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Activists are discovering the power of working together to bring accountability to their communities.

# THINKING MINNESOTA



ISSUE 28  
SUMMER 2022  
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## THE MARKETFEST REBELLION

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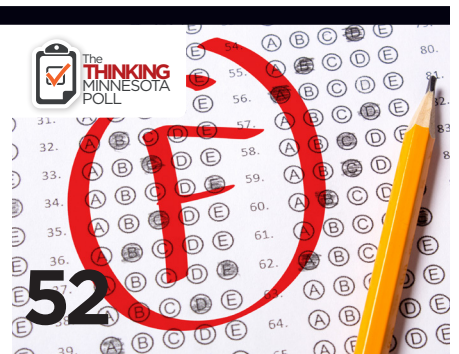
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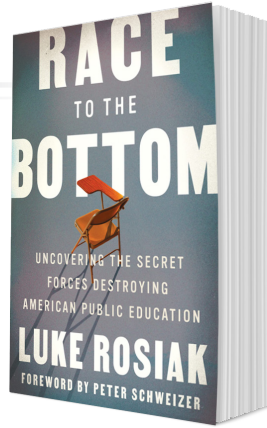
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# BIG GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS

Minnesota's Big Government policies don't solve our most pressing problems — they're making them worse.

The era of Big Government is alive and well in Minnesota. As the state faces serious, persistent problems — rising inflation, out-of-control crime, a middle-class being squeezed of its hard-earned money, and failing public schools, just to name a few — our leftist politicians seem to be doubling-down on the same “solutions” that got us in this dire situation. They pile on more government restrictions, spend more taxpayer money, and give themselves more power without any marked improvement. This is inexcusable. If the state was run like any normal business, everyone would be fired! It should be no different for the governor and the legislature. They work for us, after all, and I find their job performance sorely lacking.

Take crime, for example. The number of carjackings, theft, and violent crime has been on the rise for years. Even after Minneapolis residents voted to keep the police department, the mayor and city council were sued to get more cops back on the street. But even while the city officials drag their feet to enforce public safety with the best tools possible — namely a fully staffed police department — the city implemented a “violence interrupter” program. The program is made up of citizen groups paid by the city to wear brightly colored shirts and walk the streets. Studies have shown these programs do nothing to actually “interrupt” violence. And instead of focusing on known solutions to combat crime, this program was given \$2.5 million. But the disfunction doesn't end there. Despite contract language requiring proper records, city officials thought it was good enough for reporting to be done over



Ron Eibensteiner

the phone — meaning no proper written records exist to chart the group's effectiveness. But wait, it gets worse. Instead of pausing the program or demanding accountability, the city is giving the program an additional \$7.5 million!

Throwing money at bad policies is a favorite big government pastime. Just look at our public schools. Policy fellow Catrin Wigfall's report, *Allergic to Accountability*, shows that Minnesota's public school achievement scores have steadily fallen despite being a state with one of the highest rates of per-pupil education spending. But rather than introducing measures to improve schools — by reducing government heavy-handedness through charter schools and pathways to-

ward equal opportunities for private and home schooling — the Walz administration and the DFL-controlled legislature doubled down last year, opposing Education Savings Accounts. In fact, they want to dump more taxpayer dollars at the feet of the teachers' union, proposing \$525 million above the current base-level spending, even as more families are fleeing the failing public school system.

These examples alone are enough to draw the conclusion that Minnesota's liberal politicians have adopted a “too big to care” mantra. As the average Minnesotan has seen everything from food costs to utility bills rising, the Walz administration is transfixed on the left coast of America to institute their draconian “green” energy policies here. In this issue, policy fellow Isaac Orr explains what these low carbon fuel standards are and what they mean for the cost of energy, and therefore the cost of doing business, driving our cars, and feeding our families — basically every aspect of life. What it signals is a disconnect between our progressive policymakers who are insulated from the decisions and policies they introduce and the taxpayers who must live, and suffer, by them.

But Gov. Tim Walz and his cronies think a few petty gestures will be enough to placate suffering Minnesotans. His proposed “Walz Checks” are meager crumbs compared to the feast our state government has enjoyed at the expense of the hardworking Minnesotans whose tax dollars fund these green initiatives. And Walz's public support of the Biden administration's proposal to allow



gas stations to sell E15 gasoline this summer is nothing more than putting a Band-Aid over a bullet wound. It seems more and more like our plump politicians will keep their hands in the taxpayer's cookie jar as long as it gets replenished. Not until they're forced to account for their gluttony or explain the negative consequences of their plans do they moderate their appetite.

That is why American Experiment sponsored the Give It Back rally in April. Hundreds of Minneostans joined us at the Capitol, calling for Walz and the Minnesota legislature to give back to taxpayers what's rightfully ours: the \$9.3 billion budget surplus. Millions of average Minnesotans and their families have to operate on a budget — an increasingly tight one these days — and our politicians should be no different. After all, it really is our money, and they need to be reminded of that.

*Thinking Minnesota* gives out an annual "Golden Turkey" award highlighting the ridiculous projects and expenditures our state and local governments are throwing our money at, often with little or nothing to show for it. Last year's "winner" was the wholly unnecessary and perpetually empty Newport Transit Center, a park-and-ride facility that cost the taxpayers \$6.45 million. Here, the Met Council tried to justify this boondoggle by insisting more mass transit accessibility would alleviate the Twin Cities' traffic woes. It is another instance of Big Government dishing out more money to nonexistent "problems," while ignoring real issues — such as repairing the roads we already use.

When they aren't treating taxpayer money like their own piggy bank, imposing strict regulations are making everything from gasoline to childcare more expensive. Again, this is a consequence of government sticking its nose in places it doesn't belong and making more problems instead of solving

them. American Experiment economist Martha Njolomole has an excellent, albeit maddening, feature in this issue detailing how nonsensical government rules and regulations are exacerbating the rising cost of childcare, especially for families in Greater Minnesota.

The proposed rent control ordinance in St. Paul is another example of government imposing their will without considering the negative consequences. Even before the ill-considered policy took effect on May 1, new housing permits dropped and developers paused new projects. This

Walz and his cronies  
think a few petty gestures  
will be enough to placate  
suffering Minnesotans.

is Big Government intervention at its worst. Instead of alleviating rising rent and housing costs, this wrongheaded approach of implementing an artificial ceiling only worsens the shortage of housing that would naturally lead to market stability and eventually lower costs. To pile insult onto injury, the *Star Tribune* reported that this caused home values in St. Paul to drop by \$1.6 billion. And now Minneapolis is poised to follow St. Paul down the same disastrous path.

All of this adds up to what Minnesotans can see with their eyes and feel in their wallets: Our state and local governments are too focused on making *their* lives better than the average citizen, often creating more problems than they solve. President Ronald Reagan's famous quote is truer now than ever, "The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help." ★



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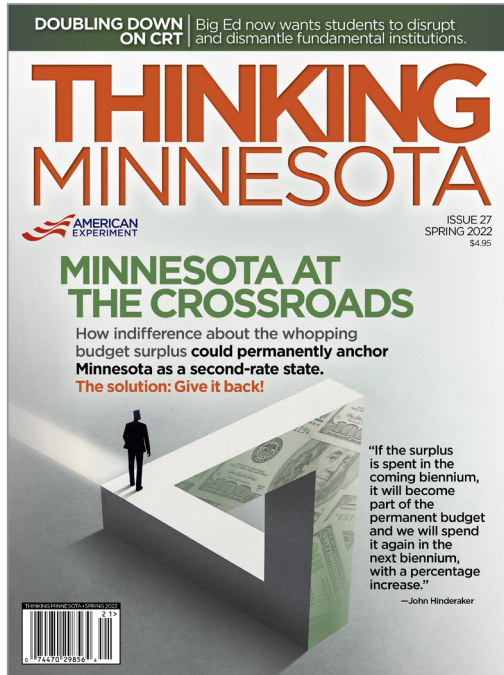
Did you know American Experiment has local chapters in Rochester Owatonna Duluth and Mankato?



OWATONNA CHAPTER



To join a chapter or start one in your town, contact Micah at [Micah.Olson@AmericanExperiment.org](mailto:Micah.Olson@AmericanExperiment.org).



Media bias?

> Just because Republicans think Minnesota media have a liberal (news) bias does not mean there is such. People generally think a medium is biased if they report the world or actions that they do not like. It is psychologically (and politically) more comforting to think the medium is biased than accept what is (usually) accurately reported.

Your headline is in fact misleading. It should have said that x percent of Minnesotans think media is biased. Not that it is “alive and well.” A bit like the pot calling the kettle black, isn’t it?

Roger Parkinson  
Naples, FL

Political mouthpieces

> I read with interest the article on biased news reporting in Minnesota (“Stirring the Pot: Most Minnesotans believe that biased reporting contributes to our polarized political climate,” Spring 2022).

The most shameful aspect of Minnesota’s polarized political climate is not the fact that polarization exists. It is the fact that the Democratic Party controls a

monopoly on news dissemination and censorship through our state’s two largest newspapers: the *Star Tribune* and the *Pioneer Press*. And local TV news channels are not much better.

When one considers the fact that more than 40 percent of Minnesota’s population voted for President Trump, and that Republicans earned enough votes to gain control of the State Senate, it is shocking to see that a huge swath of Minnesota citizens have no major newspaper representing their viewpoints nor serving as their mouthpiece in the political spectrum.

“A democracy cannot survive when one party controls the media and a large number of other voices are drowned out.”

How is a news monopoly an acceptable feature in any democracy? Our state’s largest newspaper should be renamed the *Democrat Party Star Tribune*. Its political endorsements certainly support that perspective.

If such a monopoly existed in other industries, citizens would scream for antitrust investigations and protections.

Minnesota Republicans should demand a level playing field and put forth policies and campaigns that hold the news media accountable for their biased and monopolistic reporting of the news. A democracy cannot survive when one party controls the media and a large number of other voices are drowned out. This isn’t Russia or China. Or is it?

Corby Pelto  
Minneapolis, MN

**Eye-opening issue**

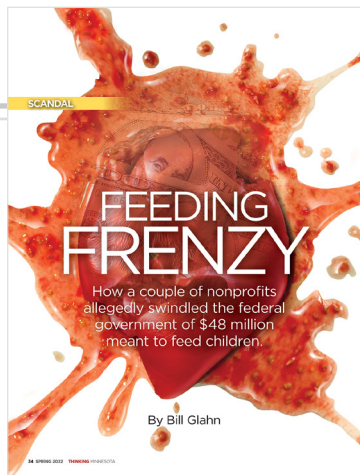
> I always enjoy reading an article or two from *Thinking Minnesota* but Issue 27 was amazing.

For “Feeding Frenzy,” why hasn’t someone gone to jail, why hasn’t someone been fired? Why hasn’t the governor resigned, isn’t he responsible?

For “Doubling Down On CRT,” two weeks ago I sent my State Representative Tom Bakk a note asking about CRT in Minnesota. His answer was true but misleading. He suggested I contact someone on the education committee for more information. I did contact a radium Republican on the education committee that in my opinion after reading your article outright lied to me.

Great Job. Keep up the good work.

*Bryan Noble  
Duluth, MN*



**“While controlling the House, Senate, and White House, Republicans failed to deliver on their much-touted campaign promise to ‘Repeal and Replace.’”**

**Broken promises**

> As someone who was hit hard financially by the ACA, it was with great interest that I read Peter Nelson’s, “The Return of the ‘Death Spiral.’” I guess I’m not surprised that neither Nelson nor American Experiment mentioned the elephant in the room. While controlling the House, Senate, and White House, Republicans failed to deliver on their much-touted campaign promise to “Repeal and Replace.”

*Ed Nelson*

**From all sides**

> You are treasonous, racist, bigoted cowards. John Whalen is a racist idiot that shows you might be right in tightening immigration... ★

*Owen Hall*

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# UP FRONT

Code of Conduct

## BREAKING THE BANK

A powerful U.S. Senator rebukes the Minneapolis Fed for playing politics with issues outside its 'statutory mandate.'

**T**he powerful ranking member of the U.S. Senate Banking Committee is calling on Neel Kashkari, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, to cease the bank's aggressive political lobbying to amend the education

clause of the Minnesota Constitution.

Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA) sent a letter to Kashkari challenging how the bank "has embraced politically-charged social causes far outside of the Federal Reserve's statutory mandate" under

Kashkari's leadership.

This is the third letter Toomey has written to Kashkari. The first two letters focused on the "woke mission creep" related to the Minneapolis Fed's sponsorship of the "Racism and the Economy" event series. The first demanded records related to the event series and any memos or emails with information on the impetus behind the focus on racial justice issues. The second followed up on this request after Kashkari failed to provide any of the records requested.

Christopher Halloran / Shutterstock.com



Sen. Toomey's letter campaign is an objection to the Fed's misguided policy agenda.







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## UPFRONT

The most recent letter focuses entirely on the improper use of the bank’s resources to lobby for the adoption of the Page Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution. As the bank’s website explains, this amendment aims to “make quality public education a civil right for all children in Minnesota.” Toomey’s letter notes:

“This amendment is highly political, as it wades into an ongoing debate about whether government-run school systems are preferable to parental choice in education. It is also controversial because it could be used by liberals to challenge education spending levels in court and give activist judges grounds for overriding levels set by the state’s legislature, which is elected by and accountable to voters.”

It goes on to itemize a number of improper actions Kashkari and the bank have taken to lobby in favor of the amendment and explains how such action “plainly violates” the Minneapolis Fed’s Code of Conduct.

Back in January, American Experiment sent letters making a similar demand to the board of directors of the Minneapolis Fed and the Federal Reserve Board in D.C. The letters asked that they exercise their general powers of supervision over the Minneapolis Fed employees and Kashkari to stop this lobbying campaign.

In response, American Experiment received a letter from Srilata Zaheer — the chair of the Minneapolis Fed board and the Dean of the

Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota — in which she expressed the board’s full support for the Minneapolis Fed’s work on the Page Amendment. This letter represents a full admission that the Board is openly and willingly violating the decades-old Federal Reserve Board of Governors political activity policy that governs their actions. Sen. Toomey referred to this endorsement as shocking.

The press release accompanying Sen. Toomey’s letter also highlighted a new report published by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University that shows an increasing share of the papers published by Federal Reserve Banks across America are

devoted to activist topics, including inequality, climate, race, and gender. The research shows the percent of papers coded as activist were in the range of four to eight percent from 2006 to 2013 and then grew to 21 percent in 2021.

At 32 percent, the Minneapolis Fed alongside the Boston Fed published the highest share of activist papers in 2020 and 2021. Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco came in around 20 percent, with New York and Philadelphia publishing less than 10 percent.

In one positive sign, the Minneapolis Fed website has changed the specific initiatives they highlight on their homepage, likely a response to Toomey’s letter. Gone are the bank’s activist initiatives on Racism and the Economy, Page Education Amendment, Minimum Wage, and Early Childhood Development. They have been replaced by more bank-appropriate topics: Inflation, Employment &



Neel Kashkari, president  
of the Federal Reserve  
Bank of Minneapolis.





An increasing share  
of the papers published  
by Federal Reserve  
Banks are devoted to  
activist topics.

Labor Markets, and Region & Community. Though, it still highlights Early Childhood Development — a long-held priority initiative for the bank.

Critics charge that highlighting the Page Amendment over inflation and employment when inflation is hitting 40-year highs exposes just how utterly tone deaf the Minneapolis Fed has become. Or maybe it just represents how committed they are to activism if it required oversight from the U.S. Senate to spur even this superficial change. ★

—Peter Nelson



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American Experiment Update

## Night at the Gala

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo headlined the Center's Annual Dinner.



Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivers keynote remarks at American Experiment's Annual Dinner in May.

**"We never apologized for this special place, the United States of America."**  
—Secretary Pompeo

**F**ormer U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo headlined American Experiment's Annual Dinner gala on Friday, May 6, at the Hilton Minneapolis hotel.

The crowd of 850 heard the former secretary's thoughts on Ukraine, China, and other current global crises, receiving an inside look at foreign policy under the Trump administration.

"It was a privilege to put you and your priorities first," said Pompeo of his time in Washington, D.C. "We tried to get that right each and every day. And we didn't get it right every day, but we never

apologized for this special place, the United States of America. Not once did I go anywhere in the world and apologize for this great history."

Pompeo served under Trump first as Director of the CIA and then as the 70th Secretary of State.

Emphasizing American excellence and resilience, he contrasted the "America first" directive followed during his tenure with the current administration's priorities. The rushed withdrawal from Afghanistan, increasing wokeness of the U.S. military, and allowance of North Korea's recent long-range missile tests

were just a few of his critiques.

He also warned the conservative crowd not to let anyone gaslight them. It will take "real resolve," but Americans will ultimately prevail, he assured.

"Our country is defined by what the Founders called the little platoons, the small places where people gather. And it's not talking heads on cable TV or in the national salons of the United States



Capitol, it's in places like PTA meetings and soccer games, and our synagogues and churches and mosques. . . . These are the places that make America unique and special, and these are the sinews that tie our nation together."

Speaking of the Russian invasion, Pompeo remarked upon Ukraine's resilience.

"I think a combination of Ukrainian tenacity and fearlessness and Russian incompetence and a fair amount of support from lots of folks has made life really, really difficult for Putin," he said.

But Pompeo warned that such resistance wouldn't necessarily deter the Russian leader.


"He is an evil tyrant who wants two simple things: to stay in power and to create a greater Russia," said Pompeo. "And whatever setbacks they may have... aren't going to slow him down any more than they have to."

The best defense the West has, he argued, is reestablishing deterrence. But only a strong America can deter "the bad guys."

CAE President John Hinderaker



spoke highly of Pompeo's energy and personality.

"I knew Pompeo was a brilliant guy," said Hinderaker, "but I didn't realize he was so personable and friendly. It was great hearing from him at a time when foreign affairs are once again on the front burner. I think he could be a good presidential candidate." 




## Beyond the Metro

A capacity crowd of 120 attendees was on hand to celebrate the inauguration of the Center's Mankato chapter. A cocktail reception and social hour featuring Center President John Hinderaker on April 21 was held at Swiss and Madison in Mankato to mark American Experiment's latest addition.

