

SPECIAL REPORT

COVID-19 and vaccinations

Dr. Michael Osterholm interviewed by Chris Dall

This is excerpted from the April 22, 2021, weekly “Osterholm Update: COVID-19” podcast with permission of Editorial Director Jim Wappes and the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota. You can listen to or read transcripts of “Osterholm Updates” at <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/podcasts-webinars>.

Chris Dall: Hello and welcome to the Osterholm Update, COVID-19, a weekly podcast on the COVID-19 pandemic with Dr. Michael Osterholm. Dr. Osterholm is an internationally recognized medical detective and director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, or CIDRAP, at the University of Minnesota. In this podcast, Dr. Osterholm will draw on more than 45 years of experience investigating infectious disease outbreaks to provide straight talk on the COVID-19 pandemic. I’m Chris Dall, reporter for CIDRAP News, and I’m your host for these conversations. If you needed any reminder that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, it came earlier this week in a briefing from the World Health Organization which reported that the world set a new weekly high last week with 5.2 million new coronavirus infections, the eighth week in a row of rising cases. Deaths also rose globally, passing the 3 million mark. Globally, the COVID-19 storm is still raging. Here in the United States, meanwhile, cases continue to remain at a high plateau as the vaccination effort tries to stay ahead of coronavirus variants....

Michael Osterholm: Thanks, Chris, and welcome to all of you for another episode of our podcast.... If one just looks in the United States, we’re now at 564,292 recorded deaths. If you were to say an individual’s name respectfully every three seconds who has died at COVID, it would take 19.6 days nonstop to do that. Think about that. That is sobering. And on a global level, we know there’s been a major undercounting of cases. It’s at 3,025,835, which if you did the same thing, say respectfully each one of these death’s name, who they are personally, it would take 105 days to state everyone’s name who’s died of COVID-19 in the past year....



*Dr. Michael Osterholm.
Photo by Stuart Isett for Fortune
Brainstorm Health / Flickr cc.*

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Upcoming events

Tuesday, June 1, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Roseville DFL Central Committee Meeting

Monday, July 5
6:30-7:15 p.m.
SD66 Outreach Committee Meeting
7:15-8:00 p.m.
SD66 Caucus Committee Meeting
8:00-8:45 p.m.
SD66 Forum Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 6, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Roseville DFL Central Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 3, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Roseville DFL Central Committee Meeting

Chris Dall: I wanted to start with the international.... Foremost is India, which has been reporting well over 200,000 new cases a day for the past week. Mike, what has happened in India?

Michael Osterholm: ... We've now hit that 5.2 million cases per week reported [worldwide] for this past week. This obviously is a real challenge. And based on what we're seeing happen around the world, we expect this number to increase quite substantially. Unfortunately, global deaths are also on the rise with more than 83,000 reported just this past week. We know that deaths are underreported in many countries. To begin with, let's take a look at what's happening in Asia and the Middle East, particularly focusing on India....

One in three infections reported every day globally are now from India. Daily deaths have reached record highs and are continuing to rise. Some are speculating that this explosive growth is largely driven by the new variant that was identified in the country known as B1617.... I don't think we have the evidence necessary to determine what role B1617 is playing in the surge. We have some data that says B117, the variant that we're dealing with here right now in North America, also is potentially playing a role....

In terms of other countries that are experiencing major upticks, if we look at Turkey and Iran, they've also seen substantial activity in the region reporting record highs that have grown exponentially over the past several weeks. If we go to Europe, we have another poster country example. Sweden today is continuing to see an increase in cases now having the world's fifth highest average for new daily cases per capita....

There's a lot we still don't know about some of these variants, including P1, the one originally identified in Brazil. And we need to continue to monitor the variant activity. In short, on a global basis, several things can be said. One, transmission is at an all-time high; we are in the darkest days of the pandemic on a global basis. Two, we are seeing countries that had been spared large waves in the past now experiencing these waves.

Chris Dall: ... Mike, where are we in that race between the vaccines and the variants? And do you have a better sense of the trajectory that this fourth surge is going to take in the U.S.?

