

2026 ITASCA COUNTY ELECTION GUIDE



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ITASCA COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

Where and when do I vote?

There are three ways to vote in Minnesota: by mail, early in-person and in-person on Election Day.



Voting by mail began Sept. 18. Some precincts in rural areas are mail ballot precincts, and ballots are automatically mailed to registered voters there. If you don't live in a mail ballot precinct, you can still request a ballot at mnvotes.gov/absentee. You can return your ballot by mail, and those ballots must be received by no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day. Or, you can drop it off yourself at your county elections office no later than 5 p.m. on Election Day.



Early in-person voting also began Sept. 18. You can go to your county's early voting location(s), usually the courthouse or government center, and fill out an absentee ballot. You will need to know your MN ID or Social Security number to fill out the application.

Starting Oct. 16, voters can cast ballots as part of the "early voting process," which is more similar to voting on Election Day. You'll fill out a short certificate, fill out a ballot and then put it into the ballot counter.

Itasca County's early voting locations are: Itasca County Courthouse in Grand Rapids (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), MN North College-Itasca Campus in Grand Rapids (Tuesday, Oct. 6, noon-4 p.m.) and Ball Club Community Center in Deer River (Monday, Oct. 26, noon-6 p.m.)



On **Election Day**, Tuesday, Nov. 3, you can go to your local polling place to vote until 8 p.m. You can find your polling place at mnvotes.gov/pollfinder.

Local election officials also send teams of election judges to nursing homes and hospitals during the 35 days before the election and provide ballots to voters who live in the city or town where the facility is located. You can contact facility management or your local election office to find out when that will happen.

How do I register to vote?



You can register to vote or update your registration online at mnvotes.gov or by returning a paper form to your local elections office until Oct. 13. You'll need your Minnesota ID or Social Security number.

You can also register when you vote, either early in-person or on Election Day. You'll need to bring one proof of residence, like your driver's license or a photo ID paired with a bill or lease.

ITASCA COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

Where can I find more information?



For more details on voting, you can visit mnvotes.gov, call 1-877-600-VOTE (8683), text 651-217-3862 or contact your county election office.

For more on the 2026 election, including candidates, maps and more, visit kaxe.org/election2026.

What is KAXE?



KAXE is a Northern Minnesota community radio station, founded in 1976. We have signals in Grand Rapids (91.7), Bemidji (90.5) and Brainerd (89.9), and our broadcast can be streamed at kaxe.org or on the NPR app.

KAXE News began in 2023, and our team of five journalists put together this Election Guide. The team includes News Director Chelsey Perkins, Northwest Minnesota Reporter Larissa Donovan, North-Central Minnesota Reporter Megan Buffington, Northeast Minnesota Reporter Emma Krab and Stella Mayerhoff, Report for America corps member covering water and agriculture.

Stay updated on local news across our region by listening to the *Up North Report*, our daily 5-minute newscast. You can find it at our website or on your favorite podcast app.

More about this KAXE Election Guide



KAXE's election guides inform people about voting and elections. We don't want to tell you how to vote, but we want to play a role in empowering you to vote by providing unbiased and trustworthy reporting.

This Election Guide features only contested races in communities with a population of at least 100. "Contested" means those in which more people are running than the number of available seats.

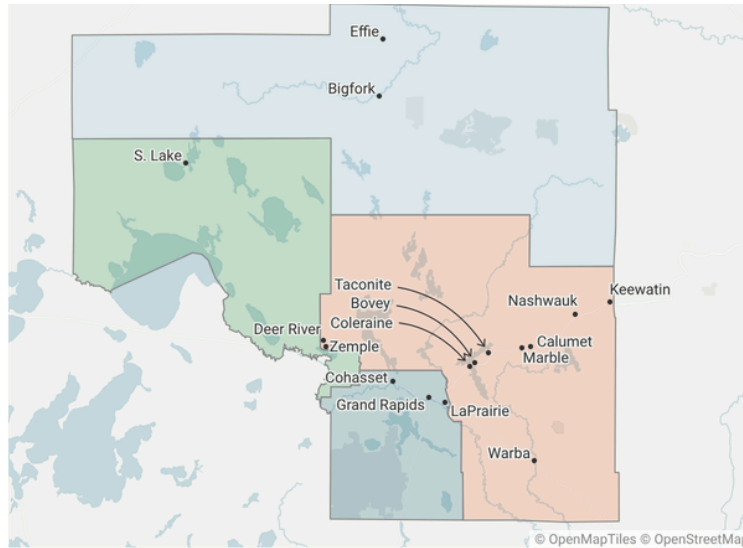
Candidate responses have not been edited and are published as submitted. As necessary, our News Team added contextual information and corrected inaccuracies, marked with editor's notes in italics.

KAXE contacted every candidate at least three times using contact information submitted to the Secretary of State's Office when they filed for office. Please contact us at news@kaxe.org with questions or comments or to report any errors.

ITASCA COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

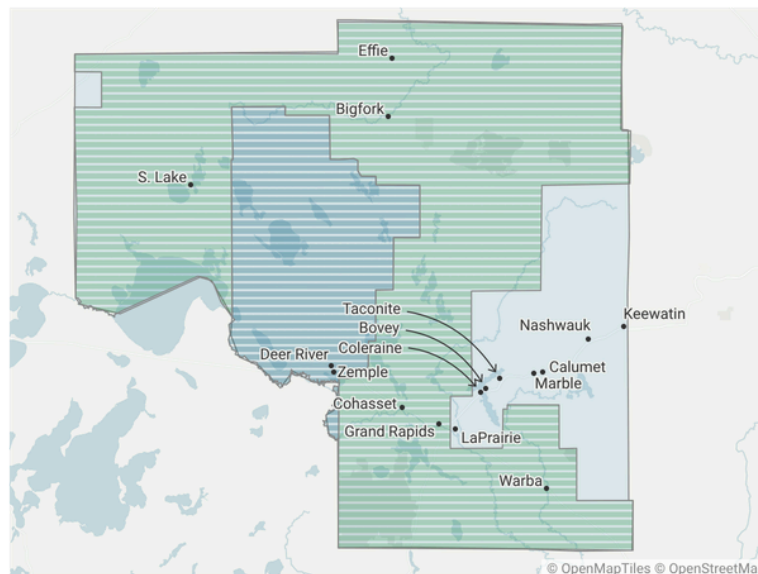
Which district do you live in?

Legislative Districts



Created with Datawrapper

School Districts

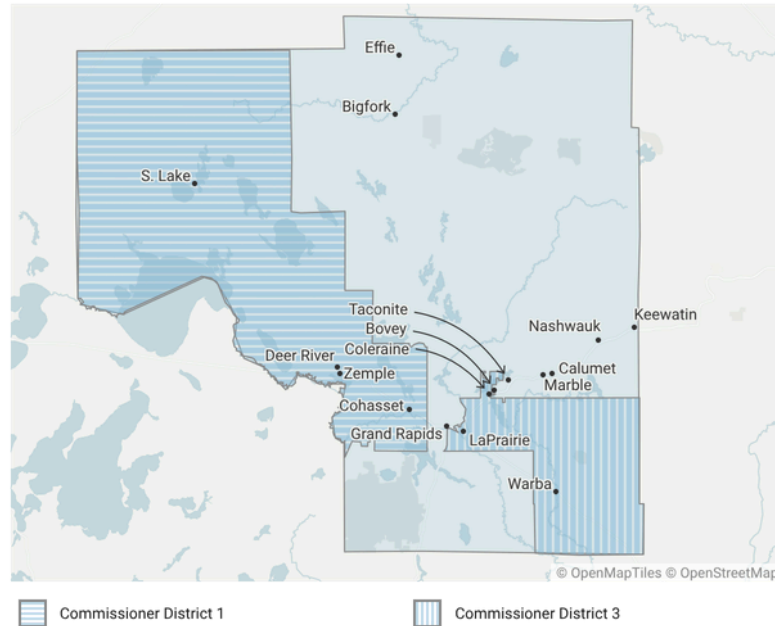


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ITASCA COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

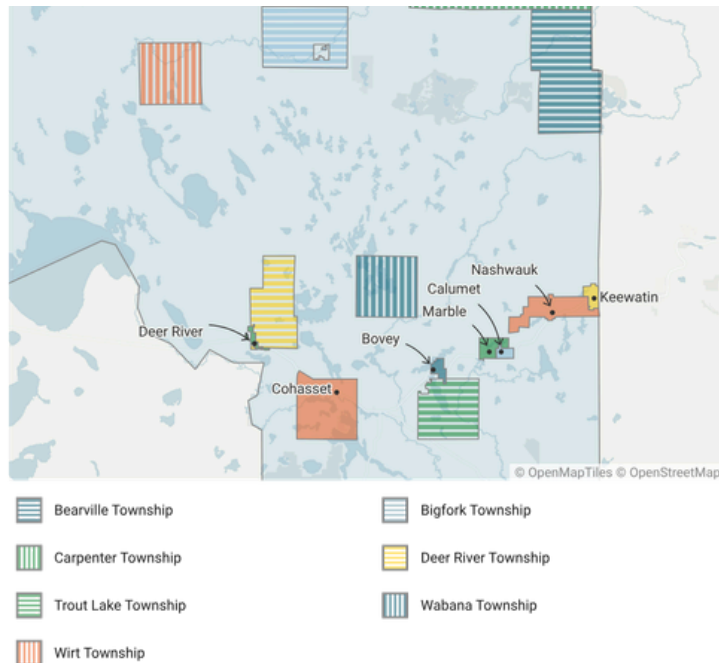
Which district do you live in?

