



## SPECIAL REPORT

### We need to invest in early childhood

by Rep. Dave Pinto



When I first campaigned to serve as Minnesota State Representative, something struck me that has stayed with me since. As Democrats, we care about many different issues. But one issue seems like it's the key to all of the others: early childhood. There's no creative force more powerful than a young mind being developed to its full potential. Given time, almost every other challenge we face can be met if we get that one right.

Supporting young kids is a moral and policy imperative. It makes fiscal sense, too. Research—and common sense—tell us that an investment in the early years pays enormous dividends for all of us, throughout the child's life. And the very biggest payoffs come from investments in the earliest years. A toddler's brain forms neurons at the astounding rate of one million per second. Eighty-five percent of brain growth is complete by the age of three.

But too much of our public policy ignores this. We spend far, far less on the first few years of life than we do on the later years of childhood and beyond.

This leads to two separate but interrelated crises.

First, our state has some of the worst disparities in the nation between residents of color and white residents, in terms of education, economics, health, and much more. We often talk as if these opportunity gaps start in the K-12 grades. But in fact they start in the very earliest months and years—e.g., mothers of color receive less and lower-quality prenatal care than white mothers—and that is when they can be most effectively addressed.

At the same time, we face an acute shortage of child care, especially care that families can afford. Caring for young children is a high-cost business, with few economies of scale. Wages are low—a high percentage of child-care workers are on public assistance—and costs are high; a year of infant care is often more expensive than a year of college. And yet providers struggle to stay in business. Not surprisingly,

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### Upcoming events

**August 5, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**  
SD66 Central Committee

**August 10, 9:00-10:30 a.m.**  
SD66 DFL Coffee Conversations

**August 13, 2019, 7:00-8:30 p.m.**  
Roseville DFL

**Saturday, August 24, Tuesday, August 27,  
Friday, August 30 - Donut Booth Shifts**

**September 14, 9:00-10:30 a.m.**  
SD66 DFL Coffee Conversations

**September 17, 2019, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**  
SD66 DFL Happy Hour

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See page 11 for full calendar.

parents of young children—generally in the worst financial position of their lives—are often unable to afford care, if they can find it in the first place.

The solution is obvious: a significant public investment in the earliest years. This past legislative session, the Minnesota House DFL introduced House File 1, a comprehensive proposal to do just that. The “Great Start for All Minnesota Children Act” includes grants to close disparities in prenatal care and to expand home visiting, a proven approach to support the most vulnerable new families. And it proposes greatly expanded support for early learning and care for the youngest children.

There were victories for young kids and their families this past session. Among them: expanded home visiting funding. An increase—for the first time in more than 30 years—in the monthly payment under the Minnesota Family Investment Program, our state’s main support for needy families. Some increased support for child-care providers. Preservation of 4,000 voluntary pre-K slots and the “provider tax” (supporting health care access).

Still, as with so many other proposals to lift up families and communities, the Great Start agenda ran into Republican roadblocks and will await our strong push in 2020 and beyond. I’m determined to continue to prioritize the youngest Minnesotans, and I hope you are too.

*Rep. Dave Pinto (DFL-St. Paul) is the chair of the Early Childhood Finance & Policy Division in the Minnesota House. He represents District 64B and can be reached at cell: (612) 964-6537.*

## VIEW FROM THE CAPITOL

### House DFLers’ efforts make Minnesota work better for everyone

by Rep. John Lesch

Despite divided government, and some cynical pundits predicting we were headed to a prolonged special session or worse yet, a government shutdown, the Minnesota House, Senate, and Governor Walz came together to reach a budget agreement on time. While the final product wasn’t perfect, it protected our core values and made Minnesota an even better place to live. Each of our victories was only possible with direct advocacy from Minnesotans, and highlights what’s possible when people make their voices heard.

House Democrats and Gov. Walz succeeded in delivering additional funding for Minnesota students, not just with a 2 percent increase each of the next two years, but new investments in special education, grants for school-linked mental-health services, and protection of 4,000 slots for our youngest learners to receive a pre-K education. We know that there is more to do, but these investments will help cement Minnesota as the Education State.