As part of American Experiment's commitment to turning positive, conservative-minded ideas into reality for every Minnesotan, the outreach campaign to Greater Minnesota has been steadily growing. Mankato joins Duluth, Owatonna, and Rochester as part of the Center's cause. Says the Center's Greater Minnesota outreach director Micah Olson, "We have a number of events in the works for Greater Minnesota,



Mankato chapter board chair Scott Weilage with American Experiment's Kathryn Hinderaker and Micah Olson at the April launch event.

building off the success of our Crime Crisis presentations in Owatonna and Rochester. They relate to public safety in Mankato and another in Owatonna on the economy and business. We are hoping to hit Willmar, New Ulm, Bemidji, and Duluth by the end of the year." More information about upcoming events can be found on the Center's website ([AmericanExperiment.org/events](http://AmericanExperiment.org/events)). 



# UP FRONT

## “Give It Back” tax rally

More than 400 people jammed into the rotunda of Minnesota’s Capitol in late April to implore Gov. Tim Walz and members of the legislature to give taxpayers what’s rightfully theirs: the \$9.3 billion budget surplus. Center of the American Experiment sponsored the “Give It Back” rally as part of a comprehensive marketing effort that included radio ads, billboards, and an aggressive surge of social media.

Joining Center president John Hinderaker and former congressman Jason Lewis on the podium were radio personalities Scott Hennen (Flag Family radio), Jon Justice (KTLK radio) and Dan “Ox” Ochsner (KNSI radio) as featured speakers.

“The last thing this state needs are more taxes,” Hinderaker said. “We’ve got too many taxes; this state needs tax relief.”

The diverse crowd included Carolyn M. from Crystal who was there with her husband and two children. It was important for her family to attend, she says, because “we can’t seem to make forward progress in our lives. Especially after having to pull our kids out of public school because of COVID, we felt we weren’t getting anything

in return for the tax burden. This administration isn’t solving problems.”

Many attendees brought homemade signs into the rotunda, occasionally chanting, “It’s our surplus, give it back!” Several political candidates offered supportive sentiments. “It’s not the government’s money to spend. The right and principled thing to do is give the money back to the taxpayers,” said Tom Dippel, Senate District 41 candidate and Cottage Grove resident who attended the rally with his wife and six young children.

American Experiment launched its “Give It Back” campaign with a report on the state budget written by economist John Phelan to help Walz and legislators deal with what became \$9.25 billion in overcollections from taxpayers. “The Case for Permanent Tax Cuts for Minnesota” showed conclusively that Minnesota’s state government is already spending at historically high levels.

In 2020, Minnesota’s state government spent \$4,348.20 for every state resident, the highest amount on record and 5.9 percent higher than in 2016. Minnesota also has the sixth highest rate of state personal income tax in the United States. American Experiment recommended using the ongoing structural surplus to permanently cut personal income taxes across the board.

Rep. Kristin Robbins, a member of the House Tax Committee, said she was at the rally to “fight for permanent tax relief to help Minnesotans at a time of rising inflation and to restrain the growth of government. The so-called ‘Walz Checks’ won’t do anything to help Minnesota families.”

Featured speaker former congressman Jason Lewis with CAE’s president John Hinderaker at the tax rally.



The CRT tour was met by a group exercising their First Amendment rights in West Fargo, ND.

## The CRT tour continues

After the success of last summer’s “Raise Our Standards” tour, education policy fellow Catrin Wigfall continues traveling beyond Minnesota’s borders in North Dakota as well as Iowa and Wisconsin. Presentations were given in Fargo at the Avalon Events Center and West Fargo at the Rustad Recreation Center, both on Wednesday, May 25 following an event in Grand Forks May 24. On Thursday, June 2 American Experiment partnered with the Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation to bring the “Education Not Indoctrination” presentation to the Radisson Hotel’s conference center in Ames. Wigfall and ITR Foundation’s deputy director Walt Rogers discussed how Critical Race Theory, gender ideology, and identity politics are miseducating America’s youth and transforming our education system. Parents, grandparents and community members learned how to push back against the politicizing of public schools.

## Upcoming events

American Experiment’s public engagement campaign continues, as it will once again have a booth at Minnesota Farmfest in Redwood County August 2-4. The three-day event attracts over 20,000 people and over 500 exhibitors from across the Midwest. The Center has been a presence at the annual event since 2019.


Also slated for this summer is a live taping of the popular politics-and-culture podcast, *Ruthless*, hosted by Comfortably Smug, Minnesota native Josh Holmes, Michael Duncan, and John Ashbrook. American Experiment’s John Hinderaker will be a guest. The June 29 event will take place on Lake Minnetonka.



## Public policy work

American Experiment’s policy fellows are continuing to turn out important work in the public policy sphere.

- Senior policy fellow Peter Nelson and Center economist John Phelan published a report on drug pricing, “Pharmaceutical Price Controls: Impact of Drug Pricing Legislation on Access to Life-Enhancing Drugs.”
- Phelan and policy fellow Isaac Orr released a brief on American national security and energy production; and Orr and policy analyst Mitch Rolling published, “Gas Station Inflation: How the Walz Administration’s ‘Clean Fuel Standard’ Would Increase Pain at the Pump.”
- Economist Martha Njolomole’s report, “Childcare Crisis: Regulation and the High Cost of Childcare in Minnesota” takes a serious look at the impact of government regulation on the cost of childcare for Minnesota families. Part of the report has been adapted for this issue of *Thinking Minnesota*.

The reports can be downloaded from the Center’s website ([AmericanExperiment.org](http://AmericanExperiment.org)). 

## New public policy fellow

David Zimmer has joined Center of the American Experiment as the policy fellow for criminal justice and public safety. Zimmer served 33 years with the Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office, retiring as a captain. During his law enforcement career, Zimmer served as a deputy and a supervisor in areas including the Jail, Courts, Patrol/Water Patrol, Investigations, and Tactical Command.




David Zimmer, policy fellow for criminal justice and public safety.

Zimmer is a graduate of the Police Executive Research Forum’s (PERF) Senior Management Institute for Policing at Boston University. PERF is a national research, teaching, and advocacy group. Its Senior Management Institute is a command course for senior law enforcement leaders. Zimmer is also a graduate of the Bureau of Justice’s Fusion Center Management course in Washington, D.C. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminal justice studies from St. Cloud State University.

Upon Zimmer’s hiring, Center

president John Hinderaker said, “His wide range of experiences and decades of relationship building within the criminal justice system will serve Center of the American Experiment well, especially holding many different roles within Minnesota’s law enforcement community.” Zimmer is anxious to continue his public safety work on the policy level, explaining, “I’m committed to using my professional experience to help advance policies that are good for public safety in Minnesota. My aim is to provide a voice for reasoned and proven

CAE’s policy fellows are **continuing to turn out important work in the public policy sphere.**

solutions to issues facing the criminal justice system and our public safety officials. I’m particularly interested in advocating for good solutions to the issues facing our front-line peace officers and police managers.” 




## National spotlight

Senior policy fellow Katherine Kersten was featured in the FOX News special *The Miseducation of America*, an expose about the leftist agenda damaging America’s public schools. The series is available through FOX Nation, a subscriber-based streaming service. Kersten’s episode aired on June 14.



Katherine Kersten featured on Fox Nation.

## MN Parents Alliance

Minnesota Parents Alliance is the newly formed 501c(4). Its goal is to encourage, offer resources, and educate citizens interested in running for local school boards. School board candidate campaign schools are being advised by American Experiment’s Bill Walsh and Catrin Wigfall. The first meeting was May 7 with plans for follow-up sessions this summer. More information can be found at [MinnesotaParents.org](http://MinnesotaParents.org) 



## Real Economic Woes

Minnesota's economic train falls off the tracks.

In March, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that the Consumer Price Index had risen by 7.9 percent over the previous year, the fastest year-on-year rate since January 1982. Stripping out volatile food and energy prices to get “core inflation,” prices were up 6.4 percent over the last year, the fastest rate since August 1982. The situation was particularly acute in the West North Central Division, which includes Minnesota. The rate was 8.2 percent, driven in large part by an increase in natural-gas prices, which was 16.1 percentage points above the increase nationally.

Wages aren't keeping pace with higher prices. The same day the BLS announced the inflation numbers, it also announced that real, inflation-adjusted, average hourly earnings had fallen 2.6 percent over the past year, and that real average weekly earnings were down 2.3 percent.

Americans are buying less with their

money. They are worse off. Economist Teresa Ghilarducci advised cutting back on veterinary treatments and eating more lentils in lieu of pricier meat.

So, DFL Chairman Ken Martin's

Minnesotans live  
in the **real world**  
of rising prices and  
falling real incomes.

March 24 commentary in the *Duluth News Tribune*, in which he claimed that, economically, “Things are finally on the right track,” was astounding. If this is his idea of the right track, I'd hate to see what the wrong track looks like.

Martin seemed to construct his argu-

ment by cherry-picking various statistics of doubtful relevance and attributing them to the passage of the American Rescue Plan. We were told Minnesota's unemployment rate fell from 3.7 percent in March 2021 to 2.9 percent in March 2022 thanks to the plan. But Minnesota's unemployment rate was falling rapidly before its passage. Indeed, that figure for March 2021 was down 7.1 percentage points from the peak of 10.8 percent in May 2020. BLS data show that, over the course of 2021, the U.S. economy added 136,000 fewer jobs than the Congressional Budget Office forecast would be created without the rescue plan. In short, the American Rescue Plan spent \$1.9 trillion and failed to create a single job.

The source of America's current inflationary woes is no mystery. As economist Milton Friedman explained, “Inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon in the sense that it is and can be produced only by a more rapid increase in the quantity of money than in output.” From the fourth quarter of 2019 to the fourth quarter of 2021, the quantity of money increased by 40 percent. Over the same period, real Gross Domestic Prod-



uct — or output — increased by just 3.2 percent. The amount of money to spend increased much faster than the amount of stuff was bid up.

The American Rescue Plan was partly responsible for this. By the time of its passage, U.S. GDP had already rebounded to 99.2 percent of its pre-pandemic peak; it simply didn't need another \$1.9 trillion dumping into it. Noting that the inflation rate in the U.S. is now above that in other countries, economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco estimate that "fiscal support measures" like the American Rescue Plan "may have contributed to this divergence by raising inflation about 3 percentage points by the end of 2021." The American

Rescue Plan did more to boost inflation than employment.

To deal with inflation, we need slower (or no) growth in the quantity of money and faster growth of real GDP, or both. The solution to America's macroeconomic problem lies on the supply side, and measures that "will increase our capacity to transport goods and tackle supply-chain issues" are welcome. But, as even the *Washington Post* points out, only about 20 percent of President Biden's \$1.2 billion infrastructure bill, passed in November, "would be used to fund roads, bridges, and other surface transportation programs."

Reading Martin's summation — that, "The facts are clear: Minnesota and America are moving forward thanks to President Joe Biden, Democrats in Con-

gress, and the American Rescue Plan" — I'm reminded of that old *Star Trek* episode where the Enterprise crew is transported to a parallel universe where everything is the opposite.

Minnesotans don't live in this parallel universe. They live in the real world of rising prices and falling real incomes. That is why about seven in 10 Americans say the nation's economy is in bad shape, and close to two-thirds disapprove of President Biden's handling of the economy, according to a recent poll from the *Associated Press* and *NORC Center for Public Affairs Research*. As election year pitches go, "You're wrong, voters, things are actually great" is a bold strategy. Let's see if it pays off. ★

—John Phelan

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TOM STEWARD

## TAKING PRISONERS

While facing a huge docket of backed up cases, Renville County's new prosecutor is showing defendants that crime won't pay.

The list of criminal offenses on the docket at times reads more like a police blotter in Minneapolis than a rural county some 80 miles west of the Twin Cities. Along with the usual lower-level crime, a rash of murder, drug, sex offender and domestic violence cases has struck Renville County in recent years, testing the authorities' capacity to deal with it.

An officer-involved shooting in Olivia, a 13-year-old Bird Island boy stabbed to death, a fatal fentanyl overdose and another homicide in Renville all occurred

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**“Not only is she enthusiastic, but that young lady has energy. Just everything about her screams throttle wide open. She's not afraid to work.”**

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within the last 10 months alone. There's concern the southwestern Minnesota county of nearly 15,000 may be losing its way, amid a feeling the criminal justice system needs to do more.

“There was this weird sense that the slow slide in the metro was creeping in here and that we were going to lose what made us unique in the process,” says Dan Coughlin, city administrator of Olivia, the county seat.

Yet it still caught Coughlin and others by surprise when Kelsie Kingston, a



Tom Steward

28-year-old assistant prosecutor on staff for five months, abruptly took over the Renville County Attorney's Office in April. Her hard-nosed assessment of the challenge ahead belies her status as one of the youngest county prosecutors in the state.

“If I was a drug dealer this is where I'd go. I'd deal drugs here and I would sell drugs here,” the unusually blunt-speaking Kingston said in an interview in her office. “I would because it's like this pie in the sky castle that has been built upon years of not doing anything about it and not being harder on drug crimes and too many second chances.”

There's a new prosecutor at the county government center in Olivia, and she's

definitely taking prisoners.

“I think there was just a different philosophy about how to prevent getting into the situation we're in,” Kingston says. “We are currently living in a situation that's been created by our past. High crime, lots of drugs, lots of homicides, lots of murders by drugs, and a lot of domestics. And now we're seeing a cyclical version where kids of parents we know from the past who may have gotten off based on previous ways we did things.”

The Renville Board of Commissioners took the unusual step of promoting Kingston after her predecessor announced he would not run for reelection this fall for the office he's held since 1999. By all accounts, the Rochester native has hit the ground running with the same determination that led her to hike the entire Appalachian Trail following graduation from the University of St. Thomas Law School.

“This is a new regime,” says Renville County Sheriff Scott Hable. “Once you meet her you won't forget her. Not only is she enthusiastic, but that young lady has energy. Just everything about her screams throttle wide open. She's not afraid to work.”

Good thing, since Kingston faces a caseload of hundreds of criminal and civil files big and small, a backlog exacerbated by the pandemic. It disturbs her that some complaints will never be adjudicated due to the statute of limitations running out, leaving victims without closure.

“Do I think a case should ever sit on my desk for a year? Absolutely not,” Kingston says. “But I'm finding a lot of those. I just charged out a predatory offender a month



ago from an incident that happened two and a half years ago and his defense is, why do you care now?"

Adding to the backlog is Kingston's tough new policy of taking defendants to trial who don't plead guilty to the highest charge facing them. Yet her resolve to hold offenders accountable rather than accepting lesser plea deals has not escaped the attention of both defense attorneys and police officers.

"Things are a little more hard-nosed, and a little bit more standardized," says Scott Tedrick, editor of the *Renville County Register*. "I think there's mixed feelings about that and I think probably, in general, a willingness to try some different things, recognizing that some-

a two-day trial. That jury got the case, they deliberated, I'm not kidding you for 6 minutes, and came back with a guilty verdict on all counts."

Yet Kingston may be guilty of not knowing when to quit. Besides cleaning up crime, she leads the local Lions Club, volunteers at Olivia's Corn Capitol Days festival and occasionally lends her husband a hand with the pigs on the farm.

"She's making it a priority to get everything done now," says Renville County Commissioner Randy Kramer. "My concern is that she doesn't get burned out, because she's burning the midnight oil."

In her first election campaign this fall against former assistant county attorney



Michael and Kelsie Kingston pictured with their dogs Ember and Blu.

thing needed to happen."

In her first month in office, Kingston opened 31 new cases, including 17 criminal files, while closing 43. Two assistant county attorneys help shoulder the workload, including her predecessor. The decisive outcome of a recent jury trial in an attempted murder case shows Kingston means business.

"Her ability in the courtroom is just tremendous," Hable says. "I think it was

Glen Jacobsen, Kingston will take her case to the public. It may come down to how fast the word spreads among criminals and residents alike that anyone intending to break the law should avoid Renville County or else.

"I'm hopeful. I do like to think that what I'm doing will make a difference eventually," Kingston says. "I'm not going to get super bogged down by the fact that it's hard right now." ★



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# Back to School

Poor public policies lead to some hard lessons.

**E**con 101 has been getting a bad rap lately. The time is long past when *Freakonomics* was the book to be seen reading if you wanted to look smart, and nowadays the principles taught in Econ 101 are often derided as simplistic, abstract theorizing. Even worse, in books like *Economism* by James Kwak, they are condemned as nothing but rationalizations for particular economic policies. Perhaps it was such arguments that convinced the leaders of St. Paul that they could ignore the lessons taught in Econ 101.

In any intro economics class, students will learn about the effects of price floors and price ceilings. A price floor — a legally set minimum price which can be charged for a good or service — will,

if set above the market price for the good or service in question, lead to a lower quantity demanded and greater quantity supplied than would otherwise be the case, leading to an excess of supply over demand. Price ceilings work in reverse. If set below the market price for the good or service in question, they will lead to a higher quantity demanded and lower quantity supplied than would otherwise be the case, resulting in an excess of demand over supply, or shortages.

In 2018, the St. Paul City Council passed a minimum wage ordinance which, from January 2020, would raise the city's minimum wage by stages to \$15 an hour for all firms by 2028. A minimum wage is a price floor, setting a price below which it is illegal to buy

or sell labor. And, according to new research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, even just the anticipation of the minimum wage hike appears to have driven declines in jobs, hours, and overall earnings for restaurant workers in St. Paul, just as Econ 101 would predict.

In elections on November 6, St. Paulites voted to enact one of the strictest rent control measures in the United States, capping annual rent increases at 3 percent with no allowance for inflation or exemption for new properties. A rent control law is a price ceiling, setting a price above which it is illegal to rent accommodations. Econ 101 would, then, tell us to expect a higher quantity of housing demanded and lower quantity supplied than would be the case at the market rate, leading to shortages — exactly the problem the measure was intended to fix in the first place.

And that is, again, exactly what is happening. Data compiled by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development show that, since the measure was passed, the number of building permits issued in St. Paul is down over 80 percent compared to the same period during the previous year. The city's mayor, Melvin Carter, who supported the ordinance, is now desperately trying to get it amended to exclude new builds.