County Board Districts



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Cities and Townships



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U.S. HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT



Pete Stauber*

Incumbent

Republican

petestauberforcongress.com



Trina Swanson

DFL

trinaforcongress.com

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.
Candidate campaign website as reported to the Minnesota Secretary of State.

U.S. HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT



Party: DFL
Age: 46
Community:
Hermantown

Trina Swanson

When Trump's administration asked me to carry out directives I believed were unethical, I walked away from my career. I started my own law firm and decided to use all my experience and leadership skills in national security, foreign policy, diplomacy, and immigration to fight for fellow Minnesotans.

Why are you running? Our district has seen the outcome of relying on the same representation for years: a focus on identity politics rather than day-to-day issues, and catering to the Trump administration rather than Minnesota families. Across this district, voters keep asking the same question: who has the experience and dedication to make life more affordable and strengthen our communities? Our current representation has been unable to articulate how they will enact concrete change.

Being effective in Congress requires Representatives with the skills to work across the aisle, identify solutions, build coalitions, and get laws passed. It requires an understanding of the issues at hand, including foreign policy, national security, and immigration. It also requires a willingness to learn about the issues one may not be fluent in, recognizing that we have a broad depth of issues to tackle in this country. I am ready to be that Representative.

Why should voters elect you? I have proven my commitment to listening to voters across the District regardless of affiliation. Sitting down and having conversations with people, listening

to their struggles, questions, and concerns, is the only way to move beyond divisive identity politics. I have worked hard to ensure my candidacy is centered around my skills, experience, and tangible solutions for Minnesota families' everyday challenges. I grew up here. The 8th District is my family, friends, and neighbors. I know I can win the 8th because I am winning people over one conversation at a time. This message is resonating: Minnesotans are ready for representation that puts kitchen table issues first and brings opportunity at home.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. I have traveled all 31,000 miles and 21 counties in this District, and it is clear that the District wants strong communities with good-paying jobs, affordable and accessible healthcare, new industry investment, and to preserve our lakes and wilderness for future generations to enjoy. To make this a reality, we must enact universal healthcare, ensure proper federal funding for childcare, schools, hospitals, and the programs the working class relies upon, and attract new industries with good-paying, union jobs to the district.

(continued on next page)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? JET Global Solutions, LLP; Founding Partner and Attorney at Law

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I grew up in Hermantown, Minnesota, where my mother worked as a nurse and my father worked first as a carpenter, then at the paper mill. They instilled in me the Minnesota values of unions, hard work, and caring for your community. Those lessons drove me to a career in public service at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and I was proud to represent the United States across the globe, leading offices and national emergency responses. I proudly served under several Administrations, worked with people from both sides of the aisle, and identified and implemented solutions to problems.

U.S. HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT

Trina Swanson (continued)

We currently have a representative who supports cuts to programs that the middle class relies upon, so the 1% can receive greater tax breaks. I will fight for Minnesota to receive proper federal funding, instead of today's status quo: placing the responsibility on the state, resulting in property tax increases. People should be able to stay in the communities they love, raise families, and retire with dignity.

What are your natural resources policy positions?

Generations to come must be able to enjoy this amazing land we call home. We must respect the science, experts, and regulatory processes that ensure corporations use the most advanced technological means in their industries to minimize the impact on our environment and manage natural resources sustainably.

I will ensure proper funding for federal agencies with oversight of our natural resources. We must return to proper staffing levels across federal agencies and reopen the critical offices that closed.

I support our mining industry and miners, just as I believe in protecting Minnesota's natural resources by consistently enforcing environmentally responsible regulatory practices. At the end of the day, mining must benefit our communities, prioritize our workforce, and protect our environment. When I am elected to Congress, I will support legislation to protect the Boundary Waters, while also supporting and protecting Minnesota's robust mining industry.

**Looking for statewide candidates?
Visit the link below for detailed guides on who's running
for U.S. Senate, Minnesota governor, attorney general,
secretary of state and auditor.**



kaxe.org/electionguide

MINNESOTA STATE SENATE

Read more on page 9

District 2



Steve Green*
Incumbent
Republican



Dan R. Rogers
DFL
danrogersmn.com



Calvin Larson Jr.
United New
Independence

Read more on page 11

District 3



Grant Hauschild
Incumbent
DFL
grantformn.com



Andrea Zupancich*
Republican
andreaformn.com

Read more on page 12

District 6



Keri Heintzeman*
Incumbent
Republican
heintzemanforsenate.com



Denise Slipy
DFL
slipy4senate.com

Read more on page 13

District 7



Robert Farnsworth
Incumbent
Republican
robarnsworth.com



**Kim (Kotonias)
McLaughlin**
DFL
kimfords7.com

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 2

Dan R. Rogers



Party: DFL
Age: 65
Community:
Guthrie

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired teacher. I am still farming and do winter logging.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. As a high school/ middle school science teacher for 38 years I worked with thousands of students that encompassed a spectrum of abilities. Giving those students a science education that emphasized interaction with the natural world around them was always important. Working with people and working to make this world a better place go hand in hand.

Why are you running?

I want those that follow to have a better future. In terms of humanity that means to treat others with respect and dignity and to always work to give those who are less fortunate a better life. We need to ensure as well, that the organisms we coinhabit this planet with, may also sustain their lives.

Why should voters elect you?

If elected I will strive to bring to fruition a better Minnesota: A state in which healthcare is not a privilege but a right; A state in which our children can attend childcare that is affordable, safe and of high-quality; A state in which housing is available and affordable; And a state that safeguards our environment.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. Priority number one: Affordable healthcare - all citizens of MN deserve healthcare that they can afford. I will work to ensure that this becomes a reality. Priority number two: Affordable childcare - childcare is infrastructure. Helping young families by providing affordable, safe and high quality childcare is as important as having good quality roads. Priority number three: Affordable housing -

citizens of this state have a basic right to housing that is affordable. Working with cities and counties across the state we develop strategies to build the housing units we need.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

Minnesota has a high quality of life. Taxes support much of those quality factors. Recent federal cuts to programs like SNAP are placing additional costs and manpower burdens on counties. Overall costs for construction, health care, fuel and labor are increasing which puts additional pressures on counties and cities to maintain amenities and needed infrastructure. Residents of our state currently have these options available: Property tax deferral program for senior citizens; regular homestead credit refund; and a program aimed at giving some veterans and their families relief on property taxes.

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 2



Party:

United New Independence

Age: 30

Community:

Clearwater County

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Independent Contractor / Conifer Transit

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. 14 years of service in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as a cook coordinator. This experiences brings how state departments operate internally, what works and where the shortfalls are.

Obtained an associates degree from Institute of Production and Recording for Music Production and Engineering. This experience will help to handle different views, approaches and characters. This will help deal with short term deadlines and working on a project/bill you may not want to work on.

Why are you running? I have lost faith that the state's

Calvin Larson Jr.

leadership and legislature will fix the problems they have created from unfunded programs, potential fraud, and lack of accountability. The 2 major parties focus on dividing voters and not uniting them. I will bring a new perspective to the legislature and call out harmful legislation that they may attempt to pass. I chose to run as an independent as the 2 parties have failed voters and i have no plans to fall down the 2 party lines. The Democrats and Republicans have gotten us to where we are today. Are you the voter satisfied with your candidates/party's accomplishments in recent years?

Why should voters elect you? This campaign offers transparency by informing voters of potential harmful legislation such as the "data center regulation" bill from 2025. Billionaires are given tax breaks by the MN legislature while taxes and fees go up on us. Minnesota operates for the profit of corporations at the expense of the working class. I will NEVER stay silent on corruption within our government regardless of party affiliation.

This campaign will submit bills to the legislature on AI Transparency Act, Prohibit Hidden Fees from electricity, insurance, and cellular companies, lower income taxes, expand employee rights, and the Surplus Investment Program.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. 1. Repeal "data center regulation" bill from 2025

- data center bill gave a "sales tax exemption" to data centers for up to 35 years.