Minnesota workers deserve to be paid every single penny they earn. Unfortunately, too many of them experience wage theft courtesy of unscrupulous employers. This can take the form of denied overtime, making employees work off the clock, or just straight-up shorted time on a paycheck. This session, with leadership from House DFLers, the Legislature enacted the strongest wage theft law in the nation, with additional enforcement resources and penalties for bad actors.

Perhaps most pressing, we stopped an impending sunset of the funding source for the health care of 1.2 million Minnesotans. These folks, including low-income people, single parents, seniors, and people with disabilities count on the Health Care Access Fund to get the care they need, and we protected it. We also worked to reduce prescription drug prices for regulating middlemen known as “Pharmacy Benefit Managers,” which set the stage for further work to require price transparency and stop price gouging.

This session I chaired the House Judiciary Committee and worked extremely hard to remove barriers that Minnesotans face when they seek justice. Steps we took this session include investments in the courts, funding for the state Department of Human Rights, public defenders, and guardians ad litem. We also strengthened protections



against sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence. Work remains ahead of us in the future, especially to decriminalize poverty by reforming excessive fines and fees for low-income Minnesotans, and updating the state sexual harassment statute to hold wrongdoers accountable.

A reality of compromise meant that the session concluded with progress still remaining on other key priorities. For more than a decade, I've been the chief author of legislation ensuring workers have access to earned sick and safe time, and I'm proud this fundamental solution to help ensure economic security was approved for the first time by the Minnesota House. Unfortunately, the same corporate special interest allies that have worked to block this policy in communities like Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Duluth teamed with Republicans in the Minnesota Senate majority to block workers from having this benefit statewide.

I continue to vocally hear from our community about the need to curb senseless gun violence. In a major step forward, the Minnesota House approved two common-sense measures to do so: expanded criminal background checks and "red flag" laws to temporarily restrict someone's access to firearms if a court deems them to be a risk to themselves or others. Despite public support as high as 90 percent, Senate Republicans voted down these measures. While this may seem like a setback, the momentum to change our gun laws continues to grow and with public pressure, I'm confident we will prevail.

New research continues to emerge about the effects of climate change and how little time we may have before they become irreversible. House DFLers approved an ambitious plan to move our state toward 100-percent renewable energy by 2050. This too was blocked by Republicans, many of who have voted on the record denying the existence of climate change itself. Minnesotans, especially some organized, motivated youth, have been vocal about the need to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and I'll keep working toward solutions which protect the planet for future generations.

The work ahead to organize around issues like these and win won't be easy, but as DFLers, we have the capacity to roll up our sleeves and get this done. It's a tremendous honor to represent our community at the Minnesota Capitol, and I hope neighbors will continue to reach out. My email is [rep.john.lesch@house.mn](mailto:rep.john.lesch@house.mn) and phone number is (651) 296-4224.

### From Sen. John Marty

**A**s we passed the third anniversary of the killing of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights last month, it is encouraging to see the community come together in remembrance. July 6, the anniversary of the shooting, was observed as Restoration Day in Falcon Heights, *"a time to remember how important it is that each of us cross traditional 'borders' between communities, a day to meet someone and get to know someone different than us. Restoration Day is about taking personal action and steps to build or restore relationships. This could be in the form of meeting a neighbor, mending a strained friendship or relationship, or even actively pursuing conversation with someone that a person would not naturally interact."*

That is a good message for each of us as we strive to make our country a better place for all.

Incidentally, as a result of a Castile Healing Forum, Rep. Hausman has begun working on legislation attempting to change how police interact with the community to prevent future tragedies like Philando's death. There is so much that needs to be done—to address implicit bias, racism, gun violence, and other problems that tear apart the community.

I hope you are enjoying the summer season, and wish you the best as we all look for ways to reduce the divisions and fear in our country. Thanks for all you do!

# Recent MPCA scandal shows need to revisit PolyMet mine permits

by Sen. John Marty

The scandal at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) over Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concerns related to PolyMet certainly has the appearance of a cover-up. There is no good explanation why the MPCA told EPA scientists and engineers—people who are responsible for protecting our waters—to refrain from sending their detailed concerns in writing. The chosen alternative of rapidly reading a letter of concerns over the phone should have raised red flags.

