



SPECIAL REPORT

The Fourth of July 1776 Independence Day Independent from what?

Speech to the MN DFL Senior Caucus, July 2, 2025
By James Patrick "J.P." Barone, MN DFL State Executive
Committee, former Democratic National Committee
member and Congressional District 4 DFL Chair

Independent from the rule of a king. Two hundred forty-nine years later, we are attending "No Kings" rallies.

There is a quotation that has been around for about 200 years, the origins of which are murky, but its message has never been more relevant—"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

Independence Day in 2025 is not so much a celebration of the past as it must be our commitment to the future. It is one year and two days until the semiquincentennial—the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Let's look back a little. Two hundred forty-nine years ago today—July 2, 1776—the Second Continental Congress voted for the independence of the "United Colonies." Why are we not the UCA—United Colonies of America? The resolution stated that the United Colonies were "free and independent states" separate from the British Empire. The vote was twelve-yes, zero-no, and one-abstention. The New York delegation had no authority to vote for or against anything but were later given the authority to approve of this resolution.

Why don't we celebrate the second of July as Independence Day? A committee had been working for about a month on the formal document, "The Declaration of Independence." There were then two days of debating, amending, and nitpicking the document. That sounds a little like a typical DFL meeting. The final wording was approved on the fourth of July.

That act did not create what we are. It simply rejected something. It established what we were not. We were not a monarchy. It took five years of war and more years of experimentation before we created what we are in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It was an amazing act of faith to only know what you were running away from without really defining what you were running to.

During those early years, as this fledgling country was struggling to survive under the Articles of Confederation and restructuring as the United States of America, a prominent citizen, Mrs. Elizabeth Powell, asked Benjamin Franklin, "What are we going to have, a republic or a monarchy?" Benjamin Franklin replied, "A republic, if you can keep it." That is our homework assignment—to keep it.

Why do we celebrate with fireworks? In a letter to his wife Abigail, John Adams wrote, "It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade ... bells, bonfires, and illuminations." Adams mistakenly believed that would happen on the second of July each year, but he was wrong.

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Let's jump ahead to July 4, 1826—the Golden Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. During those fifty years the United States was created and defined. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the two great allies in creating the Declaration of Independence, ran against each other for president—twice—and each defeated the other once. They had become the bitterest of political rivals. Yet, in their senior years, they renewed their friendship.

They did not meet personally because travel between Massachusetts and Virginia was much more challenging than it is today. They communicated through the social media of the time—written correspondence also known as letters. On July 4, 1826, both had declined invitations to attend the 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebrations, citing age and difficulty of travel.

So, as the country was celebrating with pomp, parade, and illuminations, Jefferson and Adams were at their homes. At a little after noon, Jefferson died at age eighty-three. A few hours later, Adams died at age ninety. What are the statistical possibilities of that happening? You couldn't sell that story as a movie script. Among Adams' last words were "... Jefferson lives." Once again, Adams was wrong, but the independence for which they fought still lived.

But the country was being tested. The president was John Quincy Adams, who had not won the most popular votes and had not won the most electoral votes. In the election two years earlier, Andrew Jackson had won both, but not a majority of either. Four candidates had won electoral votes, but 131 were needed to win. Jackson had 40.5 percent of the popular vote and ninety-nine electoral votes. Adams had 32.7 percent of the popular vote and eighty-four electoral votes. Two other candidates had the rest. Pursuant to the 12th Amendment, the U.S. House picked the president with each states' delegation casting one vote per state. The U.S. House picked Adams. There was a question of whether the republic would survive after a president was selected without being elected. In the 1828 rematch, Jackson defeated Adams and the healing of the republic began.

Let's jump ahead to July 4, 1876—the centennial celebration. The country had survived the Civil War, which had ended a little over a decade earlier. Reconstruction was taking place throughout the south. The 1876 presidential election tested our republic again. Rutherford Birchard Hayes, the Republican, received 47.9 percent of the popular vote and Samuel Jones Tilden, the Democrat, received 50.9 percent of the popular vote. Yet Hayes became president.

