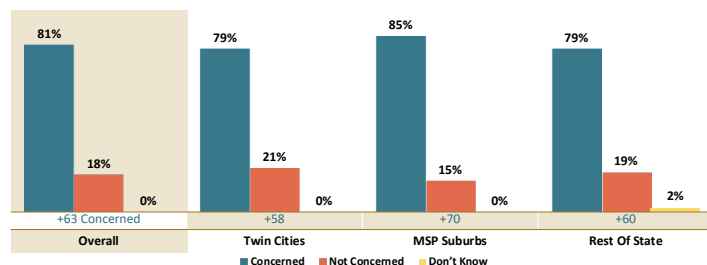


FIGURE 4: GOV. TIM WALZ'S APPROVAL RATING ON HANDLING THE RIOTS HAS FLIPPED SINCE LAST YEAR; MOST MINNESOTANS NOW DISAPPROVE.

"And, thinking about the riots, looting and arson that have occurred over the past year in Minneapolis, do you approve or disapprove of Gov. Tim Walz's response?"

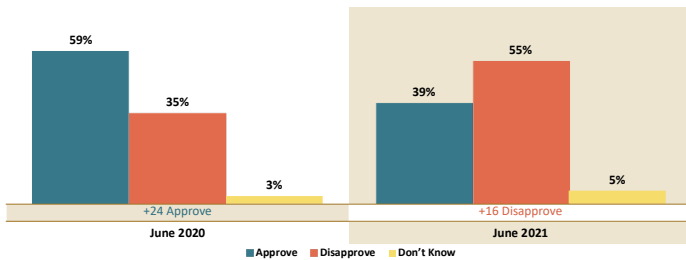


FIGURE 5: CONCERN ABOUT CRIME AMONG WOMEN OVER 55 IS VERY HIGH.

Concern over violence in Minnesota by gender/age

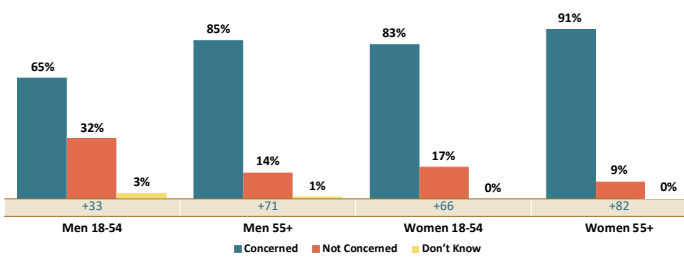
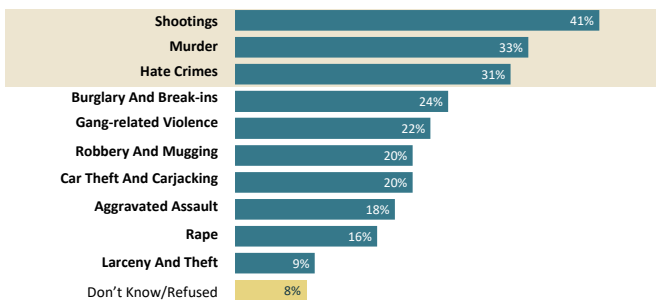


FIGURE 6: SHOOTINGS ARE THE TOP CONCERN FOR MINNESOTANS BY A LARGE MARGIN. MURDER AND HATE CRIMES ARE ALSO TOP CONCERNS.

"Thinking generally about crime here in Minnesota, what two or three types of crime concern you most?"



Sam Wagner / Shutterstock.com

cent of respondents said they were personally concerned with crime in Minnesota, with the highest numbers coming from the suburbs. Women over age 55 are especially worried, with 91 percent voicing concern for their personal safety.

"Our goal for this poll was to look beyond the debate around policing and find out how Minnesotans personally feel about crime and safety," American Experiment President John Hinderaker said. "Unfortunately, their feelings match the statistics — perceptions about crime are rising because actual crime is rising."

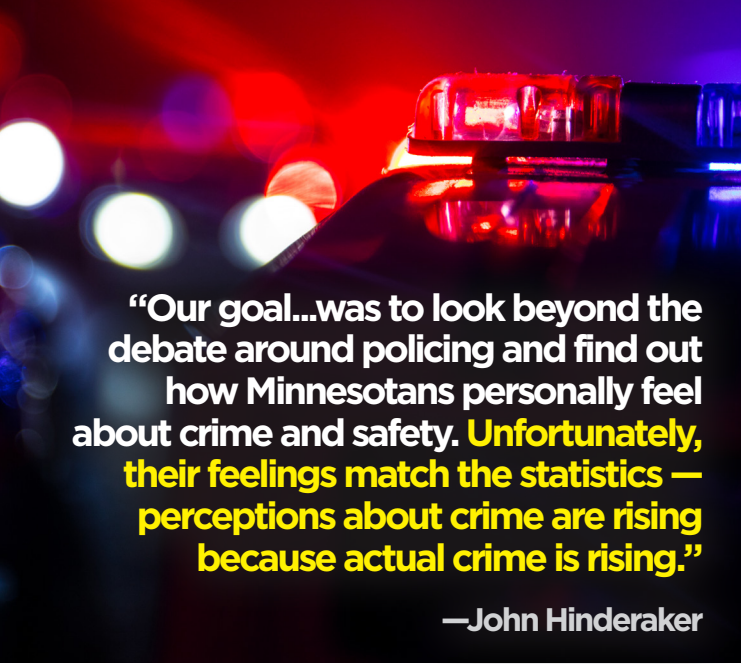
What do people fear? Shootings was the most popular answer followed by murder and hate crimes. Again, women over age 55 stood out, with 50 percent voicing their concerns about shootings.

Democrats differentiated themselves too, compared to other respondents on the question of what type of crime concerned them most and on the root causes of those offenses. While 49 percent of Democrats told us hate crimes concerned them most, only 21 percent of Independents and 15 percent of Republicans chose that response. Democrats also believe discrimination against minorities is most responsible for crime in Minnesota, with 32 percent choosing this response. Only two percent of Republicans and eight percent of Independents believe discrimination is driving crime right now.

Unlike other Minnesotans, Democrats appear to think in terms of politics instead of personal safety when answering poll questions. How else do you explain the disconnect between their concern over hate crimes and the actual statistics? Among poll respondents overall, there's nothing paradoxical between their perceptions of crimes, such as shootings and murder, and the actual crime statistics.

Walz falls

Minnesotans have lost confidence in Gov. Tim Walz to address the growing problem of riots and lawlessness in Minneapolis, according to the poll. Fifty-five percent of respondents disapprove of Walz's response to the riots, in stark contrast to the June 2020 *Thinking Minnesota* Poll, in which 59 percent approved of



“Our goal...was to look beyond the debate around policing and find out how Minnesotans personally feel about crime and safety. Unfortunately, their feelings match the statistics — perceptions about crime are rising because actual crime is rising.”

—John Hinderaker

the way he handled the riots. Related to that, 48 percent of Minnesotans now believe the state is on the wrong track, compared to 45 percent who believe the state is on the right track. This is the first time in recent memory that a plurality of respondents believe Minnesota is trending the wrong way, a reflection of their lack of confidence in Walz.

Crime is driving the wrong track sentiment too, with 80 percent agreeing that crime has gotten worse over the past year.

“Minnesotans are tired of lawlessness and violent crime, and they are holding Governor Walz accountable,” Hinderaker added. “These numbers reflect his poor handling of the riots last year and his continued silence and inaction in the face of violent crime.”

Minnesotans trust law enforcement

While Minnesotans have lost trust in Walz their support for law enforcement remains strong. Eighty-five percent trust the police in their local community to act in the best interests of the public, unchanged from one year ago. When given a list of options, 69 percent of respondents trust law enforcement to ensure their safety, compared to 50 percent for Walz, 36 percent for the legislature and 32 percent for Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. A strong plurality of Minnesotans believe that skyrocketing rates of crime evolve from a lack of support for law enforcement.

“Minnesotans trust law enforcement, not political leaders, to keep us safe,” Hinderaker said.

American Experiment recently relaunched a campaign to support law enforcement in Minnesota at www.SupportMN-Police.com. The effort includes a petition to support the police, radio ads that began on June 15, and a billboard campaign that started on June 21.

In another area in which perception matches reality, 81 percent of Minnesotans worry about their state’s ability to recruit qualified new police officers. Enrollment in police training programs was already trending down before 2020, and cities are struggling to hire and train new recruits to replace their depleted forces. ★

FIGURE 7: SHOOTINGS AND MURDER ARE TOP CONCERNS SHARED BY VOTERS ACROSS PARTIES. HATE CRIMES ARE A TOP CONCERN FOR ALMOST HALF OF DEMOCRATS.

“Thinking generally about crime here in Minnesota, what two or three types of crime concern you most?”

	Overall	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
Shootings	41%	41%	38%	43%
Murder	33%	36%	48%	23%
Hate Crimes	31%	15%	21%	49%
Burglary And Break-ins	24%	28%	20%	22%
Gang-related Violence	22%	25%	17%	21%
Robbery And Mugging	20%	29%	9%	17%
Car Theft And Carjacking	20%	25%	11%	20%
Aggravated Assault	18%	16%	27%	15%
Rape	16%	14%	16%	19%
Larceny And Theft	9%	10%	13%	6%

Heat Map Indicates Top Three Choices Among Each Subgroup

FIGURE 8: A LACK OF SUPPORT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT IS REPUBLICANS’ AND INDEPENDENTS’ TOP REASON FOR CRIME SURGES; FOR DEMOCRATS IT’S MINORITY DISCRIMINATION.

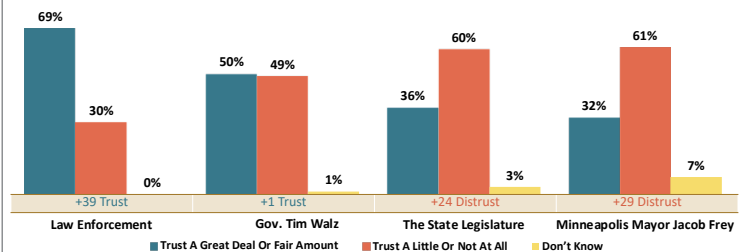
“Thinking about the various things that cause crime, which one of the following do you think is most responsible for the crime here in Minnesota?”

	Overall	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
A Lack Of Support For Law Enforcement	26%	44%	29%	10%
Discrimination Against Minorities	16%	2%	8%	32%
Governor Tim Walz’s Lack Of Leadership	14%	29%	11%	1%
Weak Economy And Lack Of Job Opportunities	12%	1%	14%	22%
The COVID-19 Pandemic	10%	3%	11%	16%
Fatherless Homes	7%	11%	5%	5%
Leniency In Sentencing	6%	7%	6%	7%
Don’t Know/Refused	9%	4%	15%	8%

Heat Map Indicates Top Three Choices Among Each Subgroup

FIGURE 9: TRUST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT FAR EXCEEDS TRUST IN ELECTED LEADERS.

“Now, I’d like to read you a list of names and entities here in Minnesota. For each one, please tell me how much you trust that person or entity to make our state safer.”



ELECTIONS



STEVE STONEMWALLING SIMON

Why is our secretary of state
hiding the
2020 voter lists?