Michael Osterholm: ... I think I know less about COVID-19 and in particular SARS-CoV-2 virus than I did six months ago. The more I learn, the more experience we have with this virus, the less I can say that I can comfortably tell you what's going to happen next. So take whatever I have to say to you, I guess, in that light. One of the issues I just have to address and one that just seems so obvious to me is the fact that we are getting used to lots and lots of cases of COVID-19 in our communities and the deaths that result because of it. In the U.S., we're now averaging about 70,000 new cases per day. The current 14-day change is up 4 percent for cases and hospitalizations are up 10 percent.... I think we seem to be somewhat in a holding pattern with the regional trends we've talked about the last couple of weeks largely playing out. Most of the states seeing higher levels of cases per capita are in the Midwest and the Northeast, although some of the states might be plateauing or showing signs of decline....

Chris Dall: ... Are you concerned about vaccine hesitancy and what it means for our ability to get to herd immunity?

Michael Osterholm: Well, let me start out by saying that from the standpoint of herd immunity, I, for one, couldn't tell you what that means. I don't know what herd immunity is with this virus. And I've seen many, many people, again, who have pontificated on this as if somehow they had a sense. Remember, herd immunity is a concept that says if you have enough people who are immunologically protected from infection, much like rods in a virus reactor, then you could, in fact, slow down transmission. Remember, herd immunity doesn't stop transmission. It's slowing it down. And in fact, it's very similar, I think, to when you're on the plane, for those few who are flying today and the pilot announces, "We're now beginning our descent into Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport and we're still half an hour out." That's when we're losing altitude. Well, that's what we have with herd immunity, you start slowing down transmission. When one considers herd immunity, you consider how many people are immune from having had natural infection and having that residual immunity or from being vaccinated. And very rarely do we talk about, in herd immunity, the concept that once immune doesn't mean always immune. And so therefore you could actually see people come in and out of that waning period.

And you all heard this past week and a half, executives from the mRNA vaccine companies, both Pfizer and Moderna, as well as some in our federal government, suggesting that a booster dose may be needed at a certain period of time. Now, I want to clarify that, because it was never really made clear to the public what we mean by a booster dose. Typically when we think of a booster dose, we're thinking of the same vaccine just to help, you might say, gin up the antibody response or the other aspects of the immune response, including t cells with the same vaccine. That's a true boost.

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If you're looking at having to vaccinate with a newer vaccine to account for the mutants or the variants, that's really not a boost. That is actually, in a sense, a new vaccine, much like we think of influenza. Nobody talks about going in and getting your booster shot for influenza this year when it's a different vaccine. And so we're not clear yet just how long this immunity of natural infection and vaccine last. So that's first of all, we just have to acknowledge that fact. The second thing is when a virus is more infectious, then it also means you have to have a much higher level of protection in that population.

So when B117 came along and we see anywhere from 50 to 100 percent more transmission than previous strains, that automatically had to move herd immunity levels up to accomplish the slowing down of transmission. And we don't know what that is. I can truly tell you, as an epidemiologist in the trenches for 46 years, B117 is much more infectious than the strains we dealt with 6 months ago. But I can't tell you with any certainty what that means. So let's just at the outset say, you know, we'd all like to try to achieve concepts of herd immunity, but I don't know what they are. And I can only hope that we can slow down transmission. But I don't have a sense that by itself will ever stop it....

I think at this point it's fair to say that the polls that have been taken to date to look at who will in fact get vaccinated have shown that the share of adults who have either received one vaccine dose or want to get vaccinated as soon as they can actually has increased some. On March 21st it was up to 61 percent from 55 percent the month before. But 61 percent means 39 percent of the population still is either not likely to get the vaccine without additional support and education or just out there and not going to get it. At this point, we don't really understand what it's going to take to get these additional people vaccinated....

And I say this with a smile, but I also say it with some certainty. Please help two or three of your friends, colleagues, neighbors, whoever, who aren't necessarily thinking about getting vaccinated right now, help them understand why it's so important to get vaccinated. Number one, the freedom it brings. Remember, I've been saying all along, have those post-vaccine parties. I've had several. I'm so excited. Where several other couples can get together, we're all vaccinated, we don't wear any kind of face cloth coverings, masks. We hug, we kiss, we sit next to each other. We have so much fun. It reminds me of what we've taken for granted that way. So that's the number one reason to get vaccinated. Number two, you can hug your kids and grandkids. Particularly if the young grandkids that can't be vaccinated yet, we still say go ahead and in a single family setting, you can hug them. Third of all, let me tell you, I can tell you, since I've been vaccinated, I don't take it for granted that, yes, we have vaccine breakthroughs. But at the same time, you know what, I feel a freedom I haven't felt before. I feel better. I just feel like I've had a rock taken off my back. So help your friends, neighbors, family, whoever get vaccinated, please....

