

2016 VOTER GUIDE

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS DULUTH



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ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS:

The League of Women Voters is non-partisan political organization, that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE:

The LWV Duluth Voter Guide is a non-partisan and impartial guide that has been compiled and published following procedures established by the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota. The purpose of the Voter Guide is to give area voters the opportunity to understand candidate positions on issues of importance this election.

Every candidate in each race listed in this guide was invited to participate. In accordance with the empty-chair policy of the League of Women Voters, if an invited candidate did not respond or declined to participate, a notation has been made in the guide. Each candidate received the same set of questions and had a specified word limit of 250 words per response. Responses exceeding 250 words have been truncated. Candidate responses have not been edited for content or typographical error.

LWV DULUTH NON-PARTISAN POLICY:

The purpose of the League of Women Voters is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens of government. The non-partisanship of LWV is the basis of our public credibility and must be carefully maintained. LWV does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. It is political in that it takes position on selected governmental issues after member study and agreement.

QUESTIONS:

If you have questions about this Voter Guide or would like more information about the League of Women Voters Duluth, please email lwvduluth@lwvmn.org or call (218) 724-0132. Visit our website at: www.lwvduluth.org.



Maria Isley
LWV Duluth President



Chelsea Helmer
LWV Duluth President-Elect

2016 VOTING INFORMATION

GENERAL ELECTION:
November 8, 2016



Additional Dates to Remember:

September 23, 2016
October 18, 2016

Early Voting Begins
Last Day to Pre-Register

Where is my polling place?
Polling Place Finder - Secretary of State website

View your sample ballot
What's on my ballot - Secretary of State website

Election Day Voting Information
Election Day Voting - Secretary of State website

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BALLOT QUESTION

In 2016, there will be one proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot in Minnesota.

Ballot language and instructions:

Voters will have the following constitutional amendment ballot instructions and question on their ballot on November 8, 2016:

Failure to vote on a constitutional amendment will have the same effect as voting no on the amendment.

To vote for a proposed constitutional amendment, fill in the oval next to the word "Yes" on that question. To vote against a proposed constitutional amendment, fill in the oval next to the word "No" on that question.

Remove Lawmakers' Power to Set Their Own Pay.

Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to remove state lawmakers' power to set their own salaries, and instead establish an independent, citizens-only council to prescribe salaries of lawmakers?

Yes

No

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 8

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of United States Representative.

It has been an honor to serve as your Congressman over the last 4 years where I have fought to protect and expand the middle class. Simply put, there is more work to do, which is why I'm asking for your support again in November.

I bring to Congress lessons and values learned as a father and a grandfather, and my marriage to my wife Mary Nolan for 32 years. I was born and raised on the Cuyuna Iron Range, and started a successful small business, creating jobs throughout northern Minnesota from the sawmill and pallet factory I owned in Emily for many years. I am a lifelong hunter and fisherman, who harvests wild rice in the fall, boils maple syrup in spring, and I never miss a fishing opener.

It's these values and experiences I bring with me back to Washington in the fight to protect pensions and programs like Social Security and Medicare, to secure living wages, to improve programs assisting our veterans, and to get more of the products we use every day made right here in America.

The simple truth is, however, there is an element in Washington strongly opposed to the work we do. They would rather protect Wall Street billionaires, other wealthy trust fund elites, and the rigged system voters are fed up with.

I ask you to support me in our effort to bring more fairness and equality for all.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS:

As I travel around our part of the state, I hear from Republicans, Independents, and quite frankly many Democrats who are fed up with Washington's way of doing business. They are had enough with the petty, partisan, political attacks. They are weary of politicians who constantly change their positions depending on the latest poll or political wind direction.

If I am fortunate enough to be elected to Congress, I will put the folks in the 8th District first and fight to unleash the economic boom in greater Minnesota, regardless of the consequences to my party or re-election efforts.

We have the right raw materials here in Minnesota whether it's our Main Street entrepreneurs, the iron and copper in our ground, the timber in our forests, or the grit and determination of the men and women who've lived here for generations. I will be a strong voice for them because the American people – not the government – have the answers to the challenges facing our nation.

For six generations my family has lived and worked in Minnesota's 8th District. I worked at my family's businesses, Mills Fleet Farm and Mills Automotive Group for more than 30 years where I learned the meaning of hard work and what it takes to grow jobs and successfully maintain a main-street oriented business.

As a father, husband, and business owner, I believe our best days are ahead and we must do everything we can to make it morning in America again.

QUESTION 2:

Please explain why you do or do not believe that the federal government should ensure that every American has health coverage.

CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

I strongly believe that the federal government should do more to ensure that every American has health coverage for themselves and their families.

It should be a thing of the past that someone should face bankruptcy to pay a medical bill, or be forced to choose between medical treatment and the basic necessities of life, which is why I support a universal, single-payer system that covers everyone, reins in administrative costs, negotiates fairer prices for the American people and provides better results. This approach has proved successful for many democratic nations, and that's what I intend to keep fighting for.

Meanwhile, I will keep fighting against dangerous Republican policies that would return us to an era where 46 million uninsured people were using Emergency Rooms for care, and a time when people who needed care were denied coverage for a pre-existing condition. The same era where women were charged more than men for the same treatment. That's no solution, and I am committed to making sure that all Americans have access to affordable health care.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 3:

What should the federal government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor the middle class and the wealthy?

CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

The widening wealth gap between Wall Street billionaires, wealthy trust fund elites and the rest of us is harmful to our democracy. We need to do more to reduce economic disparities and lift more Americans into the middle class. One way to reduce the wealth gap and expand the middle class is addressing the issue of tax fairness.

The current tax system is unfair to the middle class. It's costing us tens of millions of jobs. And study after study makes it clear that more tax breaks for the super wealthy, for Wall Street, and for multi-national corporation executives is not the cure. Trickle-down economics makes the rich richer – the poor poorer – and crushes the middle class. We need to fix our tax system.

We can fix it by requiring the wealthy to pay their fair share, while shifting the burden off the poor and the middle class, and institute more tax incentives for small and medium sized businesses to expand and hire more workers.

We can fix it by putting an end to unfair tax and trade policies and agreements negotiated in secret like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). TPP will allow foreign companies to dump below-cost products – propped-up by state-subsidies and produced by under-paid workers – into U.S. markets. What we need instead is to encourage American businesses to expand and hire right here at home, and provide them with a well-trained workforce that isn't coming out of college and vocational training burdened by heavy debt.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

How can the federal government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

This past summer, which saw the killing of Philando Castile in Minnesota and the five police officers in Dallas, I expressed my fear for the future of our Country. We simply must find ways to come together and end the division, demonization and senseless violence that will rip our Country apart if it continues.

I've expressed my support for legislation that would call for greater requirements for enrollees at law enforcement academies to receive sensitivity training on ethnic and racial bias, cultural diversity, and police interaction with the disabled, mentally ill, and new immigrants. It would also push states to adopt laws requiring independent investigations and prosecutions of law enforcement officers in cases where one or more of the alleged offenses involves an officer's use of deadly force in the course of carrying out his or her official duties.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 5:

What should the federal government's top three priorities be in setting a sound energy policy?

CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

As the Congress works to craft our national energy policies, I believe our primary focus must be to develop clean and renewable energy supplies and technologies right here in America that reduce our contribution to climate change and create good, middle class jobs. Furthermore, as a member of the Congressional Biomass Caucus, I continue to work with my colleagues to support the development of Minnesota's clean energy potentials and elevate their profile in Congress. To that end, I have supported legislation that makes use of American innovation and supports policies to require the use of domestic content in green technologies.

Additionally, I have supported legislation to end outdated tax breaks for big oil companies and impose a carbon tax, with new revenues dedicated to reducing the deficit and investing in clean energy jobs. I have also fought to sustain and strengthen landmark environmental laws that help address air pollution, oil spills, disposal of solid and hazardous waste, toxic chemical use and reduction, and our nation's drinking water resources.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

What do you believe the federal government should do to limit the impact of global climate change?

The federal government can and should play an important role in reducing the impacts of global warming and climate change. Our air, lakes, rivers and forests, are crucial to our economy in Northern Minnesota. The degradation of our air and water, along with global warming, threaten the very survival of our species here on earth. We must protect the environment in order to not just protect our economy and tourism, but to protect our traditions and way of life.

The Administration's efforts to advance the Clean Power Plan and reduce carbon pollution from power plants are also on the right track, but must do more to take into account the progressive work states like Minnesota have already done to reduce emissions. Minnesota's utilities have spent millions complying with existing regulations and mandates, and should be credited for their important work.

Congress can do its part too and help limit the impact of global climate change by incentivizing the use of new sustainable and renewable energy sources, funding research into the impacts of warming temperatures on unique environments and landscapes like our northern forests and cold water lakes and streams, researching the long term impacts global warming will have on our health and safety, and reducing the impacts of new climate change related invasive plant and animal species.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers

The right to vote is fundamental to citizens of the United States but it is under assault, as it was here in Minnesota in 2012. More states across the country are making it harder, sometimes near impossible, for eligible citizens to exercise their right. Moreover, many areas of our current electoral system are outdated and in desperate need of modernization.

We must do everything we can to expand this sacred responsibility to all people who are constitutionally eligible to vote. I support continuing efforts being used to reach more people like automatic voter registration, expanding early voting and same day registration, the push to make Election Day a National Holiday. I strongly oppose unconstitutional, cumbersome and restrictive photo ID requirements that are used to keep students, seniors and minorities from having equal access to voting.

Minnesotans understand that broad access to voting is fundamental to the success and health of our democracy, and we are fortunate to have an open and fair voting process, without barriers to youth, people of color, seniors, and people living in poverty. Each time that the voting franchise has been expanded to a new group of people in our country, our democratic institutions have been strengthened.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

How can the federal government, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12?

As a former teacher and proud member of the MEA (now Education Minnesota), I have spent a lifetime fighting to expand early childhood education initiatives, so every child will be ready to meet their full potential. I continue to keep working to fully fund elementary and secondary education, and to supply every student and school with the 21st-century technology and resources necessary to succeed.

Specifically, here in the Northland I have seen first-hand the success of Head Start, which provides kids in low-income families with special education, health and nutrition services they need to get going in life. For example, in Duluth the services provided through Head Start translate into 3.5 hours every day with teachers and counselors. Duluth wants to expand Head Start services, and they're not alone.

The good news is that the bipartisan Education Bill (the Every Student Succeeds Act) that passed Congress with my strong support includes pre-school development grants and other provisions that allow states more flexibility to use federal funds for Head Start and other early childhood development programs. Meanwhile, Sen. Patty Murray of Washington and I are championing our "Strong Start for America's Children" Act to provide even more resources to states. And I'm cosponsoring the bipartisan Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act to ensure that children in pre-school programs for more than 8 hours a day get an additional nutritious snack or meal to keep their energy up as they learn and grow.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

Please explain why you do or do not think it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

I believe it is imperative to reduce the role of money in American elections and change the way we do our politics. The influx of secret, dark money - ushered in by the Citizen's United decision - denigrates the candidates, discourages voter turnout and destroys citizen confidence in our democracy.

Members of Congress spend too much time campaign fundraising and not nearly enough time working together to get things done for the American people. Part of the solution I support is to ban Members of Congress from personally asking for money and put an end to the practice of "dialing for dollars" and making direct requests for money would be a thing of the past. It's a simple, common sense fix that already applies to judicial elections in 30 states across our nation.

Our work to pass this legislation will also help build support for my Restore Democracy legislation - a blueprint for even more comprehensive campaign and election reform. The foundation lies in overturning the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United decision that opened the floodgates to billions of dollars in special interest money being secretly funneled into campaigns. Our legislation would also put Congress on record supporting small donor-public campaign financing; limiting the campaign season; fully disclosing all campaign contributions; ending partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts; establishing national online voter registration and stopping voter suppression.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

What measures do you support to protect America from domestic acts of terrorism?

We must leave no stone unturned to keep the American people safe and protect ourselves at home and on our borders from ISIS-trained terrorists. To be sure, we must be strong, tough and unwavering in defending our country and protecting our people from the threat of terrorism. To that extent, we must constantly be examining our intelligence-gathering capabilities and making improvements wherever necessary. Everyone who enters the United States from another nation must be carefully screened, regardless of the time or the inconvenience involved.

We must bring the murderers of our citizens to justice, and I applaud all efforts by the President and our law enforcement agencies and military in their determination to do that.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

QUESTION 11: CANDIDATE RICK NOLAN:

In your opinion what are the most important challenges facing our country and how do you propose to address these challenges?

One challenge we face is that an increasing number of Americans feel as though the system is rigged against them, and sadly they are often right. So our ongoing mission has been to fix this system and make government work for families and not Wall Street millionaires and billionaires.

To help fix a rigged system, I have repeatedly testified before the International Trade Commission to stop the illegal dumping of low-quality foreign government subsidized steel. That effort has put over 1,000 people back to work on the Iron Range and throughout our region.

I have fought to protect the pensions of Teamsters that were threatened earlier this year. Make no mistake – there are powerful forces trying to do away with people’s pensions, and we will continue to fight them on every front. It’s also why I continue to fight to protect Social Security and Medicare from being privatized and gambled away on Wall Street.

That mission to unrig the system highlights why we must fix tax and trade policies to encourage businesses to expand and hire here at home – and keep our jobs from being sent overseas thanks to damaging ‘free trade’ agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership – negotiated in secret with big, multi-national corporations with no interest but their own profit and gain.

I respectfully ask for your support to join me on this mission to secure a system that works for our Nation’s middle class, not one rigged against them.

CANDIDATE STEWART MILLS: Declined to respond.

STATE SENATE DISTRICT 7

QUESTION 1: **CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:**

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of State Senator.