To be sure, Econ 101 simplifies the real world. That is what models do. They abstract from reality to isolate underlying factors. That is why there is a good sized body of empirical literature, supporting the theory, on the harmful effects of both minimum wage laws and rent controls. Hopefully the city's leaders will learn and others will learn from their example. As a proud former resident, I want the city to be famous for *Grumpy Old Men*, not bad public policy. ★

—John Phelan

This article originally appeared at *Econlib*.





UMLC

# Counting Ballots

Restoring faith in Minnesota's elections.

**T**he Upper Midwest Law Center (UMLC) is challenging a rule that restricts the ability of election judges to reject absentee ballots.

Representing the Minnesota Voters Alliance (MVA) and three Ramsey County ballot board members, UMLC has petitioned to overturn an administrative rule created by the Minnesota secretary of state. The rule limits the reasons a ballot can be rejected during name, signature, and ID verification.



UPPER MIDWEST  
LAW CENTER

According to the UMLC, this rule conflicts directly with existing Minnesota statute and concerns every Minnesota voter. "This is truly a non-partisan issue of election integrity," says UMLC Senior Trial Counsel James Dickey.

The case will determine how the 2022 midterm elections are conducted. As of now, the secretary of state's rule will remain in effect. But if the Court of Appeals sides with UMLC, the elections will operate only under state statute.

The Minnesota statute establishes the conditions that must be met for election



judges to accept an absentee ballot. Two or more ballot board members — of different major political parties — must agree that 1) the voter's name and address match those provided on the absentee ballot application, 2) the voter signed the certification envelope, and 3) the ID number on the envelope matches the number provided on the application.

If the ID numbers don't match, ballot board members must compare the applicant's signatures on the ballot envelope and their application.

But the secretary of state's rule allows judges to reject a ballot only if the name and address are "clearly" different than the name of the voter as printed on the envelope.

Other conditions that may not be used to reject a ballot include the use or lack of nicknames, abbreviations, or initials and the use of a signature mark.

According to the UMLC, it's an issue of conflicting requirements. "You have a situation where the rule conflicts with the statute, which makes it impossible to comply with both," Dickey says.

When the rule was established in 2010, just 23,237 absentee ballots were cast. In 2020 that number jumped to 1.9 million ballots, and people started paying attention to the absentee ballot verification rules.

The three citizen petitioners — Ramsey County residents Tony Ward, Thomas Polachek, and Edward Bailen — all served as election judges in 2020 and 2021. They plan to serve again in 2022. But they say the conflicting instructions make it impossible to do their job.

"The secretary of state's rule takes away the judges' ability to use their training, wisdom, and judgment and replaces it with the secretary of state's judgment, which says that you can't reject a ballot except in the rarest of circumstances," says Dickey.

Even if the rule didn't conflict with state statute, UMLC argues, the secretary of state has no authority to restrict the reasons for rejecting a ballot.

Absentee ballots are submitted inside a security envelope held within a larger envelope. The envelope shows no information regarding the voter's selection or political party, so ballot board members have no personal stake in rejecting or accepting a ballot.

UMLC and MVA agree: It's a matter of restoring faith in elections.

"It is totally non-partisan," says Dickey. "It is purely about making sure that ballot board members are not forced to accept ballots which appear to be potentially fraudulent." ★

—Grace Bureau



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## Whose Streets?

Public safety and political activism are on a collision course in the Twin Cities.

**T**he two-year fallout from the death of George Floyd has been damaging to Minnesota law enforcement, and in turn the communities they serve.

Activists seized the opportunity to attack the institution of law enforcement both physically and politically. The “defund the police” movement took root. Many politicians seized the opportunity to pander to this movement, and many were all too quick to paint the entire profession as flawed and in need of reform. The anti-police rhetoric served to embolden the criminal element, while undermining and demoralizing those who serve and protect. That combina-

tion has been disastrous for Minnesota.

The good news is that support for law enforcement is on the rise and being felt by agencies and officers alike. Strong proposals of support are being debated in the legislature to address statewide police recruitment and retention issues that began in 2020. Counties and municipalities are pursuing aggressive retention and recruiting measures and offering competitive compensation to new applicants. Political leaders on the right and left have begun to acknowledge the critical role law enforcement plays in maintaining a safe and healthy state. People of color have become more vocal in their support of increased

enforcement and funding — a long-held position that contrasts with the conventional narrative. Officers acknowledge that while the past two years have been a struggle, the outpouring of support from the “silent majority” has been evident and is getting stronger.

While vocal support and funding for law enforcement has returned, the problems created through the defund movement are significant. A 2021 poll conducted by Center of the American Experiment indicated the public ranked “a lack of support for law enforcement” as the number one reason for the rise in crime. While it will take a sustained systemwide effort to address the crime problem (prosecutors must prosecute, judges must hold and sentence, and corrections must incarcerate, not supervise), it all begins with law enforcement. Most importantly, law enforcement needs strong support to proactively address crime. When support for proactive law



enforcement is strong, criminals retreat. When support wanes and officers are relegated to being “responders,” criminals emerge.

The criminal justice system works best for all when there is a balance of power. Prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges must all work ethically to maintain this balance. Each must judiciously use their limited discretion as it was intended. No one would argue for a defense attorney to abdicate their role in providing the best possible defense for their client, or for a judge to make rulings that are out of line with the rule of law. Yet, with increasing frequency activist prosecutors are unethically abdicating their mandate and abusing their

With increasing  
frequency activist  
prosecutors are  
**unethically abdicating  
their mandate and  
abusing their discretion  
by not prosecuting  
swaths of crimes.**

discretion by not prosecuting swaths of crimes, using legally obtained evidence, or advocating for bail or incarceration in many instances.

As if this trend wasn’t bad enough, it is against the will of the people. It is both an ingenious and insidious movement being supported through progressive political action committees that have spent tens of millions of dollars on campaigns to influence the elections of activist prosecutors. It’s an end-around movement that subverts the legislative process of establishing laws and defining punishment — all in the name of “reform.” Riverside County, California District Attorney Mike Hestrin describes the situ-

ation well: “I don’t see them as reformers. What they’re after is to destroy the system, the criminal justice system that they very deeply misunderstand. This is not progressive. It’s not reform. It’s just politics and ideology-driven.”

Locally, Ramsey County Attorney John Choi, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman, and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison have all shown that they are completely in favor of the ideology of prosecutorial activism. While Freeman is leaving office after this year, one of the leading candidates to replace him is the former embattled Hennepin County Public Defender Mary Moriarty. Moriarty shows no caution in espousing the activist platform — proudly prioritizing “reform” of the Minneapolis Police Department above employing the resources of the office to prosecute the criminals who are destroying our metro area with impunity.

Minnesotans concerned about public safety must prioritize this issue above all others. Two important ways to do this are: 1) Make informed decisions and reject electing activists to serve in our vitally important roles as prosecutors. 2) Support legislative efforts that restrict prosecutorial discretion and hold prosecutors accountable in their mandate to prosecute crime.

Law enforcement professionals understand they must maintain public trust. Doing so means being serious about continuous improvement and meaningful reforms. By all accounts, public support is strong and authentic. Questions remain whether the same authenticity exists politically.

In this election year, crime will be front and center in most campaigns. We must impress upon candidates that support for law enforcement and the critical role it plays in combating crime cannot be just campaign rhetoric — it must be a meaningful, unwavering commitment. Our collective safety depends on it. ★

—David Zimmer

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# Race to the Bottom

Exposing the troubling agenda upending our public schools.

**P**arents across the country have trusted their most precious asset, their children, to K-12 public schools. Trusting that a pursuit of academic excellence is being prioritized. Trusting that students are being prepared to be informed and engaged citizens and members of society.

But a pandemic, school closures, and forced online learning revealed to many of these same parents that their child's education is being compromised. Academic excellence has taken a backseat to a political ideology, and it didn't happen overnight.

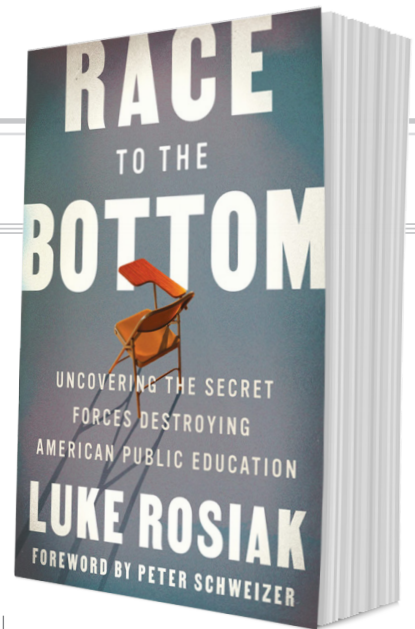
In his new book, *Race to the Bottom: Uncovering the Secret Forces Destroying American Public Education*, Luke Rosiak investigates our public school system and exposes the hidden agendas that have been pushed for decades by special interest groups and bad actors. He also identifies how American education got to the state it is in today, who enabled it, and why. Examples span the country, with several pages dedicated to Minnesota's own education system and the

extraordinary efforts to promote identity politics under the guise of equity.

It all starts with "schools putting their resources into everything except preparing our children for college or careers," Rosiak writes. And it's not a money issue. Billions of dollars have been spent on initiatives promising to solve racial inequalities and improve academic performance but that instead work against the very idea of expectations and excellence.

That hasn't kept school leaders from doubling down and continuing to hire for-profit racial equity consultants and partner with philanthropic foundations more concerned with tagging any "system" that highlights racially unequal results as inherently "systemically racist" versus proposing and pursuing ways to help all students excel.

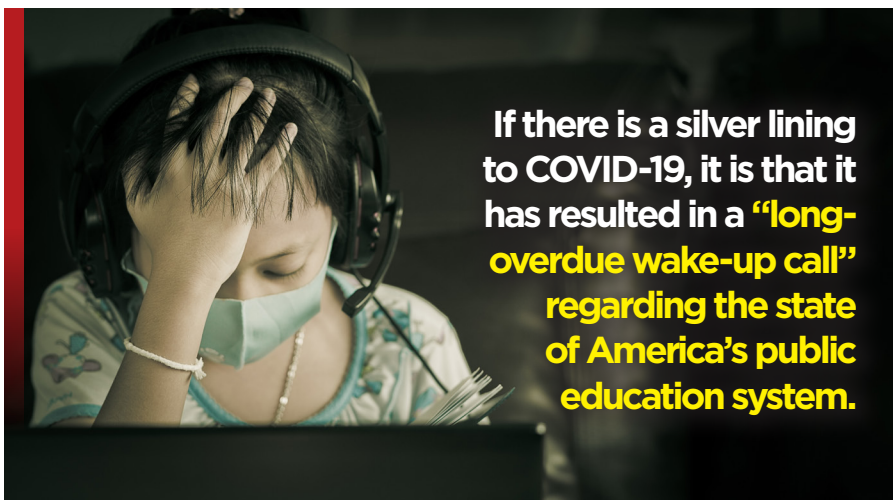
As Rosiak unravels the spider's web, he finds that those bent on turning our education system into something it was never intended to be wear multiple hats for multiple front groups. Thus, successfully hiding their influence.



## Foundations

Far from "merely the rich families who paid for some art museums or public television programming," philanthropic foundations have spent billions of dollars — accumulated through capitalism — to create various associations and activist groups. "The foundation money serves as seed money that is eventually leveraged by another source," Rosiak writes. "The foundations have created their own mouthpieces and gotten others to pay for it. There are hundreds of such activist groups, local and national, pushing complaints about 'systemic racism,' equity, and the evils of capitalism to public schools and children."

Take the MacArthur Foundation. Rosiak explains how the controversial 1619 Project likely saw the light of day thanks to the foundation. In 2014, MacArthur awarded a \$1 million, three-year grant to ProPublica — a liberal nonprofit news outlet for which Nikole Hannah-Jones wrote about race issues. She joined the *New York Times* the following year, producing her 1619 Project series that was turned into grade school curriculum. The Pulitzer Center, the nonprofit that has pushed curricula based on the 1619 Project series into school districts across the country, is also funded by the MacArthur Foundation, Rosiak reveals. Additionally, "MacArthur secured a position for Hannah-Jones as a professor at Howard University, where she would teach her racial ideas and continue the 1619 Project, by donating \$5 million to the school."



**If there is a silver lining to COVID-19, it is that it has resulted in a "long-overdue wake-up call" regarding the state of America's public education system.**



## School boards

National political interest groups have also used local education and school boards as prime real estate to “quietly amas[s] extraordinary control, all over the country.” In Fairfax County, Va., out-of-state dollars influenced local campaigns, and new school board members were driven to pursue a variety of agendas, few of which had to do with education.

## ‘Equity’ consultants

Consultant Glenn Singleton through his Pacific Educational Group (PEG) has made “millions of dollars implanting radical ideas into K-12 schools.” Rosiak traces Singleton’s influence, including how he laid the groundwork for the rhetoric that now dominates a large portion of American school districts. His teacher trainings have focused on “white privilege” and even included separating attendees into racially segregated groups where white people had to confess in what ways they were white and develop a plan to challenge their whiteness, Rosiak writes. PEG has been active in several Minnesota school districts over the years, including the Edina school district, where a push for “educational equity” led to proficiency declines.

All this focus on money and equity, Rosiak writes, has resulted in crumbling academic standards, the effects of which will hurt American kids in ways that will impact them for decades.

If there is a silver lining to COVID-19, it is that it has resulted in a “long-overdue wake-up call” regarding the state of America’s public education system, Rosiak concludes. “For the sake of our kids’ happiness, for the sake of our constitutional republic, for the sake of a modern world fueled by scientific and technological advancement, we can never, ever go back to sleep.” ★

—Catrin Wigfall

*A version of this article was originally published in the Washington Examiner.*



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## THE RUSH LINE

NOT WHITE BEAR LAKE

BY  
BILL  
WALSH



# THE MARKETFEST REBELLION

How local activists in **White Bear Lake** persuaded the **Met Council** to prevent **89 daily buses** from cutting through their charming community.

**O**n Thursday nights in the summer, the city of White Bear Lake is transformed into a mini State Fair, with thousands of people swarming its quaint downtown for its Marketfest celebration. The streets are shut down, live music blares from two stages and local restaurants and shops set up on the sidewalk, contributing to the

lively and welcoming atmosphere. In a normal year, the most common question at the info booth is, “Where’s the petting zoo?” But in 2021 the most common question was, “Where do I sign the petition against the Rush Line?”

Rush Line refers to the 15-mile, 21-stop bus rapid transit project slated to begin at Union Depot in St. Paul, run

through Maplewood Mall and end in downtown White Bear Lake. Ramsey County recently handed the project off to the Met Council where it has been re-branded as the Purple Line to better fit into the Twin Cities transit system.

Opposition to the Rush Line bus rapid transit project, previously bubbling under the surface, was about to manifest itself



in a very public way at Marketfest. A group of strangers united in opposition to the line in early 2021 and formed the No Rush Line Coalition. They included regular citizens from Maplewood, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township, Vadnais Heights and Gem Lake.

Their leader is Tim David, a White Bear Township resident and self-described centrist who is not against public transit, as long as it makes sense. He has a professional background in project management at the City of Minneapolis and Deloitte Consulting. David says that experience “helped me realize how powerful a well-organized, credible group could impact policies in a neighborhood, a city and a region.”

The first meeting of the No Rush Line group was at the Cup and Cone in White Bear Lake and included an eclectic group of citizens with a variety of concerns about the project. David pulled the group together by reaching out to people who wrote letters to the editor against the project. A core group of 10 volunteers became the backbone of the group and did most of the work.

“I tried very quickly to apply some organization to it because it wasn’t going to be a group of people who just wanted to vent,” David says.

Several in the group own homes in Maplewood with property backing up to the Bruce Vento trail. What is now a scenic, tree-lined bike and walking path will be clear cut to make room for the addition of a bus lane. Despite their literal Not-In-My-Backyard status, these homeowners are not the only ones objecting to the loss of trees and massive change to this heavily wooded trail. And the promise of quiet electric buses is hard to trust after the Met Council recently announced a plan to purchase 140 diesel buses over the next five years. A pilot program for electric buses was halted last year because of technical problems and concerns over cost and reliability in cold weather.

Other members of the No Rush Line coalition include taxpayers who simply object to yet another expensive transit project with dubious ridership projections. They watched the Southwest Light

Rail project in the western suburbs come in \$750 million over budget and the Northstar line in Anoka County lose 96 percent of its riders during the pandemic and worry the same will happen with the Rush Line.

But the strongest opposition to the project came from White Bear Lake residents who worried about how 89 buses a day driving to and through their historic downtown would ruin the city’s small-town character. It is the city’s biggest asset.

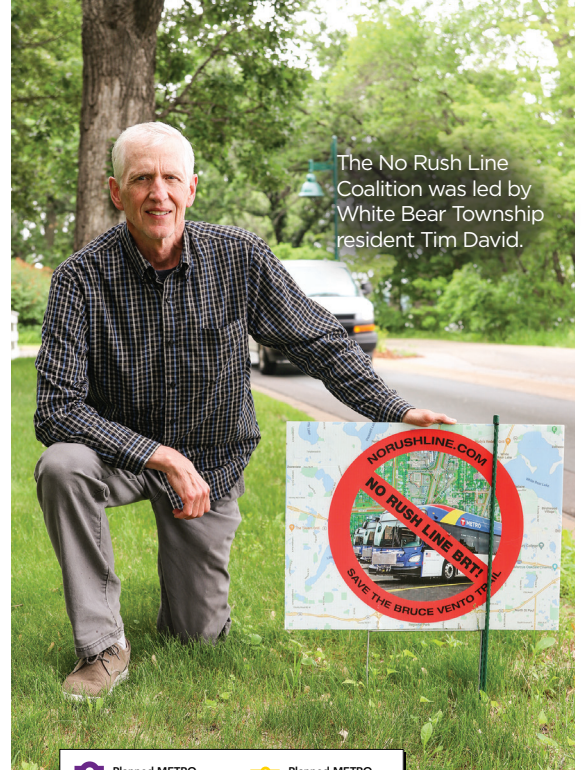
### History of Rush Line

The Rush Line bus rapid transit project started in 1999 with a Rush Line Corridor Task Force composed of 22 elected officials from counties and municipalities along a corridor that followed Highways 61 and 35 from St. Paul to Rush Lake, Minn., (hence the name; it bears no reference to speed).