We are moving from grief to legislative action

by Rep. Athena Hollins (66B)

My heart is with the family and loved ones of Daunte Wright.

Our communities are grieving the loss of yet another Black man killed at the hands of police officers, while legislative action addressing the bare minimum continues to be met with resistance from law enforcement groups and Republican members. We cannot normalize waking up to a piling list of names every day. We need to enact legislative action that holds police officers accountable and serves the justice so many Black men in this country deserve.



The future of public safety is one built through community trust. The House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Committee has had a total of 18 hearings which have included police reform bills, 11 of which occurred this year. While lawmakers passed compromise reforms last year—including a prohibition on “warrior training,” a ban on chokeholds, and required duty to intercede—many critical reforms such as enhanced citizen oversight and a strengthened police officer misconduct database were left off the table.

Some of the proposals that we are pushing forward include a measure to allow local governments to establish civilian oversight councils; a ban on altering, erasing, or destroying body-worn camera recordings and withholding footage; a prohibition to keep peace officers from affiliating with white supremacist groups; and funding to community organizations working to prevent crime.

In addition to the above provisions, I am chief author on several important law enforcement reform bills that have been included in the Public Safety omnibus bill. The first, [House File 1762](#), would regulate the use of no-knock warrants. No-knock warrants rose to prominence during the failed “war on drugs”, with the assertion that knocking or ringing a doorbell would allow suspects to destroy evidence before law enforcement could seize it. These warrants have been found to be dangerous to both citizens and law enforcement, and have led to the death of 81 citizens and 13 officers between 2010 and 2016. My language seeks to strike a balance between law enforcement’s need to occasionally move with the element of surprise, and citizens’ rights to reside safely in their homes.

The second bill, [House File 440](#), funds a study to explore the prospect of requiring law enforcement to carry professional liability insurance. This policy would help us to identify “bad apple” officers, who may conduct dangerous, reckless actions, at a very early stage. There have been several studies that suggest that the most dangerous officers are identifiable and relatively rare. A Chicago study found that the worst one percent of officers, as measured by civilian allegations, generate almost five times the number of payouts and more than four times the total damage payouts in civil rights litigation. This bill would also protect taxpayers and local governments from being financially on the hook for these bad actors. With the City of Minneapolis’ recent settlement for \$27 million, the financial benefits of this policy could not be clearer.

The Public Safety omnibus bill should not be controversial or even partisan. These are measures aiming to protect the precious lives of Minnesotans, not a political debate.

Legislative update from Senator Marty

by Sen. John Marty



The days of the 2021 legislative session are racing by quickly, though legislation seems to be moving at a slow pace, in part because most work is done virtually. I look forward to when we can meet in person, but it's not safe yet. DFLers were unable to pass a rule requiring masks at the capitol, and many of us feel unsafe being in close proximity to colleagues who seldom wear masks and are careless about COVID spreading.

Wearing masks at the Capitol

The mask rule is needed, because Governor Walz's executive order on masks is not constitutionally binding on the legislative branch. One might hope that legislators would choose to comply as an example, or as a matter of respect to others, but that does not appear to be sufficient motivation for the Republicans. When we lost the vote to require masks at the capitol, I pointed out that we already lost one Republican state

senator who died of COVID a month earlier.

Unfortunately, even the loss of one of our colleagues was not enough to get the Republicans to be willing to wear masks. Majority Leader Gazelka defeated the mask rule because he wants to "respect those who may have a different point of view" about masks. I'd prefer he "respect" those who have health conditions and don't want to risk serious illness or death from COVID.

DFL lead on Senate Finance Committee

Although my priorities remain the same—universal health care through the proposed Minnesota Health Plan, fighting climate change, racial justice, working for a just economy, etc.—I have dropped most of my previous committee assignments to become the DFL lead on the powerful Senate Finance Committee which writes the state budget.

Serving under a Republican majority is extremely frustrating, and I am fighting against some harmful budget cuts and terrible policies pushed by the majority. If we had picked up a couple more senate seats in November, as potential chair of the Finance Committee, not only would I have been able to help pass a strong progressive budget but could have done much to reform the political process. I would have a chance to stop the unaccountable, unacceptable, and unconstitutional "garbage bills" that lump numerous unrelated policies into budget bills. But those dreams are blocked by the Republican majority.