My name is Donna Bergstrom. I am running for State Senate District 7. I consider my interest in serving as an elected official to be an extension of my life-long commitment to our country, our constitution, and our freedoms – freedoms I proudly defended while serving our nation for over 20 years as a US Marine Corps Reserve Intelligence Officer, retiring in 2010 as a Lieutenant Colonel. Having been born and raised in northeastern Minnesota, I have remained committed to this region's welfare. After graduating from Carlton High School, I completed my undergraduate degree in Political Science at the UMN-Twin Cities. In addition to military service, I have worked for the consulting firm Booz|Allen|Hamilton and owned my own small business. I believe in life-long learning, and have recently obtained my Master of Jurisprudence degree from Loyola University-Chicago School of Law in Children's Law and Policy. I love Minnesota, and retain my commitment to the welfare of our state and its citizens. As an American Indian, I understand the sense of estrangement many minorities feel towards the political process. I want to give strength to the voices of those who feel marginalized, and will bring a fresh perspective and a new voice, inclusive of our values and priorities. A healthy democratic process makes space for divergent views, and is strengthened by creating solutions by working with those affected by the practices of the policy when implemented. I believe we need to work on being more inclusive in our politics.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

Hello! My name is Erik Simonson, and I am the DFL endorsed candidate for Minnesota's Senate District 7. I have represented the western portions of Duluth for the past four years in the House of Representatives, and when Senator Reinert announced he would not seek re-election in 2016 to the Senate, I decided to make a run for that seat. I've worked hard on behalf of Duluth and our great state over the past four years, and would love the opportunity to carry that very same work ethic into the Minnesota Senate!

Duluth needs a strong and experienced leader in the Minnesota Senate that will work to bring resolve to many ongoing issues: Issues such as a comprehensive transportation package, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, racial and gender equity, and a stronger public education system.

Duluth has many people living in poverty, many people working 2 and 3 jobs to make ends meet, and far too many people who still remain homeless. We need smart and strategic investments and policies to make our community stronger.

And we need legislators going forward with the skills of negotiating. We've seen an unwillingness to compromise between parties, and those actions are putting out entire state at risk. I bring those exact skills to the table, and I am committed to getting things done!

It is these reasons and more, that drive me to be involved, and they align with the core values and beliefs I want to carry to the Minnesota Senate!

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?

Economic disparity is a legitimate and important issue. Socialization of the economy, however, is not the answer. An important aspect to focus on is the graduation of Minnesota's High School students. Increasing the graduation rates of students has an economic impact, as students with a degree have better access to employment opportunities along with access to advanced schooling options. As a member of the State Senate, I will work to improve high school graduation rates among the minority populations so that they leave high school on a better footing that can lead to better job prospects and higher educational opportunities. Cultures of despondency, especially in minority communities need to be addressed, and improved educational opportunities are a vital first step. Having worked in the past six years primarily with the American Indian population in Duluth, I have witnessed first-hand the problems experienced by generations of American Indians who often are overlooked or marginalized from the dominant culture. Removing barriers for all people to access good jobs is a critical component for regaining economic vitality in Minnesota. As a Veteran, I also believe we can make progress in streamlining regulations for certifying similar skills obtained in the military to those in the economic sector.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

After four years in the legislature, I am even more convinced that two of the most significant contributing factors to the economic disparity include lack of access to public education and a lack of access to adequate and affordable housing. I have seen too many examples of poor families who cyclically remain poor because they cannot find a decent job. And in order to get such a job, education is often times a critical component that too many simply cannot afford.

Ask nearly any individual who has been unemployed, or underemployed, and is struggling to find work, or fighting to achieve a higher education and they will tell you the most important factor contributing to any chance of success is a place to call home.

I am very proud of the work we began during the 2013-14 legislative session. Work that included raising the minimum wage, raising income taxes on the top 2% of wage earners, and historical investments in education and affordable housing.

How do we fix this? We need to have the political will to ensure every Minnesota has access to free public education, from pre-K through high school. And yes, we must find the means to ensure every single graduate from public high school in Minnesota has the opportunity to obtain an associate's degree, free of charge.

If we want to close this gap – we will need to lift up those at the bottom. And that will have to include contributions from those at the top.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

What are the most important things that should be done to improve the region's economy?

Minnesota is among the highest taxed states in the nation, both personal and corporate. While some taxes are obviously needed for essential services and public welfare, more taxes are not the answer. Attention to state tax rates is key to understanding the impact on our local economy. In addition, the sometimes overly burdensome regulatory environment in which small businesses are forced to operate must be addressed if the region's economy is to improve. Small businesses are the backbone of our region's economy. Manufacturing, farming and taconite industries have been hard-hit and those areas are struggling to make gains. The layoffs on the Iron Range impact the vitality of the region, and the lives of families who live in there. Tax relief for businesses and job creators is an option that will allow for more capital to be available for investment, equipment purchases, business expansion and added employees. The budget decisions made in the upcoming legislative sessions need to measure whether the decision supports or hurts job growth. My interest is in ensuring Minnesota is a viable option for new businesses, and helps promote business growth.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

With respect to our regional economy, we first will need to see our various forms of local governments come together and agree that by working collectively toward a sustainable future, we can actually make significant progress. For too long, our region has suffered due to conflicting visions of what a viable forecast might be.

There ought to be no question that each portion of our region can play a supporting role, or a dissenting role in economic development. We must find a way to work together. Working in silo's may provide short term relief, or support the status quo, but we can and should do better.

Beyond that, diversification will be the key to any form of economic improvements. There are significant portions of our economy that are cyclical in nature, and diversifying beyond the historical norm may help in offsetting the cycles as well as adding economic growth.

We should be encouraging municipal and county governments to work together to identify region wide solutions. Diversification is all too often ignored, or thought of as the "they will come to us" solution. But in reality, and considering the impact of today's global market opportunities, our region needs to be the inspiration of emerging opportunities, and not the typical response based approach we see too often.

I am more than willing to work across these boundaries, it also takes willing partners in all forms of government to make a true impact.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

What do you believe state government should do to limit the impact of global climate change?

Parts of Minnesota are economically dependent upon industries that are considered major contributors to climate change. This is especially true on the Iron Range, where proposals to mine copper and other minerals may threaten the fragile environmental conditions that Minnesotans value. Providing jobs for the population of that region is important, but more attention needs to be focused on economic diversification so that short-term mining projects with long-term environmental effects are not forced upon the state. The United States needs a vibrant steel industry for both economic and national security reasons, and taconite mining on the Range is a vital part of that process, but economic diversification is important for long-term environmental and economic reasons. Minnesota can also address the issue of global climate change through economic incentives for the use of more fuel-efficient vehicles. The Pollution Control Agency monitors the quality of Minnesota's land, air and water, along with developing and enforcing rules to protect health standards. The PCA oversees the federal Clean Power Plan aimed at reducing carbon dioxide pollution from power plants. Measures such as these ensure Minnesota is a partner in limiting the impact of global climate change.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

The State of Minnesota and Governor Dayton have been leaders in our nation regarding this issue. Governor Dayton has directed that Minnesota work to meet and even exceed the newest national air quality standards, despite the issue being stayed by the courts at the national level.

But we can do so much more. The argument that accelerated climate change isn't real should be retired once and for all. The fact is, the legislature ought to be even more aggressive when it comes to implementing standards to reduce carbon dioxide generation, renewable energy standards, and incentivizing change toward net zero behavior. Coal cannot be part of our energy company's portfolio as we look into the future, rather a renewed effort on generating clean energy in Minnesota should be on the horizon. Minnesotan's and its energy companies send billions of dollars out of state each year to purchase energy – imagine the impact if we could keep even just one billion here – spent within our own borders?

The State should be working with municipalities and counties to help them reduce their carbon footprint, and that includes not just generation methods but consumption of energy as well. And of course our own MNSCU and university buildings ought to be the models when it comes to energy efficient behaviors.

Our future in slowing climate change will include a multitude of approaches. From energy generation sources, to building efficiency changes, to recycling and greener transportation methods, Minnesota can and should be a leader in this effort.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

What should the state government's top three priorities be in setting a sound energy policy?

A sound energy policy would include: reducing dependence on foreign oil by increasing domestic options; increase conservation and efficiency; and, support research and development in technology for energy options. Short-term gains could include financial incentives for more fuel-efficient vehicles that will reduce fossil fuel consumption. I also support expansion of energy sources that do not contribute to global climate change, including nuclear power and, when feasible, solar and wind. With each option comes an unintended consequence, such as in the use of wind power that threatens migratory birds wind-turbine farms. Diversity of energy options will also help businesses and consumers select the energy option that works best for them, and is possibly more cost effective for them. Government policies need to be inclusive of efforts that also streamline regulations in order to ensure reliable and affordable energy is available for all consumers.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

1. Bring all the interested and affected parties together to be a part of creating Minnesota's next steps. Mandates are rarely popular with utilities, but if it is made clear at the outset what the absolute goals are, at the very least everyone will have opportunity to weigh in. Beyond that, the initiative will be considered by the legislature, but work done on the front end often goes a long way toward successful implementation.
2. Establish clear, and aggressive goals toward carbon use reductions, and an increased renewable energy standard. If we truly want to make the necessary impact and slow the accelerated climate change, then we have to have the political courage to put into law real goals that will provide that desired impact. The fact is the technology is there, or at least emerging, and if we jump on it now Minnesota has a real opportunity to be a national leader in this area.
3. Develop incentives for private homeowners who want to be a part of the solution. There ought not be significant financial barriers for anyone who wants to be a part of the solution. We also need to look at further funding for municipalities and other public entities and their waste water treatment plant upgrades. There is no question that doing the right thing is going to cost money. And by spreading the cost across the entire state we can hopefully limit the impact significantly.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?

I take the issue of being able to vote very seriously, and believe that voting is a vital component of our democracy. When the 26th Amendment of the Constitution was ratified, the nation ushered in the vote of the 18-21 year olds. They brought a new voice, a new perspective. We can ensure voter access and voter identification. Equating a requirement for voters to prove their identity at polling places as an unduly burdensome obstacle is un-American. Every citizen who meets basic, common sense criteria, such as proof of identity and no record of felonious criminal behavior, is free to vote. We require proof of identification in this country for a passport, for a job, for medical care, for a fishing license, for operation of a motor vehicle, for cashing a check, but not for voting. The basic efforts government can make to ensure it is “one person, one vote” are required to ensure a strong democracy. Technology can assist in ways that were not possible in the past. In addition, taking a look at expanding voting from one day to several has increased voter turn out in other states. Looking at what the barriers are to voting is important for our state and its citizens.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

First, we need to continue to push back against suppressive measures such as voter ID. We all know, or should know, that these types of initiatives are nothing more than disguised attempts to restrict voters from participating.

We have made significant headway in the area of early voting recently, and the legislature should continue those efforts. No excuse absentee voting should be the way all elections are administered, and every single lawmaker ought to be seeking ways to make voting easier, not more difficult.

They say the best offense is a good defense, and this is an area where that will be critically important in the coming years. For the average citizen who carries an identification card in their pocket, voter ID laws seem common sense. But as I can attest to, there are many citizens who do not fit that mold, and it is those we must work to protect.

In addition, Minnesota should work towards automatic voter registration. I would like to see registration be automatic with each driver's license application, and with graduation from high school. We will have to work with other entities to accomplish this, but I believe it is effective policy and will hopefully encourage voting and more participation.

Lastly, education, education, and more education on the critical importance of voting. This is a personal challenge we should all assume, and work to ensure our friends and families all understand the importance of the right to vote.

QUESTION 7: **CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:**

Please explain why you do or do not think it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

I would prefer to reduce the role of money in American elections, but the United States Supreme Court has repeatedly determined otherwise. Financial contributions to political campaigns and causes are considered a legitimate expression of free speech, and both major political parties benefit from that situation. At the end of the day, however, an enlightened electorate can overcome the oft-times degrading effect of money on campaigns. Money, more than anything, buys publicity for the candidate in question. That publicity, whether in the form of radio, television and “social network” advertisements, or through direct mailings, is only as effective as the public allows. An informed citizenry remains the best protection against the influence of money in political campaigns. A separate issue is the concern among most of the public that campaign donations guarantee access to elected officials and even to favorable outcomes in the legislative process. That is the more serious problem, but is often misunderstood. Money, as often as not, flows to politicians whose positions on issues already coincide with those of the donors. In other words, it’s not a quid pro quo so much as a situation in which donors contribute to those politicians with whom they are in agreement.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

One only needs to spend about 5 minutes watching television in an election year to see the tremendous impact of outside monies on elections. Since Citizens United, more and more money from unidentifiable sources has been pouring into elections at all levels of government.

Much of the outside money is spent on misleading voters. This takes real time away from the actual candidate’s schedules, who must work to counter these attacks with often times little or no real resources. I assure you – that is time much better spent interacting with voters personally!

Elections ought to be publically funded, and Citizens United ought to be over turned. This would allow for a more civil and factual debate amongst candidates, more direct contact with voters, and eliminate a large percentage of the negative campaigning.

Studies have shown that these advertising attacks are in many cases influential. It is highly unfortunate when a good candidate loses only because they were outspent, but it is even more devastating when they lose due to misleading or false attacks.

Corporations often have deep pockets, and independent expenditures are easy to pull off. We need to fight to put stronger disclosure laws in place so everyone can see exactly who is funding what.

Isn’t it ironic that I as a candidate have to publically disclose the source of every \$200 donation to my campaign, but an outside entity can spend as much as they want independently without disclosing a thing? Something wrong there!

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12?

Minnesota has been a leader and champion for quality education for many years, and was the first state to pass Charter School legislation in 1991 that set the stage for innovative labs of learning that were to be shared with the traditional public schools. Additionally, open enrollment is an option that gives parents and students the right to enroll in a public school of choice, including online schools. All day kindergarten is funded statewide, providing another option to create equitable access to education. State government can help to ensure that all students enjoy equitable access to public education facilities by ensuring that considerations other than local tax bases determine quality of education. State government can reform legislation so that the school funding formula is more equitable across the state, rather than the current situation where some school districts receive more funding per student than other districts. I support giving parents who have children better served by non-public schools a tuition tax credit as doing so reduces the burdens of the families and, the cost to the state is decreased because the student is not attending a public school. I support holding staff and administration accountable for systems that best reflect how to achieve improved student performance, particularly concerning American Indian students, who currently graduate at rates of about 50% statewide – making Minnesota 2nd worse in the nation. Public schools should reflect 21st century learning for our students.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

Most politicians will agree that public education is one of the most important, and core functions of state government. And I also believe that many of us now understand the empirical evidence in support of pre-K. What remains is a baffling question of how do we put additional and adequate funding into the formula.

Personally, I think many of the challenges in our public schools currently are a result of inadequate funding. There are not always enough teachers to provide individual attention. There are often not enough counselors to deal with today's emerging social challenges. Important life based programs are being eliminated.

Minnesota is at a public school funding cross roads. We have to either generate new revenues to put into the school districts, and allow them the opportunity to do their work, or we have to reform how we currently allocate revenues.