In 2009, the legislature allocated \$3.4 million to study the Rush Line corridor. That’s always how it starts. A relatively small grant from the legislature to “study” a new project. An office is set up, engineers and planners are hired, and the work begins. After several years of study, the project grows to a point of inevitability: We’ve spent this much, we can’t stop now.

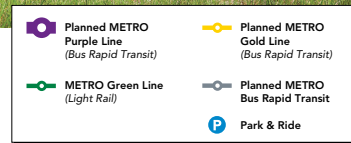
The total cost for construction of the Rush Line is \$473 million with half coming from local or state sources and half expected from the federal government through a Fast Starts Grant from the Federal Transit Administration. Ramsey County will pay for the local share of construction via sales tax revenue dedicated to transit. Operational costs of \$15 million per year will also be borne by Ramsey County taxpayers. Local planners must meet specific criteria for ridership, costs, and impact on the environment in order to receive federal funding.

As the route began taking shape, smaller decisions were presented to municipalities along the route. Should it be light rail or bus? What highways or



The No Rush Line Coalition was led by White Bear Township resident Tim David.

Bill Walsh



The original route for the Rush Line BRT project ended in historic downtown White Bear Lake.



streets should the route follow? Where will we put the stations or stops?

Some of these early decisions required votes. As a member of the White Bear Lake City Council, I objected to this cart-before-the-horse process in 2017 when Ramsey County brought a resolution

to the council asking us to approve the locally preferred alternative route. Cities were being asked to approve the route without having a conversation about the overall project.

We were assured by Ramsey County the vote that day wasn't for or against the overall project, just the route, if it was to be built. The vote approving the locally preferred alternative route passed the White Bear Lake City Council 3-2. It was the first of many 3-2 votes in favor of various aspects of the Rush Line pro-



**That 200 people showed up for a forum on a Tuesday night in October was more evidence that opposition to the project was strong and growing.**

ject. Ramsey County and Met Council later used these votes as proof that cities like White Bear Lake approved the project multiple times.

### **The Marketfest awakening**

As the project progressed through the different phases necessary to receive federal funding, community opposition started to build. Letters to the editor in the local *White Bear Press* expressed overwhelming opposition to the project. I wrote to the paper in April 2021 and asked for a "pause" in the project to review ridership numbers after the pandemic. I promised in that letter to have a city-wide conversation culminating with a municipal consent vote at a future council meeting. White Bear

residents were challenging me not just to oppose the project, but to do something about it. Feedback in my council emails and conversations ran 9-1 against the line.

Response to the booth at Marketfest was overwhelming. The No Rush Line Coalition had six volunteers manning the booth with 150-200 people signing the petition against the line each of the four nights they were there. In addition to the petition, they sent 800 postcards to elected officials voicing opposition to the project.

"We didn't know whether anyone would talk to us at Marketfest or what type of response there would be. If no one had talked to us, we would have gone away," David says.

Armed with the knowledge about widespread opposition, the core group of the No Rush Line Coalition surveyed over 100 businesses along the proposed route and found 90 percent of them in opposition. They hosted booths at festivals, hosted pop-up events along the Bruce Vento Trail and created a fact-filled PowerPoint presentation with reasons to oppose it.

At one point David emailed the presentation to Ramsey County staff asking them to verify the facts. "We wanted this group to be very fact based, which I think was important for our credibility," he says. Staff made a few clarifications to the presentation, and David continues to share it with groups, business owners, and elected officials.

### **Businesses vote no**

As the project moved forward, local business owners convened at the Best Western Hotel in White Bear Lake. Ramsey County project coordinator Andy Gitzlaff presented the plan for the proposed line and did his best to answer a barrage of questions from the skeptical audience.

"What are the ridership estimates?"



"We don't have them yet."

"How could you possibly build something this large and expensive without any data?"

Welcome to the world of government.

### **The public forum**

On a Tuesday night last October, people filed into the upper floor of Kellerman's Event Center in White Bear Lake. Big Wood Brewery and the Alchemist cocktail bar take up the lower level of this beautiful historic building in the heart of downtown, a few blocks from the second largest lake in the Twin Cities. Like many small Minnesota towns, White Bear gets its identity from the lake and began as a vacation destination for people from St. Paul looking for a quick getaway.

Kellerman's was a fitting venue for a public forum to discuss whether a bus line that runs every 10 minutes from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. is a good fit for such an historic and charming community. The owner, Terry Kellerman, one of the many business owners in the community against the project, was happy to offer his venue for the event. I cohosted the forum with the No Rush Line Coalition as a listening session, a chance for people to let us know what they think about the Rush Line project.

We set up 100 chairs, but quickly realized we'd need twice that number.



**Bill Walsh** is the marketing communications director at Center of the American Experiment. Prior to joining American Experiment, Walsh worked for 25 years in a variety of political and communications positions with the Minnesota Senate, Minnesota House and in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's administration. Walsh is also a member of the White Bear Lake City Council.





Photographs by Bill Walsh

That 200 people showed up for a forum on a Tuesday night in October was more evidence that opposition to the project was strong and growing.

David walked through his PowerPoint slides and then opened the floor to public comments. The public forum received positive news coverage, which added momentum to opposition to the line.

“The public forum was a major milestone for us, and the idea of listening to people has been important throughout the entire effort,” David says. “We are not as much trying to persuade but trying to inform, and then listen to what their views are — and we’ve talked to and listened to thousands of residents.”

## The 2021 election

In May 2021, Mayor Jo Emerson, a supporter of the project, announced she would not seek re-election, setting the stage for a mayor’s race with Rush Line as the number one issue. Rush Line opponent Heidi Hughes also announced she would challenge incumbent councilmember Doug Biehn, a strong supporter of the line. This was Biehn’s fourth race for council and the first time he had an opponent.

With momentum from the public forum, the No Rush Line Coalition, Marketfest and continued letters to the editor, Hughes defeated incumbent Councilman Biehn while Rush Line opponent Dan Louismet was elected mayor. Rush Line was the deciding factor in both races.

In February, the council held a two-hour work session on a strongly-worded resolution telling the Met Council “in the strongest of terms” to “modify the BRT Route so that it does not enter the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of White Bear Lake.” The resolution noted

opposition from the community, poor ridership projections, and how it will “negatively impact the quaint, quiet, and walkable nature of the area.”

We expected to pass the resolution at our February 22 council meeting, given the new 3-2 anti-Rush Line majority. In a surprising plot twist, Councilman Steve Engstran, who had previously voted against Rush Line many times, announced he could not support the resolution the way it was worded. Engstran objected to the tone and length of the resolution and preferred something shorter and less political. The motion was tabled until March 8, and once again the citizen-led No Rush Line Coalition sprang to action delivering phone calls and emails to Engstran and the rest of the council. A modified resolution was brought forward, and this time Engstran joined Councilwoman Hughes and me in a 3-2 vote for passage.

## Will the Met Council listen?

Throughout the years-long discussion of Rush Line, several of my colleagues on the council expressed frustration that the line was being foisted on White Bear Lake by Ramsey County and the Met Council. That was true. Until the pandemic, White Bear was serviced by Metro Transit Bus Route 265 with ridership of around 196 people a day from downtown, through Maplewood Mall to St. Paul. The route was canceled once COVID hit, and most Minnesotans started working from home.

While light rail projects require municipal consent votes from cities along the proposed route, bus rapid transit projects have no such requirement. In other

“Listening to the people has been important throughout the entire effort,” says David, pictured standing at the shoreline of White Bear Lake. The first No Rush Line meeting was at the iconic Cup and Cone ice cream shop.

words, the White Bear Lake resolution against the line was advisory only. The unelected members of the Met Council were under no obligation to listen to the city and stop the line at the city border.

But a surprising thing happened April 29 at the first meeting of the reconstituted Purple Line Corridor Management Committee, made up of local elected officials along the route and chaired by Charlie Zelle, chairman of the Met Council. Met Council staff went over the pros and cons of trying to build a bus rapid transit line in a city that doesn’t want it. The project would likely cost more and take more time without a city’s cooperation. The committee instead began discussion of alternative routes that do not include stops or stations in White Bear Lake.

## The Met Council listened!

The project will continue with a different route that includes feeder buses running into White Bear Lake to pick up riders so they can join the Purple Line at the Maplewood Mall transit center.

A group of citizens came together, got organized, worked hard, stuck to the facts and convinced two different local governmental bodies to listen and respond to their very simple message that the Purple Line bus rapid transit project is not a good fit for the town of White Bear Lake.

The work is not over for the No Rush Line Coalition and Tim David, its leader. They plan to deploy the same strategies learned in White Bear Lake to convince the Vadnais Heights and Maplewood City Councils to oppose the line. Perhaps the Met Council will afford them the same courtesy they offered to White Bear Lake. No matter what happens in the future, David reflects on what’s been accomplished:

“It was a powerful message that communities can stand up to an organization like the Met Council, which is a behemoth with limited accountability and transparency, and make a difference in a community like White Bear Lake.” ★



≡ ACTIVISTS

# CIVIL WARS

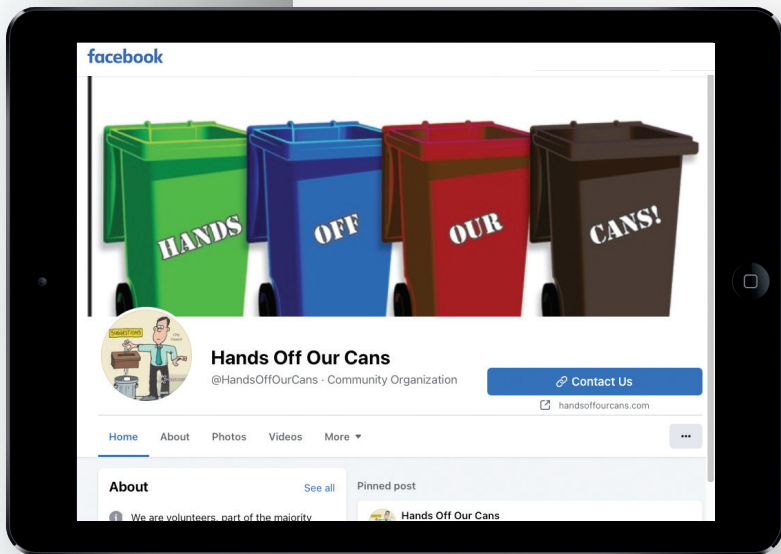
Activists are discovering the power of working together to bring accountability to their communities.





On June 1, 2015, an overflow crowd packed Bloomington’s municipal Civic Plaza to hear why the city council had unilaterally decided to implement organized trash collection for the city, instead of letting the matter be determined by public ballot. The topic may have been trash collection, but the underlying sentiment for many attendees was the city council’s blithe disregard for their concerns.

Disregarding public opposition, the City argued that it would go ahead and



Hands Off Our Cans organized petitions and public support through social media sites such as Facebook.

privately negotiate with a consortium of Bloomington garbage haulers under the authority of a legislative action in 2013 designed to make it easier for cities to develop organized collection.

What the citizens of Bloomington did next provided a case study for a growing movement in Minnesota that shows how grassroots activism can make local government accountable to the people who elect them.

By  
 Catrin Wigfall,  
 Grace Bureau,  
 and  
 Jenna Stocker

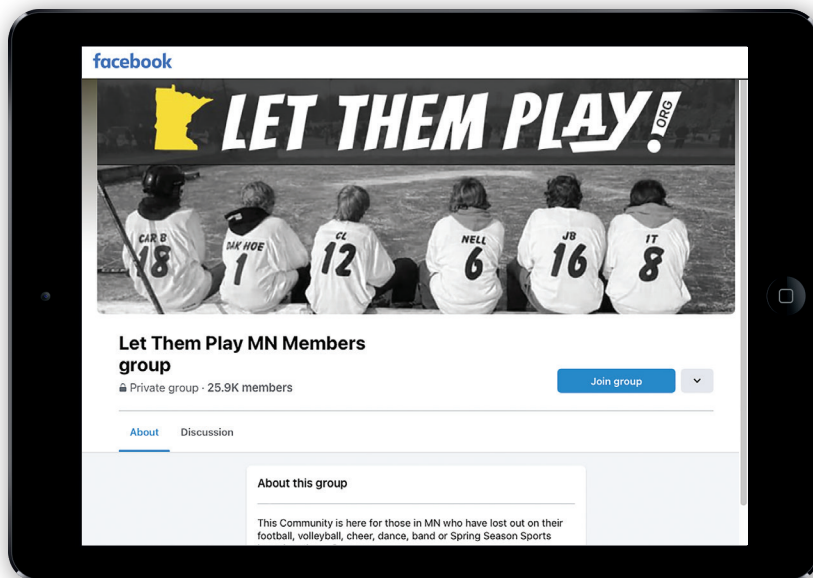
## Starting at street level

Led by resident Joel Jennissen, Bloomington citizens formed the group Hands Off Our Cans. Their intent was stopping the city council from making decisions about trash collection without the consent of voters, or even their input. The group launched a two-front battle: to amend the city charter in order

to put organized garbage collection on the ballot, and to vote down organized garbage collection. At the time, the city charter did not expressly address garbage collection. The city council used that as an opening to take it upon themselves to make a top-down decision rather than defaulting to a vote by the citizens of Bloomington. This is where the pushback began.

Despite having the difficulty of organizing a city of over 86,000 residents to a common cause, Hands Off Our Cans accomplished an improbable feat by obtaining enough petition signatures to get the two questions on the ballot. They had to overcome a city council who already planned and implemented organized trash in the interim, and to motivate voters to action.

The group recruited volunteers from across the city and staged petition signing events, spreading word through social media such as Facebook and Nextdoor. But sheer numbers weren't their only tool. Determination and resistance were perhaps their greatest assets. For the question to finally get to the ballot, the group had to sue the City of Bloomington in a legal battle that went all the way to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2020. The citizens ultimately prevailed to get the issue on the Bloomington ballot. But the larger victory was that they were able to reclaim decision-making power about an issue that directly impacted their community from unsympathetic civic leaders.



## More than a game

Championing a cause sometimes starts with just one person and one idea. Seeking out others with common goals and building from existing relationships can turn a niche cause into a great movement, especially when citizens feel their rights have been infringed upon by local gov-

ernment authorities, as seen in the wake of COVID-19 policies. One such group, Let Them Play Minnesota, exploded from a Facebook page started by Dawn Gillman. The group quickly grew to over 26,000 members statewide — all with the common goal of reversing Gov. Tim Walz's decision to shut down high school sports during the pandemic.

Although the campaign had a modest beginning with Gillman, a mother of five from Dassel, Minn., the impact of the group was felt across the state. A group of high school student-athletes rallied in front of the governor's mansion to deliver a letter to Walz asking him to resume high school sports. The movement could not be ignored. MPR quoted Anoka-Hennepin Superintendent David Law, "The Let Them Play Facebook page out of our district has over 3,000 followers. There's nothing comparable that says, 'Let them be in school.'" This groundswell led the state's largest school district to vote 5-1 in favor of resuming high school sports, and along with it, a semblance of normalcy for thousands of high school athletes. Additionally, the group had the legal resources to again sue the governor when Walz declared a four-week pause to winter sports in December 2020.

## Accountability to the people

Minnesotans are starting to demand accountability from their community lead-

Seeking out others with common goals and building from existing relationships can turn a niche cause into a great movement.

In a 2020 interview with the *Star Tribune*, Greg Joseph, an attorney for the Hands Off Our Cans group, reiterated that the real issue wasn't about trash. "The suit was about letting the people decide. . . . The next time it might be about something you care about." For Bloomington residents, organized trash collection provided the impetus for action. For other communities, it might be about increasing sales taxes, prohibiting the sales of menthol cigarettes, or whether to fund new public works projects or construction of new roads that divide neighborhoods. But no matter what the exact issue, more Minnesotans are realizing they don't have to accept decisions from lawmakers or public policy bureaucrats without making their opinions known first. The power, after all, lies with the *people* and public servants are supposed to serve the *public* interest. Across Minnesota, citizens are coming together to be champions of their communities.



ers, and sometimes it's even a matter of life or death. Minnesota's Supreme Court gave Minneapolis activists a significant victory when it reinstated the *writ of mandamus* — essentially ruling to reinstate a district court order requiring a minimum number of Minneapolis police officers. Now, Mayor Jacob Frey will have to show cause why he failed to perform his duty to provide those officers. "This is a huge victory for the people of Minneapolis and the residents of the North Side," says James Dickey, senior trial counsel at Upper Midwest Law Center (UMLC) who represents the group.

Dickey praises their courage and endurance. "They have been absolutely unified as a team throughout this entire saga," he says. "And my hat's off to them for standing up for what's right."

In the wake of the 2020 riots following the death of George Floyd, the Minneapolis Police Department experienced massive attrition within its ranks while the city was enduring a corresponding spike in violent crime. A group of residents from the city's hardest-hit areas felt that elected officials were failing to

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**"We would like the leadership of our city to make decisions that reflect the values and opinions of our citizens rather than their own vision for Edina."**

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keep them safe and were unresponsive to their pleas for help. Working with UMLC they sued Frey and the city council, demanding the city fully staff its police department.

Back in June 2020, Cathy Spann, a north Minneapolis resident and plaintiff in the case, watched lawlessness and violence break out in her neighborhood as calls to defund the police grew

louder. She and seven others decided to take action because "no one else seemed to be interested in helping."

"Our clients are the ones suffering," says Dickey. "They're dodging bullets ripping through their neighborhood, they're watching their neighbors and friends get shot, they're watching their own houses get shot. It's not fair to them."

2013, the city voted to update the charter's language, removing archaic words like "hereto" and "forthwith" to make it clearer, more succinct, and more easily understood. Now, the city argues that this language update actually changed the entire meaning of the police provision.

Because of the rephrasing, the city argues, the 2013 change effectively



Randy Cook (left) owns Erskine Iron and donated the school building space for the Academy. Tony Hedlund (right) welded the bell frame.

In 2020, eight residents charged Frey and the city council with failing to uphold the city charter, which required a minimum of 730 officers. (Because of new census data, that number has since risen to 743.) Initially, Hennepin County District Court sided with the residents, ordering the city to add more officers. But after the city appealed, the order was overturned, and the city was not required to meet that minimum. After appealing to the Minnesota Supreme Court, the case was accepted and expedited. Now, the outcome rests largely on the interpretation of the city charter.