Time to ban guns at the Capitol

The sight of people flaunting assault rifles is becoming commonplace at political rallies of Trump supporters and right-wing causes. During the past year, Michigan, Oregon, Kentucky, and Idaho all had incidents where people, armed to the teeth and dressed for combat, walked into their state Capitols to threaten public officials. These incidents made national news because the brazen intimidation was so shocking.

In Minnesota, the carrying of handguns inside the Capitol has become common during legislative hearings on gun regulation issues.

Fifty years ago, it wasn't this way. In 1967, when the Black Panthers walked into the California state Capitol heavily armed, there was strong bipartisan support for prohibiting the carrying of loaded firearms. Then-Gov. Ronald Reagan and even the NRA supported the Mulford Act, which sharply restricted the carrying of guns, not just in the California Capitol, but elsewhere. Reagan said there is "no reason why on the street today a citizen should be carrying loaded weapons."

Now however, when it is largely white conservatives who are taking guns to Capitols, the NRA and the Republican Party seem to consider it perfectly appropriate for their allies to use guns to intimidate political opponents.

Security at the Minnesota Capitol has increased significantly, especially in the months since the election and the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol in Washington.

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However, unless we change the law, once COVID restrictions are lifted and the public is allowed back in the Capitol, any Minnesotan with a permit to carry can bring a gun, whether concealed or openly visible, throughout the Minnesota Capitol complex.

We do not allow people to bring guns into county courthouses, into many big office buildings in the Twin Cities or at Vikings, Wild, and Twins games. Thirty-two other states require people to walk through a metal detector before entering their Capitol buildings.

After passage of Minnesota's concealed carry law, permit holders were allowed to bring guns into the Capitol. Initially, they were required to notify authorities, so it was easy to track how many were carrying guns. Ordinarily, few people brought guns but there was a spike whenever legislation on gun safety was being considered.

The Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus urged their members to show up, armed, to those committee meetings. There were about 150 notifications for one such hearing in 2013, almost triple the number in the entire previous year.

A hearing on gun legislation does not pose any greater safety risk than other hearings and there is no greater need for personal protection. Opponents of gun legislation carry guns to those hearings to intimidate.

There are other ways guns are used to intimidate as well. One lobbyist told some legislators whom she was lobbying that she carried a gun at the Capitol because she feared people lobbying on the other side of the issue, calling them dangerous—an insidious way of undermining her opponents. It is not surprising that the opponents reported difficulty getting appointments to make their case with legislators.

The 2005 law that allowed carrying of handguns in public allowed the same people to carry assault rifles and other long guns in public. That has led to the increasingly common sight of heavily armed people at rallies and protests. They are not armed for personal protection. They do so to intimidate and strike fear in others.

Minnesotans can consider and discuss gun legislation as rational adults; hearings should be conducted without armed intimidation. Consequently, I have introduced SF 2048, which would prohibit the carrying of guns at the Capitol and restore the law that blocked people from bringing assault rifles to rallies and protests.

We should take security at the Capitol and at political rallies seriously before there is a tragic attack that kills people. At some point, security experts might determine that metal detectors are needed at the Capitol. Unfortunately, metal detectors create an oppressive climate which makes a place feel more militarized and less safe. Whether or not they are necessary now, we should prepare and plan for the possibility in the future, including quick implementation if a credible threat appears. But for now, it's time to treat the Capitol like county courthouses and other places that prohibit guns. Public discourse on contentious issues can be done in a rational manner without allowing some to intimidate others. Public safety will benefit as well.

Allowing guns at the Capitol in these divided times is a recipe for disaster.

Keeping in touch

Thank you for the opportunity to represent you in the Minnesota Senate. If you need to reach me, please feel free to use either phone or email to reach me or my staff, Elsbeth.cavert@senate.mn or jmarty@senate.mn, (651) 296-5645.

Ramsey County prioritizes racial equity

by Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo



This spring, Ramsey County is finalizing our Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan, which will guide our investment in economic development and housing in the coming years. Ramsey County is the most fully developed, racially diverse, and densely populated county in Minnesota, and I believe that our policies and investments need to reflect those realities as we work to build the kind of community in which all are valued and thrive.