2. Lower income taxes / raise corporate tax rate / raise "gross premium tax"

- lower income taxes by 0.5% for working class.

- Raise corporate tax rate to 15% (currently 9.8%).

- Raise "gross premium tax" paid by insurance companies to 5.25% (currently 1.26%).

3. Artificial Intelligence Transparency Act

- Companies must place a disclaimer on building/website of its use of AI and what it is used for.

- Companies utilizing Artificial Intelligence must create a policy and training regarding AI safety for the employees.

- Require employers to give a disclaimer to employees on the use of AI within the company

- Prohibition of AI to determine an individual's social score/public rating.

- Information deletion policy for AI accessing personal data.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

- Change the formula for how property tax is calculated.

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 3



Party: DFL
Age: 37
Community:
Hermantown

Grant Hauschild

working with anyone who can help us get something done and making sure northern Minnesota has a strong voice at the Capitol.

Why should voters elect you? I've tried to earn people's trust by being accessible, independent minded and focused on results. I've worked across the aisle to bring resources back to our communities, support our schools, strengthen rural EMS and rural health care, provide social security and property tax relief and stand up for the industries and communities that make Northern Minnesota special. I don't agree with everyone on every issue and I'll call out either side if it's bad for Northern Minnesota, while working with anyone with a good idea if it makes a difference for my constituents.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. First, lowering costs for families and seniors. I want to continue reducing property taxes, protect the Social Security tax relief we secured in 2023, and bring down the costs of housing, child care and everyday expenses. Second, strengthening rural health care and emergency services. I've made the rural EMS crisis a top priority, but federal cuts now threaten rural health care. I'll keep fighting for our hospitals, ambulance services and fire departments so people can get care no matter their zip code. Third, growing northern Minnesota's

economy. That means supporting our industries and manufacturing, investing in infrastructure and workforce development, and making sure state policies recognize that a strong Minnesota economy depends on a strong northern Minnesota.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

I believe we need to provide direct property tax relief to Minnesotans due to the rising levies we're seeing at the local level due to federal mandates in the One, Big Beautiful Bill. I led the effort this last session to provide \$125 million in property tax refunds that equal approximately \$1,600 for the average Minnesota Minnesota recipient. I also passed a major increase in the Taconite Homestead Credit, providing up to \$515 in property tax relief for many northern Minnesota homeowners using taconite tax proceeds. Going forward, I want to keep building on those efforts and make sure rising property values do not result in people being priced out of the homes.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Essentia Health, Strategic Communications

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. -Bachelors in Political Science from University of North Dakota. -Masters in Public Policy from George Washington University. -Former City Councilor in Hermantown. -Rural Economic Development Specialist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Why are you running? I'm running because I love Northern Minnesota and I want to keep delivering for the communities I represent. This is a huge, diverse district, and every community deserves someone who will listen, show up and fight for its priorities. For me, this job has always been about putting the Northland first,

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 6



Party: DFL
Age: 52
Community:
Breezy Point

Denise Slipy

collaborate and deliver for this district and set the example for the rest of the state to follow.

Why should voters elect you? I am an independent voice for the people. When I am in St. Paul, I will be looking at what is best for the district and the people of the district, not towing the party line. People want their elected leaders to be accountable to the people not the party. Servant leaders, not self-serving!

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. Economic issues are on the forefront of everyone's minds in this district, from small businesses to our school teachers. Prices keep going up faster than our wages and everyone is struggling. Meanwhile local governments, hit with the same increased cost of goods are forced to levy higher taxes to support both mandated and necessary services to our community. Everything comes back to working people struggling to provide for their families and live the

dream of home ownership and a 40 hour work week. I'm going to fight for our district and the people who live here. I will make sure St. Paul gives us the resources we need to thrive without assuming that regulation is the answer to every problem.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

Return Surpluses- Mandate that state budget surpluses be refunded to taxpayers rather than absorbed by new government programs. Halt New Taxes- Oppose legislative efforts to expand sales taxes to essential services or impose wealth and excise fees. Curb Spending Growth- Align local and state budget increases closer to the rate of inflation to relieve surging property tax pressures.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Slipy Consulting Partner

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am not a politician. I am a community organizer that cares about the needs of the community.

Why are you running? I am running to be the change. Politics has been too polarized and common sense has been left out of the conversations. I want to



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 7



Party: Republican
Age: 48
Community:
Hibbing

Robert Farnsworth

Why are you running? I am running to continue to fight for the values we all share in the Northland. We all saw the damage done by the DFL trifecta in 23 and 24, that included higher taxes, tab fees, and mandate on our schools and businesses. We cannot go back to that, but must move forward as a more business friendly state that does not burden our schools, counties, and cities with unfunded mandates.

Why should voters elect you?

My experience in the Senate demonstrates that I have kept my word to fight for a lower cost of living, capital improvements in our region, and flexibility for our schools. In addition, I have worked across the party lines for the Good of our region.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. I would like to see true permitting reform that would allow our current mines as well as a proposed mines to get on track for job creation in our region. I would like to see reform in education by reducing mandates on our school districts, but also addressing the grad standards that are not preparing many of our students for the life they will live

beyond high school. We also need to address the cost of living issues, and the way we can do that at the state level is through tax relief and other financial relief such as car tab and boat registration fees. This should have included returning the \$18 billion surplus to the taxpayers in 2023, but that did not happen and I will work to return future surplus to the taxpayers.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level? The best thing we can do to alleviate property tax burdens is to remove the numerous mandates imposed upon our counties and cities by the state. Particularly, during the DFL trifecta, numerous mandates were put on our local units of government, which is forcing them to raise taxes in order to pay for it. We need to either repeal the mandates or allow counties and cities to opt out.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? MN State Senate and Hibbing School District

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am currently in my first term in the Minnesota State Senate. I have been a teacher for over 25 years. I am also a licensed real estate agent in Hibbing. In the Senate, I serve on the Education Finance, Higher Education, and Transportation committees. I am also board share of the IRRR.



**Read more answers from the
candidates at kaxe.org/electionguide**

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 7



Party: DFL
Age: 64
Community:
Hibbing

Kim (Kotonias) McLaughlin

I have served on the Hibbing Fire Civil Service Commission, the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools, the Boys & Girls Club, and other local organizations. In my third term on the Hibbing School Board and as a member of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, I bring experience, transparency, and a commitment to serving the Northland. I'm ready to be your State Senator and be a strong voice for our communities.

Why are you running? I'm running to be a strong voice for the Northland in St. Paul and to ensure that our communities have the representation they deserve. I'm running so that the people here have a seat at the table.

As a proud Iron Range native raised in a hardworking union family, I learned the values of integrity, respect, hard work, and showing up for neighbors. I live in this community and I understand the challenges that families face, from stretching a paycheck to accessing the services they rely on. Throughout my career in public service and local leadership, I have worked to make government accountable, responsive to the people, and overall more efficient.

Our area needs a State Senator who puts people over politics, who works collaboratively, who actually delivers results that strengthen northern Minnesota, and who moves the Northland and its families forward.

Why should voters elect you?

I humbly believe that the experience and skills I bring to the table are exactly what Minnesotans need in our state legislature, now more than ever. I'm an accountant, fraud examiner, and school board director with experience in ensuring public dollars work for the people.

I'm a collaborative problem solver. As your senator, I'll deliver results. I'll bring people together to work toward solutions, leveraging the expertise of the people here. Together, we'll work for things that matter to our region including strong public schools, affordable healthcare, good-paying jobs, lower costs, and safe communities.

I believe in transparent, accountable governance that works for the people. I have experience as a local elected official, currently serving on the Hibbing School Board, on the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, and as a Minnesota School Board Association delegate.

It would be an honor and privilege to serve as your State Senator.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Minnesota North College - Business Manager

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am Northland rooted. I'm a proud native raised in a working-class union family and a diverse immigrant community built on shared values. Thirty years ago, my husband Paul and I chose to raise our daughter in Hibbing.

A first-generation college graduate of Hibbing Community College and the University of Minnesota Duluth, I've spent nearly 28 years serving Minnesota's public higher education system as an internal auditor and business manager. I'm a Certified Public Accountant and Certified Fraud Examiner.

(continued on page 15)

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 7

Kim (Kotonias) McLaughlin (continued)

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.

Trust and integrity in government and getting money out of politics are woven into the fabric of nearly every voter conversation. People want a government they can trust and a lawmaker who puts people first. I'm listening and my priorities are aligned with what constituents say. We'll fight for:

- Healthcare: Affordable high-quality physical and behavioral healthcare services right here in greater Minnesota, including affordable prescription drugs.
- Public Education: Fully funded public education. This includes general education, career and technical education, and special education and related opportunities. In supporting public education, we need to ensure that costs don't fall on the backs of local taxpayers.
- Strong Communities: Supporting small businesses, EMS, and affordable childcare, senior services, and housing.