The requirement to maintain a minimum police force was added in 1961 amidst a worsening crime wave. Residents voted to add the requirement to the city charter, tying the minimum number of officers to the city's population (0.0017 officers per resident). In

divided responsibility for enforcement between the city council and the mayor. So, the city council must fully fund the police force, but the mayor has discretion over how many (or how few) officers to actually employ. "It's an unreasonable reading of the law," says Dickey. "It goes against the basic understanding of how legislators and executives work. [They say] the city council has to do what the people put in the charter, but then the mayor can ignore it entirely."

The Minnesota Supreme Court heard arguments on June 9 in *Spann, et al. v. Minneapolis City Council and Mayor Jacob Frey*. "We believe in law and order," says Dickey. "And we believe that public safety is a prerequisite for being able to exercise the other liberties that we have in this great country and this great state."

## Community involvement

Having a stake in one's community is just one piece of a larger part of this grassroots movement across Minnesota. The difficulty often comes from building support and getting people involved. "Complaining and arguing is one thing — an easy thing — that people like to do when they encounter something going on in their community they disagree with. But to turn that into action is another thing



Freedom Christian Academy before and after renovations performed by volunteers from the community.

entirely," explains Edina resident Dan Stocker (a relative of the author). It is a common refrain when asked what is the most difficult part of heading this type of community organization. Issue Edina hopes to change that. It is a new citywide group putting the spotlight on various civic issues that residents feel don't align with their priorities. The group's name reflects the need for a nonpartisan group of Edina residents focused on addressing their concerns where they thought the city's elected leaders were lacking. The group is composed of approximately 45 members and continues to grow.

Initially, Stocker and a small group of Edina parents banded together because they were concerned about their inability to address and publicly discuss citywide issues. "We would like the leadership of our city to make

decisions that reflect the values and opinions of our citizens rather than their own vision for Edina. This just isn't happening," he says.

To facilitate involvement, the group uses social media and established a website for residents offering easily accessible information about the community. Issue Edina emphasizes public schools, city development, and public safety, among other things. The website publishes crime statistics as well as



contact information for the Edina police chief and links to the police department's hiring page for those seeking employment information.

Working with another city group, Lake Cornelia Neighborhood, Issue Edina helped prevent a new firehouse station from being built in Rosland

Park, one of two sites proposed by the city council. A second site, favored by residents in the Pentagon Park neighborhood, was chosen instead.

Issue Edina has helped parents understand what is being taught in their children's classrooms. A post on their website informs Edina Highlands Elementary parents that fifth graders read *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice* out loud in class and then attended a play based on the book at the Children's Theater Company. "Parents might know about the assignment," Stocker says, "but they probably aren't aware the story teaches inclusion by way of marginalizing and stereotyping police." The story includes divisive anti-police messaging at a time when crime in Edina is on the rise.

## A leap of faith

While many grassroots organizations work toward change through a better-informed citizenry, some are on a mission to build whole new institutions from the ground up. Minnesota's embattled public schools are mired in controversies that pit parents against the teachers' union, administrations, and school boards. COVID-19 remote learning showed many parents how much that was being taught in schools did not align with their values. As Critical Race Theory, equity studies, and gender ideology have figured more prominently in public schools, many families are turning to private or home schools as alternatives.

Jason and Holly Breckel took matters into their own hands. After learning more about the proposed changes to Minnesota's K-12 social studies standards and local school policy changes regarding bathroom and locker room use for transgender students, the Erskine, Minn.-based couple along with 90 other concerned community members attended a school board meeting in May 2021 to let Win-E-Mac Public Schools know they were disheartened over the direction the district was headed.



**Jenna Stocker** is managing editor of *Thinking Minnesota*. A former Marine Corps officer, Stocker holds a degree in accounting from the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. Stocker spent time as a researcher specializing in Islamism and military weapons systems at the Center for Security Policy in Washington, D.C. She also contributes to *The Federalist* and *National Review*.



“My family has gone through the Win-E-Mac school system for four generations,” Holly Breckel told American Experiment. “But what do you do when you feel like the administration is making decisions that introduce school safety issues and that parents no longer have a voice in our children’s education?”

With a population of 500, Erskine is tucked up in northwestern Minnesota near Grand Forks. The Win-E-Mac school district serves approximately 430 students from four towns: Winger, Erskine, McIntosh and Mentor. Other learning environment options in the area are limited, including private schools, Breckel says.

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**“There are a lot of possibilities to achieve not only what’s best for your own child but for your own community.”**

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One is 45 miles away in Thief River Falls, but it only goes to 8th grade. Another preK-11 private school is in Bagley, still a 30-mile drive. “Plus, we love our community, so we really didn’t want to uproot our kids from it,” she says.

And while many families in the community homeschool, the Breckel family’s widespread age of children — 17, 15, and 4 — left Holly “feeling like homeschooling wasn’t quite the right fit.”

Their solution? Start a private school to serve Erskine and surrounding areas.

Freedom Christian Academy will open fall 2022 as a Bible-based school, providing a quality education and a community-minded education, Breckel says. “We are surrounded by wonderful communities, and students will learn what it means to be part of a community and how to give back.”

Together with Denton and Sofia Nikolayson of Erskine and the

support of the preK-11 private school FHL Academy in Bagley, Jason and Holly Breckel are experiencing firsthand the power of communities working together, especially when it comes to helping children.

The school will operate from the elementary wing of the old Erskine school building. Community members have donated carpet for two of the six classrooms, assisted with renovation work, and have earmarked other items on the school’s wishlist. “Plus, we are the sister school to FHL Academy, so we have the support of an established school,” Breckel says.

As Freedom Christian Academy nears closer to opening its doors to an estimated 15 students in preK-6 this fall — with plans to add subsequent grades each year — a 36-inch cast-iron bell found in the old school building and likely built between 1866 and 1872 hangs majestically from its welded frame in the front lawn, waiting to be rung to signal the start of each school day.

With a school building in place, a curriculum selected, and a dean of students ready to teach and guide children, the focus now is on determining how many teachers will be needed and making the community aware that Freedom Christian Academy is a viable learning environ-

ment for the area.

“From church presentations to Facebook, to mailing to area businesses and small-town word-of-mouth, we have had great response from just about everybody,” Breckel says. “Yes, we are taking a leap of faith — an ‘if we build it, they will come’ approach — but we are showing other parents, other communities, that you can do something to ensure your child is getting an excellent education.”

For Robert “Bo” Buehler, Freedom Christian Academy’s dean of students, the new school offers parents dissatisfied with the direction of public schools another option. “We are just starting off, but I think as more time goes by, people will see what we are able to do in our school and will be more and more willing to send their children here.”

Freedom Christian Academy is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and will not accept any state or federal funding, according to Breckel. “That way, we won’t have to follow their guidelines pertaining to controversial history and sex education curricula changes that are upcoming.”

Her advice to other parents and community members eager to get more involved in their children’s education? “Don’t be afraid to think outside the box. It does

require work, and finding out what your children are learning and being exposed to, but there are a lot of possibilities to achieve not only what’s best for your own child but for your own community.”

Minnesota’s grassroots activists are impacting their state, from schools to trash collection to combating crime. Citizens all over the state are discovering that a daunting uphill battle for a single person can become an emboldening act of courage and perseverance when like-minded citizens unite behind a common cause. Not without challenges, these grassroots organizations work to keep elected officials accountable for their actions and must answer to the people when making policy decisions on their behalf. ★



**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.



**Grace Bureau** is American Experiment’s incoming marketing communications specialist. She is a summa cum laude graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College with a degree in communication studies.

≡ GAS  
STATION  
INFLATION



By Isaac Orr  
and  
Mitch Rolling

# WALZIFORNIA

It is easy to see why the Walz administration is trying to conceal the outrageous costs of his California Fuel Standards proposal until after the election.

**You just won't believe it.**



**M**innesotans all over the state are talking about inflation at the gas station. On a nearly weekly basis, the average prices of gasoline and diesel fuel are breaking records. Unfortunately, Gov. Tim Walz and other liberal lawmakers in St. Paul want to enact a California Fuel Standard (CFS) that will increase Minnesota gasoline and diesel prices by up to \$2 per gallon. These new regulations, which the administration is calling a “Clean Fuel

will cause more gas station inflation, and what Minnesotans can expect to receive in return for feeling more pain at the pump.

The CFS, which Oregon and Washington have already adopted, is a complicated cap-and-trade government regulation intended to lower emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) from gasoline and diesel fuel.

The quantity of GHGs emitted by each gallon of fuel is called its carbon intensity (CI). The CFS regulations will require fuel producers to reduce the CI score of

CFS starts out small but increases over time as the regulations become more aggressive, which you can see in the graph showing the cost of the program in Oregon over time.

### CFS in Minnesota

An analysis by Stillwater Associates, a consulting firm, estimated a CFS in Minnesota would require a 20 percent CI reduction from our fuels by 2035.

They concluded that these regulations would increase gasoline prices by 20 cents per gallon by 2026, eventually rising to 54 cents per gallon by 2035. Diesel prices would eventually hit 53 cents per gallon. These costs would be in addition to the historic prices Minnesotans are already paying at the pump.

Federal data show that the average Minnesota household consumed about 1,053 gallons of gasoline in 2019, the most recent data available. Increasing the cost of gas between 20 and 54 cents per gallon would require families to pay an additional cost between \$210 and \$568 per year.

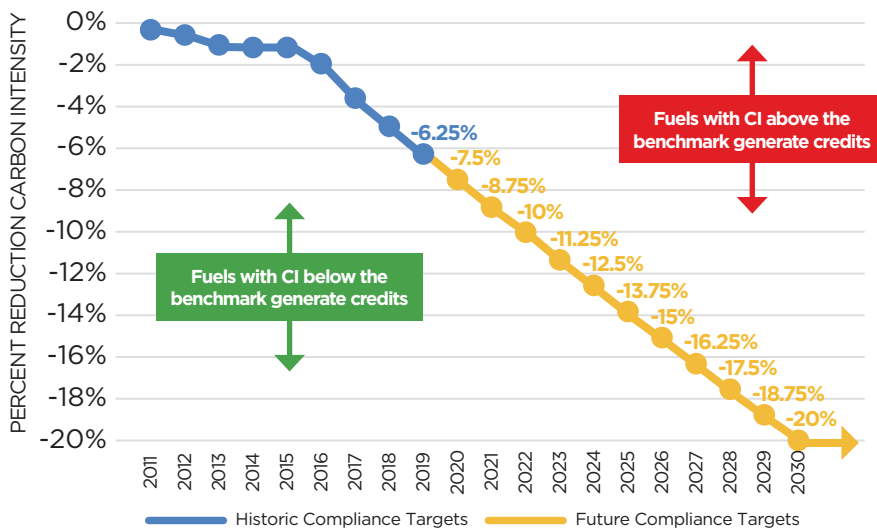
Rising gas prices have already left families and businesses with less money for groceries, health care, education, or savings. These California regulations will only make things worse.

Higher fuel costs lead to higher inflation as businesses charge more to pay for their own increases in energy prices.

A CFS will disproportionately harm rural families because residents of Greater Minnesota drive farther distances than people in cities. Costs are higher in rural areas even though wages are generally lower than in the Metro. This is why the expensive energy policies pushed by urban liberal politicians are especially devastating for residents of Greater Minnesota.

While adding 20 to 54 cents per gallon of fuel seems like an unthinkable burden on Minnesota families who are already struggling with the highest inflation in 40 years, the most recent version of the CFS legislation in the Minnesota House of Representatives is even more costly.

## How the CFS Works: Credit and Deficit Generation



Every year, the government mandates a lower CI score for the fuels used in cars and trucks. By 2030, California will require a 20 percent reduction in CI, compared to the baseline, to generate credits instead of deficits.

SOURCE: Arpiti Soni, “Overview of Low Carbon Fuel Standard,” California Air Resources Board, July 29, 2020

Standard,” will significantly increase the pain Minnesotans are feeling at the pump, but none of these extra costs will go to maintaining our roads and bridges. They will also yield zero measurable environmental benefits.

But the most interesting part of this situation isn’t that liberal lawmakers are trying to make energy more expensive — they do that all the time — it’s that they’re trying to hide it.

### What is the California Fuel Standard?

Before we dig into the coverup, it’s important to explain what the CFS is, how it

their fuels by a larger amount every year. The graph nearby shows the mandated reductions in California.

Fuels sold in the state with a CI score that exceeds the government limit are assessed a deficit (think “demerit”); fuels sold with a CI score below the mandated benchmarks receive credits. Fuel producers with deficits must either blend lower-carbon fuels into their products or buy credits from other fuel producers. In other words, producers must offset every deficit by purchasing a credit.

Consumers ultimately pay the additional costs of purchasing credits in the form of higher fuel prices. The cost of the

## Crazier than California

Earlier this year, liberal lawmakers in the Minnesota House of Representatives introduced House File 2083, a new version of the CFS legislation that is more aggressive and more expensive than California's mandate.

The new version was set to be discussed at an informational hearing of the Minnesota House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Committee on March 29, 2022. American Experiment requested two minutes to share the findings of our research with the committee, but liberal lawmakers refused to let Mitch Rolling make his two-minute testimonial debut.

Apparently, they didn't want the "informational hearing" to have too much information.

While the decision was disappointing and decidedly undemocratic, it was probably a shrewd move on their part. Mitch's testimony would have been devastating to the liberal narrative, which claims enacting a CFS wouldn't increase prices, and that it would make a meaningful difference to the environment.

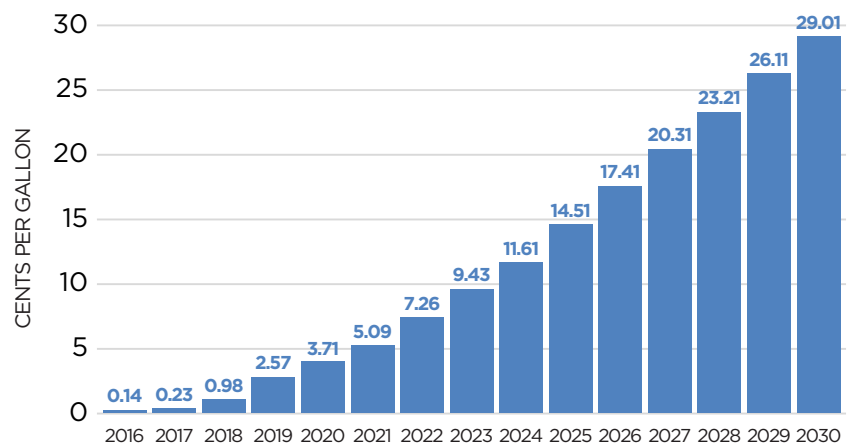
The original bill sought to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the fuel sector by 20 percent below the 2018 baseline by 2035. The new version called for a 25 percent reduction by 2030 and a 75 percent reduction by 2040.

American Experiment used the formula on the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's website to show how making the standard more stringent and shortening the timeline for implementation would make the regulations more expensive. Much more expensive.

Requiring a 25 percent reduction in carbon intensity by 2030, for example, would push up the cost of the program 36 to 67 cents per gallon by 2030, depending on the cost of compliance credits. The stricter mandates would cost the average Minnesota household an additional \$380 to \$710 per year in additional gasoline costs (in constant 2022 dollars) by 2030.

The per-gallon cost increases of mandating a 75 percent CI reduction by 2040 would be measured in dollars, not cents. By 2040, gasoline costs would increase between \$1.08 per gallon and \$2.02 per gallon, depending on credit price.

## Cost Increase for E10 Gasoline Under the Oregon CFS



The cost of the CFS program in Oregon is shown for each year using the formula provided by the Oregon DEQ. Prices are low in the early years, but quickly ramp up over time. A similar cost would likely be seen in Minnesota. Historical average annual credit prices are used for 2016 through 2021. Credit prices in the future are held constant at \$123.85.

Source: Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

By 2040, the average Minnesota family using 1,053 gallons of gas would pay an additional \$1,137 to \$2,127 per year under the California Fuel Standards.

These numbers are so big that it's hard to believe anyone could actually want to implement this policy, but the math doesn't lie. The latest version of the CFS legislation is baffling because it shows that the liberal lawmakers behind it either have zero understanding of how it will make life more expensive for Minnesotans, or they don't care.

### Where does the money go?

A CFS will substantially increase gasoline and diesel fuel costs, but unlike a gas tax, none of the extra money Minnesotans will pay at the pump will be used to pay for crucial infrastructure projects. Instead, that money will become profits for the companies that generate credits and sell them to

gasoline and diesel producers under the mandates. This is where the complicated cap and trade part, mentioned earlier, comes into play.

Companies that have credits sell them to companies with deficits. In practice, this means gasoline and diesel producers pay companies that install electric vehicle charging stations, sell electricity for electric vehicles, or generate alternative fuel sources for their credits, and these additional costs are passed on to the consumer in the form of more pain at the pump. It all boils down to cold hard cash. Consumers would be forced to indirectly funnel money into the pockets of the special interest groups preferred by liberal politicians, and liberal politicians will almost certainly blame rising gasoline and diesel prices on "price gouging" by fuel producers.

It's an unvirtuous cycle that can only be stopped by an informed public who understands that liberal energy policies



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are making energy more expensive.

## No measurable benefits

Gov. Walz has argued that implementing a CFS is necessary to reduce GHG emissions from the transportation sector in Minnesota, but he fails to level with Minnesotans and tell them how these regulations will impact future global temperatures.

The reason for this glaring omission is obvious: The change of future global temperatures would be embarrassingly small. According to our estimates, the CFS would avert only 0.0002° C of potential future warming by 2100.

In fact, eliminating all the 36.5 million metric tons of GHGs emitted by the transportation sector in Minnesota — just 0.1 percent of the global total — would reduce future global temperatures 0.00095° C by 2100, an amount far too small to be measured with even the most sophisticated scientific equipment.

## Hiding the ball

Given the record high gas prices and the looming election in November, it's not surprising that Walz and other liberal lawmakers don't like to talk about the enormous costs of the CFS and its utter lack of measurable environmental benefits.

For example, the Walz administration recently contracted with a consulting firm called WSB to release a 19-page report summarizing the feedback received on the CFS from stakeholders in Minnesota, including eight meetings with environmental groups, four meetings with petroleum refineries, three meetings with labor, farm groups, business groups and utilities, and four public meetings.