There were 369 electoral votes, so 185 were needed to win. In the end, Hayes received 185 and Tilden received 184. The one electoral vote difference was bad enough. What was worse was how it got there. There were allegations of electoral fraud, voter intimidation, and a paramilitary group called the "Red Shirts." Immediately after the election, Tilden had 184 electoral votes and four states were being disputed—Oregon and three in the south; Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. It seems Florida is always in dispute.

In South Carolina, the voter turnout was 101 percent. All four disputed states had to go to Hayes to reach 185 electoral votes. They all went to Hayes with an understanding that reconstruction in the south would end. The Republican Party of Lincoln had been sold out and the partisan transition began.

Let's jump ahead to July 4, 1926, the sesquicentennial. It was the roaring 20s. The Teapot Dome scandal revealed that President Harding and his political appointees had enriched themselves at the expense of the taxpayers. Harding's death a few years earlier allowed the investigation to continue. Government officials went to jail, including Albert Fall, who I view as an original "fall guy."

The country was implementing the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, which set immigration quotas based on the 1890 census. Setting the quotas from three and one-half decades earlier favored northern and western Europeans. It was designed to make America look like the "Good Old Days" before people, who like my grandparents came from Italy in the 1910s, infiltrated the "cultural homogeneity" and took jobs from "real Americans." Interestingly, many of those immigrants were voting for Democrats. Italian immigration fell by 90%. The act explicitly banned most Asians. The U.S. Border Patrol was established. In the next few years, more Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, Chinese, and Japanese left the United States than entered it.

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- Japan moved its alliance away from the United States.
- Adolf Hitler praised the United States for its “nativist sentiment” and consolidated his power in the Nazi Party. He was given the title “Führer,” which means supreme leader.
- Prime Minister Benito Mussolini of Italy survived an assassination attempt and was given the power to rule by decree. The decrees included taking away women's right to vote and arresting those in opposing political parties.

Let's jump ahead to July 4, 1976—the Bicentennial. Most of us remember that time as we were coming out of Watergate, and Richard Nixon said, “If the President does it, it is not illegal.” At that time the Supreme Court upheld the clear meaning of the U.S. Constitution.

So, we come to today. “History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” It is rhyming loudly—like thunder. “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” The definition of “eternal vigilance” includes:

1. Ongoing awareness;
2. Critical thinking; and
3. Commitment to protecting individual rights and freedoms from any potential threats, whether internal or external.

Yes, we must remember “internal and external.”

What is the “price?” Here is an example: There were fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence.

1. All were subject to manhunts and driven from their homes.
2. Nine died in the war from wounds or hardship.
3. Five were captured and brutally imprisoned.
4. Several lost wives, sons, or entire families.
5. One lost his thirteen children.
6. Twelve had their homes completely burned.
7. Seventeen lost everything they owned.

Not even one defected or went back on his pledged word. As Thomas Paine wrote in 1776—“These are the times that try men's souls.”

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we must pledge our “eternal vigilance.” It will be a high price, but not as high as others have paid. It will definitely not be as high a price as our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will have to pay if we fail to act on our “eternal vigilance.”



Special session and interim update

by Sen. Clare Oumou Verbeten

Information is from her latest newsletter

Although work at the Capitol generally slows down after session, I still have so much to share with you. During the interim, I'll share these updates monthly.

Our entire community is devastated by the heartbreaking losses and trauma experienced by our colleagues and their families on June 14. I attended the funeral of Melissa and Mark Hortman. As we gathered in mourning, Rev. Daniel Griffith, pastor of the Basilica of St.

Mary, reflected on Minnesota's tragic history—

calling it the “ground zero” of racial injustice in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd, and now, the “ground zero” of political violence and extremism following the assassination of Melissa and Mark. He urged us to transform Minnesota into a ground zero of restoration, justice, and healing.

Many have found comfort in the words of Melissa and Mark's children: Sophie and Colin. While experiencing unthinkable grief, they offered the following suggestions to all of us on how to best honor the memory of their parents:

- Plant a tree.
- Visit a local park and make use of their amenities, especially a bike trail.
- Pet a dog. A golden retriever is ideal, but any will do.
- Tell your loved ones a cheesy dad joke and laugh about it.
- Bake something—bread for Mark or a cake for Melissa, and share it with someone.
- Try a new hobby and enjoy learning something.
- Stand up for what you believe in, especially if that thing is justice and peace.