BY BILL WALSH

1858



One of the many ways our nation remains divided is over election integrity. One side has serious doubts about who's voting — and who's counting the votes. The other side calls such doubts a “Big Lie” and expends a lot of energy trying to silence claims of voter fraud. Never mind that successful fraud, by definition, goes undetected.

In Minnesota the matter is made worse because Secretary of State Steve Simon refuses to release challenged voter lists, despite widespread support for stronger voting laws. February's *Thinking Minnesota* Poll found that 69 percent of Minnesotans favor a photo ID requirement at the polls. Only 28 percent are opposed. The same poll showed that one-third of respondents lack confidence in election integrity, a shocking number in a state that leads the nation every year in voter turnout. But Simon called the 2020 election a “tremendous success” and dismissed claims to the contrary as “foolish and irresponsible” and “unworthy of attention.”

Center of the American Experiment worked with the Minnesota Voters Alliance to shine some light on the weakest part of Minnesota's election system, election day registration. Call it the American Experiment Voter Integrity Project.

Voting history

Minnesota was one of the first states in the nation to adopt the practice of election day registration in 1974, and support among the electorate remains strong. In fact, 353,179 Minnesotans registered to vote on Election Day 2016. That number dropped during the pandemic in 2020 to 259,742, but only because so many voters chose to mail in their ballots early.

Same-day registration is not unique in our country — 20 states offer some form of the practice each November. What is unique to Minnesota is the absence of a provisional ballot procedure to verify that those registering on Election Day are actually eligible to vote. In nearly all states where voters can't immediately prove they are legal voters, a provisional ballot

is employed. Election officials use the days between the election and the official canvass of results to confirm the eligibility of the voters who couldn't demonstrate their eligibility on election day. If the voter is deemed eligible, the ballot is counted and included in the totals.

All but three of the states with election day registration also have a provisional ballot process in place to prevent voter fraud. In New Hampshire, election officials take a photo of new voters at the poll and have them sign an affidavit swearing they are eligible to vote. Idaho is the only state, besides Minnesota, without a provisional ballot procedure

**In the 2016 election,
six percent of election
day registrants in
Minnesota used
vouching to establish
their eligibility
to vote, equaling
20,000 voters.**

to accompany their election day registration. (Idaho does have a photo ID requirement for all voters at the polls.)

Vouching

Another voting irregularity in Minnesota is the ability of a neighbor or friend to “vouch” for the residency of an unregistered voter in their precinct. An eligible voter can vouch for up to eight other residents each Election Day, simply by signing an oath “swearing to their residence” in the precinct. Vouching is used to register voters who otherwise can't demonstrate to election judges where they live, using a driver's license, student ID or one of the many documents from Minnesota Rules governing elections:

... an original bill, including account statements and start-of-service noti-

fication, for telephone, television, or Internet provider services, regardless of how those telephone, television, or Internet provider services are delivered; gas, electric, solid waste, water, or sewer services; credit card or banking services; or rent or mortgage payments.

There is a history of abuse of the vouching process in Minnesota:

- In the 2010 election, a group representing Students Organizing for America, an outgrowth of President Barack Obama's political organization, was accused of illegally vouching for students on the University of Minnesota campus. Students were meeting outside the polling location and dividing into groups after being assigned to a “voucher.”
- In the 2012 election, two women were accused of voter fraud after suspicions were raised by an election judge because a counselor from a drug treatment program brought 15 patients to the polls and vouched for their residency.

In the 2016 election, six percent of election day registrants in Minnesota used vouching to establish their eligibility to vote, equaling 20,000 voters.

Registrations treated differently

Another flaw is the difference in treatment between voting early and on election day. During early voting (by mail or in person), your application is vetted through the state system to verify eligibility. Your name and address are checked against the Department of Public Safety database or the Social Security database. If there is a problem with your registration, the county auditor must notify you 20 days before the election and give you a chance to make corrections. “The applicant must be allowed to vote only after completing the registration or after registering or updating their registration using current information for the applicant.”

But if a voter goes to a polling location

on Election Day and registers (using documents or through vouching), verification is done after the election. That is, after the vote has been counted.

The county auditor runs the same verification using the Department of Public Safety and Social Security databases, but it's a moot point once a vote is tallied. This is a serious flaw in Minnesota's verification process and the impetus for adding a provisional balloting system.

The Office of Legislative Auditor found serious problems with election day registration in its 2018 program evaluation report. Among that report's findings:

- Depending on how and when persons register to vote, their identity and eligibility to vote may not be checked against other data sources until after they have voted.
- Minnesota allows voters to register on Election Day, which allows ineligible persons to register and vote.
- County staff create and update records of registered voters in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS), Minnesota's centralized database of registered voters, but a voter's information may be inaccurate on Election Day.

The legislative auditors exposed the weakness of the SVRS. Their report found more than 26,000 persons marked "challenged" in the SVRS from the 2016 general election. These voters registered (and voted) that Election Day but had their eligibility status questioned after the fact by county election officials. It's bad enough these voters were able to vote in 2016. It is even worse that they were still on a challenge list two years later and allowed to vote again.

Postal Verification Cards (PVCs)

A voter lands on the challenged list after

county election officials attempt to verify his eligibility. One of the tools officials use is a postcard mailed to the address the voter used to register. If the postcard comes back as undeliverable, it raises a red flag about that voter's eligibility and is supposed to trigger an investigation. From the legislative audit report:

County election staff mail postal verification cards (PVCs) to confirm the addresses of new and updated registrants. The postal service may not send the PVC to a forwarding address; it may be delivered only to the name and address on the card. If the postal service returns any cards to the county election office as undeliverable, county officials must resolve the reasons for their return. A postcard could be returned for many reasons, ranging from inaccurate data entry to fraudulent registration.

The rules are even more explicit for election day registrations:

The county auditor must send notices to election day registrants whose information cannot be verified and request that the voters contact the registration office. If the voter does not provide information that resolves the discrepancy so that the voter registration application can be verified, the county auditor must challenge the voter in the statewide voter registration system and may refer the matter to the county attorney.

The legislative auditors updated their audit in 2019 and criticized the method counties are using to send postcards:

The requirement for counties to send address verification postcards to a random sample of election day registrants within 10 days after an election, as currently implemented, does not serve a useful purpose. A

sample size of three percent of election day registrants, set by the Office of the Secretary of State through rulemaking, is not large enough to yield useful data in counties with small populations. Moreover, county officials we interviewed did not send the postcards to a random sample of registrants, and several counties did not complete the task within the required 10 days.

Lawsuit against Steve Simon

The Minnesota Voters Alliance (MVA) read the 2018 auditor's report with interest and asked Simon for the current list of challenged voters in the SVRS. To identify fraud, such as felons voting before they were eligible or people voting from bogus addresses, the challenged list would be the first place to look.

Simon refused to share the list with the MVA, claiming it was non-public data under the Minnesota Data Practices Act. The MVA sued Simon in District Court, saying his interpretation of the data act was too narrow and unsupported by law.

Normally, all data is considered public unless the legislature specifically deems it non-public. In the case of election data, the legislature has been very specific about when election data is non-public, such as to protect people who fear for their safety because of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. The law says:

The secretary of state may provide copies of the public information lists and other information from the statewide registration system...

Simon argued that he was protecting voters' privacy. But a voter's name, address, phone number (if they provide it), email address and age are already public. All Simon was protecting was which voters appeared on challenge lists from county election officials.

Minnesota Voters Alliance won in District Court and their victory was unanimously affirmed on appeal by the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Slam dunk. Until Simon appealed once again, to the Minnesota Supreme Court. A majority consisting of judges appointed by Mark Dayton reversed the lower court decisions, hanging their hat on the word "may." Simon may make the data public,



Bill Walsh is the Director of Communications at Center of the American Experiment. Prior to joining American Experiment, he worked for 25 years in a variety of political and communications positions in the Minnesota House, Senate and Republican Party. He was also communications director in two state agencies during Gov. Tim Pawlenty's administration.

but he doesn't have to.

What does Simon know about the challenged voter data that we don't? Was the legislative auditor's office on to something with its program evaluations? Why won't Simon release the data?

The American Experiment Voter Integrity Project

American Experiment decided to conduct its own mailing of postal verification cards following the 2020 election to see how many would come back as undeliverable. The experiment was somewhat delayed because we did not have access to the list of who registered and voted on Election Day until the counties and secretary of state made that data public a few months after the election. And although undeliverable cards do not necessarily imply outright election fraud, the percentage of undeliverable mail and returned mail surprised us.

There were 20,056 voters who registered to vote on Election Day in 2020 in Minneapolis. We mailed postcards to a little more than half of them (11,857) as soon as we had access to the data in February 2021.

Before the cards even got to the post office, the mail house software rejected 92 addresses as undeliverable. Some were brand new construction not even in the database yet, some were due to data entry errors (street instead of avenue), some had street numbers that didn't exist (425 8th St SE), and one appears to be in Linden Hills Park (4236 York Ave S).

Of the 11,765 cards that made it through the mail house, 887 were returned as undeliverable — no such person with that name living at that address.

The undeliverable and returned cards do not represent 979 fraudulent votes, but hundreds merit further investigation.

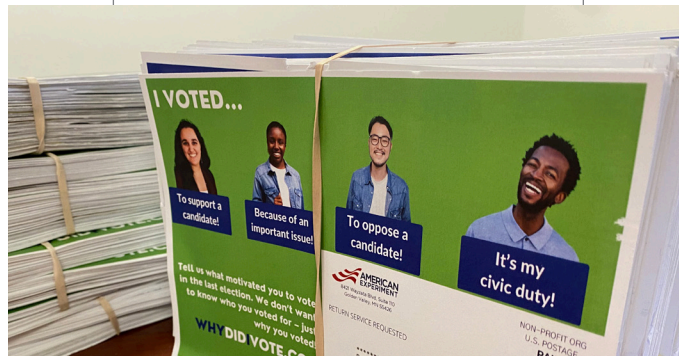
Many of the returned cards came from the University of Minnesota and Augsburg University student housing. College students move around a lot, but these just voted in November. Did they all graduate? Did the schools shut down in early 2021 because of COVID and send kids home? Seems unlikely. Some examples:

- Fifty-seven cards returned from

2508 Delaware Street SE, known as the Quad on Delaware.

- Thirty-six cards returned from 311 Harvard Street SE, known as the Hub Apartments.
- Thirty-six cards returned from 900 Washington Ave SE, known as Din-naken House.
- Twenty-six cards returned from 800 22nd Ave S, known as Urness Hall.

College campuses are hotbeds of political activism, and state and local campaigns spend a lot of time and energy recruiting students to vote and volunteer. Joe Biden received 81 percent of the vote in Minneapolis Precinct 2-10, where



If you apply our eight percent return rate against the 259,742 voters who registered on Election Day, it would represent 20,779 registrations that are at least questionable.

many of these addresses are located.

We also had three cards returned from the Days Hotel on the U of M campus, one from the Millennium Hotel in downtown Minneapolis, and one from a Minnesota Teen Challenge treatment facility. Not illegal on its face, but certainly worth investigating.

It's reasonable to assume some of these voters moved between the time they registered to vote and the mailing of our postcard. But if you apply our eight percent return rate against the 259,742

voters who registered statewide to vote on Election Day 2020, it would represent 20,779 registrations that are at least questionable and might represent voter fraud. (There are, of course, numerous other ways of committing fraud that were not part of this experiment.)