Astoundingly, the report never once discusses the likely costs of the CFS, even though cost information for California and Oregon is easy to find. In fact, the report

explicitly punts on this vital question, naming it an area for "further exploration."

Public polling explains why the Walz administration might be anxious to avoid a conversation about costs. American Experiment's Spring 2022 *Thinking Minnesota* Poll found that 59 percent oppose the CFS, with 50 percent "strongly" opposing it. Those are abysmal numbers for someone seeking statewide office.

Critics say the intentional ambiguity of the Walz report enabled them to offer a knowing wink at the radical environmentalists while letting the CFS simmer on the back burner until after the election. Then, if victory is secured, Walz can crank up the heat on this policy, which will cause

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**The intentional ambiguity of the Walz report enabled them to offer a knowing wink at the radical environmentalists while letting the CFS simmer on the back burner.**

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even more gas station inflation.

While Walz would probably like the electorate to think that he doesn't plan on implementing a CFS, the appendix of his administration's Climate Action Framework draft report clearly states that he wants to enact the policy. The mainstream media will likely leave the issue unexamined, but American Experiment is holding his feet to the fire.

In addition to exposing the cost of the CFS in our report, we launched a petition at [NoGasStationInflation.com](http://NoGasStationInflation.com) urging Walz and state lawmakers to oppose these expensive California regulations. So far, more than 1,850 Minnesotans have signed the petition, and it's just getting started.

This summer, American Experiment will run an aggressive social media campaign, host a webinar, and air radio ads warning the public that

enacting a CFS could cause gas prices to increase by up to \$2 per gallon. These ads will air all over the state, as well as being run in different languages, such as Spanish and Somali.

This outreach is important because it will clearly communicate the devastating impact of rising energy prices to the families who can least afford to pay them, whether they be rural families in Greater Minnesota, or Latino families in the Twin Cities.

## Conclusion

It's important to remember that the record-high energy prices we are experiencing today are the direct result of Biden administration actions that have sought to stifle American energy production at every opportunity. Unfortunately, the prevailing view among many liberal politicians is that rising prices are a good thing because it will make alternative energy sources more competitive with conventional fuels. Therefore, high prices are the point.

What other rationale can there be for enacting a harmful policy like the CFS that will cause prices at the pump to increase by 20 cents to \$2 per gallon? As we have already discussed, the CFS will deliver zero measurable environmental benefits, and none of the additional costs borne by Minnesota families will go toward maintaining our roads and bridges.

Not only is the Walz administration advocating for bad public policy, but it revealed its cynicism when it concealed the costs of the program. Any time a politician, regardless of party, proposes a new regulation on Minnesotans, the first question they should have to answer is, "How much will it cost?"

Record-high gasoline prices paired with the looming election have likely stymied the CFS for now, but it is fair to consider Walz's Climate Action Framework as a roadmap for his second term, should he secure one. That means the transitioning of Minnesota to Walzifornia is very much on the table.

Liberal lawmakers in St. Paul will do their best to deny that they want to pass a California fuel standard in Minnesota, but it is your job to demand transparency. You can do your part by signing our petition at [NoGasStationInflation.com](http://NoGasStationInflation.com)



**Mitch Rolling** is a policy analyst at Center of the American Experiment. He has written extensively on renewable energy and electricity policy. Mitch graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in history and Jewish studies.



GOVERNMENT

# INCOMPLETE!

Lawmakers have nothing to show but an abysmal report card from the 2022 legislative session.

By  
Bill  
Walsh





**T**he 2022 legislative session was an opportunity for Minnesota’s public servants to confront the issues plaguing the state and work to alleviate those problems for the benefit of all residents. American Experiment offered policy directives on five key issues, that if followed, would help turn Minnesota from a state on a downward trajectory to one on a path to renewal. This is how the session turned out.

### **I. Budget** **Spending Minnesota’s \$9.3 billion tax surplus**



#### **CAE launched the “Give It Back” campaign emphasizing**

- 1.** permanent tax cuts
- 2.** reduction in the overall tax rates for individuals and corporations

#### **Session Outcome**

The 2022 session started with such optimism for a permanent tax cut. The Senate proposed eliminating Social Security income from taxes and cut the bottom income tax rate from 5.35 percent to 2.80

percent. Gov. Tim Walz proposed a one-time rebate check of \$1,000 and House Democrats proposed using the surplus to redistribute wealth from taxpayers to non-taxpayers. At least everyone was talking taxes, and that talk resulted in an end-of-session tax deal that kept the Social Security tax cut and a more modest cut to the lowest income tax bracket. Even with \$1 billion in income redistribution, the compromise bill still qualified as “Giving It Back.”

But alas, the agreed-upon tax bill was held hostage by House Democrats who wouldn’t pass it unless their demands in K-12 spending were satisfied. The teachers’ union was demanding new money from the legislature to help districts like Minneapolis who agreed to unsustainable new teacher contracts.

**Hero:** Senate Republican Leader Jeremy Miller for refusing to agree to \$4 billion in new spending just to get \$2.5 billion in tax cuts.

**Villains:** Education Minnesota for holding the tax bill hostage for more K-12 spending; House Democrats and Gov. Walz for their cowardice in facing the union.

**GRADE: INCOMPLETE**

The agreed-upon tax bill was held hostage by House Democrats **who wouldn’t pass it unless their demands in K-12 spending were satisfied.**



## II. Health Care

### Rising health care and Medicaid costs



#### CAE proposed

1. codifying federal price transparency
2. repealing moratoria on new nursing home and hospital construction
3. making a permanent nursing licensure compact
4. increasing public welfare program integrity and accountability

#### Session Outcome

The Senate passed a bill to add Minnesota to the list of 39 other states belonging to the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). Joining the NLC would allow Minnesota nurses to obtain a single license to work in multiple states. The nurses' union fought the proposal, so it did not progress in the House.

Progress was made on price transparency legislation with the introduction of a bill in the House and Senate. Ameri-



can Experiment worked with the DFL House author of the bill but there was not enough time to work out all the details of this complicated legislation.

**Hero:** Rep. Steve Elkins, a House Democrat willing to work on price transparency reform.

**Villain:** The nurses' union for fencing out nurses from other states as they opposed joining the NLC.

#### GRADE: INCOMPLETE

## III. Energy

### Green energy initiatives and energy affordability



#### CAE proposed easing the financial burden of bad energy policy

1. repealing the Next Generation Energy Act (NGEA)
2. passing CAE's proposed Clean Energy Freedom Act, which includes legalizing construction of new nuclear power plants in Minnesota
3. repealing mandates requiring auto dealers to stock more costly electric vehicles
4. making the Public Utilities Commission an elected body

#### Session Outcome

Many of American Experiment's energy proposals did receive committee hearings in the Senate, and policy fellow Isaac Orr spent several days testifying in front of the Energy and Utilities Finance and Policy Committee. Progress was made in allowing nuclear power to be included in the mix of energy sources, with new allies appearing from the Left. It's getting harder for environmentalists to argue against the cleanest form of energy on the market.

Gov. Walz's idea to create gas station inflation by adopting California's fuel standards became so toxic that the House changed their bill hearing to "informational" status to avoid a recorded vote. Preventing the implementation of the California fuel standard is a policy win for the 2022 session.

**Hero:** Sen. Andrew Mathews for championing strong energy policy.

**Villain:** Rep. Jamie Long, Chair of the House Energy Committee, for pushing renewables, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and gas station inflation.

#### GRADE: C (FOR STOPPING BAD POLICY)

## IV. Education

### Academic excellence and accountability



#### CAE proposed an emphasis on transparency, accountability, and combating Critical Race Theory

1. requiring school districts to make teaching material available to the public
2. prioritizing school choice initiatives
3. aligning school board elections with the November general election
4. enacting a Parent's Bill of Rights
5. prohibiting the teaching of Critical Race Theory in schools

#### Session Outcome

As usual, most of the discussion around K-12 education had to do with money. It's the second largest part of the state budget, and we're only halfway through the largest spending increase in the last 15 years. The Senate did pass a Parent's Bill of Rights loosely based on American Experiment's work, but they



watered down the bill considerably before passage.

In conference committee, Senate Republicans offered House Democrats what they said they wanted most: hundreds of millions of dollars in new

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**What Democrats actually wanted most was new policy mandating the teaching of ethnic studies.**

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spending. But what Democrats actually wanted most was new policy mandating the teaching of ethnic studies across all grades and all subjects. Republicans were wise not to acquiesce.

**Hero:** Sen. Roger Chamberlain, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, for standing strong against ethnic studies.

**Villain:** House Democrats for prioritizing ethnic studies ahead of money for students.

**GRADE: C**  
**(FOR STOPPING BAD POLICY)**

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## V. Crime

Escalating violence and lawlessness



**CAE proposed an anti-crime agenda**

1. enact a strong “Three Strikes” law for violent and career criminals
2. strengthen mandatory sentencing rules for judges and prosecutors

### Session Outcome

Senate Republicans passed a very strong public safety bill including American Experiment’s two top priorities, but for

some reason they ignored the polling data and failed to market the proposals correctly. For example, their proposal for a Three Strikes law was renamed “Aggravated & Consecutive Sentences for Violent or Repeat Offenders.” Good policy, bad marketing.

The House stubbornly doubled down on their top solution for reducing violence: more money for unaccountable non-profits. The House and Senate were further apart on public safety than any other legislative issue, so it’s no surprise nothing got done.

**Hero:** Sen. Warren Limmer, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, for passing a strong bill.

**Villain:** Rep. Cedric Fraizer, Chair of the House Public Safety Committee, for continuing to ignore lawlessness in Minnesota.

**GRADE: INCOMPLETE**

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## Bonus Issue!

### Elections Reform

A relatively minor bill moved through a Senate committee and into the Omnibus Government Operations bill that could do more to expose voter fraud than anything else being considered. The bill added much-needed clarity to the classification of data (challenged ballots) in the

statewide voter file as public. Challenged ballots are identified by counties when red flags are raised about the eligibility of voters who registered to vote on election day. If there is voter fraud occurring in Minnesota, challenged ballots would be the first place to look, and this provision made that data public.

This omnibus bill was the subject of some end-of-session drama when the

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**In the final hours of the session, Walz was asking House Democrats to back away from the table.**

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House DFL Chair was caught on tape telling the Senate Republican Chair he received a last-minute call from Walz and could no longer vote for the previously agreed upon bill. In the final hours of the session, Walz was asking House Democrats to back away from the table, even in areas of agreement.

**Hero:** Sen. Mark Koran, author of the elections data legislation.

**Villain:** Gov. Walz, for sabotaging the end of session by asking House Democrats not to support an agreement.

**GRADE: INCOMPLETE ★**



≡ Q&A



“For the first time since the early ’70s, the United States actually looked (China’s) evil leadership in the eye and said, ‘We’re not going to let you take American jobs. We’re not going to let you steal intellectual property. We’re not going to let you spy on us from your consulates all around America.’”

— Former Secretary of State  
Mike Pompeo

# A Muscular. America

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tells American Experiment’s John Hinderaker the value of confronting China, showing resolve to Iran, and building a structure of peace in the Middle East.



*Mike Pompeo served as director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2017 to 2018 and as secretary of state from 2018 to 2021.*

*Pompeo graduated from West Point in 1986 and after his military service attended Harvard Law School. He was elected to the United States House of Representatives from 2011 to 2017, representing Kansas's 4th congressional district.*

*Pompeo was the keynote speaker at this year's Annual Dinner for Center of the American Experiment.*

**John Hinderaker: Secretary Pompeo, you did a stint as CIA director. Historically, conservatives have supported our intelligence agencies, while liberals have tended to be skeptical of them. But in recent years, it seems as though intelligence officials and former officials have tended to align themselves with Democrats. For example, the claim by a number of them that Hunter Biden's laptop looked like Russian disinformation. Based on your tenure as CIA director, how trustworthy do you think our intelligence agencies are?**

Secretary Pompeo: We're always right to be skeptical of government. Our intelligence communities are no exception to that. We should demand

excellence from them, and we should demand that they are not political. What I observed at the CIA was you have a handful of bad apples — but that's true everywhere. Mostly you had great Americans trying to do their job. In fact, former Director of the CIA John Brennan didn't even want to talk about the fact that the CIA stole secrets. He didn't like the words spying or stealing. The fact is we conducted espionage at the finest levels to support President Trump. The same thing happened at the FBI. He had a group of political leaders — Comey, McCabe, and the gang — who went off the rails. They should be prosecuted to the extent they violated the laws. And

and more secure. It's the political leadership that has failed them. That's who Americans need to be skeptical of.

**From being CIA director, you moved on to become secretary of state. How would you describe working in the Trump administration?**

It was the privilege of a lifetime, and I am deeply grateful to President Trump for giving me the opportunity. We had the glorious space to break glass, to not be confined by the historic foreign policy understandings, and just say what makes sense. Let's just go solve problems. Let's bring our kids home. Let's bring our kids back from Afghanistan, but let's do it right. If we want to try to



Secretary Pompeo and American Experiment president John Hinderaker discuss America's foreign policy stance and the most pressing challenges at the Center's Annual Dinner.

the last thing I'll say, if you know an FBI officer who's working the street, who's trying to keep drugs out of your community, or you encounter someone who you learn is working at the CIA, pat them on the back. They are doing hard work. They are great Americans, and they are trying to keep us all safer

build peace in the Middle East, let's get after it. The Palestinians are never going to cut that deal. Let's ignore that. Let's try and make their lives better, but let's go build our relationships in the Gulf. Let's challenge the Iranians to make sure they don't get a nuclear weapon in ways that no administration has done.

And then, maybe most importantly, we confronted the Chinese Communist Party. For the first time since the early '70s, the United States actually looked that evil leadership in the eye and said, "We're not going to let you take American jobs. We're not going to let you steal intellectual property. We're not going to let you spy on us from your consulates all around America." Instead of just advocating for buying and selling more trinkets between our two countries, we pulled off the Band-Aid presented by the Chinese Communist Party.

**As we speak there is a war going on between Russia and Ukraine. What have we learned so far from that conflict?**

Deterrence matters. American leadership matters. I'm asked all the time if this would have happened if I were still there. I suppose at some level it's unanswerable. I'm not still there, President Trump's not still there. But I do know this much. It didn't happen on our watch, and Vladimir Putin hasn't changed. The only thing that's changed is American leadership. And if you aren't prepared to deter, if you're not prepared to engage with folks like Vladimir Putin and make clear to them that it'll be costly, then America will suffer, not just the people of Ukraine. You watch what's happening to these innocent civilians in Ukraine and it breaks your heart. But today we've got higher energy prices. There's going to be real food challenges in good parts of the world come this fall and winter. What happens in Kiev, what happens in Moscow doesn't just stay in those places. The United States made an enormous mistake by not maintaining the deterrence that we achieved. And the Ukrainian people and now the American people are suffering too.

**The Ukraine war as it's progressed so far has illustrated how important morale is in combat. Some people are**

**concerned that the woke ideologies that seem to be infiltrating our armed forces could adversely impact our own morale. Is that a valid concern?**

I've written about this. As a former soldier, I'm very worried when I see leadership in the United States military focused on anything but excellence; focused on anything but war fighting; focused on anything but actually being prepared to execute the dangerous



**"My predecessor, John Brennan, was a political hack. He undermined the very mission set of the CIA."**

mission that the commander in chief will have to call on them to do. And the United States military has always been good about diversity and bringing in those best suited to particular skill sets. But when you begin to focus on diversity, inclusion and equity — when you start to talk about things that aren't directly related to war fighting, and the capacity to deliver lethal outcomes to your adversaries — not only will you have a less capable fighting force, but morale will fall. We have an all-volunteer service. The young men and women who have always come forward, who have gone to their recruiter's office and signed up for OCS — they've volun-

teered to serve. They will say, "I don't want to be part of any organization that doesn't understand its central mission. And I'll go take my talents and skills elsewhere." I'm worried about what this might mean for our military, two or five or 10 years from now.

**How serious is the Chinese threat to Taiwan? And is it realistic for the U.S. to commit military force there?**

It's a serious threat to Taiwan, but not just to Taiwan, to Vietnam, to the Pacific islands, to South Korea, to Japan. The Chinese Communist Party intends regional, then global hegemony. They want to run the show. They want the world to live under a set of rules that look like theirs, not ours. And that's really bad for us here in places like New Hampshire, Iowa, and my home state of Kansas. Our kids could live in a different world. Taiwan is close. It's an island nation that Xi Jinping, the leader of and the general secretary of the Chinese Communist

Party, has made clear he wants to bring into the fold. He talks about reunification, but of course they were never part of China. The threat is real. They are serious and determined. Our mission set is pretty clear. As much as we're doing today in Ukraine, we can do today in Taiwan. We can give the Taiwanese people the tools they need.

And don't just think of artillery and ships and rifles. They need all of those things, but they need American know-how and American intelligence. And then they need friends in the region. The Japanese, the South Koreans, the Australians, the Vietnamese, the Malaysians, the Indonesians all have a vested interest in making sure that Xi Jinping does not bring Taiwan into his fold. And we ought to be working on those alliances, building them up, making them stronger, giving the Taiwanese the tools they need to defend themselves. And I'm confident that we can maintain the very deterrents that



we maintained for four years in the Trump administration. I can't imagine that Xi Jinping would've undertaken an attack on Taiwan during our time.

**The Abraham Accords in the Middle East were one of the real achievements of your tenure as secretary of state. How has that changed the picture in the Middle East? And are those changes secure against what might happen in the Biden administration?**

The Abraham Accords are a blessing to the nation of Israel, the Jewish people in their rightful homeland, but more broadly to the region. To every country, including those that signed the Accords, the Bahrainis, the Emirates, the Sudanese, the Moroccans. These were Arab nations, who for decades had as their primary foreign policy objective the destruction of Israel. And they had known for a while that was foolish, that was folly, but they couldn't cross through. Really remarkable leaders — Mohamed bin Zayed in the Emirates, the Crown Prince in Bahrain, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and President Trump — came together and said, "Let's move forward, let's recognize the world as it is, we can make commerce together. We can make security together, and we can push back against the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran together." And the Abraham Accords are a result of that. I think they are lasting, not because of any individual, but because they have improved the lives of ordinary people in each of the countries that are now participating in them. And they've made opportunities for American businesses, too. And I'm convinced for that reason and that reason alone, the Abraham Accords will stand the test of history.