The problem with adding money without increasing revenues (reform) is that it means reductions somewhere else in the state budget. And there is just not an opportunity to do that. Which leaves us with the need for new revenues. If education truly is the most important priority, then I want to work with public school teachers and the districts to identify a solution, and then implement it. There is no magical solution, and in reality it will be a huge challenge, but doing nothing will only lead to further degradation of our public schools.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government, help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

Addressing racial and cultural divides in public safety requires actions on both sides of the equation. Law enforcement agencies can better train their personnel, while aggrieved communities can better address some of the underlying causes of the problems currently harming those communities, including drugs and violent crime. State government can help in both areas. Increased funding—to the extent that budgetary deficiencies are a part of the problem in fielding officers better prepared to police ethnically-diverse or minority neighborhoods—can help to alleviate the problem. More important, however, is the need to address the underlying problems endemic to some communities. State-level attention to these problems can help to illuminate societal ills that breed discontent and violence, and that leave police officers feeling threatened. Addressing the problems of poverty, substance abuse, and violence, however, has been a major focus of government at all levels for many decades (Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, for example). We did not arrive at our current situation overnight, and we will not correct these problems overnight. Improving educational and employment opportunities, which usually goes hand-in-hand, is an essential first step, and the state certainly has a role to play in ensuring positive outcomes.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

Step one: Admit that black lives matter. And remember, it is not to say that only black lives matter, rather that it is time to believe that black lives do matter also.

This is a real problem in Minnesota, as it is in many areas of our country. The facts do not lie. White Minnesotans do not make up the majority of our homeless. White Minnesotans do not make up the majority of our prison or jail populations. White Minnesotans do not make up the majority of our most economically challenged communities.

White Minnesotans do, however, make up the majority of the upper economic and social classes. And they do make up the majority of elected officials. And they do make up the majority of our graduating classes, be it high school or higher education. All of these glaring comparisons lead to distrust, anger, frustration and continued confrontations.

The state needs to put adequate funding into increasing opportunities for people of color, whether it be in ensuring educational opportunities, or small business loans, or by simply working to ensure adequate housing is available. This should be a top priority if we truly want to stop what is happening at its source.

But I think the most important point is that decisions about the future opportunities for people of color cannot be made by the privileged few. Rather we need to listen, and hear solutions from those directly affected. Key word? Listen.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE DONNA BERGSTROM:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

There are a number of challenges facing our region, including those mentioned above. One of the most pressing is the heroin epidemic ravaging our neighborhoods. Duluth has a very serious problem with substance abuse, and the resurgence of heroin, as a “drug of choice,” is a dismal sign of the depths to which we have descended as a society. Drug and alcohol abusers regularly occupy limited space in hospital emergency rooms. The “war on drugs” has not been successful, yet attacking the trade in substances like heroin must remain a priority, and that means working with other states (especially Illinois), the medical community, and the federal government. Local government needs to be forthcoming with the public with respect to the scale of this problem, and begin efforts to curb the problem with multiple measures, including educating the public on the dangers of addiction. Another, related challenge involves the shortage of adequate facilities for mental health patients. Along with increased funding for substance abuse treatment and detention centers, the region must address the shortage of infrastructure for treating the mentally ill. The economic situation on the Iron Range must be addressed. Northeastern Minnesota can support mining and the environment. Minnesota has taxpayer-funded agencies to oversee the mining industries activities. Taconite mining is eminently supportable, and I will continue to support such activities.

CANDIDATE ERIK SIMONSON:

1. Climate change.
See above responses.
2. Economic diversification.
See above responses.
3. Racial and gender equity.

I touched on racial inequalities in a previous question, but we cannot ignore the fact that women are also still facing challenges only due to gender. All people, regardless of gender, color, religious choice, or any other socio-economic factor should be denied the opportunity to advance at the same pace, at the same level, and with the same level of benefit and respect.

4. Labor and environmental harmony.

As the debate continues over the potential mining in our region of copper, nickel and other precious metals, the rhetoric between opposing groups is reaching an unhealthy level for communities to sustain. The fact is we need jobs in our region. I believe strongly in unionized workforces and their positive impacts on the middle class and society as a whole. I also believe just as strongly in clean water, air, and sustainable environmental resource policy. As individuals, we will never agree on everything, and we must learn to respect the opinions of the opposing side. Regardless of the outcome of this process, we must work together in a collaborative fashion to accomplish a better, stronger Minnesota. If these mines end up not being permitted, then we must double our efforts to diversify our economy. And if they are permitted, then we must work equally as hard to ensure they are operated safely.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 3B

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of State Representative.

I am running for House of Representatives because I have seen our government fail to work session after session. The political divide in this country and state has begun to take its toll and I believe I can be a different kind of candidate. We need to elect people with new ideas and the ability to ask tough questions. Being a small business owner and growing up in a family owned business I learned early on about honesty and integrity. My family instilled in me that you work for your pay and you show respect even to those you may differ from. This is what we need in St. Paul representing our district. We have had single representation for 40 years now and it is time for a new voice for our area.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

I love the job and I make a difference! I work hard, listen and suggest solutions that others enthusiastically accept because they participated in the process. Over the years I have earned recognition and respect for my leadership style which is democratic, supportive, encouraging, inclusive and promotes consensus. That being said, *experience* and *seniority* matters at the legislature and I have both and I use it judiciously. The concerns and interests of the people who live in district 3B hold priority and I demonstrate that by being available all year long not *just* at election season. I am constantly involved, committed and I treasure the confidence the voters given me. Thank you.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?

At this time I feel governments' role in this matter is to help close the gap. But we must close the gap in some areas in new ways. As a state we have to keep providing help for those that need it. We need to provide programs and the ability for our population to bring itself to a higher level. We currently fund our schools K-12 with 46% of our current tax revenue yearly and healthcare has been progressing to take over 20%. The taxpayers of this state have already begun to feel not only the societal strain but also a tax strain. By creating a more positive business atmosphere in Minnesota, we can provide additional revenue and help lift the burden from taxpayers. Some programs that we use to help close the disparity gap need to be audited to make sure the money is getting to the source of the need and not being used up in redundant systems and staffing. I believe going forward with new ideas and new representatives we will be able to have a new outlook on closing the gap and creating a more prosperous Minnesota.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

One way to address economic disparities is through the tax code. Ensuring an equitable education system is another approach. I also think it would more likely happen if voters would return a DFL Majority to the Mn. House and Senate to work in cooperation with Governor Dayton.

In 2012 Minnesota voters voiced their concerns over the State's growing inequality, and in 2013-14, the DFL Majority followed through on the promises to restore fairness to the tax system, structurally balance the budget, and make overdue investments in middle income tax relief, education and job creation.

Specific to the tax code, the 2013 Legislature and Governor Dayton made substantial progress in making Minnesota's tax system more equitable by requiring high income Minnesotans to pay their fair share. During 2013-14, the DFL Majority also boosted progressive Property Tax Refund programs for homeowners and renters by \$177 million and middle income tax cuts by more than \$100 million, including an expanded Working Family Credit. These efforts made the tax system more fair and progressive.

A \$100 million drafting error prevented the 2015-16 Omnibus Tax Bill from being signed into law.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

What are the most important things that should be done to improve the region's economy?

In 2013 Minnesota's state and local tax collection ranked 6th highest in the country and has not improved. In order to bring in new business and keep the graduates we must provide a better tax climate. Snow birds and college graduates are leaving the state yearly for states that offer no state income tax or a better tax climate. Minnesota is very proud of its colleges and universities. Unfortunately after we educate our students they realize this is not the best state to start a business and save for their future. Snow birds and the older population also begin to move to other states to escape the taxation and have the money they need to live on fixed incomes etc. In order to improve our region's economy we have to get new businesses and large companies to stay and also come back to the state with people tax friendly legislation.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

- a. Support and invest in education from early childhood through higher education with affordable lifelong learning opportunities. Support the plan that will reduce Higher Ed tuition and student debt. Offer family incentives to begin college savings accounts before the child starts to walk. Expand grants to "full service" k-12 schools.
- b. Restore the cuts and expand the state share to MN Investment Fund and Job Creation Fund at DEED.
- c. greater Mn communities need help in establishing workforce housing when businesses want to expand.
- d. Pass a Bonding bill that includes all the NE Mn regional projects.
- e. Develop a twenty year bipartisan, sustainable, statewide comprehensive transportation plan that improves our roads, bridges and public transit.
- f. Protect our environment, especially our water resources.
- g. Work to retain the good jobs we have and offer incentives to employers who offer full time living wage jobs in our area.
- h. Support increase of state investment in Natural Resources Research Institute for their base funding. NRRI has proven over and over again to be a gem in Minnesota's northland. During the past year alone this organization of top notch scientists and engineers have assisted 123 businesses with technical R&D to help them succeed, and provided tools for wise environmental decision-making to local, federal and international agencies.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

What do you believe state government should do to limit the impact of global climate change?

I believe that the state of Minnesota has begun to show itself as a leader in environmental studies. We have in recent decades managed to undo some of the wrong we have done to our environment at a state level. Our state has also become a leader in trying to decrease our dependence on foreign fuels. We can help even further, by creating a better business climate and creating products here at home instead of importing them in from countries who pollute and do not care about our climate. There are foreign countries that produce multitudes of CO2 emissions compared to us and if we cannot get them to stop via world agreements, the next step is to slow their progress by no longer relying on their products. We have the ability to mine and produce products in environmentally friendly ways. We should continue to be the leader in this field.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

Under the federal Clean Power rule each state has to develop a plan and submit it to EPA on how it will reduce carbon emissions (in the energy sector) by 30-40% by 2030. MN agencies, utilities and most stakeholders have been moving forward with our state plan. If Mn. implements a sound and ambitious carbon reduction plan we should have very little problem meeting those goals. For at least 15 years MN has been a national leader in developing renewable energy and reducing energy consumption . We should continue the policies we have in place for the Renewable Energy Standard and the Conservation Improvement Program as well as existing long- term plans for MN.Power, Xcel and Otter Tail. By being out in front we should reach 40% and make an impact.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

What should the state government's top three priorities be in setting a sound energy policy?

- 1) Reduce our dependence on foreign energies.
- 2) Invest in renewable energy as prices become sustainable and cost effective.
- 3) Invest and create programs for new entrepreneurs and colleges to find new ways to provide energy.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

When setting sound energy policy we should consider: 1) developing renewable energy, 2) conserving energy, and 3) complying with the Clean Power Rule. Renewable energy has been a huge success story in MN. In 2002 less than 5% of our electricity came from renewable sources but by 2015 over 21% was produced. I initiated legislation that established the wind power industry in MN. In 1991 I received the American Wind Energy Association Achievement Award for leadership advancing the cause of Clean Energy Development. In this century Solar and biomass have made great strides and we could still do much more with hydro-electric power.

The Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) was part of legislation since the early 1990's. Under CIP gas and electric utilities are encouraged to find ways for their customers to use less energy. In the last 20 years CIP has avoided 82 million tons of carbon emissions and saved consumers over \$6 billion.

Implementing Minnesota's plan under the clean Power rule could also be a big part of our future energy policy. If so, there could be further improvements to CIP, and further development of renewable energy using discoveries and recommendations of NRRI. Some individuals think we should include a carbon allowance trading program ("cap and trade") but I am not totally convinced that would be a benefit for the nation, world or planet.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?

This issue has become a hot topic on both sides of the conversation. While I firmly believe we should not allow there to be an undue barrier to voting, I also believe that the ability for a person to vote in the United States is a fundamental core freedom we have. In this day and age we have to prove who we are to do many things such as applying for welfare, social security, flying on a plane, and even buying groceries with a check or credit card. As we have grown into the world of technology we have been forced to provide identification more and more. We are asked to give our social security numbers over the phone and provide ID to purchase alcohol and tobacco. As time progresses I believe you may even be able to vote online. If we can pay our taxes and do 99% of our daily lives via electronic, the time will come when we are also able to vote online. Currently we have security issues that prevent us from doing this but the time will come when we do not. At that time the barriers to voting will fall and I hope that we will be able to see our participation rate on a national level sky rocket.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

In this 2016 election we will be using "no excuse absentee voting" for the first time. All citizens can vote by absentee ballot without having to state a reason why they are voting early. This will offer all voters the opportunity to complete their ballot when it is most convenient for them to do so.

On line Voter Registration is also allowed in 2016. Registered voters may also update their existing information on line. Same Day Voter Registration continues to be allowed at the polls on Election Day.

In person absentee voting will be allowed during the final seven days preceding an election. During this seven-day period, an individual may appear at a county office (some city and township offices may also allow for in-person absentee voting), and ask to vote. The person will receive an absentee ballot, allowed to mark it, and deposit the completed ballot into a vote tabulating machine.

I'm sure that what we experience during this election cycle will result in new ideas for additional law modifications that will make voting and voter registration more available to more people who are qualified to vote in Minnesota.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

Please explain why you do or do not think it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

I think to keep our fundamental truths and structure at some point we need to find a way to allow anyone with the qualifications to run. On local levels this may not become such an issue. On a national level I think when it starts to need \$ 1,000,000,000 to become president we have an inherent problem. I wrote the zeros because it's important to ponder. As a first time candidate I have felt the crunch to raise money and felt the internal struggle to question if my goal is to raise money or meet people and give them my concept and ideas. It is a very straining issue. We should at a state level make sure that anyone with the fortitude to step in the ring has an equal opportunity to run. Just as we do not want voters to have an undue burden, we should remove undue burdens from the candidate's process also.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

I would like to reduce the amount of money a candidate or campaign is expected to raise and spend in an election. I would also like to see more transparency, disclosure and reporting by candidates and contributors. I think local elections and school board elections should have the same reporting requirements.

I strongly support public disclosure of all spending and contributions to campaigns at all levels in America. I support and participate in public financing and voluntary spending limits. I think the Minnesota Political Contribution Refund (PCR) program should be funded so Minnesota residents can contribute to candidates whom they support. I also support the party check off on our state income tax forms.

We need to continue with community conversations about solutions for problems caused by the Citizen United decision; how individuals can run for office even if they don't have personal funding to contribute; and independent expenditures reporting.

We can't give up.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12?

As a state we currently provide 46% of our revenue from taxes to K-12 education. Our state constitution demands that we provide an equal education, unfortunately there is a lot of debate as to this equality. We need to provide an education to our young who are in circumstances beyond their control to help them get out of their situations and become young adult members of society. I have heard over the years a demand and a need to spend more and more on education. While I have no issues spending on education, we need to begin to audit our process. The education gap has not been narrowed due to spending of more money. The dollar bill does not teach our students, the teachers and staff that receive it do. We have to find a way to let star teachers and faculty excel and become a larger part in closing our education gap. Government needs to begin to hold accountable school districts and educators who are not properly using tax payers' assets to teach our children.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

The Minnesota state Constitution says "it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state". We should follow the Constitution.