The key to creating a Ramsey County that works is to prioritize racial equity. Closing the racial wage gap would add \$2.3 billion in annual earnings for Ramsey County's Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other residents of color. This work must also reflect the inequities that have been caused by our efforts at every level of government. In Saint Paul's Rondo alone, the intergenerational wealth gap from past actions is estimated at \$90 million in lost home equity. And if Ramsey County matched the nation in the number of minority business enterprises we would create nearly 7,000 new jobs in Ramsey County alone.

Our biggest challenge is in housing, which is an issue I hear about from frontline workers throughout Ramsey County. Many of our neighbors live in poverty and struggle to find or afford stable housing. The current market is not building or preserving enough affordable housing to meet the needs of these residents, including seniors, low wage workers, and others who make less than \$25,000 annually. This challenge is anticipated to grow, placing further strain on the housing market and county services for all households

Making that happen will require us to make hard decisions about resources. Most significantly, we are proposing to activate Ramsey County's HRA levy next year for the first time. Ramsey County is the only county in the Twin Cities metro which does not levy, and that greatly restricts our ability to help make up the gap to provide affordability. This levy will raise around \$11.5 million to fund housing for our lowest-income residents; to foster inclusive economic development along county transit, economic, and cultural corridors; and to expand affordable homeownership opportunities.

Under Minnesota statute, we must ask communities that had active HRA levy authorities prior to 1971 to pass a resolution to participate in Ramsey County's levy. We will formally request that the Cities of Saint Paul and North St. Paul pass those resolutions at our April 13, 2021 board meeting.

Environmental progress and local heroes

by Gwen Willems



We celebrated another Earth Day on April 22 with less than the usual fanfare, due to COVID-19 guidelines. It was a good opportunity to remind ourselves of the significant progress we have made and will make and the problems that still need our attention. We can keep Earth Day in mind every day and take [environmentally friendly actions daily](#).

The national scene

President Biden signed a slew of environmentally focused executive orders on his first day in office, rejoined the Paris Agreement, canceled the Keystone XL pipeline, committed to upholding environmental justice, and undertook numerous other improvements. He has followed through with appointing many climate leaders such as Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm and Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. Climate

is a priority in the Biden Administration.

Among initiatives still in the works are the president's [commitment to cutting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions](#) to 50 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, which he announced on Earth Day. The \$2.65 trillion infrastructure plan that President Biden proposed in March includes funding for electric vehicles, a revamped power grid, climate research, \$450 million for tribes and \$161 million for agriculture, and much more. Biden has committed to preserving 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

The local scene

While those things are happening on the national level, it is important to pay attention to what is happening locally. One of our most dynamic local organizations, the [Capitol Region Watershed District](#) (CRWD), has numerous programs and projects it has accomplished and plans to implement in our neighborhoods. CRWD recently gave out three 2020 steward awards to honor individuals and organizations that exemplify watershed stewardship through activities, projects, or policies that demonstrate a commitment to protect, manage, and improve water resources of the district.

CRWD's 2020 **Watershed Citizen Award** recipient is **Christina Kunz**, who completed the Minnesota Water Stewards training program in 2017. Her love of gardening and her many years of teaching law are interests that drew her to the program. Christina has demonstrated her love of teaching and sharing knowledge by using her own rain gardens to initiate conversations with countless neighbors and friends about how landscape design can improve the environment by capturing and filtering water and providing habitat, as well as addressing concerns about flooding or property damage. Among her many accomplishments are initiating several new residential stormwater consultations and building multiple projects with friends and neighbors, volunteering at many community events, and helping every year with CRWD's annual boulevard rain garden inspections.

"She has logged over 250 hours of volunteer time since 2018," stated CRWD staff member Lindsay Schwantes, "and I have no doubt that she's spent more than that thinking about and working on ideas and conversations focused on protecting our water. I am so grateful and honored to have been working with Christina these past few years. It has been such a joy and I look forward to continuing to work together."



*Christina Kunz
at the Snail Lake Planting.
Photo courtesy of CRWD.*

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The 2020 **Watershed Partner Award** goes to the **City of Lauderdale**. “The city plays an oversized role in stormwater management in our watershed, compared to its geographic extent and population of 3,000,” said CRWD staff member Anna Eleria. Lauderdale is instrumental in work on Seminary Pond, a regional stormwater pond built in the mid-1990s to collect and convey runoff from the 128-acre subwatershed.