**You mentioned Iran. How has the killing of Soleimani, their head terrorist, changed the military and political calculus in the region?**

The strike on Soleimani mattered for multiple reasons. The first was he was trying to kill Americans. He was actively engaged in a real-time plot to kill more Americans. He had already killed some 500 or 600 Americans in the Iran-Iraq war. Soleimani was the head of the IRGC Quds Force, their external terror operation. He was a bad guy, and he didn't like America. Even the day we struck him, he was engaged in a



**"Deterrence matters. It comes from strength.**

**It comes from being real."**

mission in Baghdad, Iraq, to build out a plot to kill even more Americans. So, in the first instance, we slowed that down. Second, the world saw what we did. Deterrence matters. It comes from strength. It comes from being real. It comes from actually executing on the things you told people you would do. And we had made a commitment.

We had made a commitment that we were not going to let Iran push us around. They'd shot down two American UAVs, and we had the opportunity to strike their most senior general. It sent notice to the world and to Iraq. And their behavior changed. We saw them change the way they thought about the

United States. They knew we were serious. They knew if we drew a line, we were going to defend it, and we didn't draw lines everywhere. We didn't send the 82nd Airborne. We didn't send the 101st Airborne Division. We didn't send a Marine amphibious force. We used American power in a restrained way to reflect a real situation on the ground. And not only did we place deterrence on stronger footing with Iran, but the whole world noticed. They all saw that the United States was serious and determined.

**And finally, we conservatives are free traders, but we have learned in recent years that we need to make some exceptions for the sake of national security. For example, we see the Europeans depending on Russian natural gas, the fact that most of our pharmaceuticals are being made in China. And the fact that the solar panels, wind turbines and raw materials necessary**

**for so-called green energy come overwhelmingly from China.**

You and I are both big time free traders. We should never walk away from that. But when we talk about free trade, we know full well that trade occurs under a set of rules, property rights, and contracts, right? Markets, information transparency, all the things that build markets. What we have failed to recognize is that the Chinese Communist Party has for decades not been playing by that set of rules. That's not the free trade, John, we have known and loved. We know that the things they have done to take advantage of us, destroying our businesses, and putting our national security at risk, aren't consistent with our free trade ideas. We should demand reciprocal relationships, and we should take those handful of technologies and those handful of tools that do really matter to American national security. We have to make sure that America has access to those. ★

Mark Reinstein / Shutterstock.com

# Stop Helping Us!

The surreal prices and disappearing number of Minnesota's childcare providers hurts parents, children and the communities they live in. ***And it's caused by the government.***

**L**et's say you're a young single mom living in Greater Minnesota, looking to find a childcare provider for your infant while you search for a much-needed job. You've heard the horror stories about the growing scarcity of providers and the sky-high prices of care, if you're lucky enough to find it. You have friends who've been forced to drive 30 minutes out of their way — twice a day — to get to their provider, and some parents spend months on waiting lists to secure an open slot. You've even heard about the couple who timed the arrival of their new baby to coincide with a pre-arranged vacancy.

Minnesota's high prices and

declining vacancies have made childcare a nightmare.

And then you did the math: A single parent family at the median income level in Minnesota should be prepared to spend two-thirds of their wages to enroll an infant in a childcare center for one year.

Your decision is probably an easy one. You won't join the workforce. You'll stay at home with your baby, likely needing some kind of government assistance or taking on work-from-home freelance gigs that pay poorly and provide no benefits.

And that local employer who is starved for access to employees will have one less person to help contrib-

By Martha Njolomole





ute to the economic development of your community. And your daughter, without the intellectual and social stimulation of high-quality childcare, will miss out on development programs that would make her ready for school.

It's not just single parents who suffer. The price of childcare impacts the family budget of most working parents as much as a second house payment.

The steadily rising price of childcare spiked in the last two years in the face of COVID-19 restrictions and the shrinking labor market. In 2019, the average American family spent \$11,836 to send one infant to day care, according to Child Care Aware, a national childcare research and advocacy group. A family with two children — one infant and one 4-year-old — could expect to pay \$21,460. Parents in Minnesota faced an even nastier childcare marketplace. They paid on average \$16,164 — or \$1,347 per month — to keep an infant in a day care center and \$28,611 for both an infant and a 4-year-old.

Certainly, these costs depend on region. If you are in rural Minnesota, chances are you will likely pay less than someone living in the Twin Cities. This is because of differences in the cost of living. Things like labor and housing are less expensive in the rural areas compared to the big cities, which saves providers money enabling them to charge lower tuition. According to data from Child Care Aware, parents can expect to pay at least 30 percent less in rural Minnesota compared to the Metro region for home-based childcare. For center-based care, parents can expect to pay 20 percent less in rural Minnesota than in the Twin Cities. Unfortunately, parents in rural Minnesota are also likely to have lower incomes. So, Minnesota parents are squeezed when it comes to childcare, regardless of where they are in the state.

Ironically, the culprit behind these soaring prices and low availability is not a cabal of nefarious providers banding together to exploit a vulnerable market. Hardly. It's the government.

## The “shortage” problem

This scarcity of childcare vacancies can be traced directly to the shortage of licensed providers. In 2019, for example, Minnesota childcare facilities had capacity to care for 227,368 children, according to the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). However, the number of kids under six who potentially needed care — i.e., kids whose

care of 10 or fewer children. Home-based providers, however, have been leaving the industry in droves. Data from the Department of Human Services show that while home-based childcare made up nearly one-third of the total childcare capacity in Minnesota in 2000, it only made up about 37 percent of total capacity as of 2021. Home-based childcare capacity has been nearly halved between 2000 and 2021.

Luckily for the metro regions, home-based providers who have left the industry have been replaced by licensed childcare centers. Centers are usually larger and are allowed to accommodate larger numbers of children. Centers are also mainly based in locations other than the provider's home, so there are no limits to how big they can be.

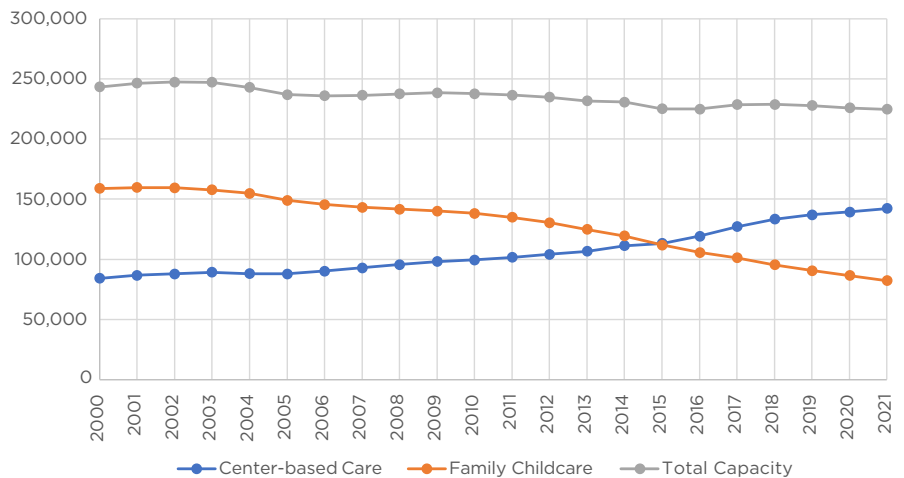
Unfortunately, in rural Minnesota centers are not easy to come by. This is largely because big, licensed day care centers are expensive to run and set up. To recoup their investment, providers rely on charging high tuition and enrolling higher numbers of children. But populations in rural Minnesota are sparse, meaning fewer children per given area of land. Moreover, parents have lower incomes compared to the ones in big cities. This makes setting up a licensed care facility in rural Minnesota financially unsound in most cases. So even though the share and number of

**The price of childcare impacts the family budget of most working parents as much as a second house payment.**

parents were in the labor force — was 310,767 according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey — a shortage of 83,399.

While this shortage afflicts the whole state, in rural Minnesota it is more acute. In rural Minnesota, the childcare industry is traditionally dominated by small home-based providers — or family childcare providers — who usually work out of their homes and are only allowed to take

Childcare Capacity by Type of Care, 2000-2021



Source: Department of Human Services

licensed childcare centers has increased, that growth has only been concentrated in the metro where populations are more densely packed, and parents can afford the high tuition. According to the Center for Rural Policy and Development, between 2000 and 2020, rural Minnesota lost over 20,000 childcare slots with no replacement.

The exit of home-based providers is deeply problematic for many reasons. For one, centers are usually more expensive than providers working out of their own homes, and even more so for younger children like infants and toddlers. So home-based providers tend to be a common option for poorer parents. Moreover, centers are usually only open during regular working hours, which means that parents who work on weekends and have irregular schedules must find other arrangements. Also, centers usually follow standard curricula, something which may not satisfy the preferences of ethnic parents who want providers that share their culture or parents who would like religious-based instruction. And since centers mostly set up shop in densely populated areas like the Twin Cities metro, they also cannot accommodate parents in rural areas.

### The COVID-19 crisis

The childcare crisis has been an issue before the pandemic, but events during the COVID-19 economy have made it worse. One, parents who lost jobs and had little need for day care or could not afford it pulled their children out of day care. Some parents also wanted to protect their kids from contracting the virus, so they did the same. As a result, providers lost money because they were caring for fewer children compared to the time before the pandemic. Providers were also required to keep group sizes small to prevent the spread of COVID-19, limiting enrollees and therefore income. To add insult to injury, providers saw their costs rise while their revenues were drying up since they had to spend more money on cleaning materials.

## Net Change in Childcare Capacity by Region, 2000-2020

		2000	2020	Net change
Greater MN	Family childcare	90,686	55,231	-35,455
	Center childcare	25,730	40,933	15,203
	Total capacity	116,416	96,164	-20,252
Twin Cities metro	Family childcare	68,845	29,120	-39,725
	Center childcare	60,779	97,816	37,037
	Total capacity	129,624	126,936	-2,688

Source: Center for Rural Policy and Development

To illustrate how heavy these losses were, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis did an analysis looking at a hypothetical childcare center. According to their calculations, based on the state's 10-person group limit, a day care center that normally serves 104 children — 16 infants, 28 toddlers, and 60 pre-school kids — would have to reduce their enrollment by 47 and only take care of 57 children. This means that the center lost \$17,943 in monthly revenue.

Certainly, government programs like the American Rescue Plan Act and the Paycheck Protection Program helped some providers weather the pandemic. However, some providers have had to dip into their savings or take out high interest loans. Worse yet, some have been forced out of business. This exacerbates what was already a nightmare for parents, especially those with low-incomes, and those in Greater Minnesota.

According to the Center for Rural Policy and Development, Minnesota lost more than 4,000 childcare slots between 2019 and 2020, with in-home providers making up an estimated 97 percent of the total loss.

### What government can do

Minnesota's regulators and legislators rarely consider how regulations contribute to high-priced care, preferring to focus on increasing subsidies and expanding publicly funded childcare programs. But this crisis has been caused by burdensome child-staff ratios, hiring requirements, and a stringent regulatory environment, all caused in

the spirit of "protecting" children.

So, to tackle the childcare issue more sustainably, lawmakers need to address factors that raise the cost of providing care.

### Loosen child-staff ratios and group size limits

At a day care center, children are usually divided into groups. The person in charge of giving primary care to each group of children and designing day to day programs is considered a lead caregiver. In Minnesota, childcare workers with teacher qualifications are the designated lead caregivers.

The number of caregivers required per group of children is dependent on staff-child ratio requirements. For Minnesota, the maximum number of infants — age 6 weeks to 16 months — that can be in one group is eight. And for every four infants, centers must have one staff person. This means that centers must have two staff workers per group of infants. However, other states like Colorado, Arkansas, and Mississippi allow more infants per staff person and more infants per group.

Requiring staff to take care of a small number of children increases the cost of providing care, and these costs are passed on to parents. To alleviate costs, legisla-



**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.



tors should consider allowing larger group sizes as well as more children per worker. Findings from American Experiment, for example, show that if Minnesota laws were changed to allow five infants per staff, center tuition for infants would be approximately \$2,811 less. For 4-year-olds, allowing one more child per worker would make center tuition less expensive by about \$450.

In addition to allowing staff to take care of more children in each group, legislators should also consider changing the definition of infants to only include children between 6 weeks and 12 months. Generally, older children have greater staff-child ratios and group sizes. In Minnesota, for example, childcare centers can have 7 toddlers — defined as children between 16 to 33 months — per staff, and 14 toddlers per group. States where the age cut-off for infants is low — like 12 months — usually put slightly older children in bigger groups.

In Minnesota, however, the cut-off age for infants is much higher at 16 months. This means that while children between 12 and 16 months are considered toddlers in other states, and therefore face looser restrictions, that is not the case in Minnesota. If legislators lower the cut-off age for infants to 12 months, it will mean that children between 12 and 16 months will be defined as toddlers, allowing centers to put them in bigger sizes and thereby reducing the cost of providing care — savings that could be passed on to parents.

## Loosen hiring and training requirements

To be employed as a teacher at a day care center in Minnesota, someone with a high school diploma must have 4,160 hours of experience as an assistant teacher and 24 quarter credits from an accredited post-secondary institution. Assistant teachers must have a high school diploma and 2,080 hours of experience as an aide or student intern and 12 quarter credits from an accredited post-secondary institution. Taken together, a childcare teacher at a center requires a high school diploma plus more than 6,000 hours of experience and 24 quarter credits of post-secondary education.

Other states, however, only require childcare workers who are designated as teachers or lead caregivers to be over 16

years old and undertake training before looking after children. Such training may include topics in child development, safe sleeping methods, as well as First Aid and CPR.

According to research evidence, stringent hiring requirements have little to no effect on quality. However, these requirements do increase the price of childcare. Findings from American Experiment, for example, estimate that requiring childcare workers to have a high school diploma raises the cost of center tuition by about \$1,920 for infants, and \$1,300 for 4-year-olds. Moreover, those costs double when post-secondary education is added.



**Ironically, the culprit behind these soaring prices and low availability is not a cabal of nefarious providers banding together to exploit a vulnerable market.**

Legislators should loosen Minnesota licensing laws and ensure that hiring requirements instead emphasize on-the-job training and other mechanisms like apprenticeships. This would enable workers to get the knowledge and experience they need without incurring heavy education costs. Considering that the childcare industry is a low wage industry, it makes no economic sense to require workers to spend time and money to fulfill the high bar of requirements as college credits for such low wages. It is no wonder that providers report that qualified workers leave childcare to go to work at places like McDonald's, which have no skill requirements but pay the same wages, if not more.

## Loosen administrative rules

Administrative rules sometimes reduce flexibility and increase compliance costs contributing to the rising cost of care. For instance, as previously mentioned, the Minnesota DHS requires that the person in charge of a group of children — also known as the lead caregiver — should have the qualifications of a teacher.

Unfortunately, teachers are more expensive since they face more stringent hiring requirements compared to other caregivers like aides or assistant teachers. And due to this rule, day care centers are unable to use equally capable, but more affordable workers with less educational qualifications like assistant teachers or aides as lead caregivers.

Allowing day care centers the flexibility to use other skilled workers like aides or assistant teachers as lead caregivers would lower costs for providers without lowering quality, especially considering that assistant teachers in Minnesota face more stringent requirements than do lead caregivers in many states.

## Conclusion

If the childcare crisis persists, more and more Minnesota parents will be unable to work, forced to stay home and provide care for an infant or child, and businesses will not be able to find workers. Not to mention that children will miss out on important development programs. The childcare crisis is detrimental not only to parents, children, and families but the entire economy.

To address the issue, legislators need to realize that it is government action that has been at the heart of the crisis. Minnesota rules strictly limit the number of children that workers can take care of. In addition to that, our state also places higher education standards for teachers compared to other states. These stringent rules do not come at zero cost. Higher education standards raise labor cost, as do small group sizes and strict staff-child ratios. These are costs that are then passed on to parents through higher tuition. It is high time lawmakers stop throwing more money at childcare and start dealing with the real culprit. ★



The  
**THINKING**  
MINNESOTA  
POLL

# LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

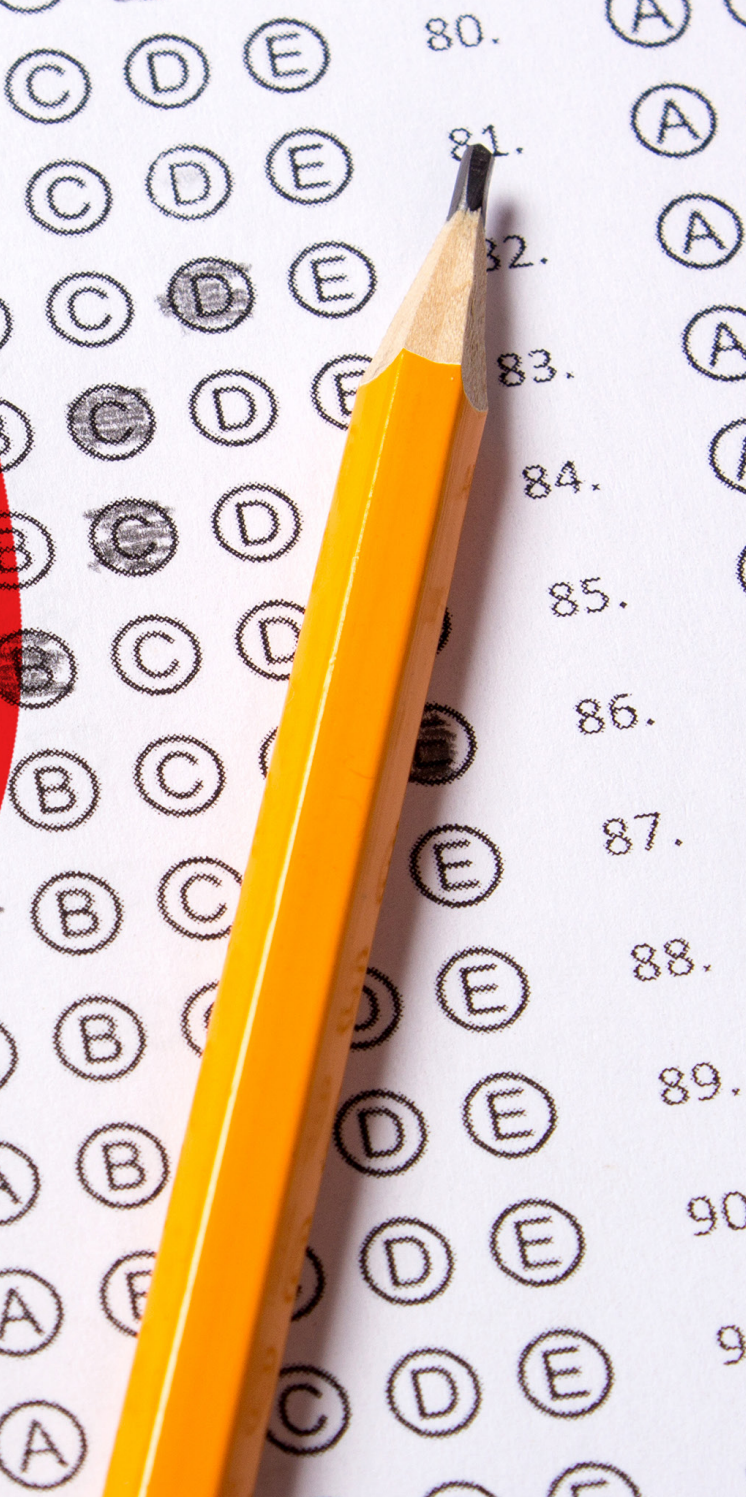
Minnesotans are losing confidence in their public school classrooms.