This list deserves more scrutiny. Simon should show us the data on challenged ballots. Counties should make public the results of their postcard mailings.

The privacy argument worked with Mark Dayton's court appointees and a sympathetic and lazy press, but it shouldn't work with legislators, given that 32 percent of Minnesotans have expressed a lack of faith in the current electoral system. Following these recommendations will restore voter confidence:

- The verification process for election day registration should be the same as registration before Election Day. Voters should not be allowed to vote until their eligibility has been determined.
- Minnesota should add a provisional ballot process to election law, like other states that use it to complement election day registration.

- Minnesota should add a photo ID requirement to election law.
- Simon should immediately release the challenged voter data requested by the Minnesota Voters Alliance.
- The Minnesota Legislature should hold Simon accountable in public hearings for not releasing the challenged voter data.
- The Minnesota Legislature and Secretary of State should fully implement the recommendations of the Legislative Auditor from the 2018 and 2019 program evaluations of election day registration.

The 2018 auditor's report, our postcard experiment and Simon's inexplicable refusal to release the data all lead to the same conclusion: Because there's no voter ID requirement, Minnesota's system of election day registration without provisional ballots is the weakest in the nation — the type that facilitates fraud — and it must be fortified. ★

COVID-19

THE NUMBERS LIE

State officials
manipulate
COVID-19
data about
minorities.

BY JOHN HINDERAKER AND MITCH ROLLING

The claim that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted people of color is often heard and rarely, if ever, disputed.

It is one in many instances where politicians and activists identify “white privilege” and use that concept as a basis for policy.

Here in Minnesota, it has been widely reported that minorities, and especially blacks, have suffered from COVID to an extent several times greater than whites. This claim, frequently repeated and never questioned in the press, has been the basis for potentially discriminatory actions by the Walz administration. But is the assertion of disproportionate impact true?

In December 2020, a group of sociologists and others at the University of Minnesota produced a study that gave initial impetus to the idea that COVID devastated minority communities. Its sensational conclusion was that black Minnesotans died from COVID at a rate more than five times that of white Minnesotans, while latinos in Minnesota died from COVID at a rate more than four times that of whites, when adjusted for age.

This startling conclusion garnered considerable publicity, all of it uncritical. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota donated \$5 million to the University of Minnesota to establish a Center for Antiracism Research and Health Equity. In announcing this grant, the university’s press release said, “During the pandemic, Black Minnesotans are dying from COVID-19 at a rate five times higher than white Minnesotans when adjusted for age.”

Mpls. St. Paul Magazine wrote, linking to the sociologists’ study:

[E]xcess mortality — “COVID-19 mortality alongside deaths indirectly attributable to the pandemic” — has been higher for people of color, at a rate estimated to be around five times more for Black people in Minnesota than white folks...

Can that claim possibly be true? The sociologists’ study itself acknowledged obvious facts to the contrary:

Non-Hispanic white Minnesotans

account for about 80 percent of the state’s population and about 82 percent of its COVID-19 deaths. This seeming lack of disparity may be surprising, especially at a time when Minnesota has received national attention for its deep racial divide following the police killing of George Floyd.

So if whites represented 80 percent of Minnesotans and 82 percent of COVID deaths, as of the date of the study, how was COVID killing blacks and latinos at levels several times greater than whites?

The authors of the University of Minnesota study did not base their analysis on death certificates that cite COVID as a cause of death, the normal measure of COVID mortality. Rather, they looked at total death statistics for the various racial groups. They counted total mortality from all causes, excluding only homicide, suicide and accident, for the months March through October of 2020, and compared those numbers with the average total mortality for each racial group in the years 2017 through 2019.

These authors justified using total mortality data, rather than the Minnesota Department of Health’s COVID statistics, on the assumption that members of minority groups who died of COVID were less likely than whites to be diagnosed with that disease. What evidence did the authors offer for that proposition? None. It was sheer speculation. Moreover, in 2020, 10.8 percent of all white deaths were attributed to COVID in the Department of Health’s database, while 13.8 percent of black deaths were so attributed.

This fact suggests that there is no merit to the theory that minority COVID deaths were somehow under-recorded. And that is only the beginning of the problems with the sociologists’ report.

Using the average of raw mortality numbers for 2017 through 2019 as a baseline for comparison with 2020 numbers sounds plausible, but it is a statistical trick that introduces a major error into the study. Minnesota’s black population has been both increasing and aging at a

faster rate than the white population. As a result, raw numbers of black deaths have been increasing much faster than white deaths, which were virtually flat for the period 2017 through 2019.

Specifically, during this three-year period, black deaths in Minnesota increased by 13 percent, while white deaths increased by only 1.9 percent. If those rates of increase in mortality are projected into 2020, and that number is used as a baseline against which to compare actual mortality, nearly one-third of the alleged increase in black mortality in 2020 — all of which the authors attribute to COVID — disappears. This is a good example of

**The (Walz) administration
may have engaged in
race discrimination in
the distribution of
anti-COVID vaccines.**

a statistical device that seems innocent, but badly biases a study’s results.

The second source for the claim that minorities in Minnesota have been disproportionately impacted by COVID is the Department of Health itself. The MDH website aggressively promotes a racial angle to the state’s COVID experience:

COVID-19 is exposing what has always been true: racism is pervasive and persistent. . . . We know that communities of color and Indigenous communities don’t need data to verify their experience. The purpose of this dashboard is to educate and spark community leaders, nonprofits, foundations, governments, and corporations to work together to reduce and eliminate systemic barriers so communities of color and Indigenous communities can recover with dignity and resiliency.

The Department of Health evidently



views its COVID statistics as an instrument of activism, but the data themselves belie the Department’s racial interpretation, particularly with respect to mortality. The Department’s own numbers show that whites and Native Americans, not blacks, Hispanics or Asians, are over-represented as COVID victims.

As of June 3, the MDH dashboard shows that 6,188 whites have died from COVID, representing 0.139 percent of the white population. Among “Latinx,” the totals are 81 deaths, or 0.072 percent of that population. Among blacks, the numbers are 368 deaths or 0.100 percent of the black population. As for Asians, 288 have died with COVID listed on their death certificates, representing 0.101 percent of Minnesota’s Asian population. And finally, 101 Native Americans have died from or with COVID, or 0.169 percent of that population.

In other words, MDH’s own records indicate that Native Americans and whites have disproportionately died from COVID, with blacks, Hispanics and Asians dying at lesser rates. In particular, whites, 80 percent of Minnesota’s population, are now over-represented with 88 percent of COVID deaths.

There is no mystery as to why this is true. Minnesota’s white population skews older than most minority populations, and COVID is overwhelmingly a disease that is dangerous to the elderly, especially those who are already sick. This basic demographic fact explains why COVID has

impacted white Minnesotans to a greater extent than minority groups whose populations are, on the average, younger.

The data compiled by MDH obviously don’t support the “racism” narrative favored by the Walz administration, so the Department of Health has promoted “age adjusted” COVID death calculations. On an “age adjusted” basis, MDH claims that all of the minority groups have higher COVID death rates than whites, with blacks at a ratio of about two and one-half to one.

This “age adjustment” creates a hypo-

Someone who uses the state website to sign up to be vaccinated is asked questions about his or her race, gender, and sexual orientation, but is not asked anything about obesity, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

thetical number of blacks (for example) who would have died if the age distribution of the black population were the same as the age distribution of the white population — according to the Department’s statistical methods — but who did not, in fact, die. “Age adjusted” fatality numbers represent, at best, a contrary-to-fact hypothetical, and are not a competent basis on which to ground public policy.

Despite the obvious flaws in the methods used both by university sociologists and the state Department of Health, and despite the undeniable fact that Minnesota’s whites have died from COVID at a rate greater than their share of the population, the press has uncritically parroted these groups’ claims of racial disparity.

Worse, the Walz administration has apparently relied on claims of dispa-

rate impact in crafting its response to the epidemic. In particular, the administration may have engaged in race discrimination in the distribution of anti-COVID vaccines. Although its language is vague, an MDH guideline issued on March 3, 2021, describes “belonging to a community of color” as a risk factor that should be considered in prioritizing vaccine availability, and tells of a “vaccine distribution and engagement approach that prioritizes disproportionately impacted communities, settings and populations.”


The Walz administration has also prioritized sending vaccines to Federally Qualified Health Centers, as well as exempting those groups from the administration’s 72-hour distribution goal, because they “are vaccinating community members from Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color at significantly higher rates than other sites.”

Further, someone who uses the MDH website to sign up to be vaccinated is asked questions about race, gender, and sexual orientation, but is not asked about real risk factors, like obesity, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. How this information is used has not been publicly disclosed.

If the Walz administration did engage in race discrimination in distributing the vaccine, it was, in all likelihood, illegal — a violation of the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause. In a recent case, *Greer’s Ranch Cafe v. Isabella Casillas Guzman*, the Court held that allegations of COVID disproportionately impacting women and minorities cannot justify race and sex discrimination in administering a government program.

Race is not a risk factor for COVID. Apart from random variation, the reason for modest differences in COVID mortality among various groups is that the actual risk factors for the disease — age, of course, but also obesity, diabetes, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and so on — are not uniformly distributed through the population.

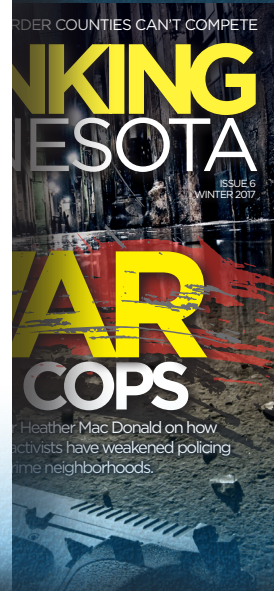
The Walz administration’s misguided obsession with race is one reason why it performed poorly at publicizing the real COVID risk factors and taking practical actions to protect the most vulnerable Minnesotans. ★



John Hinderaker is President of Center of the American Experiment, and is well-known nationally as an internet, radio and television commentator.



Mitch Rolling is a Policy Analyst at Center of the American Experiment on energy and environmental issues, and is an expert on statistical analysis.



121,078!