I prioritize people over politics. I believe zip code should never define or limit opportunity. I will fight to ensure the people of the Northland receive the resources we deserve.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

Using a multi-faceted approach, I'll champion policies that reduce property taxes. Short term, I'll work for direct taxpayer relief through expansion of the homestead market value credit and renters' credit. I'll also propose a task force to study the 1970s "Minnesota Miracle" to determine whether an updated version could reduce increased reliance on local property taxes to fund essential services. Our government must provide necessary services, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure, but we must not place undue burden on property taxpayers.

I'll prioritize tax relief for working and middle-class Minnesotans before giving tax breaks to the wealthiest. We need to ensure taxpayers are getting the greatest value from every dollar. Increased transparency, effective oversight, regular audits, and community input can help local governments control costs and make responsible decisions about levies and spending.

My goal is straightforward: provide meaningful property-tax relief while protecting the essential services our communities depend on.



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

MINNESOTA STATE HOUSE

Read more on page 17

District 2B



Matt Bliss*
Incumbent
Republican
mattbliss.us



Emily Thabes
DFL
emilythabesformn.com

Read more on page 18

District 3A



Aaron Kania
DFL
kaniaforhouse.com



Roger Skraba
Incumbent
Republican
skrabaforhouse.com

Read more on page 20

District 6A



Ben Davis
Incumbent
Republican



Samuel Grigsby
DFL

Read more on page 22

District 7A



Spencer Igo
Incumbent
Republican
spencerigo.com



Erin McCabe Ningen
DFL
teamerin7a.com

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 2B



Party: DFL
Age: 46
Community:
Bagley

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Beltrami County Historical Society, Executive Director

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I hold master's degrees in library and information science and in interdisciplinary leadership and have spent most of my career running institutions that answer to the people who fund them. As Executive Director of the Beltrami County Historical Society, I manage the budget, grants, staff, and volunteers, and I guide our board. Every dollar I spend is publicly accounted for. I also worked on Capital One's fraud team, training associates to detect and prevent fraud.

I am the daughter of a nurse practitioner, a teacher, and a career veteran. I grew up in a rural West Virginia farming

Emily Thabes

community depressed by the decline of the coal and dairy industries. I know the value of rural communities and the culture and economic contribution they bring to a state. I will bring those values, my education, my experience, and my drive to improve life for everyone here to the House.

Why are you running? I was moved to action when bad actors in the federal government terrorized and killed people in our communities while Minnesota's own state representatives looked on, and in some cases egged it on. I could no longer stay out of it. I learned in childhood that people only get through by taking care of each other. I am a librarian by trade, responsible for serving all without asking who 'deserves' help.

This is the standard I want for our government. We are obligated to one another and to the land, and so is our government. I am running to make that obligation real, with fierce joy.

Why should voters elect you? My leadership philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom and excellence in service of others. I live out that philosophy by preserving and sharing our community history, serving on and alongside community organizations, and caring for the land and water I live on.

I live in this district by choice. I show up. I have knocked on doors across seven counties and listened to what people carry: childcare that costs more than a mortgage; health care

out of reach for elders and folks with chronic illness; housing nobody can afford; and farms and resorts alike leaving family hands.

I run a public institution on a tight budget. I believe in transparency and in developing smart systems that keep working when needs change. My campaign is funded by individual donors and organizations whose members share our values. I will bring that accountability to the House and keep communicating after the election.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. Care people can access. Childcare families can afford, and providers can survive on, with families choosing the provider that works for them. An elder care ombudsman with real authority. Keeping rural hospitals and clinics open, starting with the unfunded balance on the new Mahnommen facility.

Clean water. Protecting water at the source in the Headwaters, cleaning up the Cass Superfund site, and protecting manoomin as both a treaty obligation and a measure of water health.

(continued on page 24)

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 3A



Party: DFL

Age: 51

Community:

Vermillion Lake Township

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? USFS District Ranger Retired, Wildland Firefighter

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. My career as a public servant spanned 28 years as a federal employee. This included twenty three years as a law enforcement officer, wildland firefighter, and supervisor for twelve of those years. For the last six years, I served as the US Forest District Ranger in Ely Minnesota. In this position I was responsible for fifty employees, complex mineral permitting, forest management, Wilderness stewardship, tribal consultation, and emergency response to natural disasters like flooding and wildfires. Compassion and care helped make things better for those people and communities during difficult times.

Aaron Kania

Why are you running? As a community leader, I often interacted with politicians who were less than prepared to represent us in a meaningful way. Or worse, took partisan sides and ignored people who "did not vote for them." I spoke with our state representative when DOGE was firing firefighters in Northern Minnesota and pausing work on firebreaks around Ely. The response I heard; we need to "cut the fat." My response focused on two key points: 1) These are the fire fighters and first responders we rely on during a crisis. We should be supporting them now, before it becomes a disaster. 2) These are members of our community: they have young families, are buying homes, putting kids in schools. They are our coaches, neighbors and friends. Given my background and proven leadership I know I will stand tall for our community in a way our current rep won't.

Why should voters elect you? I am running to represent District 3A with steady, practical leadership - focused on listening, showing up consistently, and getting real results for our communities. District 3A needs a strong voice at the Capitol. We deserve a leader who listens to all sides. I value hearing different perspectives and understanding what matters most to my neighbors. The only path to lasting change is through compromise. We must focus on what unites us, rather than pursue divisive partisan politics. I will work tirelessly to bring that compromise back to the legislature and work to find common ground to achieve results for Northeast Minnesota.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. 1.) I will protect and utilize our land. The foundation of this economy is our land. I will support forestry, tourism, and the responsible use of minerals — all while ensuring that these industries do not threaten our woods, waters, or Wilderness. Transparency is the key to success when priorities come into conflict. 2.) I will make life more affordable. The skyrocketing cost of living is hurting all of us. We should keep more of our tax revenue in the Northland, fully fund our schools, and support rural healthcare while keeping the cap on prescription drug prices. 3.) I will provide strong leadership for the Northland. We need our voices heard in St Paul! 3A needs a bi-partisan representative in the Capitol. I have decades of experience bringing people together across parties and communities to fight natural disasters, keep us safe, and deliver real results.

(continued on page 24)

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 3A



Party: Republican

Age: 64

Community:
Ely, MN

Roger Skraba

whole life in the woods and waters that surround us. I will always protect our environment, I have guided for over 40 years so I know firsthand how important clean air and water are. Winning by such a large margin also makes me feel that the people want me to serve them in St. Paul.

of good paying jobs. To extend or make permanent the 340B Drug Pricing Program in Minnesota. Our rural hospitals count on these funds to keep providing services in rural Minnesota.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? State Representative/
Wilderness Fishing Guide

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Ely City Council 9 years, Ely Mayor 8 years, MN State Representative 4 years. US Army Reserves 9 years. Graduated from North Dakota State University, Fargo, with a BS in Construction Management. Served on St. Louis County Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment 15 years.

Why are you running? To serve the people of District 3A. I have always wanted to serve the communities I've lived in and I have been fortunate enough to do that. I have experience in elected office and I have lived my

Why should voters elect you? When I was elected the first time I won by 15 votes, I won my second election by over 3,600 votes, a 23,000 percent increase. I have proven to the voters that I can and do work across the aisle to take care of the people I represent. I was born and raised in Ely, MN and lived my whole life in northern Minnesota. I know the people, the issues and the lay of the land. I have elected experience being a city councilor, mayor and state representative, with all of that experience comes relationships with people who can help get things done. When I'm elected all that experience is put to use and all the people from District 3A benefit.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. We have to stop the fraud in our State Government, we know it is happening and the usual checks and balances are not working so we need to determine what is the best way to stop it. I will support and help pass a Capital Investment bill that fixes our critical infrastructure and creates thousands

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

Stopping bills that have unfunded mandates in them. When legislatures pass bills with the state not funding them then the county and local governments have to raise property taxes, by stopping legislation like that there cannot be any increases for that issue.

We also need to encourage those that can work, to work. The more people working the more money moves around and the economy grows, new businesses grow out and pay new property taxes, lessening the burden on those already paying.

We also need to address the school districts increases to property taxes, the State keeps passing unfunded mandates to school boards and that needs to stop.

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 6A



Party: Republican
Age: 49
Community:
Mission Township

Ben Davis

Why are you running? Our state government is out of control with spending and pushing a big-government agenda. We need to downsize government and cut spending and stop the fraudulent abuse of our tax dollars. Lowering taxes on residents and cutting mandates on small businesses will help our economy thrive. We can accomplish this by electing conservatives state wide and bringing accountability back to government agencies. This is exactly what Ben Davis has a history of fighting for.