As we remember Mark and Melissa, we also keep John, Yvette, and Hope Hoffman close in our thoughts, too, and offer wishes for a complete recovery.

Special session update



On Monday, June 9, we convened a special session to pass our remaining budget bills. With the most closely divided legislature in the country, a one vote difference in the Minnesota Senate and a tied Minnesota House, we passed a budget that protects the generational gains we've won to make Minnesota a place where anyone can thrive.

We protected universal school meals that keep kids fed and save families money, defended paid family and medical leave from attempts to cut it, maintained our nation leading child tax credit and tax reductions for seniors, strengthened labor rights, and kept Minnesota on a path toward our clean-energy goals.

Special session also marked the repeal on health-care access for undocumented Minnesotans—an attack on dignity and basic human rights. I was proud to give a speech on the Minnesota Senate floor standing firmly against this cruel, racist, and deadly bill. You can watch that [here](#).

This session, twenty-five of my bills were signed into law. I'm proud of the bills I got across the finish line to reform the criminal justice system, support crime victims, defend workers, protect consumers, and deliver resources to our community. I look forward to sharing more details with you in my upcoming end-of-session report.

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District updates

Episcopal Homes “Democracy” program. I was honored to be invited by former Minnesota House Representative Kathleen Vellenga to visit Episcopal Homes and speak with residents participating in their “Democracy” program. Kathleen has been leading this thoughtful initiative for several years now. Her leadership in creating space for civic engagement and reflection, especially during these turbulent times, is deeply inspiring.

Roseville Eye Clinic. On June 12, I had the pleasure of touring the Roseville Eye Clinic with Dr. Kari Maffitt. Dr. Maffitt and her team are delivering critical vision care to patients across the district. We discussed the importance of preventative eye health, challenges around insurance coverage, and how we can continue to support community-based health-care providers in delivering high-quality care.

Saint Paul Area Synod. Meeting with the Saint Paul Area Synod’s summer interns this June left me filled with hope. These young leaders are bringing energy, compassion, and faith to their work in our community. We spoke about how faith-based service can intersect with polity, equity, and advocacy.

Arcade Street Project. On June 20, I stood alongside my colleague Sen. FOUNG HAWJ at the Arcade Street Project press event, where we celebrated new state funding to support small businesses impacted by long-term road construction. Thanks to a \$250,000 grant secured in the state’s transportation budget, mom-and-pop shops along Arcade Street—many of which are immigrant- and BIPOC-owned—can now access relief grants of up to \$5,000 to help them stay afloat during the rebuilding process.

You can read more about the project and the press event [here](#).



My District 66 Team. As the 2025 legislative session comes to a close, I’d like to thank my incredible District 66 Team. None of this work would be possible without the dedicated support of my legislative assistant, Kashanti; media specialist, Jess; and our interns, Darius and William. Every day, this team works behind the scenes to answer your calls, solve problems, connect constituents to resources, and make sure our office reflects the needs and values of the people we serve.

From tragedy and perseverance, we emerge stronger and more determined. Thank you for entrusting me with the opportunity to serve you. I’m proud of what we have accomplished together and excited for the work still ahead.

Capitol Address

95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-8866



I visited Grand Rapids and Virginia

by Rep. Leigh Finke, 66A

Information is from her latest newsletter.

The political landscape can often feel confusing and difficult to navigate, especially for those addressing trans needs. In a world with an abundance of misinformation, it is crucial that we understand the truth and how current state and federal legislation impacts us all.

Town halls in Greater Minnesota

I am excited to have held my town hall events on Sunday, July 20, in Grand Rapids and Virginia, with opportunities for important discussion focused on queer and trans health, identity, and legislation. This was an opportunity to get answers and clarification directly from me.

Stay connected

If you haven't yet, you can "like" and follow my [official State Representative Facebook page](#) to keep up with my work. I also invite you to contact my office with any questions or comments you may have at (651) 296-3824 or rep.leigh.finke@house.mn.gov. I will be happy to assist you.

For broader legislative information, you can access the Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services for nonpartisan recaps of high-profile bills, committee hearings, and floor sessions with their [Session Daily](#) publication.

It's an honor to represent our community in the Minnesota House.

Legislative Assistant: Robin Mercer-Taylor, robin.mercer-taylor@house.mn.gov



We worked tirelessly to advocate for our communities

by Rep. Athena Hollins, 66B

Information is from her latest newsletter.