As the *Ely Timberjays* newspaper bluntly stated, “Let’s make no bones about it—this appears to be a significant state agency scandal suggesting intentional malfeasance by top officials in the MPCA. Failure to investigate how this happened would seriously undermine the public’s confidence in state environmental regulators.”



It is encouraging to hear that DFL Rep. Rick Hansen, the chair of the House Environment Finance Committee, has begun an investigation of the situation by the Legislative Auditor, and the EPA’s Office of Inspector General is also investigating.

However, we need to find out not only whether state and federal environmental agencies failed to do their work properly, but also to look at the outcome of that process—the permits that were granted to PolyMet.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum said the leaked email “appears to represent an absolutely intolerable breach of the public trust by two regulatory agencies,” and that the public has the right to question “whether the PolyMet permitting process was rigged against the legitimate environmental and public health interests of Minnesotans.”

To ensure that the permits are not rigged, here are some bold actions that Governor Walz should take:

1. Suspend the DNR and MPCA permits for the PolyMet mine until there is a review of the flaws in the process, and until the permits are rewritten to protect Minnesota’s environment and financial interests.
2. Direct the DNR to modify the tailings (waste rock) storage permit to require best practices, like dry tailings storage. Minnesota should accept nothing less after the tragic collapse of a similar tailings dam in Brazil that killed 237 people. In fact, a consultant hired by the DNR warned that the PolyMet plan for waste rock storage was a “Hail Mary type of concept” that “will eventually fail.” That mining consultant said he was surprised that Minnesota law allows a temporary tailings impoundment dam to be authorized for permanent waste storage. He said that other jurisdictions wouldn’t allow it.

After their recent dam collapse, Brazil has now banned this type of dam and is decommissioning existing ones. It is shocking that Minnesota would permit PolyMet to open a new mine using such a risky system, when even Brazil is prohibiting them.

3. Direct the DNR to modify the financial assurance requirements so that those who profit from the mine are required to provide a full “damage deposit” to cover cleanup and ongoing water treatment. The DNR recognized that a damage deposit of over a billion dollars would be needed for the type of operation allowed under the current permits. However, the permit issued by the DNR ignores the most important recommendations of their own consultants and will not end up with the damage deposit needed. Those experts know that PolyMet does not have the capital to pay for cleanup costs and could simply declare bankruptcy when it comes time to pay for the cleanup, leaving taxpayers holding the bag.

Glencore, the true power behind the PolyMet project, has structured the financing so they would get the first profits from the mine and then wash their hands of the problem. They have shown themselves to be one of the most irresponsible companies around.

Because PolyMet is unable to provide the appropriate damage deposit, the DNR must have an ironclad requirement that Glencore, now majority owner of PolyMet, be held liable for all cleanup costs with a full, up-front damage deposit.

4. Conduct a study of the health impacts of the project. Minnesota health professionals, including the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians and Minnesota Nurses Association, called for a health impacts study, but no study was done. Sulfide mining releases toxic chemicals into the environment, and we should listen to the medical experts who believe the health impacts from the mine must

This flawed process resulted in flawed permits. There are three major new pieces of information available that merit a revisiting of the permits and the failures in the process that produced them, including:

- The discovery that agencies involved in the permitting process failed to seriously address both EPA concerns and those raised by their own consultants, preventing the rigorous analysis needed,
- The tragic collapse, and the subsequent decommissioning of similar existing dams in Brazil, showing the folly of approving such a risky system in Minnesota, and
- The recent news that a corporation as irresponsible as Glencore now holds a majority of PolyMet shares, making it clear that the sham “financial assurance” required of PolyMet will leave Minnesota taxpayers financially responsible for the expensive cleanup.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum said the leaked email “appears to represent an absolutely intolerable breach of the public trust by two regulatory agencies,” and that the public has the right to question “whether the PolyMet permitting process was rigged against the legitimate environmental and public health interests of Minnesotans.”