In his fictional town of Lake Wobegon, Garrison Keillor poked fun at Minnesota's collective sense of superiority when he wrote "all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average." According to the latest *Thinking Minnesota* Poll, Minnesotans no longer feel all the children are above average. Almost half of the respondents gave our public schools a grade of C, D or F, a sharp decline in scoring since we first asked the question in March 2020. It's probably a good thing we didn't ask if Minnesotans still think the women are strong and the men good-looking.

The poll was conducted by Meeting Street Insights, a nationally recognized polling operation based in Charleston, S.C. Using a mix of cell phones and landline phones, the company interviewed 500 registered voters across Minnesota from May 10-12, 2022. The margin of error is  $\pm 4.38$  percent.

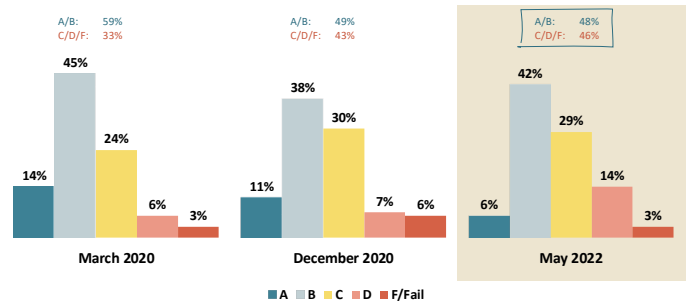
After almost two years of school shutdowns, distance learning, and the social isolation of our youngest learners, Minnesotans are rethinking their support of public schools. The number of respondents who gave public schools an A or B dropped 10 percent since March 2020, and those who gave schools a D or F





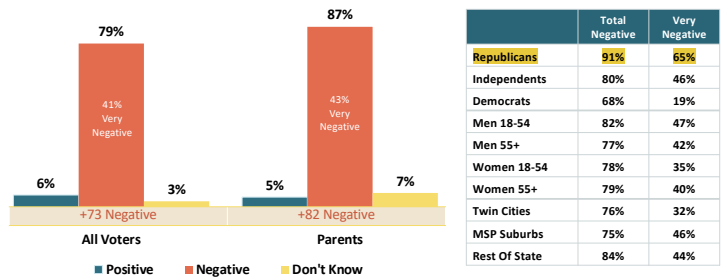
**FIGURE 1:** The percentage who give the state’s schools an “A” grade is half what it was two years ago, while those who give the schools a “D” or “F” has doubled.

“What letter grade would you give the public schools here in Minnesota?”



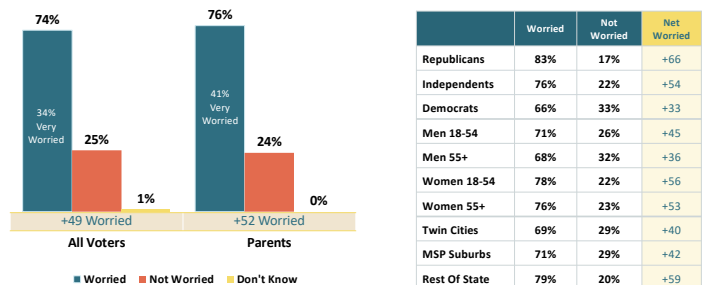
**FIGURE 2:** Eight out of 10 Minnesotans say the COVID-19 school closures had a negative effect on children in the state.

“Now, thinking about education in the wake of COVID-19, do you think school closures in Minnesota have had a positive or negative effect on children, or did they not really affect them either way?”



**FIGURE 3:** Three-fourths are worried that children have fallen behind academically because of the state’s COVID education policies.

“How worried are you that children have fallen behind as a result of COVID education policies?”



almost doubled. While Minnesotans still give their local schools higher marks than the state, the number giving local schools an A or B also dropped 10 percent since 2020.

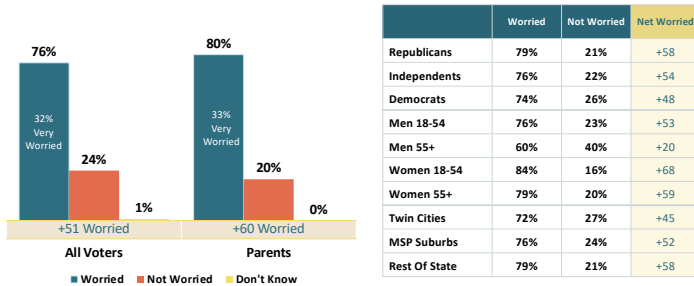
“It’s very telling that support for local schools dropped so dramatically in such a short time,” says John Hinderaker,

**About the pollster**

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

**FIGURE 4: Three-fourths of voters and 80% of parents say they are worried about the mental health of children because of the state’s COVID policies.**

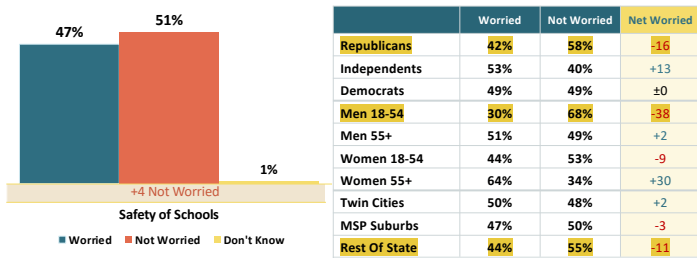
“And, how worried are you about the mental health of children as a result of COVID education policies?”



	Worried	Not Worried	Net Worried
Republicans	79%	21%	+58
Independents	76%	22%	+54
Democrats	74%	26%	+48
Men 18-54	76%	23%	+53
Men 55+	60%	40%	+20
Women 18-54	84%	16%	+68
Women 55+	79%	20%	+59
Twin Cities	72%	27%	+45
MSP Suburbs	76%	24%	+52
Rest Of State	79%	21%	+58

**FIGURE 5: Fully 47% of Minnesotans are worried about safety in public schools.**

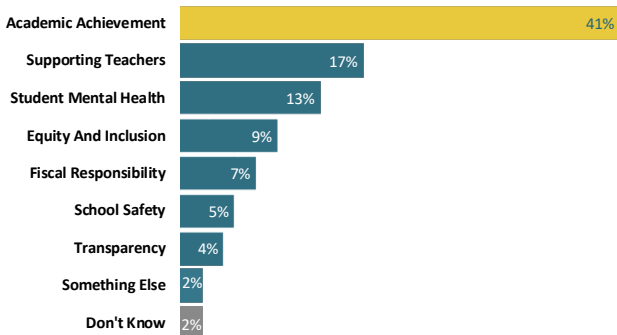
“How worried are you about the safety of Minnesota public schools?”



	Worried	Not Worried	Net Worried
Republicans	42%	58%	-16
Independents	53%	40%	+13
Democrats	49%	49%	±0
Men 18-54	30%	68%	-38
Men 55+	51%	49%	+2
Women 18-54	44%	53%	-9
Women 55+	64%	34%	+30
Twin Cities	50%	48%	+2
MSP Suburbs	47%	50%	-3
Rest Of State	44%	55%	-11

**FIGURE 6: Minnesotans say academic achievement should be the top priority.**

“When it comes to education, what should be the top priority for your local school leadership?”



president of Center of the American Experiment. “There is no stronger indictment of shutdown policies than Minnesota parents losing faith in their local public schools.”

According to the poll, the lost faith in schools is rooted in respondents’ views of how children fared throughout the pandemic. Seventy-nine percent of Minnesotans and 87 percent of parents believe that school closures in Minnesota had a negative effect on children. Seventy-four percent of respondents and 76 percent of parents are worried that children have fallen behind because of COVID-19 education policies. And 76 percent of Minnesotans and 80 percent of parents are worried about the mental health of children as a result of COVID-19 education policies.

Gov. Tim Walz shut down schools at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 and set up a complicated (and impossible to meet) metric for schools to open the following fall. Most Minnesota public schools did not reopen until the spring of 2021, even though COVID-19 posed very little risk to school-aged children.

Minnesotans are also concerned about the safety of teachers and students with 47 percent saying they are “worried about the safety of Minnesota public schools.”

What do Minnesotans expect from their public school system? For one, they want schools to focus on academic excellence. An overwhelming plurality (41 percent) of respondents chose academic excellence when asked to choose the top priority for local school leadership. The next closest answers were “supporting teachers” at 17 percent and “student mental health” at 13 percent. No other answer received more than 9 percent.

“Minnesotans desperately want our schools to focus on academic excellence, not chasing the latest fads like Critical Race Theory or equity and inclusion,” adds Hinderaker. “School board members and superintendents need to listen more to the customers of public education: parents and taxpayers.”

When it comes to listening to parents, the overwhelming majority (93 percent) believe school board meetings should be open for public comment. Many school boards in Minnesota have joined a disturbing trend of limiting public comment from parents and taxpayers at their school board meetings. Out-of-touch school boards and superintendents frequently remind the public there is no legal obligation for board meetings to include a public forum option, but our poll shows the people want to be heard.

One issue driving the need for public comment at school board meetings the last few years is Critical Race Theory (CRT). Aware-



# When it comes to listening to parents, the overwhelming majority (93 percent) believe school board meetings should be open for public comment.

ness of CRT increased from 58 percent in September 2021 to 75 percent in the current *Thinking Minnesota* Poll. That awareness is the likely result of American Experiment’s 22-city tour exposing the pervasiveness of CRT in Minnesota schools, especially in the draft social studies standards currently under review.

As was the case last year, the more people know about CRT, the more they oppose it. A plurality of respondents (38 percent) now oppose teaching CRT in public schools, up from 34 percent last year. The issue has crystallized along partisan lines with only 5 percent of Republicans supporting it and only 7 percent of Democrats in opposition.

**“The heart and soul of our education system is up for grabs in this fall’s election, from governor all the way down to school board.”**

All of these important issues really come down to one important question: Who should have the biggest voice about what is being taught in the classroom? We asked respondents to choose between parents, because it involves their children, or teachers, because they have more training and experience.

*Thinking Minnesota* respondents chose parents

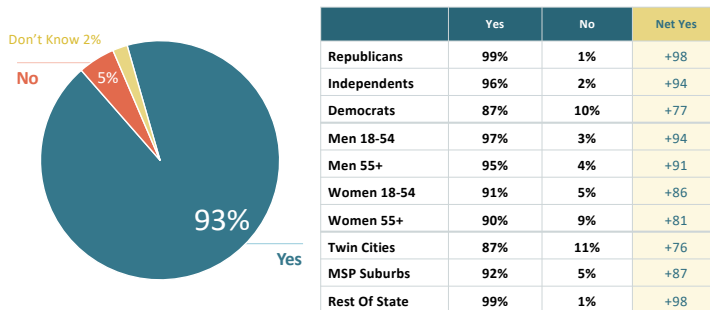
over teachers 53 percent to 44 percent. Once again, this issue broke down along party identification. Democrats were much more likely to choose teachers over parents (73 percent-25 percent) while Republicans chose parents over teachers (85 percent-14 percent). The issue of who’s in control of education played a central role in the 2021 Virginia governor’s race. Many believe Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe’s statement that “parents shouldn’t be telling schools what they should teach” cost him the election to Republican Glenn Youngkin.

“The heart and soul of our education system is up for grabs in this fall’s election, from governor all the way down to school board,” says Hinderaker. “Minnesotans are telling us that candidates who listen and respond to parents will be rewarded in November.”

A return to Keillor’s “above average children” and to revive confidence in our public schools depends on how well Minnesota leaders listen and respond to the results of this poll. ★

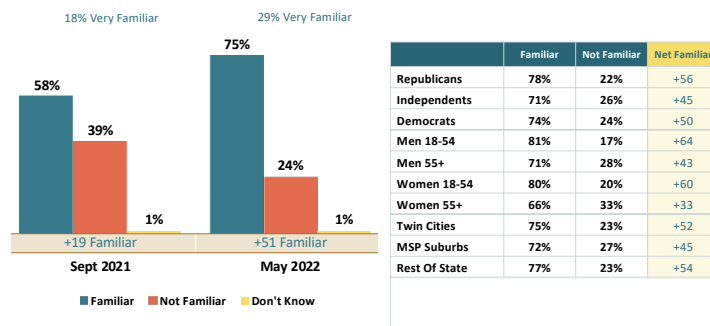
**FIGURE 7: Nine out of 10 Minnesotans believe school board meetings should be open for public comment (with strong bipartisan support for this).**

“As you may have heard, some school boards in Minnesota have begun to limit public comment from parents and taxpayers at their school board meetings. Knowing this, do you believe school board meetings should be open for public comment?”



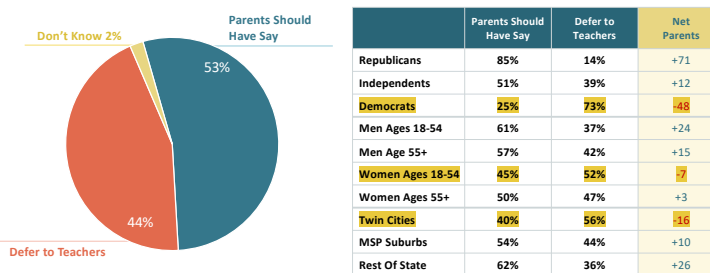
**FIGURE 8: Three-fourths of Minnesotans say they are familiar with Critical Race Theory.**

“How familiar are you with Critical Race Theory?”



**FIGURE 9: Most believe parents should have a say in what’s being taught in the classrooms, with Democrats, younger women and Twin Cities voters being the exceptions.**

“When it comes to what is taught in the classroom, please tell me which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion. Parents should have some say about what is taught in the classroom because it involves their children...OR...Parents should defer to teachers and school leaders about what is taught in the classroom because they have more training and experience.”



# LEADERSHIP MIA

It's up to voters to lead the way.



John Hinderaker

**Governments  
are probably  
the greediest  
institutions in  
our society.**

Minnesota's 2022 legislative session was disappointing to many. Put bluntly, little was accomplished. How to deal with the state's projected \$9.3 billion surplus was the main issue before the legislature, and the question was left unresolved. As you would expect, liberals wanted to add to Minnesota's already out-of-control spending, while conservatives wanted to use the surplus prudently, through permanent tax cuts, a one-time rebate, or minimizing state debt.

American Experiment led the effort to bring about permanent tax cuts with our "Give It Back" campaign. We set up a website, GiveIt-BackMn.com, which Minnesotans used to send more than 33,000 emails to Gov. Tim Walz and their own representatives and senators, requesting that the surplus be returned to the taxpayers in the form of permanent tax cuts. Many Minnesotans also used the site to record brief video messages that we sent on to the governor.

The Center promoted our Give It Back campaign with emails, radio ads, social media and billboards. In doing so, we spoke for the largest number of Minnesotans. As this month's *Thinking Minnesota* Poll found, 35 percent of Minnesotans want the surplus used for permanent tax cuts, while 15 percent prefer a one-time rebate and 12 percent want to use the cash to pay for capital projects rather than borrowing. Compared with those 62 percent who prefer a prudent course, only 34 percent want to devote the surplus to more education and welfare spending.

But many legislators did not get the message and in the end, the House and Senate negotiated a compromise in principle, under which \$4 billion would be added to state spending and \$4 billion would go to tax cuts. But when the House reduced its proposal to writing, it reneged

on the agreement. The House's plan provided for only \$2.6 billion in tax cuts over three years, while actually raising taxes elsewhere. The Senate declined to go along with this double-cross, and the session ended without a budget agreement. As usual, there was no leadership from the governor's office.

So the issue now rests with the voters. Our polling over the past several years has shown that by a two to one margin, Minnesotans want lower income tax rates in all brackets and restraint in state spending. From our legislature, they have gotten the opposite. The time has come for Minnesota voters to rise up and make their preferences known. In November, the issue will be clearly presented: Do most Minnesotans want a future of uncompetitive tax rates and ever-higher and more wasteful spending? Or do they want to bring Minnesota into the 21st century, with normal tax rates and an effort to rein in government waste and fraud?

Based on both the *Thinking Minnesota* Poll and common sense, I'm betting on the latter.

These events prompt the question, where does leadership come from in public affairs? Contrary, perhaps, to popular assumption, leadership rarely comes from politicians. The truth is that most politicians don't lead, they follow. The path of least resistance, and the easiest road to re-election, are the lodestars for too many.

What direction do Minnesota's voters want to go? That is the question that will be answered in November and in the 2023 legislative session.

And the timing could hardly be more critical. Minnesota needs change, and we need it now. Over the coming months, American Experiment will lead the effort to modernize Minnesota's tax system and rein in excessive spending. The issue couldn't be more critical to our state's future. ★





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