School Districts should not have to rely on regressive property tax referendums for general operating expenses. Pre-K and early childhood programs should be available and affordable for all children and families.

The legislature in this 2015-16 biennium provided grants for full service community schools which are an important strategy in ensuring equity in our schools and reduces opportunity and achievement gaps. In order for schools to offer these "wrap around" services, partnerships within the community is essential. For example, at Myers-Wilkins Community School in Duluth they partner with nine organizations in the area to provide enrichment programs, while also working with Blue Cross and the county in the creation of a community health hub on the campus. I authored HF1709 which provided grant money to foster the development and expansion of full-service community schools across the state. Four competitive grants were awarded and Lincoln Middle School in Duluth was selected.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

As many citizens have seen over the last few months we have a problem that's growing in this nation. We have chosen to ignore the facts and issues that have led us to this level of anxiety in the state and nation. In my opinion we have a respect problem. I was brought up that you shook a man's hand not just because you wanted to but because it was given. In hockey we ask our children and young adults to shake hands at the end of a game no matter how hard the match. If those teams refuse to do that we are quick to point out that that is not how we do it in Minnesota. Many of our population have chosen to no longer listen or respect others no matter the situation and unfortunately this is beginning to cost loved ones lives. When we live in a country that even at the highest levels of government there is a divide between sides that can insight violence, how can we expect that to not trickle down to a street level feeling? We watch on TV daily as our leaders laugh at the other side and choose to throw mud at each other rather than set an example. We have to begin to elect people who are willing to bring this country together with respect and integrity. We live by example and the examples being portrayed daily are pushing us towards a cliff.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

There are no easy answers and no policy answers at this time. but certainly there will be many initiatives to consider when the 2017 session begins. Community discussions must begin in every part of the state. People of all walks of life and individual of all ages must join in and voice their thoughts. Values, expectations, training, community standards, are all part of molding solutions and defining the issues that have to be addressed. I welcome your ideas and if you want me to join your neighborhood conversation I am willing to attend and listen. We must not wait until National Night Out next August to begin.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE TIM BRANDON:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

Healthcare Costs: At a business and personal level many are spending an enormous amount to insure themselves and family. The MnSure website was a complete disaster rolling out and cost the taxpayers an incredible amount of money. As a legislator I will do my best to look into the problem and continue to help small business and the citizens to bring healthcare costs down. I will also hold the government accountable.

Tax Climate: We have to create a better tax climate for our citizens and businesses. We are one of only a hand full of states who continue to tax social security. This continues to burden our retirees. The tax climate is poisonous and needs to be looked at and brought to a level that allows the people and businesses the ability to thrive not just survive.

Roads: There is not a person reading this who would probably not complain about the condition of our roads. The government continues to spend money without questioning how it's being spent. This is our money and it is time we begin to ask questions. I think that there is at times better ways to spend the money. I don't see a group of 10 workers and ask if that's too many, I look and think if they split into two groups they can get more done. Nobody loses a job but the city and the state get more accomplished with the same dollar.

CANDIDATE MARY MURPHY:

Finish the work that was left on the table and set priorities for the future. Listen to our constituents and build an economy that works for everyone. Ensure transparency in the process of making laws and restore confidence and openness in government. Establish a legislative calendar with rules that are realistic and allows opportunity for *the people* to be heard.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 7A

QUESTION 1:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of State Representative.

CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

I'm currently a state representative (one term), Professor of Economics at UMD, mother of two boys (Otis & Lewis), and a partner to an incredible husband (& criminologist) Rob Weidner. I'm running for re-election to continue working on economic and social justice, and health care reform. As a public servant, I am able to use my expertise in economics, health policy and higher education to create legislation to help Minnesotans.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

My name is Dylan C. Raddant; and I am the GOP nominee for District 7A in Duluth, MN. I am running for office because I believe that the population deserves a more efficient Government that is held to the utmost accountability in St. Paul.

For Fiscal Responsibility, projects proposed by the Senate, including \$26 million to repair the Glensheen Mansion in Duluth, \$1.9 million for a parking lot in an arena in St. Paul, and \$6 million for an arts center in Hennepin County should be considered second priority compared to other pertinent projects such as Health Care and Education.

For Fairness, I believe that the sovereign is entitled to have all sides of Government compromise for the benefit of its' residents. The failure to pass a bonding bill from both Democrat and Republican alike shows a lack of consideration for citizens in Minnesota. If elected, not only will I interact with my 38,804 residents, but, I will interact with all political parties to come to a consensus that best benefits the community.

As for Freedom, one that I deviate from some members of my party from, I believe that no Government has the right to interfere in an individual's right to express themselves. In particular, no bathroom bill should exist, much less be adopted by any party of the Minnesota Legislature.

As the Prairie Home Conservative, I believe in Fiscal Responsibility, Fairness, and Freedom.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?

The Legislature should pass bills to increase the minimum wage, provide paid leave for safe and sick time, subsidize child care, increase the state earned-income tax credit, provide tax deductions and refundable tax credits to reduce student debt, provide tax deductions for college savings accounts, increase investments in early childhood education, increase funding for public schools (including subsidizing the cost of driver education), subsidize child care, offer a public option on MNsure to provide affordable health insurance, offer a public retirement savings option, and increase tax rates on investment income.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

A reality that Minnesotans face is that the economic culture of Minnesota has declined— in particular the Minority community is most affected. A Minnesota family of color will have a median income that is one-half of their Caucasian counterparts. 30 percent of Minnesota African-American families, compared to five percent of their Caucasian counterparts, live below the poverty line. While a colored Minnesotan has a lower median income average compared nationally, a Caucasian Minnesota family will have a higher national median income average.

To fix the growing disparity, first, one needs to accommodate for the lower class (with an emphasis for Minorities) in order to obtain basic human rights. I would propose offer property tax incentives for Grocery chains (such as Aldi) to be established in lower-income parts of the state. Any temporary loss in property tax revenue would be covered by both the revenues from the Grocery store as well as providing a Community Service through ending a Food Desert. I would also propose offering free IDs to those whose income is below the Poverty Line. That way, one would not be prevented from obtaining employment (due to a requirement for IDs in numerous Job Applications), elections (which should have a Voter ID law in place), etc. As for Old Central High School, a bipartisan solution to providing a good use for the school would be to create an affordable housing unit for patrons of good moral character who work hard. These solutions will begin to close gaps in income through opportunity.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

What are the most important things that should be done to improve the region's economy?

We need to invest in transportation and infrastructure improvements which include investments in public transportation. We also need to invest in broad band for greater Minnesota to increase opportunities in rural areas of the state. We also need to invest in clean energy, and protect our natural resources (water, land and air). Health care and higher education are the largest employers in the Duluth region so any investments in these industries will benefit the region.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

One way to improve the economy is to lower the sales tax tax rate. One issue facing the issue is a higher-than-average tax rate in Duluth compared to other cities in Minnesota. More so is the fact that higher taxes, overall, not only alienates higher income residents, but, attracts lower-income residents who rely on public services more, thus increasing deficits in budget. In sales tax, for example, Duluth's rate is 8.375 percent. Compare this tax rate to 7.775 percent in Minneapolis. It is higher tax rates, according to the *Center of the American Experiment's* report, that causes higher-income residents, individuals who donate their money to Minnesota charitable causes, to flee to the Western United States. By lowering the sales tax rate, one can expect the residents to make up the difference in decreased sales tax revenue through either spending more on goods-and-service or investing, which may generate a high rate of return. At the same time, the higher class residents who come back to Minnesota will then generate even more revenue for the city.

Another way to improve the economy is to emphasize bringing in technology jobs over manufacturing and industrial ones. Eventually, Duluth will run out of certain resources; and mining in the Iron Range will one day cease due to resources used up. Thus, it is pertinent for Duluth to offer incentives to either create startups, or, have technological companies move here; and as State Representative, I would endeavor myself toward said goal.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

What do you believe state government should do to limit the impact of global climate change?

The state legislature, governor and state agencies need to work on policies that protect our water, air and land. We need to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels, including the burning of coal. We also need to provide goals to our utility companies to invest in clean energy and provide incentives to consumers to reduce energy consumption. Investing in community solar and wind energy are now cost-effective solutions. Other initiatives include reducing greenhouse gas emissions (80% reduction by 2050), reducing reliance on fossil fuels, increasing energy efficiency requirements, retire/repower coal plants, zero energy building codes, wastewater treatment energy efficiency standards, use of electric vehicles using renewable energy, transit and multimodal travel, use of thermal renewable energy, and use of cover crops.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

To limit the impact of global warming, the state Government has to work together, both Republican and Democrat alike, to come up with a bipartisan solution. While both parties may argue as to the amount of responsibility Humanity has for climate-change, all alike will agree that future profits could trickle-down and help fund projects that benefit the community at-large.

I would propose that students in State Universities should be given scholarships for providing ways to make Minnesota more energy efficient through class projects. Citizens who purchase energy-efficient products from a local retail store should also be exempt from sales tax for that particular item.

My biggest priority would be to endorse the burgeoning electric car movement further through incentives and innovations. For a 2015 Model S (with a 85-kwh battery), a driver has 89 miles per gallon to work with compared to 37 miles per gallon for a 2016 Ford Fiesta. The costs for fully charging the 2015 Tesla Model S, \$3.20 according to estimates from a Minneapolis charging station, outweigh the cost of filling up the 2016 Ford Fiesta. Duluth should allocate transportation funds towards charging stations, making the profits up through selling the units for charging to customers. Furthermore, car-owners who pass an emissions standard test be given a check for the amount of carbon emission saved to fuel back into the economy.

In short, team-building and economic encouragement will encourage a bipartisan economization of the eco system.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

What should the state government's top three priorities be in setting a sound energy policy?

The state should take an inventory of all greenhouse gas emissions, make public buildings more efficient, set high targets for utility companies to reach efficiency goals for providing clean energy (including setting rules for utility companies to pay market rates to consumer/community solar gardens) and provide incentives to convert to clean energy consumption for commercial and residential users.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

The first priority is emphasizing the development of Solar energy. So far, Duluth is making progress by participating in Minnesota's Solar Challenge, a program designed to develop solar energy in the city. To improve on the solar policy, Duluth should relax zoning and permitting to allow one to implement solar panels wherever one legally can. Furthermore, significant vacant land in Duluth should be use as a solar base to help power up Duluth's electricity in a more cost-efficient manner.

The second priority is to encourage Duluth residents to encourage the deregulation of the energy business on a smaller scale to benefit the local community. Residents should be offered rebates to start their own energy unit to either keep and use or sell at a profit to local residents. Doing so in a deregulated economy can cause natural competition, forcing companies to lower their energy prices which in turn would be passed onto the customer.

The third priority is to encourage local residents to invest into local solar companies. Although one may marvel at the thought of solar panels overlooking Canal Park or a Mom-and-Pop company successfully competing with Minnesota Power, without investment, said projects are fruitless. Residents should be able to invest into local Energy startups and get a potential return of investment – no matter how little the cost. The homegrown idea would be an amalgamation of Kickstarter and the Stock Market.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHUTLZ:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?

We need to make it easier to vote. I chief authored a bill for automatic voter registration when applying for or renewing a driver's license. I oppose all legislation that creates barriers to voting, such as voter ID laws. Early voting and voting by mail can be made much simpler than our current system. Minnesota should also restore voting rights of convicted felons.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

There needs to be a bi-partisan plan that allows all law-abiding citizens the ability to vote in a free-and-fair election. My opponent, Jennifer Schultz, argued that "I think voter ID laws are discriminatory. It hurts the elderly, hurts young adults, hurts the disabled, and hurts people of color." While I do not believe that Voter ID laws are inherently discriminatory by nature, I do believe that certain factors in the city prevent some from being able to vote. 23.3 percent of persons in my district live below the poverty line.

One proposal I have, if elected, is to offer ID's, normally costing \$17.95, to be offered to Minnesota residents at a reduced or free rate. That way, residents can afford to vote, as well as participate in civic engagement. Another proposal is to offer free bus service to Election centers during Primary and Election season. For those that are handicapped, there should be handicap-accessible buses and election centers to help one vote, as well as a list of accommodations to help out said person. Furthermore, I would encourage a diversity forum akin to the League of Women Voters for the minority community to exist in Duluth to create a non-partisan approach to enlighten voters on the democratic process. One final idea is to make Election Day a holiday. Doing so would give workers the opportunity to vote without having to commute between jobs and miss the opportunity to vote due to time constraints.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

Please explain why you do or do not think it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

It is vital to pass legislation for campaign finance reform. Citizen's United has changed campaigns making compromise in divided government difficult. A significant amount of money was spent in state races to gain control of legislative redistricting. In many states redistricting has led to more polarization of elected officials. I chief authored a bill to reform legislative redistricting by taking it out of the hands of the Legislature. We now have fewer moderates running for office. We also have more anonymous PAC money being used in negative advertising. The DFL has proposed the DISCLOSE Act to force PACs to disclose donors and spending on campaigns. I fully support the DISCLOSE Act and other measures to reduce the amount of money spent on campaigns. I also support the return of the political contribution refund program, which was eliminated in 2015.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

This question can be divided two-fold: first, arguing against reducing the role of money in elections, and secondly, providing current events for my argument. ‘

First, limiting campaign contributions, according to *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission* (2014), infringes on the First Amendment by limiting ones voice through dollars. Chief Justice Roberts noted in his decision that, “if the First Amendment protects flag burning, funeral protests, and Nazi parades — despite the profound offense such spectacle causes — it surely protects political campaign speech despite popular opposition.”

Secondly, it is the message, not money, that has influenced recent elections. Bernie Sanders, who, nearly won the Democratic Nomination despite donors donating an average of \$29.14 per person, and Donald Trump, who is competing now fiscally with Democratic Opponent Hillary Clinton, have succeeded because they have both portrayed a populist message that appeals to a key demographic ignored by traditional elections

Second, my campaign – one that has run on less than \$500 so far – is one that has been successful due to my policies and not by fiscal resources. Members of the LGBT and minority communities have joined my campaign not because of Campaign Ads or because I am affiliated with a Union, but rather of my attempts to de-regulate the transitioning process and looking to create affordable housing in the Old Central High School site.