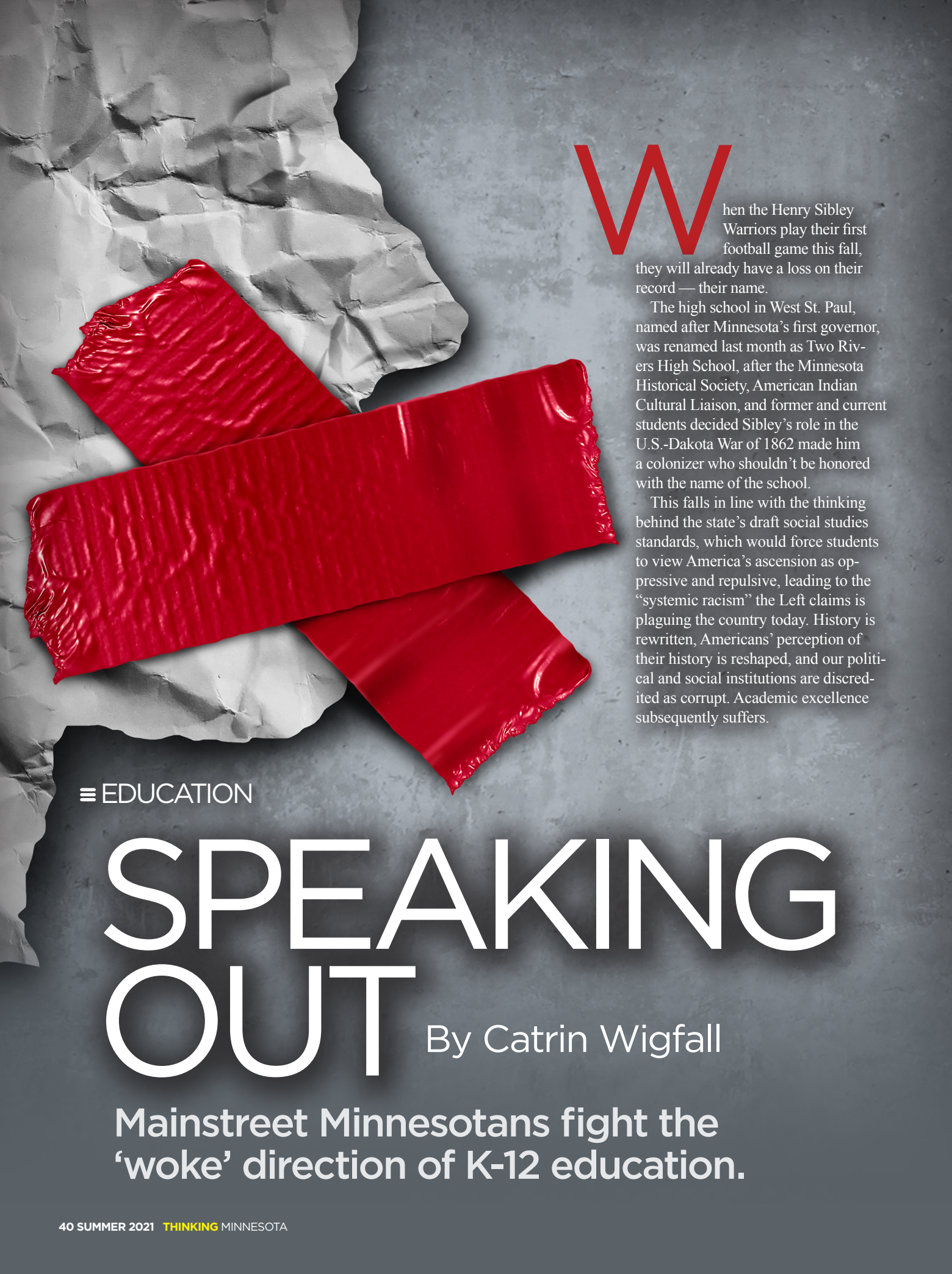
That's the circulation of *Thinking Minnesota*. We've grown over 1,500 percent since our first issue six years ago. So you know it's getting read.

And you know it is getting passed around. Now think of the number of people who share this magazine with family and friends.

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W

hen the Henry Sibley Warriors play their first football game this fall, they will already have a loss on their record — their name.

The high school in West St. Paul, named after Minnesota’s first governor, was renamed last month as Two Rivers High School, after the Minnesota Historical Society, American Indian Cultural Liaison, and former and current students decided Sibley’s role in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 made him a colonizer who shouldn’t be honored with the name of the school.

This falls in line with the thinking behind the state’s draft social studies standards, which would force students to view America’s ascension as oppressive and repulsive, leading to the “systemic racism” the Left claims is plaguing the country today. History is rewritten, Americans’ perception of their history is reshaped, and our political and social institutions are discredited as corrupt. Academic excellence subsequently suffers.

≡ EDUCATION

SPEAKING OUT

By Catrin Wigfall

Mainstreet Minnesotans fight the ‘woke’ direction of K-12 education.

Center of the American Experiment talked to a half-dozen Minnesotans, as a follow-up to “Educrats Unleashed” (Spring 2021) and our Raise Our Standards campaign that generated more than 80 percent of total public feedback on the proposed K-12 social studies standards. Revised on a 10-year cycle, Minnesota’s K-12 academic standards lay out what students must “satisfactorily complete” to graduate from high school. The first draft of the proposed social studies standards revisions released in early December 2020 is the latest vehicle from Gov. Tim Walz and his Department of Education to replace academic knowledge and skills with today’s version of political correctness.

Parents, educators and even a war hero shared their concerns over Walz and his Department of Education’s efforts to cultivate politically correct attitudes and advance an agenda that teaches a warped view of our state’s and nation’s history and democratic institutions. Protecting and maintaining the vision of liberty and equality that unites us as Americans, these Minnesotans believe, is facing a serious threat from within that will have grave implications for today’s and future generations.

Hope and change

Winnie Martin, an Edina parent of two, recalls how hope framed her mindset as her children started on their K-12 education journey. “Hope that your kid will receive the best education. Hope that your kid will be exposed to multiple facets of thought to discern their own thought pathway. Hope that your kid will be taught ‘how to think’ versus ‘what to think.’ Hope that your kid will feel safe in school to inquire, express and collaborate. Hope that your kid will be accepted for who they are and held accountable for the expectations at hand.”

That hope is being tested in a school system that Martin insists is failing kids miserably. She wonders how parents can trust a system determined to blame and burden students for mistakes made before they were born or at least before they were old enough to understand any missteps occurred at all.

The starting point for education, in her mind, begins at the top with standards development — a process that is exposing itself to be filled with identity politics — and then to curriculum selection, which, she fears, will also deride the foundation of America and teach social studies through a biased narrative. The result: Minnesota schools will continue on the same trajectory they are on today — “south,” she says.

Not all parents are aware schools are headed in this downward

trend, Martin says. Educators often aren’t transparent about what textbooks they’re using, and the supplemental curriculum resources they are pairing with the textbooks don’t help. “Parents have to be the ones to protect children from overwhelming them with overly complicated topics that aren’t age appropriate. But how can we protect them when we have no lens into what they are doing or being taught?”

Serena Harad, a Minnetonka parent of three, worries that the draft social studies standards are weighted too heavily toward personal perspective versus fundamental facts. “I agree that skills are important and that content is learned with these skills, but our students need basic core knowledge about our history in order to thrive,” Harad wrote in an email to the Minnesota Department of Education’s Social Studies Committee. “They need to learn about

America’s founding and the wars we’ve fought to remain free and support other nations in their fight for freedom.”

She also emphasized the need to keep teaching students about one particular atrocity: the Holocaust. It was not included in the first draft of the new proposed standards.

Above board

Michelle Meyer decided that elected office was the natural next step to increase transparen-

cy and gain the confidence of the community.

“Running for school board — and getting other like-minded parents to do so — is one of the key ways to make impactful change,” Meyer says, adding that she’s horrified how much education has changed since her 14-year stint (2000-2008 and 2011-2017) on the Sartell-St. Stephen School Board. “This should be a wake-up call for how quickly curriculum and leadership can change the direction of education.”

The current push for institutional orthodoxy is nothing new to Meyer, though, because she was a social studies teacher in

both middle and high school before she ran for a school board seat in 2000. She feels that state and local education leaders have always wanted to teach a social justice agenda. “They just took advantage of everything that has happened recently. Look back at the history of public schools and you will see this has always been their goal: state run schools that indoctrinate students.”

The scary part? Not all parents are aware a political ideology has invaded their children’s schools, she says. But if they knew it was here or likely on the way, she believes many of them would agree that it is harmful to view everything through a “woke” lens,



“Running for school board — and getting other like-minded parents to do so — is one of the key ways to make change,” former board member Michelle Meyer says.



such as how the first draft of social studies standards labels America’s 19th-century westward expansion as the result of “whiteness, Christianity, and capitalism.”

Get the word out, Meyer says. Inform everyone.

New school

As a third-grade teacher, Stacy Swedberg understands the responsibility she bears: To equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to help them become civically engaged and responsible members of society. “We say the Pledge of Allegiance every morning and talk about the flag. We cover the American Revolution, the Civil War and the Holocaust. We talk about China and communism.”

Swedberg teaches the importance of thinking critically about different perspectives and encouraging students to ask questions and create their own opinions. She refuses to conform with the proposed standards in their current form, should they be approved someday, because they contradict her overall philosophy. “In a world full of hate, be the light,” Swedberg says. She always tells students to think about how their actions affect others.

Or in one case, how external forces affect her students. A white student, after watching the news, worried about being racist, based on skin color alone. Swedberg asked if skin color is a chosen trait. Then she asked if the student feels a certain level of superiority based on skin color. The student did not know how to respond. “It’s something they don’t even think about,” she says, until they are told to think about it.

It is happening so much throughout the state’s K-12 classrooms that she pulled

John Clark celebrates his 98th birthday this month and was a combat pilot during World War II. “This foolishness about the country being racist is racist itself,” he says.

her three children out of the Bemidji school district — where she teaches. Now they attend an online public school, but they still haven’t eluded leftist leanings in their new learning environment.

For example, communication from the online school to parents highlights current events, which Swedberg understands, but it is the cherry-picking of news items and how the information is depicted that concerns her. One email she received told her: “We cannot ignore the impact current events, like the trial of Derek Chauvin, mass shootings, and the ongoing pandemic, is having on our school community.”

Making history

World War II failed to make it into the first draft of the social studies standards. Instead there is language that says students will “explore how individuals and groups in the past have fought against

bias and discrimination through social justice movements.” This benchmark pertains to first graders.

The Minnesota Department of Education has walked back key omissions like WWII, saying the first draft focuses on additions

and revisions. But it’s concerning this content didn’t make the cut to begin with. “I have been disturbed,” John Clark says, “with what I have read.”

Clark, who celebrates his 98th birthday this month, was a combat pilot during the war. He flew a B-17 during 32 missions over Germany as part of the 100th Bombardment Group. The pilots were called the Bloody Hundredth because of the heavy losses the bombers sustained, sometimes losing entire squadrons of 120 to 130 men in each. Out of his total missions, Clark crashed in Belgium once, but a swamp provided a soft enough landing for him to walk away without a scratch.

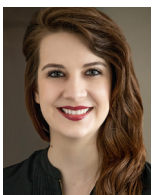
He recorded his experiences in a diary and became a bit of a historian. His motivation was his mother, a former journalist who sent him a notebook and told him to record everything he saw and did.

“This foolishness about the country being racist is racist itself,” Clark says. He admits there are mistakes in America’s past, with individuals engaging in wrongdoings, “but show me a life that does not have one mistake. I can think of only one individual: Jesus Christ.”

Clark went on to become an engineering professor at the University of Michigan before retiring to Bloomington to be near family. And he feels strongly about education being about meritocracy over equity, based on something he learned when he was earning his doctorate degree from MIT. “You hear people say, ‘I worked hard on that,’” Clark says, “but my question is: ‘What did you accomplish?’ You’re supposed to work hard. At MIT you were rewarded for your accomplishments.”

International man of pedagogy

Michael Fody, a retired teacher living in St. Cloud, brings a global perspective to



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



his views, which leaves him “absolutely disheartened by the atrocities being committed to our shared history” in schools. He’s lived and worked on four continents as well as taught in eight states.