## Recognizing our community

by Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo



It has been a hot and humid few weeks here in Ramsey County, both outside and—because our air conditioning was broken for more than a week—at the County Courthouse. Here in the District 3 office, though, we have been working hard to address the many issues facing our communities. I wanted to highlight two things that happened over the last few weeks that brought me hope, but also illustrate some of the challenges we face.

In June, I authored a proclamation from the Board of Commissioners recognizing Pride Month in Ramsey County. 2019 is the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, which are widely recognized as the beginning of the LGBTQ+ rights movement in the United States. When I came here, I was surprised to learn that Ramsey County has never issued a proclamation recognizing Pride Month, or even (as far as anyone knew) recognizing the LGBTQ+ community in general. We live in a time of an unprecedented assault on those

communities from the federal government, and I was extremely proud to stand with them in the fight for justice and equality.

A few weeks later, I had the privilege to attend an event organized by the City of Falcon Heights to recognize Restoration Day, which is celebrated annually to mark the anniversary of Philando Castile's shooting on Larpenteur Avenue. Mr. Castile's death sparked a national conversation about the way police interact with people of color in our communities, but here in Minnesota it produced not just awareness but deep anger and grief over the needless and senseless death of a member of our community. The event featured a panel discussion chaired by Council Member Melanie Leehy, and attended by Mr. Castile's mother Valerie Castile, his good friend John Thompson, and local Falcon Heights activist Kay Williams. The event was one of healing, but it also highlighted how far we still have to go before Ramsey County and Minnesota are places that are truly safe, welcoming, and just to all of our residents.



*Commissioner MatasCastillo presenting the proclamation to Tanith Broom, president of TransChance Health, and other representatives of LGBTQ+ communities and organizations in Ramsey County.  
Photo courtesy of Jackie Watters.*

A few nights ago, there was a shooting outside the Lamplighter at Rice Street and Larpenteur Avenue, one of a number of disturbing incidents of gun violence that have happened in and around the district this year. It is essential that people in our communities are able to feel safe and free from the threat of gun violence. We need fewer guns on our streets, period. We also need to take a hard look at the locations that have seen repeated violence over the last few years to ensure that the design and policies of these places help us keep people safe. Here at Ramsey County, we are investigating models to interrupt the cycle of gun violence from every direction, and I will have more to share about that work soon.

I want to encourage everyone to contact my office with thoughts or concerns. The problems we face are complex, and the more perspectives we hear the more we will be able to do to solve them. Please send me your concerns directly at [Trista.MatasCastillo@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:Trista.MatasCastillo@co.ramsey.mn.us) or (651) 266-8360.

# All about composting

by Gwen Willems

### What's it all about?

One of the ways we can impact our environment in a positive way is to set aside our organic matter and make it into compost. Defined simply, compost is a mixture of decayed or decaying organic matter used to fertilize soil. It is usually made by gathering plant material into a small-scale backyard pile or bin or large-scale industrial operation and letting it decompose naturally with aerobic bacteria, fungi, and other organisms.

Composting fights global warming. About half of global solid waste is organic or biodegradable. In large landfills, it decomposes in the absence of oxygen and emits the greenhouse gas methane. Composting waste is a much more effective way of dealing with it, retaining moisture and nutrients of the original waste matter and producing valuable fertilizer and stable soil carbon through natural carbon sequestration.

According to Dawn Pape, Ramsey County Master Gardener volunteer and composting advocate, compost is black gold as a soil amendment. It takes just a ¼ inch of compost used as fertilizer annually to reduce soil erosion, improve the moisture holding capacity of sandy soils, and improve drainage of clay soil. It's far superior to synthetic fertilizers that can change the natural balance of soil organisms.

### To start composting

If you decide to compost in your yard, choose a convenient, yet out of the way site that gets sun and is protected from the wind. Remember that the process needs food, shelter, air, and water.