In conclusion, Government should not interfere in a person's right to use their money to encourage people to vote. Government should only encourage people to vote in a free-and-fair campaign.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12?

We can invest in public schools, particularly those schools that need more resources to address achievement and opportunity gaps. We can also invest in educating teachers and support staff, and increasing the diversity of the workforce. Salaries for public teachers have not kept up with comparable professions in our state. This hurts our ability to attract high-quality students to the profession. We also should be investing in early education where there are high rates of return.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

There is an immediate need for Minnesota to improve their graduation rates – especially for Minorities. Only 49 percent of Native Americans in 2012-13 who went to Minnesota’s secondary schools graduated the second lowest rate in the nation. As for African-American and Hispanic, less than 60 percent walked across their aisle.

I hypothesize that the achievement gap in the minority community is due to an imbalance of punishment based on race. A colored individual is more likely to be punished more severe than their white counterparts. This is especially prevalent in early-childhood, a time for development in students who, once suspended, would be deprived of learning of behavioral sciences.

There needs to be an equal protection and enforcement of school rules. Punishment must be doled out on a case-by-case basis based on numerous factors involved – Color not being one of them. In helping advance the project set forth by Dr. Bernadeia Johnson, Superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools, I propose that there should be no out-of-school suspensions for students at grades five and below. If a student is not at school, a student cannot learn; and once a student is suspended, one would be more likely to drop out of school; and nationwide, while black students make up 18 percent of the racial mix of preschoolers, they are part of the 48 percent of colored preschoolers with more than one suspension.

Equity in Education Equals Excellence in Education.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

The state should convene a task force to investigate the recruitment and training of public safety officers along with an evaluation of effective community policing models. Police and other public safety officers need to invest in activities that work toward building trust with communities of color.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

The key to addressing a cultural divide is through perspective. In a car chase, for example, while the police cruiser may believe that they are pursuing a fleeing suspect, the runaway driver believes that they are being persecuted by the police. To ensure that all interactions with public safety are fair in the same vein that trials are supposed to be, public safety should be reformed. There needs to be a budget for body cameras to insure that public safety officials are not infringing on citizen's rights – as well as ensuring that citizens are not disruptive and feeling entitled against officers.

There needs to be an equal protection and enforcement of the law. Punishment must be doled out on a case-by-case basis based on numerous factors involved – Color not being one of them. The biggest fear for any social worker is to see a minority child descend from an education environment into expulsion into a correctional facility; and when a minority is disproportionately likely to enter prison compared to their Caucasian counterpart, change needs to be addressed. I propose a more diverse criminal justice system of all races. A trial of an African-American may seem more fair when a jury of six whites, three African-Americans, and three Hispanics reaches a verdict; or when an Appellate court of a Hispanic defendant is led by a Hmong judge.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE JENNIFER SCHULTZ:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

In our region the most important challenges are moving families out of poverty and addressing opportunity and achievement gaps. To move families out of poverty state funding is needed for affordable housing, education, job training, financial counseling and public subsidies that help families move toward independence. I believe that by addressing poverty we can resolve many barriers to success. To do this the state and local units of government need to work together to fund social workers, public health staff, mental health case managers, teachers, counselors, youth development programs, shelters, and many other services designed to help families succeed.

CANDIDATE DYLAN RADDANT:

One challenge involves approving PolyMet's NorthMet project past the permit stage. Because the company has agreed to numerous regulations, PolyMet, due to the economic impact it provides, should be given a permit for their NorthMet project. According to a study from the University of Minnesota-Duluth's Labovitz School of Business and Economics, the development of the NorthMet project would create \$15 million in yearly municipal tax revenues and \$45 million in federal tax revenues. Furthermore, St. Louis County, the county that hosts PolyMet's NorthMet project, would have a total economic impact of \$515 million, annually. If elected, I would prioritize the regulatory process so that PolyMet would have their NorthMet project approved expeditiously.

Another challenge involves the need for healthcare reform in the State of Minnesota. There have been numerous facts (over \$300 million has been spent towards the development of the MNSure website that has suffered from numerous glitches) and figures (up to \$271 million, according to a recent audit, that has been wasted on directing people to health programs inappropriately based on income) that are used to prove a growing issue in Minnesota Healthcare. What is overlooked by some, however, is Minnesota's Mental Health system lacks adequate care. In my district, patients who attend St. Luke's or Essentia, for example, may lack hospital beds. The wait time to receive treatment is longer than it should be. There also lacks individualized therapy based on the nature of a patient's illness. If elected, surplus revenues would develop new Mental Health programs.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 7B

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of State Representative.

I am a hard-working, outdoors-loving Minnesotan. I work as a certified flight instructor at Lake Superior college. I am running for state representative to bring about reform and move Minnesota in a positive direction. As father of a young child, I am always concerned about our state's future. My goal is to promote freedom. Freedom comes through honest, open politics. Freedom comes in the form of a healthy economy, common sense environmental regulations, and low taxes. Freedom means parents get a say in their children's education. Freedom comes when people of different belief systems coexisting without any one group accosting another. Freedom comes by honoring the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Freedom comes in the form of limited, responsible government and healthy family values. This is what I want for the future of our communities.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I'm Liz Olson and I'm running to represent District 7B in the Minnesota House of Representatives. I'm a mother, wife, avid trail runner and believer in strong communities. Both my parents were pastors and I grew up living in and understanding the needs of both rural and urban communities. I've called Duluth home since graduating from the University of Minnesota Duluth 12 years ago. Shortly after, my husband and I purchased a house in the Denfeld neighborhood. This fall we welcomed our first child into our home. In addition to attending school at UMD, I went on to receive a Master of Arts Degree in Congregational and Community Care from Luther Seminary in St. Paul.

I believe in a Minnesota that promises all of us a chance to live with dignity — a Minnesota that offers living wage jobs with good benefits, strong public schools, and expanded access to our democracy. I have spent my time in this city organizing people and advocating for access to health care, worker protections and an end to homelessness. My experience lies in engaging and mobilizing diverse groups of people, especially those often left out of the political process, to shape policy solutions at the state and local level. And now, I am ready to take another step forward in this work by running to represent district 7B in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?

The first way that our state government should stop contributing to the economic disparity between the classes is to get out of the game of picking winners and losers. Common sense government regulations should not favor any particular company or industry at the expense of others. Unfortunately, all too often, this is not what we see. I do not support politicians who are swayed by big donations from special interest groups. Rather, I believe that businesses and individuals should have a level playing field. Our economic policies, taxes and welfare programs should reflect this philosophy.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

Almost a quarter of the people in Duluth live in poverty. Too often, our neighbors, friends, and family are living paycheck to paycheck, facing foreclosure, or experiencing homelessness. People are working full-time and still can't support their families. Over half of the workforce in Duluth doesn't have access to a single paid day off. This poverty hurts our entire community, not only those struggling daily to make ends meet. I believe that we must build an economy that works for everyone, with living wage jobs that allow families to support themselves and live with dignity, and benefits like paid family leave and paid sick and safe time for all workers.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What are the most important things that should be done to improve the region's economy?

The government plays an undeniable role in our region's economy. Regulatory environments can put a stranglehold on the economy or lead to a business friendly environment where prosperity flourishes. I will say it again: Government should not pick winners and losers. Subsidies should not cause certain businesses to profit while putting others at a competitive disadvantage. One evidence of our state government going astray is Minnesota's unconstitutional law which attempted to cut off our ability to purchase electricity from North Dakota. Oftentimes activists push for undue delays in the permitting of important economic projects, setting back our economic growth and costing us valuable jobs. Burdensome regulations will put our businesses at a disadvantage and as a result harm our economic prosperity. Let me also praise the excellent job that some of our cities have done in creating the attractive business environment and high standard of living that has led to an IT sector boom. Let's not implement policies that will drive out the very business that we have worked so hard to attract!

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

We need to equip the region's economic development mechanisms with the tools and resources needed to continue the growth of our local economy. In addition we need to ensure that our region's economy works for everyone. We need to support strong communities, from our public schools to our recreation hubs, in order to strengthen the whole of our community.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What do you believe state government should do to limit the impact of global climate change?

I appreciate the effort of the Duluth League of Women Voters to provide unbiased analysis of candidates and the issues. I do, however, believe that the very premise of the question “What should our state government do to limit the impact of global climate change?” is politically charged. Policies at the state level purporting to “impact the global climate” are often used to push agendas that have no real impact on the global climate. Our state government should be much more concerned with the steps that we are taking to protect the environment within our own borders. We are all stewards of our environment. This means we should make the most of our natural resources, managing and benefiting from the prosperity they bring while protecting the natural environment.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I support the League of Women Voters efforts to target climate change through legislative solutions, including setting caps on greenhouse gas and carbon pollution, encouraging conservation and renewable energy and investing in a new clean energy economy.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What should the state government’s top three priorities be in setting a sound energy policy?

The government’s role in promoting a sound energy policy cannot be overstated. The only way to do so is to consistently abide by free market principles. Unfortunately, some Democrats have a history of doing great harm to not just traditional energy production such as lignite, but all forms of mining. Secretary Clinton and President Obama boasted of how they would wage war on the coal industry and then went on to do so, putting countless Americans out of work and causing increased energy costs for the rest of us. The very thought of our leaders using political means to drive certain parts of our energy sector out of business ought to be repulsive to us all. Combating this type of abuse of power is one of the primary reasons I am running for office.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

As a state we need to continue our work to reduce carbon pollution, invest in cleaner transportation, and invest in renewable power sources. In addition we need to continue to find ways to conserve energy. Above all we need to ensure that special interests and corporate profits do not jeopardize the future our water, land or residents.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?

I have learned something from my political opponents over the years: A reliable way to deceive voters is to change the language we use. My opponent is all too anxious to slap the label “voter restriction” on what has really been the sincere efforts of many of our congressmen and women to protect the sanctity of our democracy by preventing voter fraud. She ought to be ashamed of herself. The idea that we should not be required to show proof of our identity when we go to vote is unbecoming to a democracy. I laud the sincere efforts of our leaders to prevent voter fraud and challenge my opponent to lay out specifics on why asking voters to confirm their identity is somehow “restricting,” even though the state would provide free identities.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I worked hard to defeat the Voter Restriction amendment in 2012 and believe we need to expand access to our democracy, not shrink it. I believe that full and robust participation in all parts of politics — from the way campaigns are run, to the voting booth, to how policies are shaped and passed — makes for a stronger democracy. Minnesota, and Duluth in particular, has historically high voter turnout. This is something to be proud of. However, there are still laws that keep people from participating in our democracy. Tens of thousands of Minnesotans who have left prison and returned to their families and communities cannot cast a ballot because they are still on probation or parole. I support efforts to restore voting rights to those 47,000 Minnesotans. It’s time for the voices of these community members to be heard at the ballot box.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

Please explain why you do or do not think it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

I think that elections should be about principles. Sound leadership and wisdom are crucial in our government. Unfortunately, money in politics is ubiquitous and often takes the attention away from what is important. We need to elect principled leaders. We need to see beyond politics and partisanship. As your representative, I pledge to make decisions based on what is best for Minnesotans, and our communities. If only all our politicians felt the same way.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

We need to reduce money in politics. At the root of money in politics is corporate power, structural racism, and structural sexism. Our democracy needs to engage and represent the people it is intended to serve, not the corporations. We need to challenge the way in which these three structural barriers to equity show up in our political process, as well as the policies we shape and pass at the State Capitol. We need more people engaging in our democracy to challenge these interests that jeopardize the health and wellbeing of our state and nation.

QUESTION 8:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12?

CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

The single most important factors in our children’s education are parental involvement and parental control. As a representative, I will seek out the input of parents, teachers and students. Our education system must be adequately funded, but just like other things in life, throwing money at something doesn’t necessarily make it better. We need to be smart about our spending. Our leaders must look to the needs of both teachers and students to make this happen.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I believe that one of the most impactful changes the state legislature could make to support the Duluth Public Schools, and district's around the state, would be to provide an increase to the general education funding formula with an ongoing adjustment based on inflation. By providing a consistent and inflation-adjusted investment in education our districts will be able to budget and plan more effectively. Other good steps related to funding: Increase integration funding that goes towards reducing the achievement gap, fully fund special education services mandated in state statute, remove the requirement that ISD 709 must pay special education and transportation costs for charter schools.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

Before answering any question about public safety, let me first give my genuine thanks to the many public servants who make daily sacrifices for our communities. They deserve much respect and appreciation. The great majority of public servants are sincerely trying to do their jobs to the best of their ability and do not treat people differently with regards to race and culture. The best way we can go about addressing these divides is to enlist their help.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I support efforts to challenge the ways structural racism shows up in our state's public safety. In particular I support ending broken windows policing, ending for profit policing and prisons, better training all our public safety officials, independently investigating and prosecuting in cases of police violence, more community voices and representation within the structures of public safety, accountability through measures such as body cameras, and I ultimately support the solutions and efforts of those groups such as Campaign Zero.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

Our values as Minnesotans and the health of our economy are of utmost importance to our way of living. We cannot afford to allow overbearing regulations to stifle our businesses and economy. We must not drive businesses away. We must provide quality education to the next generation. We need to listen to the input of our healthcare professionals and address their needs as they work hard to provide top quality care. We must use free market principles to create a level playing field and we must protect our beautiful natural environment.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

Over my time in Duluth I have watched our community grow and flourish thanks to the creative leadership of our elected officials and citizens. We need to continue on the path we are on as a community. However, there are many that still have not benefited from the progress our region has seen. As a legislator, I believe we can shape and pass policies that will have a positive impact on those who often are not included and do not benefit from the growth our region has seen. In particular, nearly 50% of Duluth's workforce does not have access to a single paid day off to care for themselves or a family member when sick or fleeing abuse. We need to change that so everyone in our city, region and state can have a good paying job with benefits that support their family. By working with those often left out of the political process, we can implement policies that benefit the entire community.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 2

QUESTION 1:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of County Commissioner.

CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

I grew up just outside Superior, Wisconsin, in a family in which public service was a way of life, and have worked hard to live up to that ideal. I graduated from Superior Senior High, attended the University of Wisconsin-Superior, and graduated from UW-Madison with a nursing degree. After working for eight years as a registered nurse, I returned to college and earned a Master's Degree as a Nurse Practitioner from the College of St. Catherine's. Currently, I am employed as a Nurse Practitioner by the Fond du Lac band of Ojibwa. I live in Duluth with my wife Jennifer, a physician, and our two daughters; Mary and Clare.