The 2025 Minnesota House of Representatives adjourned after successfully passing a state budget for the next two years. We passed the remaining budget bills for [Commerce](#), [Energy](#), [Environment and Natural Resources](#), [Health, Children and Families](#), [Higher Education](#), [Human Services](#), [K-12 Education](#), [Taxes](#), and [Transportation](#).

We started this session the same way we are ending it—standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our community, with labor leaders, with faith leaders, with community advocates, and with our colleagues working tirelessly to advocate for our communities and defend hard-fought legislation we worked decades to secure.

Throughout this session, it became increasingly clear that the GOP was focused on repealing existing programs and reducing services for Minnesotans while providing unnecessary tax cuts for millionaires. This approach creates divisions among hardworking Minnesotans who are struggling economically and facing significant barriers to economic advancement. From targeting our LGBTQ+ community members to reducing vital funding for vulnerable individuals living with disabilities and cutting support for those who care for our aging population, these policy decisions have not served to improve the lives of Minnesotans.

The most concerning action taken this session was the threat to shut down the government—potentially laying off thousands of Minnesotans—in order to eliminate healthcare coverage for our undocumented neighbors. My colleagues in the People of Color and Indigenous (POCI) Caucus joined community leaders and advocates to condemn the MNCare repeal bill. We unequivocally stand in solidarity with all of our immigrant neighbors. Click on the links, where you can watch our [press conference](#) and read our complete [press statement](#).

Each time such decisions are made, it reinforces the perception that certain communities' needs are not prioritized. Our communities deserve legislators who will distinguish between genuine fiscal responsibility and policies that disproportionately impact vulnerable populations.

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Our medical community—including mental-health providers, trauma units, and frontline health-care workers—has expressed deep concern about the consequences of eliminating health-care coverage. These policy decisions have real-world implications that extend far beyond legislative chambers, affecting families who depend on these services during critical moments. The premise that we lack sufficient resources to provide comprehensive care deserves serious examination, particularly when corporate tax reductions occur alongside health-care cuts, and creates a concerning pattern that impacts the communities that have contributed to building this state.

For these reasons, I voted ‘NO’ on this cruel bill that strips health care from our neighbors. Watch my floor remarks [here](#).

2025 DFL accomplishments

The people of Minnesota elected a tied Minnesota House sending a clear message that they wanted us to work together to get the job done. While we could have achieved a lot more in the first session of divided government since 2022, DFLers successfully blocked Republican efforts to roll back laws that help to make Minnesota a great place to live, work, and raise a family, including Paid Family and Medical Leave, universal school meals, and reproductive freedom, and nearly every single DFL accomplishment from the 2023-2024 session remains in effect.

Minnesotans deserve a fair shot to build a better life, but no matter how hard you work, far too many people still can’t afford to get ahead. That’s why DFLers are fighting for change that puts more power in the hands of Minnesotans, not the billionaires and big corporations who are rigging the economy to benefit themselves.

DFLers are listening to working families while Republicans do the bidding of their billionaire and big corporate backers. Just like Trump, Minnesota Republicans want a budget that siphons off more and more wealth for the ultra-rich while hardworking Minnesotans get less.

At every turn, Republicans worked to uphold a status quo that is holding Minnesotans back, including trying to eliminate paid family and medical leave. DFLers protected your rights and freedoms and will continue to fight for a future where everyone can get ahead—not just the ultra-wealthy and well-connected.

ICE in St. Paul

Minnesota Legislature 2025 Accomplishments
This year, DFLers balanced the state budget and blocked Republicans from rolling back laws that make Minnesota a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Budget: ✓ BALANCED	Paid Family & Medical Leave: ✓ PROTECTED
Reproductive Freedom: ✓ PROTECTED	Universal School Meals: ✓ PROTECTED
Earned Sick and Safe Time: ✓ PROTECTED	Gun Violence Prevention Laws: ✓ PROTECTED
Clean Energy Goals: ✓ PROTECTED	LGBTQ+ Equality Laws: ✓ PROTECTED

As your elected leaders, we'll keep engaging our constituents and keep working to put more power in the hands of hardworking Minnesotans so you have a fair shot to build a better life.