- Begin by laying down brown materials, 4 to 6 inches of twigs or other coarse carbons on the bottom of the pile for good air circulation. "Brown" materials also include dead leaves, cardboard, and brown paper bags.
- Alternate green and brown materials, adding layers of nitrogen and carbon materials. "Green" refers to organic material such as grass clippings, fruit, and vegetable scraps.
- Make layers about 4 to 6 inches thick.
- Top all the layers with brown materials, too, to minimize odors. Smaller materials, chopped or shredded, will decompose faster.
- Once you turn the pile the first time, these materials will get mixed together and compost more efficiently.
- For faster decomposition, break or chop materials into smaller pieces, as it makes more surface area available to your composters and water.
- Water your compost pile as needed to keep it moist.
- Turn and mix the pile every two to four weeks. It will be getting warmer in the middle from microbial growth.
- To destroy seeds and pathogens, aim for a temperature of 130-150 degrees F for at least three days and up to fifteen days.
- Be patient. If your compost area is well-managed, it will take about four to nine months, not including winter, to be done, and an unattended area will take one to three years, not including winter. Compost will be half the original size, dark colored, look and smell like soil, and feel crumbly like rich soil.



*(Continued on next page)*

## What to compost

- Fruits and vegetables
- Eggshells
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea bags
- Nut shells
- Shredded newspaper
- Cardboard
- Paper
- Yard trimmings
- Grass clippings
- Houseplants
- Hay and straw
- Leaves
- Sawdust
- Wood chips
- Cotton and wool rags
- Dryer and vacuum cleaner lint
- Hair and fur
- Fireplace ashes

## What not to compost and why

- Black walnut tree leaves or twigs. Releases substances that might be harmful to plants.
- Coal or charcoal ash. Might contain substances harmful to plants.
- Dairy products (e.g., butter, milk, sour cream, yogurt) and eggs. Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies.
- Diseased or insect-ridden plants. Diseases or insects might survive and be transferred back to other plants.
- Fats, grease, lard, or oils. Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies.
- Meat or fish bones and scraps. Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies.
- Pet wastes (e.g., dog or cat feces, soiled cat litter). Might contain parasites, bacteria, germs, pathogens, and viruses harmful to humans.
- Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides. Might kill beneficial composting organisms.

## Compost structures



*This bin is discounted through Ramsey County.*

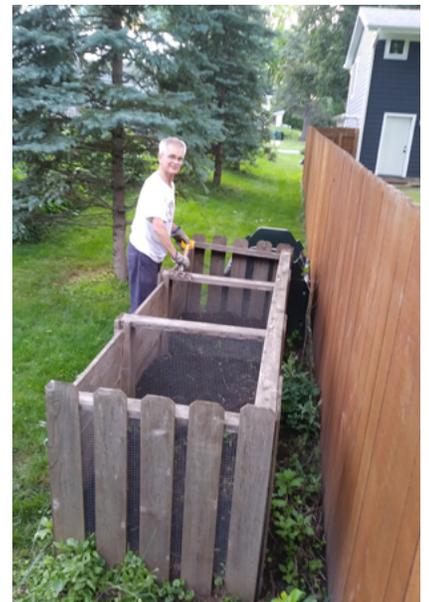
A variety of structures make good compost areas. Among popular ones are turnable barrels and drums and chicken wire and wood bins in which compost can be turned with a fork. The latter bins can be single or triple bins beside each other, which allow the composter to start each bin at a different time.

If you'd prefer to buy a compost bin made from recycled materials rather than make one, consider buying one at a discount available to Ramsey County residents. Visit [www.RecycleMinnesota.org](http://www.RecycleMinnesota.org) and enter promo code "ramsey," or call 651-641-4589 and mention that you are a Ramsey County resident.

If you decide backyard composting is not for you, or you live in an apartment, another option is to collect your organic waste and drop it off at a local station, such as Ramsey County's.

Go to <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/recycling-waste/collection-sites/organics-recycling> to check out organic waste receptacles that Ramsey County is giving away and to find out more about their collection site locations and hours.