I was elected to two terms on the Duluth City Council in 2009 and 2013, and was elected in a special election in 2014 to the St. Louis County Board. On the St. Louis County Board, I chaired the Public Safety Committee in 2014 and have been chair of the Health and Human Services Committee from 2015 to present.

I have been active in the community as a member of the Friends of the Lakewalk, Duluth Preservation Alliance, and Peace United Church of Christ. In my free time, I enjoy hunting, fishing, gardening, and running with the family dog.

I am running for re-election to be the 2nd District County Commissioner because I want to continue to protect our most vulnerable citizens, maintain a strong budget without undue taxpayer burden, foster economic development and strengthen partnerships between all levels of government.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

I am Linda Ross Sellner and do heartily wish to continue my public service at the County level representing eastern Duluth. I am under-employed in the dental health care field where I have made my living for over 30 years. Besides my Associate in Science degree from UMD in Dental Hygiene, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Geology-Land Use Planning with a Biology minor, while raising my four daughters with their father during our 20 year marriage. Finding employment in my new field was difficult in middle-age so I began to volunteer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, South St. Louis County, capturing soil data in the field for two stints. I currently volunteer with the MPCA as a citizen stream monitor for Chester and Tischer trout streams.

I also gathered household data for the U.S. Census bureau in 2010. I understand how important that data was to political representation and for governmental analysis via five semesters of study in GIS (Geographic Information Systems) at UWS, 2009-11.

I am a landlord and have a 3rd floor apartment I rent out in the brick house my Father built. Most recently, my education extended to certification as a Building Analyst Professional (Home Energy Auditing) through BPI, Inc. in 2012. I understand energy conservation.

I've served the maximum two terms on the Duluth Environmental Advisory Council and the Duluth Public Utilities Commission where I was voted President.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?

In the past year, the most shocking statistic I learned was that between the years 2000 and 2015, the percentage of St. Louis County citizens who were at or below the poverty level grew from 9 to 17%. During that same time period, we saw more job creation than ever in the history of St. Louis County. This tells me there is a significant amount of working-class poor. These people still qualify for child care assistance, medical assistance and food stamps. As a nation, we effectively cannot reduce the welfare burden without creating livable wage jobs along with having equal taxation.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

Greed is at the heart of the economic disparity that exists between St. Louis County residents. The basic human desire to provide a better life for our decedents can no longer be achieved. This was the dream of the middle class but the middle class is shrinking into oblivion. Human labor no longer supports the production of goods that build real wealth for all in a community. Quality of life and the natural environment that belongs to all of us is offered up on false belief in the mantras of job creation and increasing tax base. These aren't working for most of us anymore.

Since it is not our responsibility to change the hearts of others or beat on a door that never gets opened, I believe we must use our unemployed time to get involved with our government processes and speak out against injustice, greed and the disproportionate representation and benefit to the 1%.

Blogging, chat rooms and mindless acceptance of media bias won't cut it. Discover what you are passionate about and then get educated about it and speak up, literally or with your vote.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

What are the top three things that the County Board should do to improve the region's economy?

The county needs to work hand-in-hand with all of our cities to foster growth. A few examples of ways of helping include:

- Funding to remove blighted properties
- Tools to improve recruiting businesses to the area including tax abatement
- Improving our infrastructure so citizens can safely and easily get to these jobs

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

1. Collaborate w/County officials and staff to move toward economic support to diversify employment opportunities that move us away from large, extractive industries that work on boom or bust cycles.

2. Recognize the unique attributes of St. Louis County that especially pertain to land, water and sense of place for its citizens. If we build on keeping these intact and healthy, we provide future quality of life to our descendants. This is sustainability and we owe it to each other to value it and pass it on.

3. Stop supporting business initiatives that don't produce results, whether that be by more diligent monitoring of proceeds expended or by requiring up-front accountability in providing local employment benefits. External auditing has proven wasteful spending and political posturing within the IRRRB. Taxpayers have been duped and the crooks got away under the guise of "economic development". This initiative deserves tenacious scrutiny by County Commissioners and will then undoubtedly, reverse the current trends to instead apply incentives toward legitimate, sustainable job growth-from the bottom up instead of from the top down.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

What can county government do to help address the impact of global climate change in our region?

The county already has emphasis on upgrading county owned buildings to be more energy efficient. These buildings have some of the highest energy efficiency ratings around the state, including our newly remodeled Government Services Center in Duluth. We are also investing in solar power.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

First of all, let me say that in this election, there is no political party that better reflects the urgency to act on climate change than the Green Party. Despite the national political rhetoric, for or against even the *concept* of climate change, real action must take place at the local level-where the effects are felt. The only opportunity we have to put a Green candidate in place, come the November election, is at the local level with my run for County Commissioner.

I will look at every County decision with an eye to how it will successfully prepare us or push us away from the worthy goal of adapting to climate change, on the ground. The human environment and the natural environment degrade together. Climate change changes everything. We are moving into the survival mode now.

St. Louis County put forward a Comprehensive Water Management Plan in 2010 that seeks to address negative impacts of climate change in regards to the abundant water resources within our County. This includes addressing improper development and maintaining wetland functionality. This noble document was due for mid-decade review in 2015. This has yet to commence, nor have many County officials even read it. To me, this indicates how much of an up-hill battle we have to change the County mindset from economic development that doesn't include environmental precautions and foresight.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

What can county government do to address aging infrastructure (roads and bridges) in the region?

I am proud of my vote on the half-cent sales tax that is dedicated to improving roads and bridges. This added nearly \$14 million yearly for dedicated funding to repairing and maintaining our 3,000 miles of roads and 600 bridges throughout the county. As state and federal governments struggle with funding, St. Louis County has taken the lead on this issue.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

County government has already taken care of funding for maintenance of roads and bridges in the County—the transportation sales tax, instituted last year. Almost \$40 million in projects were delivered over 2015-16. There are \$25 million in proposed projects for 2017-18. General obligation bonds have been secured at low interest rates utilizing transportation tax as a funding source for debt repayment. Each year, additional money is forwarded to these and new projects via amendment to the County's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan and considered routine.

The County Public Works Department, in my opinion, is adequately staffed and projects are adequately funded with help from the transportation tax and lucrative federal funding. In fact, the federal funding mechanisms involving MN-DOT are so entrenched that an individual citizen's attempt to challenge the process—as I did with the 4th Street Heritage Park dissection and the removal of over 200 boulevard trees, was futile. One must consider also, that road byway or intersection enlargements, bridge and culvert replacements and other multimodal projects are allowed by reduction in greenspace and sometimes, natural environment features. Thousands of acres of wetlands have been lost to transportation infrastructure needs.

I would like to see more transportation monies going toward maintenance and quality work done the first time. We must personally accept responsibility for safe and defensive driving habits. Engineers should not be considering how far one has to turn their necks at an intersection or how to recover after running off the road in project design.

QUESTION 6:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?

CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

I have always been a strong advocate of making voting as easy and accessible as possible. I worked hard to oppose Voter ID on the ballot in 2012 and will continue to advocate for voting rights.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

If you are a legal citizen of St. Louis County, you deserve to be prepared to show some kind of documentation to prove that is the case the first time you vote in your city, town or precinct; early or absentee voters included. This is why all should be encouraged to become citizens of the USA and to take up permanent residence. Once your name and residence is on file, subsequent voting at the proper location should be carried out as it is now with no proof of identity needed. Voting equipment must be accurate and tested to assure it. Thank goodness for the people that volunteer their time to register voters and secure each person's ability to vote if the rules are followed. Thank goodness for those that offer rides and help to those who need it to get to the polls and carry out their civic duty.

QUESTION 7:

How can county government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

We can continue support for training of Sherriff's staff on cultural sensitivity issues. We also should work to recruit more minorities into open positions within the Sheriff's department.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

Over one third of our County budget goes toward police protection and law enforcement; more than to health and human services, to transportation or to land management. Yet, what were the additional law enforcement positions (besides jailors) recently tacked on to 20 badly needed child protection worker increases? Putting officers in rural schools and then into recreational enforcement when school is out for the summer. To me, this is a blatant example of misuse of authority and the squandering of long-standing budget priority to this entity. According to recent surveys, a greater percentage of people feel safe. Much crime cannot be prevented by police officer number increases. Instead, law enforcement ends up seeking out crime where none exists and unfortunately, some citizens are more targeted than others. My upmost respect goes out to those who put their lives on the line for the welfare of County citizens. But crime prevention starts at home. We must build up the quality of life of families, children and the communities out of a sense of respect, boundaries for behavior and presence to each other—not fear of law enforcement personnel.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

Please explain why you do or do not think that it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

There should be a limit on how much you can raise and spend in an election. The US Supreme Court's decision on Citizens United was a mistake in my opinion.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

Special interests (ie. Money) in American elections is rampant and contrary to the essence of government of, by and for the people. On the other hand, special interests are usually businesses backing candidates who then expect their elected officials to vote according to that business related preference. Bribing of government officials is rampant as well. This is against all rules of decency, even in the sports arena. Public officials should have the general public's best interest in their voting records and personal lifestyles.

As with the huge influence individual purchasing power has on consumer marketing (County) voters have the power to nullify the copious, bad money used for political mud slinging toward candidates running against each other. We know these expensive and monotonously run advertisements are thin on facts and thick on attention-grabbing gimmicks. *Don't buy into it!* Let political bad money be wasted on back and forth finger-pointing but make sure you vote with integrity. Research the candidates and make your own vote count towards decency in government. The League of Women Voters offers this profile as a source of candidate research as well as our local newspaper.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

Out of home placement (child foster care) is the largest challenge facing the county. St. Louis County spends \$14.5 million per year through property taxes on this annually (accounting for over 10% of the money raised by property tax), and it continues to increase every year. We need to work to find ways to end the escalation of out of home placement. The county needs to address the epidemic of opiate/heroin addiction. Services for mental health must continue to be a priority as well. I was proud to recently vote to increase staffing for 20 dedicated children's social workers.

CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:

Certainly the repercussions of illegal opioid drug use to families and children is not only a challenge but at epidemic proportions in St. Louis County. Lack of staffing have been partly addressed since the County social workers demonstrated for it but my gut instinct is to ask *why* are so many residents abusing drugs? Those able to prescribe opioid medications must be held accountable and documentation should be rigorous. If ease of access is restrained, we're still left with too many County resident's lack of hope and in need of temporary escape. At the crux of the matter is quality of life. How do we improve that for all? Face our discrimination and seek to let it go. Recognize our unique talents, perhaps through career counseling and aptitude testing. Free or reduced tuition for training and education and strive for more time spent outdoors.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3

QUESTION 1:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of County Commissioner.

CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

I grew up one of six children. My dad was a union bricklayer and my mom a homemaker until becoming a speech pathologist. In a big family, I learned early about hard work and getting along with people to reach common goals. Those simple values continue to guide me in my work, life, community and family. I am running for county commissioner because I love my home in West Duluth, my community of so many distinct and beautiful neighborhoods and because it is these simple values that will make progress for us all. I am the Executive Director for First Witness Child Advocacy Center and have 25 years' experience working on issues of public safety, and public health and human services. I have effectively delivered quality services on a very tight budget. I have streamlined processes to reduce waste and have a greater impact in the community. I have built successful collaborations and changed policies to improve people's lives. I am running for County Commissioner because I will bring new experience and insight to the board that is needed to find solutions to the problems we currently face in the county.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 2:

What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?

CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

The government needs to set policy that allows people to make a decent living for the work they provide to society. This includes increasing the minimum wage and supporting earned sick and safe time. We need to regulate the safety nets available to people in poverty and they need to be strengthened and made more effective. We need to evaluate our current services and make changes that will help lift people into the middle class, providing real pathways to living wage jobs and practical support such as child care.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

What are the top three things that the County Board should do to improve the region's economy?

1. Invest in infrastructure. Honor project labor agreements and prevailing wage agreements. This includes closing loopholes for tax deferred business investments.
2. Partner with education, major industries, business leaders and the community to create a workforce ready to take on the growing industries in our region.
3. Ensure that all contracted service providers through the county are providing a living wage and benefits for their employees. Currently, some of these employees need government assistance to supplement their earnings.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

What can county government do to help address the impact of global climate change in our region?

The county can utilize the land it manages to maintain important watersheds and eco-systems where needed. The county can continue to implement important environmental friendly practices in building and renovating county owned structures, including using renewable energy sources. The county can continue to implement and strengthen standards for private septic systems and also support services and programs that address solid waste and recycling, aquatic invasive species and nonpoint source pollution. I would not weaken any current environmental policy.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

What can county government do to address aging infrastructure (roads and bridges) in the region?

With over 3,000 miles of roads and 600 bridges, this is an important question. Infrastructure is needed to support a strong economy and is a core service of government, requiring investment and maintenance. In 2015, the County Board passed a half cent sales tax dedicated to roads, bridges and infrastructure. This tax generated \$14.5 million in the first year, putting people to work on many projects. I support this dedicated tax. I also support working with the other counties who are requesting a statewide gas tax to support roads.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?

I believe that voting is at the heart of our democracy. I am surprised and dismayed when I see elected government officials attempting to limit voting rights. I feel as an elected official it is my responsibility to engage voters in issues that affect them and encourage their participation in all aspects of our democracy. We have many practices in Minnesota that support the rights and ability of voters, such as same day registration, early voting, voting by proxy and absentee voting as well as neighbors vouching for each other to vote. I support maintaining all of these practices and ensuring that regardless of when or how you vote, each vote is counted.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

How can county government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

We need to recognize that we do have an overrepresentation of people of color in our criminal justice system and an underrepresentation of people of color in our criminal justice response. I think the county needs to work not only with other levels of government, but also community members and the workers within our public safety system to address this issue. We need to understand how and why we see this trend and commit to common goals as to how best to make effective change. I think we need to be open to new ideas and solutions and rise above rhetoric and misunderstanding. This will take a long term commitment of some resources and time.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

Please explain why you do or do not think that it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

I think it is important to limit the role of money in elections, because the cost of running is becoming very prohibitive to many people. We need more candidates and a greater variety of candidates to ensure true representation of the people. I believe that public financing for candidates would increase discussion of issues and positions, limiting mudslinging and misrepresentation of facts.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

The number one challenge facing our region is the need for living wage jobs with benefits. The county can invest in needed infrastructure, and partner with entities through workforce development to ensure we have industries and a workforce that align with one another. We can use county managed land to support economic development where appropriate. Our region is also experiencing a huge challenge with opiate addiction and an influx of heroin. Residents have voiced their concerns throughout the district as I've gone door to door talking with them. We now have a greater need for child protective services and out of home placements for children. This tears at the fabric of our families and communities, overburdens our systems and services, and drives up costs. I would ask all departments in the county to work collaboratively with local health and non-profit entities and other units of government to combine resources and develop new and creative strategies to address this issue. We need to make sure we are not duplicating services, but instead, are working together with unique perspectives and resources to achieve common goals. I believe the west side of Duluth is especially challenged by being left out or left behind. Each neighborhood has unique possibilities, strengths and needs. We need to recognize each neighborhood for their individuality and the role they have in a greater vision for the region. I will be a strong voice for the west side as decisions are made, recognizing the importance of each neighborhood.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

QUESTION 1:

Please provide a brief description of the judicial office you are seeking, including a brief description of the duties of the office.