You may have heard that there have been ICE sightings and arrests in St. Paul. While St. Paul is a sanctuary city, where we have committed to not working with ICE enforcement, you should still know your rights around federal agents. Know your rights and share information with others:

1. You have the right to remain silent. You do not have to answer any questions from ICE or other law enforcement.
2. You have the right to an attorney. You may have a lawyer with you if ICE or other law enforcement questions you. Do not sign anything without a lawyer.
3. You have the right to decline a search. Do not open your door. ICE is not legally allowed to enter your home without a proper judicial warrant.
4. Don't run, don't panic, stay calm.
5. Learn more about your rights with these resources that are available in multiple languages: Catholic Legal Immigration Network - Know Your Rights and The ACLU's Immigrants' Rights.

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Keep in touch

While the 2025 legislative session has concluded, I strongly encourage you to continue reaching out to share your voices and advocate for the issues that matter most to you. My office remains ready and eager to assist you in any way possible as your state representative.

Thank you for the tremendous honor of serving our community. I look forward to continuing our close collaboration and working on legislation that makes the cost of living more affordable, ensures health care for all, and invests in our community and critical projects.

Minnesotans are strong, resilient, and striving every day to build a better future. That's why DFLers are working for you—not billionaires. Together, we are building a better state for everyone.

You to continue to reach out to my office to address any questions, comments, or concerns you may have. I value hearing from you, email any time at rep.athena.hollins@house.mn.gov or call my office at (651) 296-4224. You can also follow my official [Facebook page](#).

Legislative assistant: Emma Erdahl, emma.erdahl@house.mn.gov



I am busy working with all our partners

by Garrison McMurtrey, Ramsey County Dist. 3 Commissioner

Information is from his latest newsletter.

Luther Seminary

Earlier this month, we learned Luther Seminary will be moving to a nimble learning model and will be transitioning from their physical location in Saint Anthony Park. I am sad to see them, as a pivotal steward in our community for over 100 years, leave our neighborhood but respect their decision as they seek a new space to meet their needs. The announcement from Luther Seminary, is yet another announcement of a closure in our community within the last couple of months. We've also gotten announcements around the closure of Westrock off University Ave. and the University of Minnesota's Les Bolstad golf course in Falcon Heights. With these departures, our community is also presented with a unique opportunity for what's to come.

Although both cities (Saint Paul and Falcon Heights) are the land-use authority for these respective properties, I am looking forward to working with neighbors, city, state, and regional partners, to ensure that we hear all ideas, concerns, and questions. We have a once in a generation opportunity to usher in new development that meets the needs of our community. It will be important that we have collaborative efforts that support local businesses, creates employment opportunities, builds housing, and establishes affordable, sustainable, and thriving neighborhoods for generations to come.

Please feel free to reach out to my office if you have additional comments about the new development opportunities in our district or questions in general. We look forward to talking with you.

District 3 updates:

Ramsey County Transportation Improvement Plan. In early June, I voted in support of the Ramsey County Transportation Improvement Plan —not because it's perfect, but because it lays a strong, flexible foundation for our county's future. This plan does not lock out any single project. It is a living document. It does not signal the end of the county's involvement in West 7th—despite it being a state road, we will and should stay at the table. This plan also does not remove the county's commitment to building transit throughout our communities. I believe it is a strategic investment in a more connected, inclusive, and sustainable Ramsey County. I look forward to working with all our partners to build towards the future. You can watch the *2025-217 Eligible Projects for the Ramsey County Transportation Sales and Use Tax Funding* vote below:



Critical Corridor awardees. Congratulations to the Ramsey County Critical Corridors awardees. This program offers assistance to qualifying public, private, and nonprofit organizations, for place-based investments along major transportation, commercial, and cultural corridors. My colleagues and I via the Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) approved a total of \$300,000 in funding for projects throughout the county. Special congratulations to Critical Corridor awardees in District 3: Union Park District Council, North End Neighborhood Organization, and Rice & Larpenteur Alliance!

You can learn more about the Ramsey County Critical Corridor program [here](#).