*Gwen is co-chair of the Capitol Region Watershed District Citizen Advisory Committee.*



*Sen. John Marty with his family's three-bin arrangement. Photo courtesy of the Marty family*

# Joint leadership report on SD66 DFL activities

by SD66 Chair Ryan Lee and SD66 Vice Chair Katrina Lee



With the first round of Democratic presidential debates behind us, we are well and truly into primary season! The senate district has been holding meetings every other month to discuss ways to improve the caucus and convention process for 2020. We appreciate everyone who took the time to respond to our survey, and we especially appreciate the volunteers who have already come out to help us plan for next year's events. Here are some dates you should pencil in your calendar:

- Tuesday, February 25, 2020: SD66 Precinct Caucuses
- Tuesday, March 3, 2020: Minnesota Presidential Primaries
- Saturday, April 11, 2020: Proposed Date for the SD66 Endorsing Convention



Currently, we are exploring possible venues at which to hold the caucuses and convention, and we'll be voting on some of these at our August Central Committee Meeting. Some of the considerations that have been factored into the potential locations include location, facility layout, price, parking availability, proximity to public transportation, and potential for helping serve and reach out to underrepresented communities. We appreciate the many suggestions from our constituents. After taking a month off from planning in September, we'll begin to plan for the caucuses in earnest in October. We are currently looking for volunteers who would be willing to take the helm of one of the following subcommittees, which are in charge of the following tasks:

- Classroom Subcommittee
  - o Organizing the copying, printing, cutting, stapling, and stuffing of precinct packets
  - o Recruiting conveners and/or training conveners
  - o Coordinating student and community volunteers
- Facilities Subcommittee
  - o Helping to figure out facility needs such as accessibility, signage, maps, and classroom assignments
- Outreach Subcommittee
  - o Reaching out to underrepresented communities
  - o Coordinating with campaigns/interest groups
  - o Coordinating carpooling or in-a-pinch transportation
- Computers/Content Subcommittee
  - o Advertising and marketing via social media and traditional media
  - o Coordinating fundraising efforts
  - o Entering data

If any of these sound like something in your wheelhouse, please don't hesitate to reach out to us over Facebook, in person, or through our contact page (<http://sd66-dfl.org/contact>).

Thanks so much for being involved—we can't do this without you!

*(Continued on next page)*

## Donut Booth

Openings remain for volunteers to support Senate District 66 and promote progressive values throughout Minnesota. Sign up for your shift in the State Fair Donut Booth this summer. It's a great way to meet fellow DFLers, see the fair, and sell those yummy mini donuts.

Contact Linda Zelig, (612) 747-7244 or [lmzelig@gmail.com](mailto:lmzelig@gmail.com), for your preferred shift

### Saturday, August 24

- Shift 1 – 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Shift 2 – 1:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Shift 3 – 6:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.

### Tuesday, August 27

- Shift 1 – 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

### Friday, August 30 – 3 shifts

- Shift 1 – 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Shift 2 – 1:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Shift 3 – 6:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.

*Please sign up now!* You'll receive a confirmation letter later this summer with a ticket to the state fair, information about what to wear, and an explanation of the tasks.

Thank you! We cannot do this without you!

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## CALENDAR

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**Monday, August 5, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

**SD66 Central Committee Meeting**

New Life Presbyterian Church  
965 Larpenteur Avenue West, Roseville 55113

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**SD66 DFL Happy Hour**

Visit our website at <http://www.dfl-sd66.org/> for calendar updates.

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### Elected officials

**Sen. John Marty**

(651) 296-5645  
jmarty@senate.mn

**Rep. Alice Hausman**

(651) 296-3824  
rep.alice.hausman@house.mn

**Rep. John Lesch**

(651) 296-4224  
rep.john.lesch@house.mn

**County Commissioner**

**Mary Jo McGuire - Dist. 2**

(651) 266-8356  
maryjo.mcguire@co.ramsey.mn.us

**County Commissioner**

**Trista MatasCastillo - Dist. 3**

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### DFL contacts

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Lauren Peterson, Chair  
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(612) 860-7823  
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**Ramsey County DFL**

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**4th District DFL**

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(651) 747-5651  
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**Minnesota State DFL**

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The *Senate District 66 DFL Newsletter* is published four times a year to inform and educate all interested parties in the activities and issues of SD66 DFLers including elected officials and endorsed candidates.

Please contact the editor if you are interested in joining the newsletter committee or submitting an article for publication.

### Newsletter committee

**Editor:** Gwen Willems (651) 646-8854

**Designer:** Edwin Beylerian

**Committee Members:** Judy Berglund, Katrina Lee,  
Ryan Lee, Charlie Quick, Gwen Willems