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

The Minnesota Supreme Court is responsible for establishing legal policy statewide, resolving the most pressing constitutional issues, and setting precedent in complex civil and criminal controversies. The Supreme Court generally hears oral arguments during the first two weeks of every month on cases involving multiple, complex legal issues, and the Court is often asked to either clarify the law, extend the law, apply existing law to a new, often unforeseen scenario, or resolve a split within the lower courts. Many times, there are significant policy issues at stake as well. The gravity of the issues and the knowledge that the Court is the court of last resort colors and influences each setting. Although we don't always agree with one another, the discussions among the Justices are always collegial. Given that the seven of us work together day in and day out, the respect we accord one another is critical to the proper functioning of the court and the administration of justice.

During the second half of the month, we have two settings of Special Term where we consider petitions for review and handle other administrative matters that arise as part of the Court's obligation to regulate the legal profession. Finally, and probably less obvious to the casual observer, are the many statewide committee and liaison assignments for which each justice is responsible.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

I am seeking a seat on the Minnesota Supreme Court, the final arbitrator of our constitutional rights. Justices reject or accept petitions from lower courts, usually by majority vote. After hearing from the attorneys or litigants in writing and oral argument, the Justices research and write opinions that can be precedent. The Supreme Court is suppose to judge the judges, their decisions, and the constitutionality of our laws. I will add that the Justices are not effectively doing their fundamental job for the people of the State of Minnesota, and instead are caught up in court culture and bureaucracy which, as an officer of the court for 29 years, I intend to transform. I am a Justice for the people, not the establishment.

QUESTION 2:

Please provide a personal statement describing your past work and life experience and why you are seeking this office.

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

I attended Mounds View High School; received my B.A. in English from Arizona State University; and my J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School. I am married to the Reverend Willie Hudson, a retired Pastor and former St. Paul Police Officer. My son, Kobie, is an attorney working at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

I practiced law for over 20 years before joining the bench. I started as an attorney at Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, which provides free civil legal aid to low-income people. I later joined a firm practicing in employment law and civil litigation. I then worked at Hamline University School of Law as the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, and was later appointed to serve as the Saint Paul City Attorney. I then worked at the Minnesota Attorney General's office in the Criminal Appellate Division. Governor Ventura appointed me to the Minnesota Court of Appeals in 2002, where I served for 13 years. I was appointed by Governor Dayton to the Supreme Court in August 2015.

I am seeking election to continue to serve on the Court because I believe in public service and working to ensure equal access to justice for all. I have demonstrated my commitment to these values throughout my career. If I am privileged to retain my seat, I will continue to give every case my full attention and strive to resolve each case in a thoughtful manner, according to the rule of law and the evidence in the case.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

Justice matters. I am a working wife, mother and grandmother, from a large Christian family, with all of the life experiences that come with it. For 29 years, I have helped thousands of you as an attorney in the trenches with legal challenges before hundreds of Judges in county courts across the state. I have argued countless appeals to the Appellate and Minnesota Supreme Court, and Petitions to the United States Supreme Court.
www.MacDonaldLawFirm.com

My legal experience includes judicial experience. For 22 of those years, I served part-time as small claims court Judge and Adjunct Referee in family and civil court.

I have asserted violations of civil rights, and experienced a shocking violation of my civil rights when I was made to participate as an attorney in Sandra Grazzini-Rucki's child custody trial ---in handcuffs, a wheelchair, with no shoes, no glasses, no paper, no pen, no files, missing children --- and no client, after asking the Judge to remove himself from her case because we filed a Federal court action against him for civil rights violations he inflicted on a family with his court orders.

In 2011, I founded Family Innocence, a nonprofit dedicated to keeping families out of court: resolving conflicts and injustices peacefully. www.FamilyInnocence.com

I will restore faith in the fairness of our justice system by restoring adherence to our Constitution. The Constitution does not exist to give us rights, but to uphold the fundamental rights we have by being born into this world.

QUESTION 3:

What do you believe is the mission and role of a judge in the community?

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

Marion Wright Edelman said that “service is the rent we pay for living.” We must do our part to improve our communities. I take seriously the responsibility that Justices on the Minnesota Supreme Court have to be ambassadors of the law in our communities. I enjoy interacting with the citizens of Minnesota and I value each opportunity to educate Minnesotans about their judicial system. Thus, I regularly speak at schools, colleges, service clubs, and other community groups about the judicial system and their role in it. I honor the opportunity I have been given as a judge by working every day to serve all Minnesotans.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

The mission and role of a judge in the community is to connect with compassion to the humanity of the people in the community. We belong to a variety of communities ---- families, homes, churches, schools, workplaces, to name a few. Judges should be authentic, approachable, transparent, diligent and accountable. As Minnesota Supreme Court Justice, I will continue to reach out, listen, engage and understand with compassion the people in the community where they live, and not get caught up in the legal “system,” or ignore their concerns. When do you ever see a Judge do this?
www.MacDonaldforJustice.com My direct line is 612-554-0932. Feel free to call me.

QUESTION 4:

It is important for candidates to engage, reach out, and listen to all communities, especially underrepresented communities. How are you currently accomplishing this and what is your plan to continue if elected?

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

I regularly speak to diverse community groups around the state which gives me the opportunity to hear their concerns and to talk with them about the judicial system. This past year, for example, I have participated in a round-table discussion on building self-esteem with middle school girls of color (and their teachers) in connection with the Twin Cities-based “Lovin’ The Skin You’re In” program; I’ve had lunch with the Hutchinson Rotary Club; dinner with the Range Bar Association, and spent the day at the Blue Earth County District Court in Mankato talking with citizens at an “Open House” event designed to listen to community concerns and help local residents get to know their courthouse and learn about the judicial system and its players. I am committed to continuing this type of outreach if I am elected to continue in my position as an Associate Justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

After 25 years as a family law attorney, I recognized that the way our laws, attorneys and courts regulate and break up families is beyond a reasonable doubt objectionable. In 2011, I had an epiphany: Abolish Family Court in One Year. Alongside my clients, other attorneys and mediators, I founded Family Innocence, a nonprofit dedicated to keeping families out of the court adversary process and resolving injustices peacefully. Within a year, we developed the Family Innocence Process (“FIP”), a model that can eliminate court for families altogether. With FIP, separated or separating family members (or anyone) can choose not to sue each other in court (or to suspend an existing lawsuit), inviting court jurisdiction only when absolutely necessary. Our courts are regularly allowed to deprive us of liberties with our children, property and resources, to one degree or another, when we seek assistance. I will continue to educate the people and those in positions of authority, like lawmakers, law enforcement, attorneys and Judges on the Family Innocence Process, Restorative Justice (family) Circles, mediation and alternative dispute resolution. I plan to continue my work with families and Family Innocence after I get elected. www.FamilyInnocence.com

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON: See Question 6 below.

Do you believe the composition of juries adequately and fairly reflects society at large? Why or why not? If not, what can we do to change this?

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

The composition of juries could adequately and fairly reflect society at large, but there is an inherent obstruction by the system. 99% of cases are settled short of a jury trial. Our system tolerates the engineering of cases by law enforcement, lawyers, prosecutors and Judges in their prosecution and “advocacy”, including depriving juries of making a decision by instilling fear in the litigants, some of whom do not have attorneys, at great expense to their resources, liberties and emotional wellbeing. The engineering continues in the selection of the jury from a jury pool, if it ever gets to that. May I add that Judges and juries often base their decisions on argument and not on the particularized facts of the situation, or the law. In practice, juries rely on those in the system, and fail to understand their awesome power and duty to dispense justice as decision-makers. Juries often concentrate on proof of innocence beyond a *shadow* of a doubt, and not by reasonable doubt, which is wrong thinking. Jurors are not inherently bias, but the lawyers in our adversary system regularly pick jurors that they hope are bias to the arguments of the prosecution or defense.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

Do you believe there is under-representation of women or people of color in the court system? If so, how would you work to correct the problem?

Question 5 (regarding juries) and Question 6 (regarding the representation of women and people of color in the court system), both go to a similar question: ensuring that the judicial system—whether that be juries, judges, attorneys, or court staff—reflect the society that we live in. Diversity in the entire court system promotes the public’s trust. Our system must be representative of the diverse communities that we serve so that everyone feels confident that they will be heard and their cases will be decided fairly. It is a shared responsibility of all attorneys and judges to help ensure that the legal profession is open to all and that it is a system that engenders the public’s trust. To fulfill that responsibility, we must reach back into the early educational pipeline—elementary and middle school—with the message that the legal profession has rewarding opportunities for women and people of color and that the profession wants and needs their presence.

As an African-American attorney, my personal and professional experiences include having received anonymous racist hate mail when I was the St. Paul City Attorney. And like many women attorneys, I experienced my share of slights and rejection as a practicing attorney simply because I was a woman. One result of these experiences is the realization that various forms of discrimination still exist. Every member of the judicial system must be ever-vigilant to ensure that anyone who enters a courtroom is treated in a fair, respectful manner.

Judges are also interpreters of the law and we are tasked with applying the law evenly and fairly to every party. We are aided greatly in these tasks by ensuring that our decision-makers represent the broad spectrum of our community. We are all products of our life experiences; none of us comes to the practice of law or the bench a blank slate. And it is the diversity of our backgrounds that brings a richness and depth to the decision-making process. Particularly on an appellate court, where decision-making is collaborative, that diversity of experience leads to a fuller debate, helps to ensure that all perspectives are explored, and allows arguments and rationales to be filtered through many different lenses. This, in turn, leads to better, more informed decisions.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

Women and minorities are not underrepresented. We are all human beings, and need to avoid dividing ourselves by race, gender and, most importantly, our judgments about others. To correct the problem, we need to set aside our judgements, be open to communication and forgiveness, and see the humanity in others and their behaviors. We also need to educate the people on the Rule of Law and the Constitution.

QUESTION 7.

What do you believe are the causes of the high rates of minority incarceration?

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

Some research suggests that the aggressive, more punitive criminal justice policies of the 1980s and 1990s has had a disproportionate effect on racial minorities, the poor, and immigrant communities. This serious issue is multi-faceted, involving complex political, economic, racial, and class considerations. This question is not easily answered and does not lend itself to being addressed in a few short paragraphs. That said, Minnesotans are people of good will and it will require people of good will to join hands and hearts and engage in honest, open, and undoubtedly difficult discussions about personal responsibility, as well as political, economic, and racial inequality. When that discussion begins in earnest, it will reveal not only the root causes of high minority incarceration rates, but solutions, as well.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

Land of the free? America incarcerates more people than any other country. Jails are privatized and big business. If the name of the game is “break a rule --- you pay”, why is it that those in the system can break rule after rule and not be accountable to the people they pursue or society as a whole? High rates of minority incarceration is caused by the failure of our government officials use appropriate discretion and to follow the our rules and laws.

Then, there is poverty. By poverty I mean most individuals met with legal challenges do not have “extra” money, including resources from family and supporters, to fix the problem, or to pay fines, bail or attorneys. They are often vulnerable and taken advantage of. The burden is inappropriately placed on them, when they are presumptively innocent, with law enforcement and prosecutors inflicting fear and coercion through argument, and failing to take the necessary time to discern the particularized facts of the i situation and why the person did what he/she did. They create a narrative or “story” around facts. The chosen narrative around the facts are then conflated as “fact,” which is not truth. Blackstone’s formulation is a principal that it’s better that 10 guilty persons escape, than one innocent suffer. Our criminal court culture fails to error on the side of liberties, operating on the premise that it’s better that innocents suffer, to capture the guilty. Unfortunately, our criminal justice systems is almost purely punitive.

QUESTION 8:

Do you believe that all citizens have adequate access to legal help and the legal system? If not, what can be done to provide wider and better access?

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

Access to justice is a critical issue because Minnesota citizens must be able to have their claims resolved in a fair and prompt manner, regardless of their financial circumstances. I value the trust I have been given as a judge, and it requires, among other things, that I use my voice to stress that access to justice is a right of every Minnesotan. I was privileged to begin my practice at Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services. That experience brought home the reality that there was, and is, a persistent justice gap in Minnesota. Approximately 26% of Minnesotans live at or below 200% of poverty – \$47,700 per year for a family of four. In 2014, Civil Legal Services could still only meet the need of one out of every three eligible clients. This is a fundamental access issue, and as a profession we must continuously fight the lull of indifference. Minnesota’s judiciary has been deeply committed to the issue of access to justice for years and Minnesotans can be proud of the programs in place that ensure access to our courts. But there is always more that can be done.

If I am elected, I will continue to advocate for adequate funding for Civil Legal Services and the Public Defender system so that those without the means to pay for an attorney are not blocked from access to our judicial system and competent legal representation. Likewise, I will continue to encourage the private bar to provide pro bono legal services.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

Our citizens do not have adequate access to legal help and the legal system, particularly in terms of having lawyers that have become necessary to maneuver through the maze created by policy, rules and laws. Attorneys are expensive. There is an inherent failure to adhere to the Rule of Law and uphold the Constitution. Together, we can create a system where justice is free, and the people --- or the judges---do not have to rely on lawyers. We have wrongly made the laws and our system complex, and our citizens incompetent, without a lawyer. Our lawyers and Judges often cater to the system as officers of the court, when in reality they are our public servants, employed by us. We can only get a court appointed (free) lawyer if we are impoverished, and it is a criminal matter. Law enforcement, the courts and court officers (attorneys) have forgotten that they are our public servants.

QUESTION 9:

What have been the most effective methods for improving court procedures and efficiency? What other methods would you suggest?