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Road construction and maintenance updates

- [Dale Street](#): Paving is complete and traffic lanes are open. Road-striping work is ongoing due to several weather delays, therefore continue to watch out for crews. An emergency stormwater repair is complete, while restoration work is ongoing.
- [Rice Street](#): The next phase of construction has started—roadway excavation and grading, curb and gutter installation, and traffic signal work from Arlington Avenue to Wheelock Parkway. Removal and installation of sanitary sewer, water main, and storm lines is ongoing. Rehab of the bridge over the railway continues from Maryland Avenue to Cottage Avenue continues.
- [Arcade Street/E 7th Street](#): As of June 9th, Arcade Street is closed to through traffic in both directions between Wheelock Parkway and Maryland Avenue. In late June, expect closures in both directions between Magnolia Avenue and Sims Avenue.

Don't forget to continue supporting your local businesses! They are open!

Recent community events

Episcopal Homes visit. In mid-June, I joined State Senator Clare Oumou Verbeten for a joint Q&A with the residents of the Episcopal Homes during their Democracy Club. I had a chance to share about the work happening at the county as well as hear directly from folks about their concerns, especially the proposed federal cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and affordable housing, and the impact

Steamfitters Pipefitters Local 455 visit. I had opportunity to tour the Steamfitters Pipefitters Local 455 facility. They represent more than 1,500 certified steamfitter/pipefitters working across a twenty-two-county jurisdiction. Their trade includes more than fifty segments ranging from welding to rigging. Members have access to a five-year apprenticeship program and journeyman training classes at this site. They continue to not only do amazing work to keep our community going but also have great opportunities to give young people valuable, vocational experience.

Seventeenth Annual Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing Conference. I was honored to participate in the Seventeenth Annual Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing Conference. This year's theme was "Black Fathers," focusing on the current challenges fathers face in their involvement in their children's lives from prenatal and beyond. Additionally, the conference explored culturally sensitive approaches that celebrate and uplift Black fathers.

Contact me:

Garrison McMurtrey - Commissioner, District 3 (651) 266-8378

Matt Hill - Principal Aide (651) 266-8378

Beverly Hammond - Administrative Assistant (651) 266-8353

Going plastic free

by Gwen Willems

There is so much information available about plastics pollution that it is relatively easy to become educated about it. However, more challenging is how we as individuals can lesson our use of these ubiquitous products. Last month was Plastic Free July, sponsored by the Australia-based Plastic Free Foundation and groups such as Clean Water Action.

The problem

As we're all aware, single-use plastics are a growing problem for our water and our health. We have seen islands of them in the ocean, single pieces stuck to aquatic animals, and lately the news is about microplastics found in our bodies, even our brains.



Plastics seem to be everywhere, so without even thinking about the impacts, we can use them—plastic bags, clothing, to-go containers, packaging, beverage containers and lids, condiment packets, and more. It's time-consuming and difficult to recycle, so much of it ends up in the trash and our environment. We need more research on how plastics degrade and create microplastics and if there are any solutions. I recently read about a microorganism that can break down

plastics, but how safe is that and how long would it take to test and complete that option?

What can we do?

The idea of going plastic free feels overwhelming, but certainly we can be aware of and use fewer plastic items. Use reusable and compostable containers. Recycle. The Plastic Free Foundation offers many tips. By category, they include:

At work

Bin audit. A bin audit is a great way to take stock of what waste you could be avoiding, and improve your composting and recycling habits.

Workplace kitchens. Reducing plastic use in your workplace kitchen is easy.

Engaging coworkers. Invite people at work to go plastic free.

Workplace procurement. Make an impact on your workplace's procurement practices.

At school

Bin audit. Are you recycling, composting, or avoiding waste correctly?

At school. Inspire people in your school to go plastic free.

At the school cafeteria. Use easy alternatives to single-use plastic in your cafeteria.

Students and parents. Take the next step and bring plastic-free thinking to your school.

For teachers. Aim to reduce plastic waste in your classroom.

At events

Event signage. Help people go plastic free with effective communication.

Reusables at events. Offer reusable items at your next event.

Keeping it clean. Reduce waste at your next event with a washing-up station.

Event vendors. Make sure vendors don't use plastic at your event.

What others do

Curious to know what people have done for Plastic Free July? Read [inspirational stories](#) from participants reducing single-use plastic waste at home, work, or in their community. Learn about the steps they took, the challenges they overcame, and lessons learned.