He acknowledges that “rumblings” of political indoctrination started many years ago in higher education, a level he calls “completely captured” today. K-12



Talk to the locals in a foreign country and most view the United States as a place that strives to “form a more perfect union” by learning from the past and being hopeful about our future.

education is the last holdout, primarily because there is more community involvement, and with it, a lot more power, “if they exercise it.”

Fody sees pushback against the politicizing of schools from parents who are rebelling — they don’t want classrooms turned into ideological battlegrounds. And they are going to have to keep mobilizing. “Hopefully communities wake up in time, because teaching students to view each other based on the color of their skin is not unifying. It’s

divisive to an extreme. It doesn’t help create informed citizens or foster civil discourse.”

Its inherent divisiveness destroys K-12 education as a unifying force in American culture, Fody says.

His teacher friends overseas are also upset over efforts in the United States to rewrite history and promote a worldview that is antithetical to a pro-human vision. They blame the U.S. — and its “oversized influence” — for exporting Critical Race Theory and revisionist history.

They absolutely detest and abhor it in France, Fody says, and in Brazil his friends are fighting similar race-based issues. This mess diminishes America’s standing on the world stage. “Our enemies are testing us. We are no longer respected but are a laughingstock.”

The passport

Global travel brings a wealth of knowledge, an education in itself, steeped in culture, history and progress. And the U.S. is often a hot topic. Among the expat crowd, it is common to come across the sanctimonious backpacker, who loves to lament America the same way radical leftists do today, thousands of them doing it in our K-12 schools as they attempt to indoctrinate children.

But talk to the locals in a foreign country and most view the United States as a place that strives to “form a more perfect union” by learning from the past and being hopeful about our future. They think about how great it would have been for them if they could have grown up and gone to school in the states.

Fody recalls a trip 30 years ago to Togo and Nigeria. He met a woman who traveled to Africa with a group of black Americans, learning more about their ancestors and their history. The woman told him she felt so lucky to have a U.S. passport. She held it up in her hand, Fody says, then clutched it to her chest.

“It’s one of the few times I kept my mouth shut. I just nodded.” ★

Never Give Up

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

AN INSIDER'S FIGHT AGAINST THE COVID-19 FIASCO



CCHF Annual Gala 2021

**THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 9, 2021**

**6:00 PM
Golden Valley Country Club
Golden Valley, MN**

Keynote Speaker

SCOTT W. ATLAS, MD

Dr. Scott W. Atlas, MD served as President Trump’s Special Advisor and as a member of the White House Coronavirus Task Force. From this powerful inside position, Dr. Atlas countered the irrational mandates pushed by the CDC and imposed by the states. He said lockdowns are dangerous and called for scientific truth to be followed, not fear-mongering.

**Big Tech cancelled him.
Major media scorned him.**

Calling him “a brave and brilliant man,” Hillsdale College awarded him the Freedom Leadership Award, its highest honor. Dr. Atlas has been a voice of truth on Fox News and Newsmax.

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A man with a balding head, wearing a dark grey suit jacket, a light blue checkered shirt, and a blue patterned tie, stands with his arms crossed. He is smiling slightly. The background is a blurred interior space with a lamp and a vase.

Q&A

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

American Experiment President **John Hinderaker** interviews Senior Policy Fellow **Peter Nelson** about his work in the Trump administration, D.C. vs Twin Cities living, and what his double-full-circle career means for health care in Minnesota and America.

Peter Nelson

returned to Center of the American Experiment in June after serving over three years with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Originally from Edina, he used all the health care expertise he acquired during his time in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to craft federal policies that benefit hundreds of millions of Americans. Now he'll further some of those initiatives in his home state as well as in others that seek his prowess to improve their health care systems.

Jana Noonan Photography

Peter, you're rejoining us after a 3 ½-year absence to work in Washington, D.C. Before we talk about that, let's back up a little bit. You started at American Experiment when?

Back in 1997, shortly after I graduated from Wheaton College. That's actually when I was first introduced to health care policy, through a research project studying small business purchasing cooperatives. And then I ended up going to law school and didn't have plans to come back to American Experiment. But one thing led to another and I landed back here after law school, specializing in health care policy for a large part of my job. Although, as you know, I pursued a number of other policy areas in Minnesota.

So in 2017, you got an offer to take a high-level position in the Trump administration, specializing in health care regulation.

It was a move I was not expecting. Someone reached out to me for my resume and said, "We think you'd be the ideal person for a position at CMS." It was from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. There was a focus on stabilizing the individual health insurance market. It was in shambles when the Trump administration came into power. Premiums had increased — doubled since Obamacare was implemented — and insurance companies were fleeing the market. They were very focused on fixing those problems.

At the time I was working on individual market issues in Minnesota, finding ways employers could actually move into the individual market and finance plans for their employees to give them more choice and flexibility. That was a big part of the Trump administration agenda, to give states more flexibility to come up with their own solutions. They knew states were closer to the ground and therefore knew their markets better than Washington knew their markets. CMS was ready to implement the right policies for America, and this was an opportunity I couldn't pass up.

What was your job title and who was your boss?

I was the senior advisor to the administrator, Seema Verma. I believe she was the longest-running administrator at CMS. It was really a privilege to work with her and for her. We accomplished so much during our tenure. We had 16 initiatives that we were driving throughout that time, and I was primarily involved with two of them.



“There was a focus on stabilizing the individual health insurance market. It was in shambles when the Trump administration came into power. Premiums had doubled since Obamacare.”

What were you specializing in?

One area was price transparency. It's really hard to know the price of care before you get care. In fact, it's by design. The insurance companies and the hospitals don't want you to know the price. By hiding it, they defeat competition in the marketplace, which leads to higher prices and bigger profits for them. Prices are central to any market. They guide a market and if you don't know the prices, there's no competition to drive prices down.

The other was the insurance market

space. I focused on stabilizing the insurance markets and that involved working on health insurance exchanges. We implemented reforms to make sure the markets run optimally. For instance, there were rules in place that allowed people to sort of game the process, waiting until they were sick to enroll. We tightened up those requirements to make sure people were continuously covered. It's better for the insurance market and better for you, the individual.

So put all that in a nutshell.

It gets very technical. A lot of it was giving states the power and flexibility to

“A lot of it was giving states the power and flexibility to oversee rules and requirements. States are in a better position to assess the situation. This promotes a stable marketplace.”

oversee rules and requirements because states are in a better position to assess the situation. This promotes a stable marketplace. The prior administration was not interested in pushing rules that worked for the entire marketplace. They were just focused on enrolling more people, which led to a lot of premium increases.

What was it like to work in the Trump administration?

It was nonstop work, never boring. There was always something going on and the pace was pretty crazy. There were a lot of different people we got to work with. Great people. I even did some of my work on the White House grounds at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, where we held regular meetings to work on issues that crossed agencies. That was another thing about my job that was so interesting: Working with people at Treasury and people at Labor because a lot of these issues cross these agencies.

It was a very collaborative environment. One thing that surprised me was how well the process worked among so many stakeholders. We just got in a room and worked through it all to craft what was really the best policy for America.

What kind of guidance did you get from on high? Were the politicians in there, telling you what to do? Were lobbyists running the process?

My experience was that the Trump administration hired really good people to develop and implement good policy. We were largely left to do our jobs. Of course, we listened to every special interest because you need to hear everyone out when you're developing policies. But the special interests never drove policy. We were free to set policy based on what we thought was best for America.

What was it like to live in Washington, D.C.?

I wish I could say I had a lot of time to really live there but the pace was pretty hectic so there wasn't much time to really experience the city. But I'll admit, the weather was something I couldn't stand. When summer hit, the heat and humidity were too much for me to bear. I would trade three months in hot, humid D.C. for three months in a cold Minnesota winter any day. If you're not from Minnesota, you don't understand how much people from Minnesota can miss Minnesota, so I'm glad to get back to our winters.

But it's our nation's capital. It's a great place to be. There's so much happening. I had an apartment less than a mile away from my office, which was right across the street from the Capitol. There are obviously great restaurants in the area. And the Nationals' baseball stadium was only two blocks away. Back in 2019 I got to go to a lot of the key games that led to the Nationals winning the World Series. That was a really exciting time.

I always think that most people in Washington consider the Democrats to be the home team. How was it being a member of the Trump administration in that environment?

When you're talking about certain policy areas in D.C., that's particularly



true, and it was certainly true with health care. The Left tends to dominate the health care space so we were constantly under attack when we were promoting our policies. There are really smart conservatives supporting a movement toward a more consumer-driven health care system. But they are swamped — by the sheer number of special interests working for the Left. It was a constant fight, responding to our critics and having to deal with politicians in Congress who weren't happy with the direction we were going. It certainly didn't make our jobs easier. But that's politics and that's D.C.

With a new administration, a lot of people are wondering what will be undone easily and not so easily.

I'm hopeful a number of key initiatives will persist, starting with price transparency. That policy is just common sense. I'm optimistic the work we did on health reimbursement arrangements will also move forward. These are opportunities for employers to fund individual market coverage policies, pre-tax, which is something that could transform and strengthen the individual insurance market and make it more competitive. That's also common sense and I think it'll move forward.

Those are two good examples of ideas the Obama administration never pursued. It might not be that they opposed those policies. It just wasn't their priority. But we had a priority to make the markets more competitive — to take advantage of competition to drive toward a better health care system.

I do worry that some of our policies that give states more power to find their

“There are smart conservatives supporting a movement toward a consumer-driven system. But they are swamped — by the sheer number of special interests working for the Left.”

own health care solutions will fall by the wayside. Checks and balances are there but elections matter. That’s politics.

One of the areas you are really an expert in, Peter, is health care policy at the state level, and what states can do within the federal framework that, for better or for worse, we’re dealing with. This puts you in an ideal position with a state-based think tank.

That’s what positioned me for the federal government job as well. They were looking for people with experience at the state level because Republicans and conservatives generally think the states are better at coming up with solutions. I worked on 1332 waivers when I was in D.C. These are waivers from Obamacare rules that allow more state-based initiatives to improve their health insurance markets. While the Biden administration will likely try to limit flexibility under 1332 waivers, states should still pursue them. That said, states continue to be the primary regulators of insurance and will need to continue to assert this authority to advance policies to ensure a stable, competitive insurance market.

When you were with American Experiment before you went to Washington, you were highly respected in the Minnesota Legislature and you were frequently in St. Paul to testify before committees. Do you look forward to getting back to that and guiding our state on health care?

Absolutely. There are a lot of things I missed when I went to the federal government and that’s definitely one of

them. Getting out to St. Paul, walking around the Capitol, getting things done. The state level is where the action is. That’s where you can really have substantial influence and advance real policy solutions. When I left Minnesota, I knew it wasn’t long-term because I loved what I did before so much. It really was a joy to work at the State Capitol with so many good legislators and staff. And working with other people at American Experiment, we accomplished so much before I left, and I know that work continued while I was gone. I’m excited to pick it back up.

One of the things we’ve been doing the last few years is working with groups in other states, having more and more impact, not only here in Minnesota but in other places around the country. It seems to me you’re in a great place to share your expertise not only here in Minnesota but to advise other states as well on how they can maximize their health care policy.