Why should voters elect you? Voters should elect Ben Davis because he fights for their rights. He has a proven track record of protecting the right to bear arms and freedom of speech. He passed crucial legislation mandating government employees to report suspected fraud whereas previous statute stated employees were "encouraged" to report fraud. Ben Davis is the common-sense candidate in this election to help lower taxes and end the billions of dollars of fraud that has happened under Democrat power.

Editor's note: In December 2025, federal prosecutors estimated fraud in state-run Medicaid programs could exceed \$9 billion; Gov. Tim Walz and state officials said that was a sensationalized number, though they've acknowledged it could exceed \$1 billion.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. Three of the top priorities of our campaign include election reform, ending the billions of dollars worth of taxpayer funded fraud, and boosting our local economy. To accomplish election we will need Voter I.D. and end the vouching system. To stop fraud we need commissioners that will implement oversight and a legislature to hold them accountable. To boost our economy we need to lower the tax burden on hard-working families and small businesses.

See previous editors' note.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level? The Democrat trifecta pushed some of the heaviest and numerous mandates on local governments and school districts. This has caused property taxes to skyrocket. Ben Davis will fight to cut unfunded mandates to school districts and local governments.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? MN House of Representatives

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Ben Davis has served his community for the past four years as the state representative in MN House District 6a. He is currently the co-vice chair of the State Government Committee. He also serves on the Elections and Government Operations Committee and the Veterans Committee. Ben is also a member of the Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board.

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 6A



Party: DFL
Age: 58
Community:
Grand Rapids

Samuel Grigsby

work as an EMT, firefighter, state fire instructor, and police reserve officer, as well as serving on numerous non-profit boards in the Grand Rapids Area, including 30 years on ski patrol at Mount Itasca.

Why are you running? "I am running because I believe the people of District 6A deserve a strong voice focused on the issues that matter most to our communities: quality rural health care, strong public schools, good-paying jobs, affordable housing, and accountability for every taxpayer dollar."

Why should voters elect you? i am committed to strengthening our communities by standing up for working families, supporting quality schools and local health care, ensuring tax dollars are spent responsibly, and working to make life more affordable. I will be a voice for everyone in District 6A and work every day to earn your trust,

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. "When I am elected, I will work to protect and strengthen rural health care, advocate for a strong public education system, work to help our families afford everyday life, and ensure transparency and accountability in spending the public's dollars. We have to look at permanent funding for schools and help achieve good effective and reasonable health care through bipartisan teamwork."

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level? We need to look at ways to help fund our schools and local government at more appropriate levels and look at the formulas we use to calculate these numbers and get them adjusted to current numbers.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? City Of Grand Rapids

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Sam Grigsby is the DFL endorsed candidate for election to the Minnesota House of Representatives in District 6A. For more than 30 years, Sam's passion for community has led him to



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 7A



Party: Republican

Age: 30

Community:
Wabana Township

Spencer Igo

Why are you running? I am running for re-election to continue the work of the people of House District 7A. Serving as our representative has been an amazing and humbling experience to not only deliver on the needs of our district, but also to create partnerships that are working and advocating to make our home even better. My experience in this life is all due to one thing, being raised right here in Northern Minnesota and the Iron Range. It is that upbringing that lit a fire inside of me to serve and advocate for our home. We can have a thriving economy, vibrant schools, and communities that flourish if we continue to work together. That is why I am running for re-election so that we can continue creating and fostering partnerships that lead to not just the success of our community, but our entire state.

Why should voters elect you?

I am asking for your vote to continue to build on our combined commitment and goals for our district. My focus these past two years has been around energy, housing, and funding education. I was able to pass bipartisan bills like a first in generation nuclear energy study, housing reforms and funding, and a historic bipartisan constitutional amendment that is now on every Minnesotan's ballot this fall that will increase funding to schools at 0 cost to the taxpayer. All these accomplishments are the building blocks for the work I am asking to continue to work on. We need to

continue to pass energy bills that diversify our electric grid and restore affordability and reliability. Housing policy needs to continue to drive on cutting red tape and mandates to build the homes people want. It is work like this that will make our communities strong for generations to come.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.

My top three priorities would be centered around affordability in our state and streamlining government. One priority would be removing the moratorium on nuclear power so that we could have conversations and invest in the potential if Minnesota were to build this carbon free baseload power. Second, we need to remove duplicate programs in state government. By doing this, tax dollars are spent more efficiently while reducing the cost of the programs which ends up as tax savings. Finally, we need to continue the work on permitting reform at all levels of government. This doesn't mean cutting regulations, it means making a system that has a clear process and timeline, so people, business, and communities know what to expect.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Small Business Owner

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have BS in Public Administration from the University of North Dakota which I pursued for my passion to build strong communities like ours. I also had the opportunity to work for 2 years in Congressman Pete Stauber's District Office. This all combined with my last 6 years of legislative experience as a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, and recently a member of the Ways and Means Committee along with a Co-Chair of the House Housing Finance and Policy Committee, gives me not only the tools but the relationships to continue the work of the people of our district.

(continued on page 24)

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 7A



Party: DFL
Age: 60
Community:
Hibbing

Erin McCabe Ningen

Why are you running? I'm running because I believe that we need citizen leaders from all walks of life to step up and get involved in government. Corporate donors and professional political operatives have drowned out the voices of everyday Americans who keep this country running strong. I am not taking any special interest money because we deserve a representative whose time, effort, and vote belong exclusively to the people of northern Minnesota.

Why should voters elect you? Most of us agree: it's time for a change. I possess the courage, integrity, and common sense to prioritize serving the people of the Northland over party battles or lobbyist interests. I bring some fresh ideas to the table along with a commitment to make government work for all of us.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. Public education, health care, and jobs. Quality public education ensures that all Minnesota kids can build a stable, meaningful life. We should change the formula for the permanent School Fund so it does not disadvantage rural schools, and we should protect against defunding

public education with private school vouchers. Our Healthcare System is flawed. I support single-payer Medicare for all. We must move our economy beyond boom-and-bust cycles of mining dependence. We can stimulate job creation by reducing the influence of lobbyist insiders to ensure that innovative ideas have a fair chance to gain public support.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

We should reform our system for funding schools. The current system relies too heavily on local tax levies. We must close the tax loopholes to ensure that the top 1% and corporations pay their fair share. I support adding the 5th tier for income tax. We need to be mindful of mandating local projects for which the state doesn't provide the funds.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? First Call for Help of Itasca County-988 Crisis Call Specialist. Sportsman's Restaurant & Taverna-Server.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I studied political science and constitutional law at Bemidji State University. I bring state policymaking experience from serving two appointed terms on the Minnesota Community College Board and one term on the Minnesota State University Board. More importantly, I have the lived experience of a single mother navigating rising costs, dwindling healthcare access, and the daily realities facing working families.

Emily Thabes (continued)

Cost pressure on households. Local Government Aid and County Program Aid have sat at \$644.4 million since 2024, pushing the difference onto local taxpayers. I would fund both in full and tie them to inflation. More of the money should come through the state formula, so schools are funded equally whether the surrounding property wealth is high or low.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

Your property tax is based on your share of a local budget, and your share depends on what the assessor says your property is worth compared to everyone else's. Three high lakeshore sales can reprice an entire shore and shift costs onto neighbors who never sold anything. Your statement will not show any of that.

I would push for a full review of how the tax is calculated, aimed at a system people can understand and that accounts for ability to pay. Right now, I would expand the refunds people already qualify for and tie them to inflation, spread large valuation increases over several years rather than landing them in a single bill, and simplify the class rates.

The homestead exclusion also demands revision. It lowers one home's taxable value without the state paying for it, so the relief comes off one bill and onto the neighbors.

Aaron Kania (continued)

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

This fall, Minnesota voters will have the opportunity to approve an amendment to increase annual school disbursements from the state's school trust fund. This is an important step we can take now, to increase funding to our public schools without raising taxes. A 'yes' vote means more money for our schools.

Additionally, taxes on vacation rentals in District 3A flow to the state instead of to our school districts - that money needs to stay local. Local and County Program Aid haven't been adjusted for inflation - our property taxes have increased to cover the gap. Senator Hauschild has proposed legislation on this and I would push to propose his bill on the House side. That's the single biggest structural fix available to us.

I also believe that Minnesota shouldn't tax Social Security benefits at the state level. Rising property taxes are placing an undue burden on our seniors.