In 2016, the city and CRWD began investigating ways to improve the pond’s stormwater management functions, which include reducing pollution to the Mississippi River and minimizing flooding to a downstream apartment complex. Lauderdale played an extremely vital role in this effort and was undaunted by the lengthy, circuitous, and expanding nature of the project over five years. The city’s close involvement led to securing the financial support for construction as well as long-term maintenance of the pond from Falcon Heights, Ramsey County, and the University of Minnesota and construction access rights from five different private property owners.



*Seminary Pond Project.
Photo courtesy of CRWD.*

Construction began in 2020. Improvements will remove an estimated 2.26 tons of sediment and 10.3 pounds of phosphorous from entering the Mississippi River annually and protect the downstream apartment complex from flooding. In late spring 2021, the project site’s wetland and upland areas will be restored with native trees and plants

Special kudos to City Administrator Heather Butkowski and Public Works Coordinator Dave Hinrichs, as well as city staff members, council members, and the mayor.



*BIPOC Parks Ambassadors.
Photo by Asha Shoffner, Saint Paul Parks
and Recreation’s Environmental
and Outdoor Program Coordinator.*

CRWD’s 2020 **Watershed Outreach Program Award** recipient is **Saint Paul Parks and Recreation’s BIPOC Parks Ambassadors Program**. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation’s mission is to help make Saint Paul the most livable city in America by facilitating the creation of active lifestyles, vibrant places, and a vital environment. According to CRWD staff member Lindsay Schwantes, “The BIPOC Parks Ambassadors project connects Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to water and the natural world within the watershed district, in ways that are meaningful, accessible, sustainable, and empowering.”

Begun in 2020, the BIPOC Parks Ambassadors Program educates and empowers people to become stewards of the water and land through outings, story strolls, workshops, and other programming.

The project will continue to facilitate opportunities for connecting people to the water. Some examples of these outings and workshops are kayaking, learning to find and filter water, edible plant hikes, fishing, painting, snowshoeing, skiing, and meditations.

Thanks to CRWD and staff members Jessica Bromelkamp, Lindsay Schwantes, and Anna Eleria for sharing awards information and permission to use it for this article. Gwen Willems is cochair of the CRWD Community Advisory Committee.

SD66 DFL leadership report

by SD66 DFL Chair Ryan Lee



Happy Spring! We've had a long winter, falls, summer, and spring before that. But as COVID-19 vaccinations reach more and more Minnesotans and the hope of returning to "normal" springs anew, it's important to remember the great inequities that have been exacerbated by this disease and the policies around it.

For over a year, people have been working from home if they can, but those are often the lucky ones, and essential workers have been putting themselves and their families at risk to carry out jobs that often don't even pay a living wage. I can't understand how essential workers can comprise half of all workers in low-paid occupations. How can something be essential and have only minimum wage value! Minnesota has a higher minimum wage than the federal government, so thankfully a person earning minimum wage would "only" need three full-time jobs to pay for a typical two-bedroom apartment in SD66. That's a prospect that I hope no one would find reasonable.

The growing gap between expectations of friends, family, society, government, and the reality of those expectations can only serve to create more pain and dissatisfaction. Over the past year, we have witnessed the unfortunate deaths of Black Americans in our state at the hands of those sworn to protect and serve. The eyes of many Minnesotans have since been opened to a reality that has always existed. There is a gap in our system of justice. Minnesota abolished the death penalty in 1911, but the ability for a government officer to summarily execute an individual has been allowed to this day by the U.S. Supreme Court cases *Tennessee v. Garner* and *Graham v. Connor*. This gap in justice allows people who have been tried by a jury of their peers and who have been found guilty to endure a maximum punishment of prison and fines. But a person innocent in the eyes of the law can be independently executed by a paid officer of the government.

I grew up in a small rural town in Minnesota. I remember when the police officers would come to school and be played up as heroes. They taught us about the dangers of drugs, about the brave things they do to keep us safe. And to a kindergartener or first- or second-grader, these adults in their uniforms, with their guns, and fancy cars, how could they not be everything we were told?

What our school didn't do was teach us about the gap in justice. How members of our society are treated differently, that a uniform doesn't make someone a good person, that it is okay for citizens to engage in good-faith questioning of those who have the power of life and death over anyone in the community.