That’s exactly right. At CMS, I worked directly with state regulators on health insurance marketplace issues. They are eager to reform their systems, to make them work better. Sitting down in a room with state regulators and trying to come up with solutions was one of the more enjoyable parts of my job. That was something people appreciated about the Trump administration, our eagerness to work with the states. It wasn’t an adversarial environment. It was a how-do-we-make-this-work-for-you environment. So I’m excited to hear about our expanding work and presence in other states, and I’m definitely eager to work with them.

Well, Peter, we’re delighted to have you back and we know you’re happy to be back as well.

I could not be happier to be living among family and friends again. I have friends in D.C. but, you know, Minnesota is home. I want to enjoy all the things Minnesotans love to do. I just got back from the North Shore a few days ago. It’s one of my favorite places to visit and now I can run up there any weekend I choose. ★

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Regressive and Ineffective

Tobacco taxes hurt low-income
Minnesotans, small businesses.

BY
MARTHA
NJOLOMOLE



Progressive policymakers seem to love increasing tobacco taxes even though they don't deter smokers from smoking, unfairly target low-income Minnesotans, hurt small businesses, and force police to invest more hours into stopping cigarette smugglers instead of catching deadly felons.

Gov. Tim Walz may have backed off his \$1-per-pack tax increase this year when the state found a \$1.6 billion budget surplus, but that didn't prevent the House Preventive Health Policy Division Committee from passing a bump of \$1.50 per pack. Democrats also introduced legislation to ban flavored tobacco statewide. And just because these bills never made it to the governor's desk, it's clear Democrats intend to wage this war on tobacco into the foreseeable future.

They believe bans and taxes discour-

age people like Butch Shimota from feeding their cravings, and others from picking up the habit in the first place, based on declining smoking rates following former Gov. Mark Dayton's 130 percent increase in cigarette taxes, to \$1.60 per pack.

A smoker for 29 years, Shimota, 47, distinctly remembers the Dayton tax increase. "I was absolutely pissed," he says, and the fact that Walz proposed — and House Democrats doubled down on — more tobacco taxes "is just a joke."

The number of smokers may have declined, but that is only part of the story. Shu-Hong Zhu, director of the Center for Research and Intervention in Tobacco Control at the University of California-San Diego, attributed the plummeting smoking rates mainly to e-cigarettes. Chinese smoker Hon Lik, who was going through three packs a day, got scared when his father died of lung cancer, and he invented the first electronic smoking device in 2003. This runs nearly parallel to the trend of Minnesotans quitting smoking, which goes back to the late 1990s.

A Minnesota Adult Tobacco Use survey, conducted by the state Department of Health and an anti-tobacco nonprofit called ClearWay Minnesota, shows that only 14 percent of adults were smoking in 2018, the latest year covered in its analysis. That's down from 23 percent in

1999, a drop of nearly 40 percent. It's even more precipitous for high schoolers, according to the Minnesota Department of Health, as only three percent of students smoked cigarettes last year, compared to around 31 percent in 2000, a 90 percent decrease. Even when you account for e-cigarettes, tobacco use among high school kids fell from around 39 percent in 2000 to just over 20 percent in 2020, a 47 percent decline.

The high school stats are significant, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as 1,600 youths smoke their first cigarette each day and nine out of 10 adult smokers started when they were 18. Like Shimota. He tells his nephews and nieces to never try

Just because these bills never made it to the governor's desk, it's clear Democrats intend to wage this war on tobacco into the foreseeable future.



This is an excerpt from a longer paper, available at [AmericanExperiment.org](https://www.AmericanExperiment.org)

cigarettes because he smoked his first one as a high school senior, caving to peer pressure. “Then it kinda just becomes a habit,” he says. “You go to a party, have three beers and a cigarette, and you get a heck of a buzz. It’s cheap and fun.”

Death and taxes

There are 480,000 Americans who die each year from smoking cigarettes, according to the CDC. That’s 1,300 a day, as smokers are 30 times more likely to succumb to cancer than nonsmokers. It’s an addiction. Addictions often defy logic and health science. And taxes. Economists Kevin Callison and Robert Kaestner found that

“it will take sizable tax increases, on the order of 100 percent, to decrease adult smoking by as much as five percent.” Besides, Minnesota’s tobacco tax dollars go straight to the general fund, where they can be easily reallocated for projects unrelated to tobacco-use abatement.

Shimota, a former heavy equipment operator on residential construction projects, is a veteran on 100 percent disability today from combat-related injuries. He lives in New Market, some 30 miles south of the Twin Cities, where he does occasional handyman jobs — and spends at least \$250 a month on cigarettes. That puts him right around the demographic that is hurt the most by higher prices: People who earn \$35,000 a year or less.

These are the folks with a smoking rate of 24.1 percent, according to a 2018 survey by the state’s health department, compared to 8.7 percent among Minnesotans with incomes over \$75,000. In 2019, half of all smokers made \$25,000 or less.

This also means lower-income Minnesotans spend more of their total income, 3.8 percent, on cigarette taxes, according to the state Department of Revenue. That number will rise to 5.4 percent should House Democrats someday get their way. High-income residents, on the other hand, spend only 1.8 percent of their earnings on cigarette taxes and that would become only 2.8 percent under the House’s proposed tax hikes.

None of these numbers have any impact on Barbara Wagner, 64. The retired waitress has been smoking since she was in high school and insists a tax will never convince her to quit. “I love



getting up in the morning and having a cigarette with my cup of coffee,” she says.

Electric slide

The best bet for Wagner and other smokers to quit would be electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), such as e-cigarettes and vapes, as the University of California-San Diego showed through its research. There’s also support for this study from British health officials, who found the electronic nicotine dispensers are 95 percent less harmful.

Too bad Democrats, despite the data, prefer to raise taxes on these electronic devices, claiming they encourage young people to smoke.

Walz still wants a tax of 35 percent on vaping products such as nicotine solution and devices and a 95 percent wholesale tax on electronic devices. And House Democrats are pushing to tax e-cigarettes the same as regular cigarettes. Never mind that Minnesota already has the highest wholesale taxes in the country for vaping products.

It’s not helpful, as youth statewide are already misinformed about e-cigarettes. Only 18.2 percent of them believe e-cigarettes are less harmful than regular cigarettes.

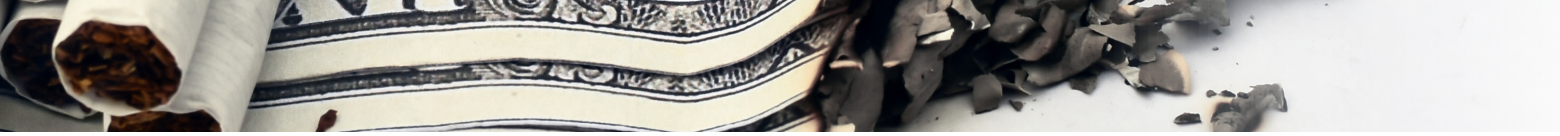
Zhu, at the University of California-San Diego, only acknowledges that government efforts — and national campaigns that use evocative advertising to emphasize health risks — “play a role.” His research also suggests a 2009 increase in the federal tobacco tax, from 39 cents to \$1.01 per pack, had a negligible effect on quitting smoking in the two years that followed, reinforcing his theory on e-cigarettes.

Border run

More taxes simply motivate smokers to find cheaper options. Shimota avoids paying tobacco taxes as much as possible by buying his cigarettes outside



Martha Njolomole is an Economist at Center of the American Experiment. She earned a Master of Arts in economics at Troy University in Alabama. Martha’s upbringing in Malawi, a developing country, helped her develop a passion for contributing to research on the social and economic advancement of economically disadvantaged people.



of Minnesota. His targets: Missouri, where the tax is only 17 cents; North Dakota, which has a tax of just 44 cents; and South Dakota, with a \$1.76 tax. He doesn't travel much, so when he's not there to buy a bunch of cartons himself, he asks friends to pick some up for him while they're on vacation or business trips.

Wagner usually drives to Iowa to buy her cigarettes. It's just 15 miles to the border from her home in Austin, Minn., and she saves \$20 a carton. But Wagner, as well as Shimota and his friends, are not nearly the equivalent of the black market, where 36 percent of cigarettes smoked in Minnesota are brought in illegally from other states, according to a study by the Tax Foundation and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. That's boosted by the 142 percent increase in excise taxes from 2006 to 2018, prompting a smuggling jump of 52 percent.

A tax hike of \$1.50 per pack would push Minnesota's total tax burden to \$5.173. Subtract 44 cents, the tax in North Dakota, and Minnesota has a tax rate that's \$4.733 higher than its western neighbor. Now imagine a commercial smuggler transports 100,000 cigarettes from North Dakota to Minnesota, and sells them at a price point based on Minnesota's tax rate. That's a profit margin of nearly \$475,000.

Richard Marianos, a former special agent in D.C. at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, had to assign two groups, each with 15 field agents, to focus on the smuggling industry about a decade ago, because it had become so violent and lucrative. Two agents traded guns and heroin for tobacco. Various other undercover operations revealed that smuggling even crossed international borders, with deals worth close to a million dollars in smuggling traced back to terrorists, although he declined to provide details. "Tobacco smuggling was more profitable for them than selling narcotics," Marianos says.

With such a wide profit margin, it's no wonder counterfeit tobacco products were flowing into America from countries as far as China, Belize and the Philippines.

For a state like Minnesota, with crime on the rise in its biggest city and economic center, increased smuggling means a further strain on our policing and criminal justice system, forcing officers to focus more on smugglers and prohibition — work that doesn't enhance public safety. This also means increased interactions between police and citizens, a relationship that these days is already fraught, especially in urban areas.

Cuts and customers

Kevin Aldwaik knows about urban conflict. Originally from the Middle East, Aldwaik moved to the Twin Cities in 1996 and found work as a stock clerk. He opened Webber Mart, his own convenience store in north Minneapolis, in 2005. And today, even as his neighborhood struggles to contend with Minneapolis's public safety concerns, Aldwaik's primary fight is with tobacco taxes and regulations.

Tobacco comprises 40 percent of Webber Mart's sales; without tobacco, he estimates the store would lose 70 percent of all sales because users buy groceries, lottery tickets, snacks and

food. "It's a domino effect," he says.

He felt a huge impact in August 2018, when Minneapolis restricted menthol sales and other flavored tobacco to liquor stores and tobacco shops, aiming to cut youth smoking, which was already declining. That cut Aldwaik's sales of all tobacco products by 50 percent. Additionally, he lost about \$180,000 in store revenue in 2019, due to customers taking their business to Brooklyn Park and other surrounding cities. Minneapolis, meanwhile, saw tobacco shops more than double in response to the restrictions, according to city data cited in the *Star Tribune*. "The ban did not reduce menthol smoking," he says. "It just made my life worse."

It did the same for several of his workers. The loss of revenue forced him to cut back his workforce from six people to three. These jobs are not coming back.

Future tax hikes would surely become more subtraction by addition. Cigarettes and other tobacco products are the staple of the convenience industry, making up about 35 percent of all in-store sales in 2020, with cigarettes around 28 percent, according to *Convenience Store News*, a trade publication that puts out an annual industry report. Tobacco also drives spending on other products, the report shows; therefore, tobacco taxes hurt sales of multiple commodities.

In 2013, Minnesota experienced a loss of 1,100 jobs, \$110.9 million in overall activity, and \$10.7 million in business and personal taxes due to Dayton's tax hike on cigarettes, according to a study by John Dunham & Associates, a Florida consulting firm that specializes in economics and public policy. Aldwaik weathered it. Next time, it will force significant changes, similar to the flavor ban.