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

Advancing technology will continue to be a benefit and a challenge for the judiciary. Technology will always outpace the law, but we have made great strides over the last few years to move the court system from a paper-based institution to one based on electronic case records. As part of the broader eCourtMN initiative, eFiling and eService of court documents is now available in all 87 district courts, as well as the state's appellate courts. We must continue these efforts in order to better serve not only the public, but the practicing bar, the law enforcement community, and other justice partners.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

The most effective methods for improving court procedures and efficiency is appropriately implementing alternative dispute resolution, starting with restorative circles and mediation. There needs to be more education, and the recognition that most of us make mistakes and operate every day in family innocence. We can resort to court assistance if we are wrongfully deprived of our liberties with our resources, property and children. More often than not, the system and court process results in the very deprivation we sought to restore. Other methods for improving court procedures that are critical are education on unitive systems, like restorative justice circles and other consent processes.

QUESTION 10:

What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice, if any?

CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

The Supreme Court must safeguard the integrity of the judicial process. I strongly believe that justice is not simply a result; it is a process that must embody both the perception and the reality of justice for everyone who sets foot in the courts. As judges, our role is not simply to reach the correct legal result, but to ensure that all parties are treated fairly and respectfully. That means things as simple as calling people by their proper names and truly listening to each party's argument. Over the years, I have found that even unsuccessful litigants are often satisfied with the court system and the legal process if they feel they were "heard" and that the judge seriously considered their position. And thus, as judges, we should never lose sight of the fact that behind each legal issue we encounter are real, human lives—lives that will be greatly impacted by the decisions we make.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

The greatest obstacle to justice is fear, including attachment to a particular outcome and "winning," rather than a commitment to a resolution. There is coercion in our justice system at every turn---law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, juries--- inflicted on the people it encounters. There is an inherent failure to discern the facts and recognize the humanity in the act. We have a propensity to be fearful and avoid conflict, rather than move towards communication, a tendency enabled by our culture and system. We see almost every conflict as having to be determined by law enforcement and courts. We should be able to correct injustices as readily as they are inflicted, and there are ways to do this through restorative justice circles, and even the Appellate Court. All of us need to operate in love and not fear, and set aside our judgments to connect to each other and our humanity.

QUESTION 11: CANDIDATE NATALIE HUDSON:

What are the most critical issues facing the criminal justice system in the State of Minnesota?

Record numbers of judges are retiring as they reach the mandatory retirement age of 70. This presents challenges and opportunities. The challenge is the loss of experience and institutional knowledge that are so critical to addressing the complex issues brought into our courtrooms each day. But this challenge also affords the judiciary the opportunity to welcome new, diverse talent to the bench—judges who bring with them fresh ideas, fresh perspectives, and an eagerness to tackle an ever-changing legal landscape.

It is particularly vital that the judiciary remain neutral in order to approach each case independently and resolve each controversy in an open, transparent manner while treating all parties fairly and respectfully. I enjoy wrestling with difficult legal issues and working with my colleagues to reach the correct legal result for each particular case. A court's decision should be accurate, follow the rule of law in accordance with the evidence in the case, and be accessible to all citizens – not just the parties involved. I am committed to being a neutral, impartial decision-maker, who reaches decisions based on a thorough review of the facts and the rule of law.

CANDIDATE MICHELLE MACDONALD:

The most critical issue facing the criminal justice system is that individuals, law enforcement, lawyers and Judges get caught up in a punitive ---not justice--- system, resulting in a failure to dispense true justice. Our adversary system is archaic, lacks unity, and fails to follow the rule of law. Behaviors that should constitute teaching moments for all involved instead become “blame” moments, and reasons to involve law enforcement, lawyers and the courts. Judges regularly fail to recognize the harm, fail to upholding liberty rights, lack diligence, and fail to take the necessary time to discern the facts, apply facts to the law, reach legal conclusions and make orders, which is their primary role. There is a lot of pretending going on, not recognizing bad acts or bad law, getting caught up in bureaucracy, civil rights violations, and making unconstitutional decisions in the name of “justice”. Our justice system is more often cookie-cutter with a “one-size-fits-all” mentality and court culture. The system regularly criminalizes licit behavior and lacks common sense. Law enforcement, attorneys and judges fail to use their broad discretion wisely, instead getting caught up in non-serious matters involving inherently good people who make mistakes, leaving them no time to concentrate on more serious matters.

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT 13

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

Please provide a brief description of the judicial office you are seeking, including a brief description of the duties of the office.

District Court Judge for the Sixth Judicial District in Duluth, Minnesota.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

Please provide a personal statement describing your past work and life experience and why you are seeking this office.

As an assistant city attorney in Duluth, I worked as a prosecutor and as a community liaison with law enforcement to reduce blight and nuisance crimes. I created a program for first time offenders with low level crimes to have a charge dismissed if they completed a community service project. I was recognized for this work at the city with the "Own It, Solve It, Take Pride" award. As a staff attorney at Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women, I represented victims of domestic assault, sexual harassment and stalking in civil and family cases. As a staff attorney at Indian Legal Assistance Program I provide legal representation to people charged with crimes and representation to parties in civil cases such as divorces, custody disputes and eviction cases.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

What do you believe is the mission and role of a judge in the community?

I strive to instill in the community confidence in our judicial system, by treating all fairly and with open ears. We can do this by working hard to handle cases efficiently, treating all those who come before us respectfully as demonstrated by our demeanor and understanding of their case and giving them an opportunity to be heard.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

It is important for candidates to engage, reach out, and listen to all communities, especially underrepresented communities. How are you currently accomplishing this and what is your plan to continue if elected?

Judges are required to be neutral and treat all people who enter the court room fairly. For this reason judges involvement in partisan or “specific issue” organizations is restricted. I participate and volunteer in activities that serve our community as a whole. One example is my support of the Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) which provides legal representation to people with civil cases that cannot afford an attorney. I have volunteered in the soup kitchens in our community and participated in Neighbor National Night Out activities.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

Do you believe the composition of juries adequately and fairly reflects society at large? Why or why not? If not, what can we do to change this?

Jury pool selection is not within the judges control. In the courtroom, attorneys determine whether a juror is a good fit for the subject matter of a case. If the jury pool is not reflective of the community then the method of how jurors are selected for jury duty would need to be addressed.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

Do you believe there is under-representation of women or people of color in the court system? If so, how would you work to correct the problem?

In some areas of the court system there is a lack of diversity. As an individual I look for mentoring opportunities and encourage women and people of color to apply for jobs. It is important that notice of job opportunities is adequately disseminated to reach these groups.

QUESTION 7. CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

What do you believe are the causes of the high rates of minority incarceration?

This is a complex issue that has been has been researched and continues to be studied. As a judge I do my best to be aware of my own implicit biases and to be vigilant about looking for biases in the system.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

Do you believe that all citizens have adequate access to legal help and the legal system? If not, what can be done to provide wider and better access?

The legal system can be very complicated and overwhelming. We are fortunate that in our region there is a staffed law library that is open to the public. We have very experienced public defenders and well supported organizations assisting people with civil cases such as divorces, parenting and custody issues and eviction cases.

QUESTION 9:

CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

What have been the most effective methods for improving court procedures and efficiency? What other methods would you suggest?

Technology. The ability to store, share, file and retrieve information across the district increases the speed at which we can schedule and hear cases.

QUESTION 10:

CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice, if any?

Not enough funding for public defenders and funding for organizations that provide legal representation for people who cannot afford an attorney in civil matters. Another issue is the extremely high debt load (student loan) for new attorneys makes it difficult to lure them to public service. There are some programs to reduce student loans for attorneys who work in these areas however the programs are not available for everyone.

QUESTION 11:

CANDIDATE THERESA NEO:

What are the most critical issues facing the criminal justice system in the region?

Addiction and mental health issues that result in criminal behavior.

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT 15

QUESTION 1:

CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:

Please provide a brief description of the judicial office you are seeking, including a brief description of the duties of the office.

I was appointed to be a Sixth Judicial District Trial Court Judge by Governor Mark Dayton in June of 2014. Pursuant to the Minnesota Constitution, I am seeking election to the seat to which I was appointed. District courts are the state trial courts of general jurisdiction. A district court trial judge presides over a variety of cases including criminal, civil, family, juvenile, and probate.

QUESTION 2:

CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:

Please provide a personal statement describing your past work and life experience and why you are seeking this office.

I became a lawyer in 1983. I spent my first two years working as a law clerk for Federal Magistrate Patrick McNulty in Duluth and the next six years at the Legal Aid Service of Northeastern Minnesota. While at Legal Aid, I worked on the Senior Law Project and rode the circuit in Cook, Lake, and Carlton counties. In 1991, I became an Assistant Carlton County Attorney. Several years later, in 1995, I moved to the St. Louis County Attorney's Office where, over the course of nearly 20 years, I worked in all three divisions, criminal, public health and human services, and civil. My work was primarily as an adult and juvenile prosecutor. From 2007-2010, I served as Head of the Criminal Division. I was also appointed a Special Assistant United States Attorney in 2011. I've been on the trial court bench since 2014, handling all types of cases and presiding over the Carlton County Drug Court. I've spent my entire career in public service and want to continue to serve in a way that draws on all of my experience over the past 33 years. I believe my background and temperament make me an excellent candidate for this position.

QUESTION 3:

CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:

What do you believe is the mission and role of a judge in the community?

The primary role and responsibility of a judge is to handle the work of the district court. I believe that judges also have a responsibility to do outreach in the community to educate the public about the work of the court. I have done this in a variety of ways since being appointed to the bench, by speaking to classes and community groups about the court and by doing presentations about our drug courts.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:

It is important for candidates to engage, reach out, and listen to all communities, especially underrepresented communities. How are you currently accomplishing this and what is your plan to continue if elected?

I am currently serving on the statewide Committee for Equality and Justice, whose three-fold mission is to work collaboratively across the Judicial Branch to (1) eliminate bias from court operations, (2) promote equal access to the courts, and (3) inspire a high level of trust and confidence in the Minnesota Judicial Branch. I am also the Chair of our local Equal Justice Committee. In this capacity, I have reformed our committee, reached out to underrepresented communities for representation on the committee and worked with the committee to plan our first Community Dialogue. The goal of this Community Dialogue is to provide a forum for community members to share their court experiences with Judges and members of the Equal Justice Committee. Our first Community Dialogue is scheduled for October 29, 2016 at Denfeld High School from 9:30 a.m. until noon. Once this is completed, the committee will evaluate the feedback from the community and determine what changes we might be able to make to improve our court system and how we served underrepresented communities. Going forward, we will continue to host Community Dialogues around the district.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:

Do you believe the composition of juries adequately and fairly reflects society at large? Why or why not? If not, what can we do to change this?

The lack of diversity in juries is a challenge for courts across the country. The presence of minorities on juries allows for fellow jurors to better understand the experiences of different races in the criminal justice system. One of the challenges to empanelling diverse juries is poverty. Poverty often results in a lack of stable housing or frequent moves, which then results in juror notices being returned as undeliverable. Although the Minnesota legislature doubled the juror per diem this year to twenty dollars a day and increased the mileage reimbursement to the same as the federal level, jury service presents a disproportionate burden on the economically disadvantaged. In talking to jurors after trials, most have extremely positive experiences – which contradicts the negative views many citizens have about serving on juries. Possible solutions include finding ways to expand the jury pool, increasing juror compensation, and doing community outreach to explain that jury service is not only the backbone of our system, but a rewarding experience.

QUESTION 6:**CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:**

Do you believe there is under-representation of women or people of color in the court system? If so, how would you work to correct the problem?

I believe there is an under-representation of people of color and women working in the court system. The Minnesota Judicial Branch does outreach to underrepresented communities and our Community Dialogues will include information about employment opportunities in the Judicial Branch. The Duluth Courthouse had an open house last year that included information about employment opportunities within the Branch, and it was well received.

QUESTION 7.**CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:**

What do you believe are the causes of the high rates of minority incarceration?

This is a subject on which volumes have been written. There are many causes, including poverty, the war on drugs, and institutional racism.

QUESTION 8:**CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:**

Do you believe that all citizens have adequate access to legal help and the legal system? If not, what can be done to provide wider and better access?

People do not have adequate access to legal help, especially in civil and family law cases. People appear in court frequently representing themselves on important matters because they can't afford counsel. Minnesota has an excellent public defender system, but their caseloads are too large. Civil legal service programs are underfunded and overwhelmed with cases. Volunteer lawyers offer critical services, but more funding is needed. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has tried to address this problem by establishing self help centers where self represented litigants can find information and assistance. Each county in our district has a self-help workstation with a computer, telephone and printer. Citizens can find legal information, print court forms and talk to self-help staff over the telephone.

QUESTION 9:**CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:**

What have been the most effective methods for improving court procedures and efficiency? What other methods would you suggest?

The Minnesota Courts have been a national leader in technological innovations. eCourt Minnesota, which became mandatory for lawyers on July 1, 2016, requires electronic service and filing of documents. Our Chief Justice Lori Gildea described this initiative as, “the largest transformation in the 150 year history on the Minnesota Judicial Branch.” The system improves efficiency and increases the availability of on-line access to court information. There are many other Judicial Branch initiatives that use technology to more efficiently and effectively do our work. Our district has also centralized many of our court operations, which is another innovative way we have improved efficiency.

QUESTION 10:**CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:**

What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice, if any?

The earlier answers touch on some of the obstacles to justice, lack of affordable counsel for individuals in civil and family cases, high caseloads for public defenders, and crowded court dockets. Another concerning area is the lack of services for people suffering from mental illness and addiction. With too few services available, people who would otherwise be released into treatment facilities pending trial remain jailed.

QUESTION 11:**CANDIDATE LESLIE E. BEIERS:**

What are the most critical issues facing the criminal justice system in the region?

One critical issue is the explosion of cases involving opiates. These cases affect not only the criminal justice system, but our child protection and family law cases as well. Widespread opiate addiction is not just a problem in the court system; it is a public health crisis. The Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to treatment courts and we have 5 treatment courts in this district. Unfortunately, these courts cannot handle the very large number of drug cases that have flooded the systems. Additional resources and working collaboratively with service providers is critically important to addressing this problem. Another significant problem is the incarceration of the mentally ill because of the absence of local community resources. Incarceration exacerbates mental illness in many cases, and the lack of resources to protect public safety and the safety of these defendants is a challenge we must continue to make efforts to address.