Spencer Igo (continued)

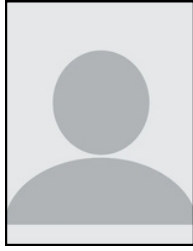
What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

I would continue to champion energy policy around nuclear, biomass, and carbon sequestration. All these policies offer the ability to create new industry and tax base which takes the burdens away from taxpayers and stabilizes our economies. We can combine this energy policy with reforms to programs like ESST and PFML so that they work better and more efficiently in ways that respects employees and businesses. By continuing to work on permitting reform these three things would result in thriving economic development not only in our district but the entire state that would benefit local governments and every single taxpayer. Finally, we need to remove or change the unfunded mandates that have flowed to all levels of local government.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Read more on page 26

Deer River School Board (elect 3)



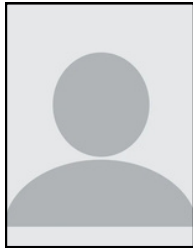
Richard Fieldsend*



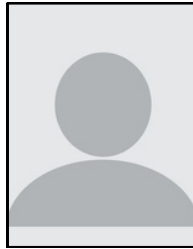
Timothy M. Frits



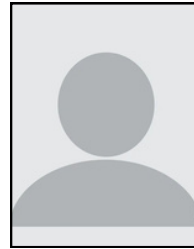
Carrie Johnson



Lloyd Kongsjord
Incumbent



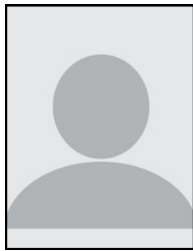
Scott Ramsdell Jr.*



Pam Thompson*
Incumbent

Read more on page 29

Grand Rapids School Board (elect 3)



David Marty
Incumbent



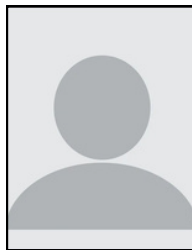
Christopher Reilly



Darren Romans



Brian Vroman



Dan Wolf

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.



Age: 44
Community:
Deer River

Timothy Frits

Why are you running? I am running for a school board position at ISD 317 because I believe our district is at an important point where thoughtful leadership and a clear direction are needed. I want to help make our school board more representative of the students, families, staff, and taxpayers we serve. I also want to help create an environment that attracts more families, students, and resources to our community.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. If elected, my priorities will be to secure sustainable funding, strengthen educational resources, and provide the leadership needed to support our schools and community.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? USDA-Forest Service

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

The experience and knowledge I have gained throughout my career have provided me with valuable skills in financial management, union relations, Human Resources, budgeting, and long-term planning. My current role as a supervisor has strengthened my ability to navigate complex situations, make informed decisions, and work effectively with others. My previous employment has given me additional experience in labor relations and budgeting, while earning my bachelor's degree has provided me with opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute in a variety of professional capacities.

Why should voters elect you? If elected, I will listen to the voices and concerns of our community and use that input to help guide my decisions. I understand that difficult choices will sometimes be necessary, but I believe those decisions should be made with a focus on the long-term health and success of our district. I will work to establish clear long-term goals, protect the resources our students and schools need, and pursue stable and sustainable funding solutions for the future.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. One leader I admire is Franklin D. Roosevelt. During the Great Depression and World War II, he expanded programs and reforms that provided economic relief and strengthened communities. His commitment to public service inspires my belief that strong leadership can make a lasting difference.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

One of the greatest challenges facing our district is student enrollment. I believe we must attract more families by making our schools welcoming, accessible, and well-balanced. A strong school district benefits not only our students but also our entire community.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member? My goal is to ensure every student graduates prepared for success, whether they choose to attend college, enroll in a trade school, join the workforce, or pursue another career path. Every student deserves the opportunity to build a successful and independent future after high school.



Age: 43

Community:

Leech Lake Reservation

Carrie Johnson

collaborating with staff across multiple departments, students, families and community members. My experience as AFSCME Vice President has given me a deeper understanding of both the strengths of our district and the challenges we must address together.

Why are you running? I am running to provide a voice for our students, staff, and community members.

Why should voters elect you? I am committed to transparency and will continue to advocate for our community. If elected, I will make decisions based on what is best for the students and the district, even when those decisions are difficult.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. George Goggeye Jr. I have observed his commitment to our community, families, and public service, and respect the dedication he has shown throughout his career. He has served in leadership roles in education, tribal government, and cultural preservation. These qualities are beneficial in helping our diverse district reach its full potential. The quality that I most admire is his willingness to listen to the community we are elected to serve.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. Ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the district and the community. Representing the interests and concerns of students, staff, families and taxpayers.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

Transparency and accountability across the district. Having the hard conversations and communicating with our community to bring those concerns forward so that they can be addressed.

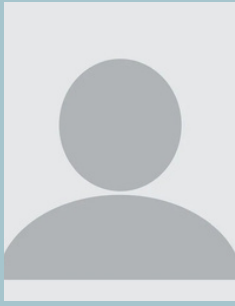
What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member? Student Support Services

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? ISD 317- Student Support, Special Education

Editor's note: Under Minnesota statute, a school board member can only be employed by the district if they expect to earn no more than \$20,000 each fiscal year.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am a life long resident of the #317 school district and have children attending both King Elementary and Deer River High School. I have worked within both school buildings,

DEER RIVER SCHOOL BOARD



Age: 46
Community:
Talmoon

Lloyd Kongsjord

Why should voters elect you? In my eight years on the board, we've overcome challenges, but important work still lies on the road ahead. I am running so I can continue leading with positive solutions that move our schools and community forward.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Theodore Roosevelt...he lived by "DON'T QUIT" every day. He believed real leadership isn't about sitting back—it's about stepping up, facing tough challenges head-on, and refusing to quit.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. I want to keep working with our staff as we navigate state regulations and unfunded mandates.

To protect our school, I want to reopen the conversation about moving to a four-day school week. Given our current budget challenges, this could save jobs and keep class sizes manageable for our staff and students.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

Unfunded state mandates have left us with tough choices: a referendum or cuts. I would like to reopen the conversation on a four-day school week which gives us an option to save jobs and protect our classrooms

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

Our admin team and school board have had to make some tough financial decisions, but we worked through them together. Because of those decisions, our S&P credit rating has actually improved and that shows the choices are paying off and keeping our district financially healthy.

The district came out stronger on the other side. I am proud to be apart of ISD 317 and to help serve our communities.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? RK Construction / Lloyd's Landscaping

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Current school board chair

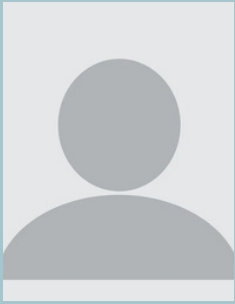
Why are you running? Our district has made great progress with the challenges it has faced but there is still important work ahead. I am a graduate from DRHS and want stay focused to address our ongoing challenges and see these through for our students and our community.

Who is KAXE?

KAXE is a Northern Minnesota community radio station, founded in 1976 with signals in Grand Rapids (91.7), Bemidji (90.5) and Brainerd (89.9). The KAXE News team of five journalists put together this Election Guide. The team includes News Director Chelsey Perkins, Northwest Minnesota Reporter Larissa Donovan, North-Central Minnesota Reporter Megan Buffington, Northeast Minnesota Reporter Emma Krab and Stella Mayerhoff, Report for America corps member covering water and agriculture.

GRAND RAPIDS SCHOOL BOARD

David Marty



Age: 74

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have served two 4-year terms as School Board representative and hope to continue to contribute

Why are you running? I have served 8 years as a School Board Representative and during that time we have hired an amazing new

Superintendent and balanced the budget, making serious cuts as needed.

Why should voters elect you? During my term, we've hired an amazing new Superintendent and have balanced the budget after years of losses (at the expense of many qualified instructors) I hope to be a part of planning for a future for ISD318

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Matt Grose. An extremely capable and experienced education leader with students and staff best interests in mind every day

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals.

- 1 Creating an environment for student success at every level. Increasing Graduation levels.
- 2 Supporting the Staff and infrastructure for a successful school

- 3 Maintaining excellent Administration and staff
- 4 Supporting and developing our Indian Education Program

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected? Finances. We need to find new ways to fund our student success

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member? High success of our students at every level, including reading, IB, graduation levels, etc.

UP NORTH REPORT

91.7
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90.5
NEWS

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GRAND RAPIDS SCHOOL BOARD



Age: 44

Christopher Reilly

I am a published researcher and comfortable with data. I will dig deeper into test scores and metrics, into objective comparisons with other districts, to help our staff understand where they are succeeding and where we need work.

Why are you running? My eldest daughter is a high school senior. Watching her, I have learned what it means to be a motivated student in this district today. She and her peers know the best classes to take, they know which teachers work the hardest with them, and which counselors to ask the difficult questions. I have seen her flourish. I want to ensure that the best teachers and counselors feel supported.

Some of my children have received Title I services. Nationally, NAEP testing reveals that a record share of students today have literacy skills below the "basic" level. I want to advocate for the students who have extra challenges, while trying to keep the bar as high as reasonably achievable.