Counterproductive

To the right of the counter in the Webber Mart, there's a sign with FLAVOR BAN in big black lettering enmeshed in a circle slashed by a diagonal line. The background is dark burnt orange. Aldwaik, now often lobbying elected officials to lighten tobacco laws in the Twin Cities, wants everyone to know what's happening, to fight back.

Just 20 minutes south in Bloomington, the city council passed a flavor ban — including menthol cigarettes — that will go into effect on Jan. 1. From then on, no more stores will receive tobacco licenses while those that sell tobacco products and close by June 30 of next year will have their licenses eliminated, an attrition toward prohibition that will surely cause additional small business and law enforcement pains.

This is a big deal when you consider that Bloomington is the state's fifth biggest city, is home to the Mall of America, and will join Minneapolis, St. Paul and almost 20 other cities with some type of restriction on flavored tobacco. The spread of tobacco policies is becoming almost like a zombie outbreak, in which one person under the spell bites another, and then that person infects someone else, and so on, until the impact is exponential. And whenever conservatives make some progress in combating and containing this morbid movement, millions more get bit with a new ban or tax. ★

AT THE CROSSROADS

Minnesota's Walter Mondale famously failed to resurrect Hubert Humphrey's liberal coalition, but also took the first, faltering steps toward a new progressive politics that appealed to younger, educated, middle-class voters.

The evening before the 1984 presidential election, Democratic candidate Walter Mondale told an audience at the Minneapolis Airport: "Tonight, I end what may be the longest campaign in American history. For thousands and thousands of miles, through long days and long weeks and long months and now long years, through all the debates, through all the campaigns and speeches, through all of the joys and heartaches, I could hear you, and I could also hear Hubert pushing me on."

Mondale, who passed away in April aged 93, was often described as Hubert Humphrey's protege and the bonds between the two Minnesotans were strong. In 1948, aged 20, "Fritz" Mondale, a minister's son from Elmore, got his start in politics managing Humphrey's Senate campaign in the state's heavily Republican Second Congressional District. Appointed state Attorney General in 1960, he was appointed to Humphrey's Senate seat on his election as Vice President in 1964. Four years later, Humphrey appointed Mondale co-chairman of his presidential campaign.

But Mondale's political life was not a re-run of Humphrey's. Humphrey's politics were rooted in what Joe Rauh, vice

president of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) — an anti-communist liberal group Humphrey helped found in 1947 — described as the "liberal-labor-Negro coalition that had elected every liberal president and made possible every liberal advance since the 1930s." His political life spanned the high noon of political liberalism in the 1960s, based on this coalition, and its subsequent fall as that coalition disintegrated.

Mondale came to prominence as that disintegration became obvious. His attempts to reassemble the old coalition in 1984 were a spectacular failure, but his political life saw the first, faltering steps towards a new progressive politics, one that appealed to younger, more educated, middle-class voters — the kind who elected Joe Biden president in November.

1964 to 1984

In 1964, Lyndon Johnson was elected president in a landslide, with over 61 percent of the vote. But even then, there were signs that the coalition which underlay this success was fraying.

African-Americans were the first element of the old coalition to rebel. At the 1964 convention, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) insisted that its integrated delegation be seated for the state instead of the official, segregated one. The compromise, largely negotiated by Mondale, failed to

By John Phelan

placate the MFD and irritated the Democratic party's powerful southern wing.

The liberals were the next to rebel. Already active in the fight for civil rights, they became further radicalized over the war in Vietnam. Indeed, it was liberal Democrats who turfed Lyndon Johnson out of office in 1968, just four years after his landslide.

The last element to break was labor. Working-class whites recoiled from rising urban violence and the anti-American antics of liberals in settings like the Democratic convention in Chicago in 1968. They flirted with George Wallace in that year's election before ultimately backing Humphrey: He won 61 percent of the vote in unionized neighborhoods.

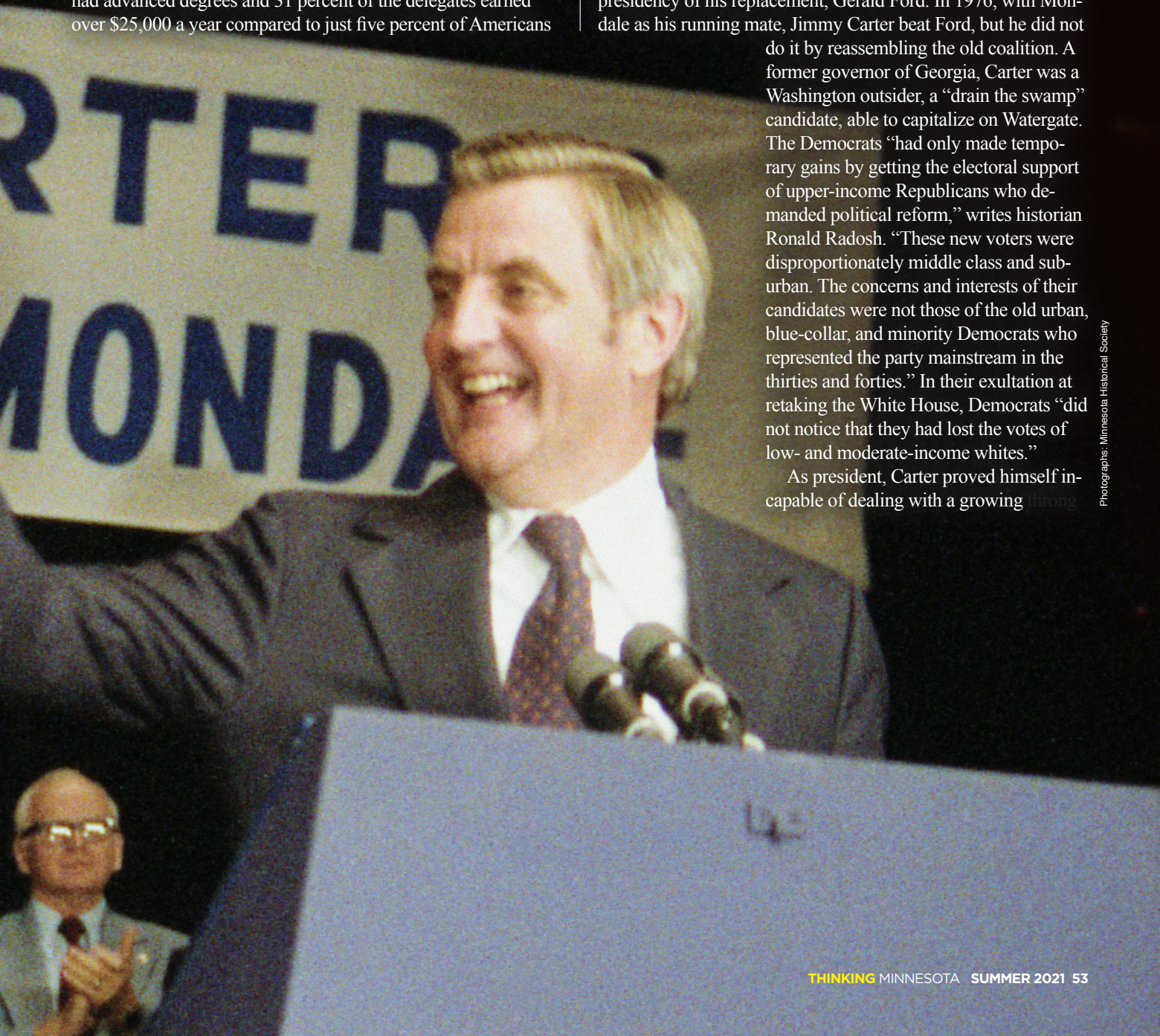
But by 1972 liberals were fully in control of the Democratic Party. The delegates to the convention that year were minorities and richer, better-educated whites. A disproportionate number had advanced degrees and 31 percent of the delegates earned over \$25,000 a year compared to just five percent of Americans

overall. There were no farmers in Iowa's delegation, but New York's contained nine delegates who were associated with gay rights groups, and South Dakota's were "anointed" by two Native Americans.

The verdict delivered by the American electorate in November was clear: Richard Nixon was reelected with 61 percent of the vote, carrying 49 states and winning 521 Electoral College votes to George McGovern's 17. Part of this landslide was due to the labor vote. Unwilling to swallow their doubts about a Democratic candidate for a second successive election, Nixon became the first Republican presidential candidate in recent history to win the blue-collar vote, by a 5-to-4 margin. While McGovern won the union vote, he only did so by 50 to 48 percent.

These structural problems were obscured for a time. In 1974, Nixon resigned over Watergate, which also fatally tainted the presidency of his replacement, Gerald Ford. In 1976, with Mondale as his running mate, Jimmy Carter beat Ford, but he did not do it by reassembling the old coalition. A former governor of Georgia, Carter was a Washington outsider, a "drain the swamp" candidate, able to capitalize on Watergate. The Democrats "had only made temporary gains by getting the electoral support of upper-income Republicans who demanded political reform," writes historian Ronald Radosh. "These new voters were disproportionately middle class and suburban. The concerns and interests of their candidates were not those of the old urban, blue-collar, and minority Democrats who represented the party mainstream in the thirties and forties." In their exultation at retaking the White House, Democrats "did not notice that they had lost the votes of low- and moderate-income whites."

As president, Carter proved himself incapable of dealing with a growing



Photographs: Minnesota Historical Society

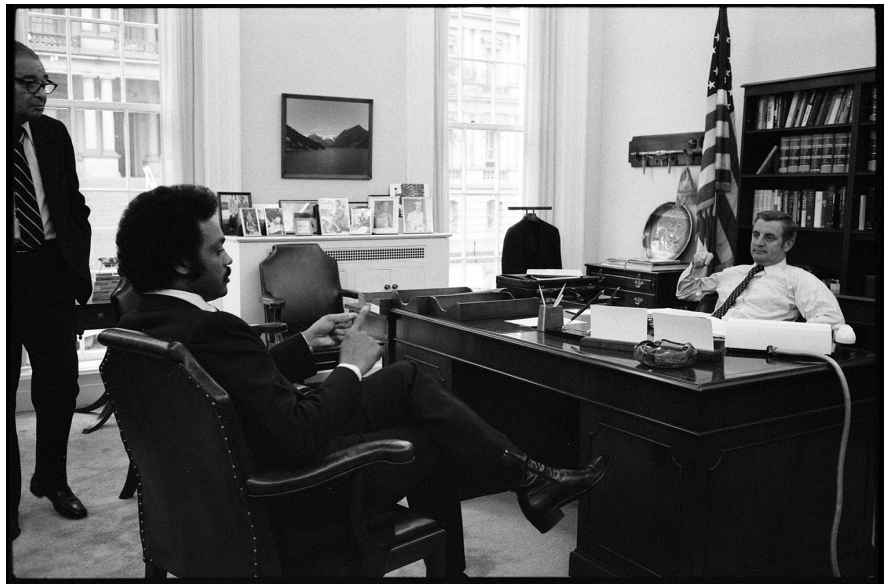
of domestic and foreign crises — stagflation at home and renewed Soviet aggression and oil crises abroad. A frustrated Mondale seriously considered resigning at one point. In 1980, Carter was crushed by Ronald Reagan, winning only six states with Republicans gaining 12 seats in the Senate and 33 in the House. Many Democrats, however, comforted themselves with the belief that Carter’s defeat was due to one off, freak events like the Iranian hostage crisis, and his own obvious shortcomings. They perceived no essential, structural issues, and believed that they could still win with the old coalition if only they could put it back together again.