Gwen is a member of the Capitol Region Watershed District Community Advisory Committee.



For business

Staff and customers. Encourage staff and customers to go plastic free.

Packaging. Be part of the push to remove plastics from supply chains.

Keeping it clean. Reduce waste at your next event with a washing-up station.

Event vendors. Make sure vendors don't use plastic at your event.

My community

Plastic free picnic. Share the solutions to single-use plastics and inspire people with a fun picnic.

Beach/park clean up. Get a group together to clean up a park or beach.

Find your tribe. Join (or create) a group of people going plastic free.

Movie screening. Organize the screening of a plastic-related film.

Local government

Engaging the community. Explore ways to get your community involved with plastic-free activities.

Workshops and talks. Engage your community with solutions for a world without plastic waste.

Local government uptake. Show the values of your local government by striving to reduce plastic waste.

Local policies. Make widespread impact by changing local government policies.

Get much more detailed information about these options [here](#).

State DFL Central Committee met on July 17

by Gwen Willems

The State DFL Central Committee met by Zoom on July 17. The meeting began with the usual opening business, officer reports, and standing committee reports. Richard Carlbom, Minnesota DFL Chair, described the 2026 Path to Victory plan (see below).

We voted electronically on candidates for open positions on Minnesota DFL Committees. Their names were put forward by the Nominations Committee or they were nominated at the meeting. Winners were:

Party Affairs Committee—Kit Bix, Jonathon Rehlander, and Ayana Smith-Kooiman
Budget Committee—Jeff Strand
Platform and Issues Committee—Jorge Martinez

An update to add the Feminist Caucus to the Community Caucus Bylaws was approved.

2026 Path to Victory

State DFL Chair Richard Carlbom presented a strategic plan that sets the stage for DFL victories statewide in 2026. The following information is from his PowerPoints on the subject.

The landscape includes:

- Trump's approval rating has been declining.
- Democratic party approval is low nationally and in Minnesota.
- Most candidates aren't able to transcend the party band or outperform partisanship.
- There's opportunity to leverage negative perceptions of Trump while improving perceptions of Democrats

Through 2025-2026 DFL goals, we want to set the stage for:

- DFL victories up and down the ballot in 2026.
- Leading to an overwhelming Republican defeat.

We have four priorities on the path to victory.:

- Listen. Learn. Lead. Meet voters where they're at.
- Organize. Invest. Build. Year-round, local engagement.
- Improve our brand. Demonstrate what we are fighting for.
- Hold Republicans accountable. Tie them to Trump's chaos.

Tie Minnesota Republicans to Trump. Tie them to his policy agenda that is hurting families, sowing chaos and confusion, and dividing our communities.

Hold them accountable. Create compelling social media content across the party's platforms to hold Republicans accountable and recruit more Minnesotans into the DFL's organizing ladder of engagement.

Work with the press. Earn negative media attention for Republican opponents.

We're not just a party ... we're a brand. Apply a brand strategy to the DFL. Build recognition, consistency, and loyalty—just like any strong brand. What is our brand? "We fight for working families."

CALENDAR

CD4 Central Committee
Tuesday, August 12, 7:00 p.m.
DFL Headquarters
255 Plato Boulevard, St Paul, MN 55107

SD66 Central Committee
Monday, September 1, 6:30-8 p.m.
New Life Presbyterian Church
965 Larpenteur Avenue, Roseville, MN 55113

CD4 Central Committee
Tuesday, September 9, 7:00 p.m.
DFL Headquarters
255 Plato Boulevard, St Paul, MN 55107

SD66 Central Committee
Monday, October 6, 6:30-8 p.m.
New Life Presbyterian Church
965 Larpenteur Avenue, Roseville, MN 55113

CD4 Central Committee
Tuesday, October 14, 7:00 p.m.
DFL Headquarters
255 Plato Boulevard, St Paul, MN 55107

Events are subject to change. Visit our website at <http://sd66-dfl.org/> for updates.

Elected officials

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sen.coumouverbeten@senate.mn

Rep. Leigh Finke (66A)
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rep.leigh.finke@house.mn

Rep. Athena Hollins (66B)
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County Commissioner
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County Commissioner
Garrison McMurtrey – Dist. 3
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DFL contacts
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4th District 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

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