Why should voters elect you? I love living and working in northern MN. I moved my young family of 6 here 12 years ago, largely because I had been convinced that our district outperforms most others (particularly those with similar resources) in developing curious, honest, hardworking and capable young men and women.

When I recruit young physicians to join our group, I tell them about the ballet company at the Reif, the new

grade schools, and the IB program. I explain how life as a kid in our area is less stressful than the suburbs I grew up in, yet the district and the other resources we have in the area provide them with everything they need to get started in this life.

To keep telling that recruiting story, the district needs to continually improve. I am asking for your vote because I am committed to doing what I can to make that improvement happen.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Teddy Roosevelt. He was the youngest US president, veteran, founder of the US Forest Service, trust buster, and passionate naturalist. He survived an assassin's bullet. He walked the streets of NYC at night while working to reform the police. He wrestled friends in the NY governor's mansion. He helped restart the building of the Panama Canal; without his support for revolutionary mosquito control, it probably would not have been built. He nearly died exploring the amazon basin. Also, although he was as imperfect as any of us, he seemed unusually willing to reconsider his political positions.

(continued on page 34)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Physician (radiologist) at Grand Itasca, Bigfork, Hibbing, Roseau, Cook, Cloquet and International Falls.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have been a member of the district CACR (curriculum) committee for two years, during which I successfully pushed to open some IB courses to 9th and 10th graders who qualify for them. I encouraged the reduction of iPad homework for middle school students. I am leading the committee this year, as we try to expand its membership and redefine its goals.

I was a student for longer than most; I studied at the University of Notre Dame, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. Whether they choose trade school or university, I want our district to challenge our students so that they are prepared for what follows.

GRAND RAPIDS SCHOOL BOARD



Age: 60

Darren Romans

ensure our schools continue serving students, families, and our community well.

I am running to listen to parents, teachers, staff, and students and to bring a common-sense, community-focused perspective to the School Board. I believe in accountability, transparency, responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and keeping decisions focused on what is best for the students and families of ISD 318.

Why should voters elect you?

I believe public service begins with listening, working together, and making common-sense decisions. Voters should elect me to the ISD 318 School Board because I bring a lifelong connection to our community, and a genuine commitment to the future of our students.

I want every ISD 318 student to have that same opportunity to succeed, regardless of the path they choose after graduation.

Most importantly, I will keep the focus where it belongs: on our students, our families, and building a stronger future for ISD 318 and the Grand Rapids community.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Two public leaders I admire are Abraham Lincoln and George Washington because both demonstrated the character, courage, and leadership needed during some of the most difficult periods in our nation's history.

I admire Lincoln for his ability to bring people together during a deeply divided time. He demonstrated humility, perseverance, and a willingness to listen to different

perspectives while remaining committed to doing what he believed was right.

I also admire George Washington for his integrity, sense of duty, and willingness to serve when his country needed him.

Both leaders remind me that effective public service requires honesty, courage, humility, and commitment. Those are qualities I would strive to bring to the ISD 318 School Board.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. If elected to the ISD 318 School Board, my priorities will be focused on student achievement, responsible spending, strong schools, and maintaining the trust of our community.

I want to ensure every student has access to a quality education and the support they need to succeed. I will carefully review district spending, look for efficiencies, and support investments that directly benefit students and the classroom. I want to strengthen communication and trust between the district and the families it serves. Parents, teachers, staff, and community members deserve to be heard and kept informed.

(continued on page 33)

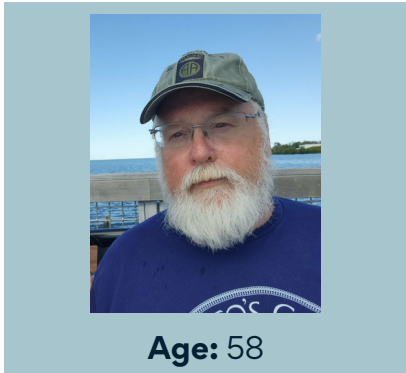
Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Rajala Mill Company. / Sales

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am a lifelong resident of the Grand Rapids, area, with family roots spanning generations. Growing up here has given me a firsthand understanding of the people, values, opportunities, and challenges that make up northern Minnesota. Grand Rapids is my home, and I am deeply invested in its future.

I graduated from Grand Rapids High School and continued my education at Itasca Community College. My education, combined with a lifetime of experience in the community, have given me perspective on the issues that matter most to local families.

Why are you running? I am running for the ISD 318 School Board because I believe strong schools are the foundation of a strong community, and I want to help

GRAND RAPIDS SCHOOL BOARD



Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I teach History and Ethics at Minnesota North-Itasca Campus

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am a 1986 graduate of Grand Rapids High School. I also have an Associates Degree from Itasca Community College, a Bachelor of Arts in History from St. Cloud State University, and Master of Arts in History from Minnesota State-Mankato.

Why are you running? I am a strong believer in public education. I am a product of public schools, and have two children who attended District 318. Education brings opportunity. We need to provide the children of School District 318 with the best possible education we can offer and give them the skills and knowledge to be able to compete in a rapidly changing world. I want to work with others on the board to ensure that our schools are as strong

Brian Vroman

as possible, so that our young people, whether from Grand Rapids, Bigfork, Effie, Cohasset, Warba, or other communities and rural areas around the district can have bright futures and become engaged citizens.

Why should voters elect you? I have a great deal of experience in higher education, which includes working with large numbers of post-secondary option students -- high school students taking college courses. I am familiar with the major issues facing education, including funding difficulties, and if elected, my experience and perspectives will be an asset to the board and to the school district. I am a creative thinker, and can help to envision and develop novel ways to address problems. Rural schools are in need of more support from the state. Because I am familiar with state government and how it works, as a member of the School Board, I would be an effective advocate with legislators and other state officials.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. First, no public leader is perfect; as human beings, they all have their faults. But as a historian, I admire British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, because he stood firm and remained courageous at a time when it would have been easy to give up. He frequently put himself at great personal risk when he would have been able to avoid doing so. He also was able to inspire the British people to hold steady against the Nazis, even when Britain stood alone.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. If elected, I recognize that I will be one member of a six-person board and must work collaboratively, not arbitrarily. As a veteran, I learned in U.S. Army leadership training to observe and listen when entering a new leadership role, unless a crisis requires immediate action. I understand there will be a learning curve and will approach the responsibility thoughtfully.

I want district policies to be fair and equitable for students and employees. If cuts are necessary, I will work to protect as many jobs as possible, especially those of employees working most closely with our students.

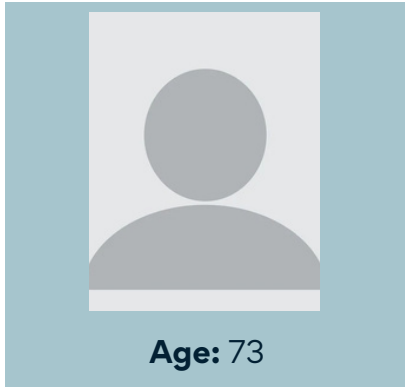
Long-term, I will advocate for stronger State support. Rural districts must work together for equitable funding. Given 318's high poverty rate, we cannot rely so heavily on local property taxes. I will support efforts to restore recreational property tax revenue that was redirected to the State general fund in the early 2000s.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected? Currently, the biggest challenge is funding.

(continued on page 34)

GRAND RAPIDS SCHOOL BOARD

Dan Wolf



Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. B.S. Mine Engineering; 40 years working in the mining industry; Christian

Why are you running? To restore Christian values in our schools.

Why should voters elect you? I will work to restore Biblical Principles in our school system.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Donald Trump because he does what is necessary to run our country.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. Restore prayer and pledge of allegiance. Teaching the truth about the founding of our great country.

Editor's note: Students, teachers and school officials have a right to pray in school, but schools may not sponsor prayer nor coerce or pressure

students to pray, according to U.S. Department of Education guidance. Grand Rapids School District policy requires recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance at least once a week, in accordance with state statute.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected? DEI and woke agenda need to be stopped.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member? I am not aware of many successes.

Darren Romans (continued)

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

I believe one of the biggest challenges facing ISD 318 is balancing the need to provide a high-quality education with the financial realities facing our district.

I believe every expenditure should be evaluated based on whether it provides meaningful value to students and families.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

One success in ISD 318 that I would strongly support as a board member is the district's commitment to providing students with multiple pathways to success after graduation. Not every student follows the same path, and our schools should prepare students for college, skilled trades, the military, or entering the workforce directly.

I also believe this approach benefits our entire community. When we prepare young people with the knowledge, skills, and work ethic they need to succeed, we strengthen our local workforce and help keep families and talented young people connected to the Grand Rapids area.