I'd like to think though, that it is never too late to learn. The Democratic Party remains a large tent with a technicolor spectrum of opinions. In this case we all want a change, but as always, when it comes to reform, agreeing on the details is hard, as anyone who has tried to convince a group of hungry friends where they should all go to eat will know.

I think, too often phrases like "fall in line," or "this will get us closer," or "don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good" are well intentioned, but they don't help those who are hurting the most. When people don't feel safe calling the police, we have a lot of work to do. I know just enough to know that I don't know enough to solve these problems. So, I look to you, the community of people who want to make Minnesota a safer and better place, to step up and to support our party unit's membership and representatives in helping to pass much needed police reforms.

If any of you out there reading these newsletters are interested in sharing your story, or offering more to this conversation, please reach out. My email address is rmlee07@gmail.com. We don't know what we don't know. Our senate district has leadership positions available, and we can provide a platform for ideas.

I hope that 2021 will be a better year than last year, and I hope that 2022 will be better than that. I look forward to helping to flip the Minnesota Senate, hold the Minnesota House, and keep the governorship. I want to see reforms on health care, carbon emission reduction, and workers' rights. But if a large community of Minnesotans don't feel safe walking in public, we need to take care of that first.

Larger issues affect Roseville

by Roseville Council Member Wayne Groff



Well, it has been quite a year. From a pandemic to the murder of George Floyd to impeachment of the President of the United States for sedition.

I am writing to give you some idea of how I see those and other issues affecting Roseville.

The Roseville City Council had regular updates at our meetings from the Roseville Fire Department. The RFD was the point department for receiving and distributing accurate information about the pandemic as we all learned the ever-changing recommended responses.

I requested that we require masks in businesses and inside spaces in Roseville and it passed the city council.

A few days later Gov. Walz made the mask mandate statewide. As we know, it has not always been easy to enforce, but it set a standard. And we did as a city enforce where we could.

The killing of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis was a huge shock. The council had a response condemning the killing. The Human Rights, Inclusion and Engagement Commission brought recommendations to the council to begin addressing structural racism in the city. One of the recommendations was to hire a consultant to begin the evaluation. Another was to hire a permanent staff position to guide the city through the longer process, which can take a couple years or more. This will address each department in the city and look at hiring and activities through an equity lens.

I am pleased to say the council has hired Culture Brokers, headed by Lisa Tabor, to consult this year. She has attended two city council meetings so far and is working with staff at this time. Roseville is also pleased to welcome Equity and Inclusion Manager Thomas Brooks. The Equity and Inclusion Manager is a new position authorized by the Roseville City Council in its 2021 budget. Brooks' hiring is part of the city's commitment to identify and address barriers to equity.

Of course, there is all the usual work to be done in the city besides the above work. Paving streets, repairing infrastructure, adjusting programs at the parks to accommodate social distancing and masks.

I am pleased to say the council hired a consultant to review our utility billing and it was found that the billings were not balanced according to national standards. The council made adjustments and residential properties will be paying lower utility rates. Commercial users will pay slightly higher rates. We are hoping this encourages an analysis of water use by higher users and leads to better environmental practices.

Finally, even with the challenges of the pandemic and unrest in the city, we were able to balance the city budget and lower the levy slightly. However, even with the lower city tax levy, individual property taxes probably increased some because the assessed value of your house went up. The tax is also affected by the county portion and the portion paid to the school district.

Thank you for your support in the past. If there are any other issues you wish to discuss or if you want more details on the brief overview, you can contact me by email, phone (612-867-0915), or text. If you wish to donate to my campaign, you can send a check to Volunteers for Wayne Groff at 2266 Marion Road, Roseville 55113. Or donate on my website: Vote4wayne.org.

CALENDAR

*SD66 DFL is continuing to hold its meetings remotely until further notice.
Zoom links and instructions will be posted at sd66-dfl.org prior to the meeting dates.*

Tuesday, June 1, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Roseville DFL Central Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 6, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Roseville DFL Central Committee Meeting

Monday, July 5
6:30-7:15 p.m. SD66 Outreach Committee Meeting
7:15-8:00 p.m. SD66 Caucus Committee Meeting
8:00-8:45 p.m. SD66 Forum Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 3, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Roseville DFL Central Committee Meeting

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

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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.

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