1984

Mondale was among a small group of Democrats who perceived, albeit dimly, the party’s structural problems. During the 1980 campaign, he gave a speech calling for a “redefinition of the tradition in American politics for which Hubert Humphrey stood.” At the heart of this, wrote Steven M. Gillon, “was the recognition that liberals had to pay closer attention to middle-class needs.” Mondale argued: “People do not cease to count once they leave the shadows of disadvantage and injustice.”

This gleam of light soon dimmed. To prepare for a presidential run in 1984 and to distance himself from the calamitous Carter presidency, Mondale undertook a widely derided “reeducation program” after 1980: “I’m going to try to emphasize studying and learning again,” he told the Minneapolis *Tribune*. In *Time*, William Henry called it “a gesture so goofy on its face...that few people took it seriously enough even to mock it.” And when the reeducated Mondale emerged from his chrysalis in 1982, it wasn’t clear what he’d learned. After a speech to the Democratic midterm convention, his speechwriter said: “After listening, I’d be hard pressed to name a single fresh theme or idea which holds it together.” Strategically, Mondale was going to try to reassemble the old coalition in 1984.

But there were early signs



that the coalition was broken beyond repair. At a straw poll in Milwaukee in June 1983, Mondale’s campaign manager, Bob Beckel, noted too many young delegates with nuclear freeze signs. A veteran told him: “You know, there are a lot of people here I’ve never seen before.” Beckel noted that there were a lot of other people who should have been there who weren’t. When Mondale saluted Humphrey as his mentor during his speech, “the silence was eloquent,” according to *Newsweek* reporters. “There weren’t a whole lot of Humphrey Democrats in the house.”

In the event, Mondale only secured the Democratic nomination at the end of a grueling battle with Gary Hart who, on his election to the Senate in 1974, had declared: “We are not a bunch of little Hubert Humphreys.” If Hart was clear what he *wasn’t*, it was much less clear what he *was*, besides nebulous appeals to youth and change. Indeed, his candidacy was mortally wounded when, during a televised debate, Mondale simply asked him, “Where’s the beef?”

But Hart had identified what *Newsweek* reporters described as “...that new

class known variously as yuppies (for young urban professionals), yumpies (for young upward-mobile professionals), or, in the term of art favored by the younger Hart campaigners, the Quiche Corps. They were at the leading edge of the nation’s passage from a smokestack to a microchip economy, from a heavy-industrial past to a high-technological future. They were not, like their parents, the children of depression or war; they felt no blood knot to the unions, the New Deal, or a party identified in their formative years with Vietnam, inflation and rising mortgage rates. The party was losing relevance to them, in Hart’s formulation, and was in danger of dying of precisely the sort of alliances Mondale had struck and the variety of promises he had made.” Hart, for example, saw Mondale’s union connections not as a strength, but as a weakness: “Fritz,” he said, “can’t even go to the *bathroom* without asking the plumbers’ union.”

Mondale’s attempts to reassemble the old coalition were further hampered by Reagan’s aggressive courting of the labor vote: He went as far as to ride through Ohio in Harry Truman’s old railroad car.

Just before a speech at a Chrysler plant in Belvedere, Illinois, Mondale’s running mate Geraldine Ferraro was handed polling data showing one third of union auto workers planning to vote for Reagan. “I’m absolutely floored,” she told the workers, junking her prepared



John Phelan is an Economist at Center of the American Experiment. He is a graduate of Birkbeck College, University of London, where he earned a BSc in Economics and of the London School of Economics where he earned an MSc.

remarks, “I care about where America’s coming from. So could someone — anyone — *anyone* — let me know what the feelings are and why we’re losing one-third of the UAW workers?” “Tentatively at first,” *Newsweek* reported, “people began talking, a litany of grievances about Iran and abortion and freeloading on welfare. ‘You’re among friends here,’ one of them...told her. ‘I’m voting for Mondale and for yourself, okay? But what Reagan has done is said the things the workingman believes.’”

Seeing this, some Democrats questioned whether the coalition was worth reassembling. In June, a former Hart strategist, Pat Caddell, penned a memo for the Mondale campaign titled: “Current Political Situation.” In it, he argued that attempting to reassemble the old coalition was pointless. That coalition, which had amounted to a majority, had shrunk to a plurality. In a subsequent memo in July, Caddell argued that trying to reconstruct it amounted to “trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.” Instead, Mondale ought to target “younger voters, moderates, independents, college-

Mondale’s attempts to reassemble the old coalition were further hampered by Reagan’s aggressive courting of the labor vote.

educated, suburbanites and women” — substantially the “yuppies,” “yumpies” or “Quiche Corps” who had voted for Hart in the primaries and the “disproportionately middle-class and suburban” voters who had elected Carter in 1976.

That November, Reagan achieved a historic victory. He won 59 percent of the vote, carried 49 states, and took 525 of the 538 electoral votes, the most of any presidential candidate in history. Minnesota alone remained loyal to the man from Elmore, and that by a margin of just 0.2 percent. The scale of Mondale’s failure to reassemble the old coalition,

shown in his vote from key Democratic constituencies, was staggering. Reagan’s vote among 18- to 24-year-olds rose from 46 percent in 1980 to 66 percent; among Catholics from 49 to 57 percent; and with Southerners from 51 to 65 percent. In 1984 Mondale became the first primary candidate the AFL-CIO had ever endorsed, but it was worth little on Election Day: Reagan’s share of the “blue-collar” vote went up from an already healthy 45 percent in 1980 to 56 percent in 1984.

1984 to 2020

Political commentator Kevin Phillips once quipped that along with McGovern, Carter and Michael Dukakis, Mondale would be one of “the four faces on the Mount Losemore of American Politics.”

But the scale of Mondale’s defeat served a purpose. It buried the old coalition once and for all and, in the ashes of defeat, Democrats embraced Caddell’s prescription that they target “younger voters, moderates, independents, college-educated, suburbanites and women.” These voters elected Bill Clinton in 1992. When Mondale’s fellow Silent Generationer, Joe Biden, was finally elected president in 2020, exit polls showed that his victory was driven by young voters, “moderates” and suburban voters — the type that Carter stumbled upon, Hart identified, Mondale only belatedly grasped after, and Clinton finally snared. The question is how the demographic wooed by Clinton’s conservatism was attracted to Biden’s offer of politically correct big government last year.

Changing demographics made targeting more affluent voters a winning strategy. A week before Election Day in 1984, Richard Nixon had reached the same conclusion as Caddell, writing in a memo for the Reagan campaign that the Democrats had run “an establishment Democrat, Mondale, campaigning on traditional Democratic issues and appealing

to the old Democratic coalition of minorities, labor, the disadvantaged, etc., which proved unbeatable for Roosevelt, Truman, and Johnson. What this election demonstrates is that there are just not enough voters in those groups to make a majority.” Indeed, in 1967, Census Bureau data showed that just 11 percent of American households had annual incomes of more than \$100,000 (in 2019 dollars) and 36 percent had incomes below \$35,000. By



2019, the share of households earning over \$100,000 annually was up to 34 percent and the share of those with incomes below \$35,000 was down to 25 percent. As the United States moved “from a smokestack to a microchip economy, from a heavy-industrial past to a high-technological future,” chasing the labor/unionized/“blue-collar” vote, as Reagan did on Truman’s old train, was to chase a diminishing share of voters. In a country where an increasing number of voters are affluent or middle class, this is where elections are won and will be won.

Despondent following his defeat in 1984, Mondale asked McGovern: “George, how long does it take to get over this?” “I don’t know,” McGovern replied, “I’ll tell you when it happens.” Walter Mondale oversaw the last rites of his mentor’s political coalition. But, however unwittingly, he helped the Democratic Party move toward a new formula for electoral success. He might have found some comfort in that. ★

OLD-FASHIONED RACISM

The radical Left is making race the most important factor in evaluating everyday Americans, and in the process, is furthering racist attitudes it claims to abhor.



John Hinderaker

In Moorhead, one leftist was led away in handcuffs. But activists were vastly outnumbered by citizens who wanted to learn more about CRT.

Critical Race Theory is one of the great evils of our time. Its central tenets are: 1) The most important thing about a person is the color of his/her skin. 2) You have rights as a member of a group, not as an individual. 3) People of the same race have similar character and personality traits. Critical Race Theory, in other words, is nothing but old-fashioned racism. CRT advocates like to say that “whiteness is a disease.” Can you imagine the outcry if our public schools started teaching that “blackness is a disease”? But for the Left, the most virulent racism is not only acceptable but admirable, as long as it is directed at whites.

American Experiment has been fighting against these poisonous doctrines for years, going back at least to 2017 when we exposed leftist political indoctrination in the Edina public schools. But CRT has now gained a foothold in public schools across Minnesota, and Gov. Tim Walz’s proposed revisions to the K-12 Social Studies standards would institutionalize CRT in all of our classrooms. Those standards teach that America is an oppressive country, and that “whiteness,” Christianity and the free enterprise system are all to blame.

Do these extreme views represent the majority of Minnesotans? Of course not, as the *Thinking Minnesota* Poll recently confirmed. But they do represent the views of the Walz administration and Education Minnesota, the state’s far-left teachers’ union. It will take a concerted, district-by-district effort to keep our schools from teaching these anti-American doctrines to our children.

That is the message of American Experiment’s 17-city “Raise Our Standards” tour. Over a whirlwind two weeks, we sponsored events across Greater Minnesota. More than once, we put on three events in different cities on the same day. Catrin Wigfall, our featured speaker, is six months pregnant. I am not sure how she did it.

Most events drew crowds of more than 100. As I write, we are looking forward to four meetings in the Twin Cities, with early registration suggesting some will bring 500 people.

To my knowledge, no policy organization has undertaken anything comparable to our “Raise Our Standards” tour. We have drawn national and even international acclaim for our grass roots approach. Of course, this success has also attracted CRT forces set on indoctrinating our children.

At several stops, leftists tried to disrupt our presentation. In Moorhead, one leftist was led away in handcuffs. But activists were vastly outnumbered by citizens who wanted to learn about CRT.

Perhaps even more insidious was the Left’s effort to suppress our First Amendment rights by threatening host venues. In Hibbing, our original locale canceled and we had to move to another location on short notice. In Duluth, the country club that had agreed to host us received threats and smears directed against us from left-wing activists, and backed out. We then moved our event to a Holiday Inn. Within hours, they called to say that they couldn’t host our meeting after all.

To his everlasting shame, Duluth’s Superintendent of Schools hailed the postponement as a credit to the “community,” alleging that we were spreading “misinformation,” although he had no knowledge of our content.

Of course, we will not be deterred. We rescheduled our Duluth program for the week of July 12, and we arranged for uniformed off-duty police officers to provide security for all of our Twin Cities events. But the fact that the Left is so determined to prevent our message from being heard shows how committed they are to turning our public schools into anti-American indoctrination centers. We truly are engaged in a battle for the future of our country. ★



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