As a board member, I would work to protect and build upon these opportunities while ensuring we remain financially responsible and focused on student success.

SCHOOL BOARD CONTINUED

Christopher Reilly (continued)

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals.

Rigor for every student, whatever path they choose. I will push to track district outcomes in career placement and post-secondary enrollment. I want the district to try to collect feedback from families who move to other districts and survey our graduates about their college GPAs.

With the data we already have and the data we discover, I will do my best to make our results understandable in context. Our district already spends less per student than the state average while testing above it. I will advocate that the board publish an annual, understandable comparison against similar districts in Minnesota and nationally. Voters, staff, and families all deserve to know exactly where (the evidence shows) we stand.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

Declining enrollment, facility upkeep, rising costs, staff recruitment and retention, finding the right balance with technology, diverse student backgrounds and goals, cheating, AI... the list of significant challenges is long. A singular focus would require the neglect of too many other issues.

To these problems I know about and the many more I expect to learn about, I will bring a consistent approach. I will avoid the temptation to reinvent the wheel. Our district is not unique in facing these challenges. If elected, I will work with the district to research the best, most proven and practical, method to address each challenge. When we make a change, I promise to honestly review it's effectiveness.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

Before I became involved in CACR, the district made a significant investment in phonics education for our teachers (IMSE-Orton Gillingham) as early as 2017. The result was significantly improved reading scores. This effort was written up as a case study, an example for other districts to follow. I hope to support future, similar efforts during my time on the board.

Brian Vroman (continued)

I support the ballot initiative that would amend the Minnesota Constitution so that schools could receive more revenue from School Trust properties, as well as redirecting non-homestead recreational property tax revenue from the State General Fund to local school districts. Meanwhile, we need to lobby for more State support, so that schools with an inadequate tax base are not left behind.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

In recent years, the District has moved from a deficit to a balanced budget. Many cuts were made, and some of them were painful. I don't like cuts, and I might not agree with some of the specific decisions made, but the District was able to avoid statutory operating debt, which would have led to deep, arbitrary, and potentially very hurtful cuts, so on the whole, this was an important success.

ITASCA COUNTY OFFICES

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County Attorney



Devin J. Gorski



Cassidy Villeneuve

Read more on page 38

County Board District 1



Cory Smith
Incumbent



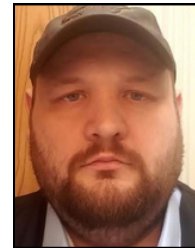
Lonny Witkofsky

Read more on page 40

County Board District 3



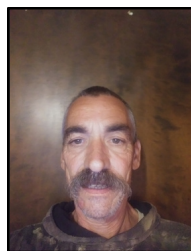
John Johnson
Incumbent



Robert Preble

Read more on page 42

Soil and Water Conservation District 4



Dennis Barsness



Marjorie Sella
Incumbent

ITASCA COUNTY ATTORNEY



Age: 41
Community:
Grand Rapids

Devin J. Gorski

always been done" just because it's easy. I want to do things better whenever possible.

Why are you running? I am running for Itasca County Attorney to bring a proactive, common-sense approach to our local legal system. I've seen our courtrooms from every angle and I know where our system works and where it doesn't.

My priority is two-fold: efficiency and education. As your next county attorney, I will bring swift accountability for offenders without costly, unnecessary delays. I will also educate the community, particularly our kids, about the law and real-world consequences, helping keep us on the right path and out of the justice system.

Itasca County deserves transparent, principled leadership that protects taxpayers, supports law enforcement, and keeps our families safe. I am ready to bring experienced, common-sense justice to our community from day one.

Why should voters elect you?

Itasca County voters deserve a county attorney who will deliver firm, common-sense justice through building positive, collaborative relationships with local law enforcement, the County Sheriff, and other county agencies. I am ready to work hand-in-hand with our officers, deputies, social workers, and county commissioners to make our courtrooms and communities more efficient and accountable.

I'm not going to sit on a high horse. My approach will be listening to neighbors, protecting taxpayer dollars, and focusing on proactive

solutions like educating children about the law to stop crime before it starts.

There is a balance that must be obtained between holding individuals accountable and protecting our constitutional rights. This applies from advising county board leadership to keeping our streets safe and everything in between. I will bring experienced, approachable leadership to the office. Together, we can build a safer, more efficient Itasca County.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Rather than pointing to a single famous figure, the public leaders I admire most are those who step up in our local communities to take on tough, often thankless, leadership roles.

It takes genuine courage to put yourself forward. Whether running for local office, serving on a school board, leading a county agency, or stepping up as a union representative, real leadership means stepping out of the crowd, taking responsibility for outcomes, and making difficult decisions in the public eye. I respect anyone who answers that call, subject themselves to public scrutiny, and put in the hard work to improve their community.

(continued on page 44)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?

Itasca County Attorney's Office, Assistant Itasca County Attorney

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

I am qualified to be your next Itasca County Attorney due to a balanced perspective that extends beyond a traditional prosecutor's path. I don't come from money, so I had to work blue-collar and retail jobs as a teen and young adult before starting my law career. I understand the everyday challenges facing working families. My hard-earned, practical life experience grounds my work in common sense and accessibility. I have seen Minnesota's justice system from all sides. My three years as an Assistant Public Defender and now, as an Assistant County Attorney, allows me unique insights into best practices to prosecuting crime and protecting our community. I don't believe in doing things "the way it's

ITASCA COUNTY ATTORNEY



Age: 30
Community:
Grand Rapids

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I am currently an Assistant County Attorney in the Itasca County Attorney's Office.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I attended school in Deer River and at ICC prior to obtaining a BA in psychology and attending Baylor Law School, a Christian university in Texas. I have worked in the Itasca County Attorney's Office for over four years. Prior to that, I worked as an Assistant County Attorney for Beltrami County. I have successfully prosecuted a wide range of criminal cases, from petty misdemeanors to serious felonies. I have also handled juvenile delinquencies, child protection cases, and other

Cassidy Villeneuve

civil matters while working as a prosecutor. I am currently the longest serving Assistant County Attorney in the Itasca County Attorney's Office. I have extensive courtroom experience and have a deep understanding of the challenges that the Office faces.

Why are you running? I am running for Itasca County Attorney because I care deeply about this community and believe my experience has prepared me to lead the office effectively. I believe that as prosecutors, we have a duty to our communities to ensure public safety and hold people accountable for their actions. Our communities deserve a justice system that responds to crime, supports victims, and works every day to keep neighborhoods safe. I want to lead an office that is professional, ethical, and focused on public safety while treating victims, law enforcement, defendants, and the public with fairness and respect.

Why should voters elect you? If elected, I will bring experience, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to public safety to the Office of Itasca County Attorney. I will use the experience that I have gained to give back to the community that raised me and to ensure that the Office serves the people of Itasca County with fairness, competence, and dedication.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. A public leader that I admire is Dolly Parton. While not a

typical public leader, I think Dolly deserves the recognition because she united people through kindness and culture. She encouraged people to follow their dreams, believe in themselves, and to lift up others. Dolly made a lasting impact with her Imagination Library, a program that has donated over 300 million free books to children around the world to encourage a love of reading and learning. She also founded The Dollywood Foundation which provides scholarships to keep students in school. I admire that she took actions to support children and was able to unite people with her kindness, in addition to her musical talents.

What do you think more people should know about the role of county attorney? I think people should know that the County Attorney and Assistant Attorneys are bound by the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines. This means that we are limited on what sentence can be imposed for crimes.

Which areas of law are you most and least comfortable with? The areas of law that I am most comfortable with are criminal law and juvenile delinquencies. The area of law I am least comfortable with is tax law.

ITASCA COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1



Age: 48
Community:
Squaw Lake

Cory Smith

sustainable that St. Paul thinks that any county, let alone rural counties, can continue down this path. And as always, continue to be mindful of our budget making dollars stretch as far as we can stretch them while still maintaining services that the county needs. I will continue to work with department heads on restructuring departments where we can to not only be more proficient in the way in every aspect of county government.

What are the three biggest issues your county is facing?

Tax increases, lack of funding for road and bridges and rural ambulance and hospital funding.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Tax increases. Continue to push our legislators in St. Paul to fight against nonfunded mandates. Continue to work with our Land Department to sell more of our tax-forfeited land to get it back on the tax roll. Continue to try to find ways to do more with less and continue to explore every grant opportunity that will help the county.

What would be your top spending priorities and savings priorities in the county budget? Outside of the mandated services that we are mandated to pay, which is a large chunk of our budget, in no particular order would be our roads and bridges and public safety. On the savings side, we need to continue to think outside the box when it comes to how we run departments. Cutting down on the county's footprint by selling buildings and properties that are no longer needed and continuing to work with our great partners to achieve grant funding when we are able.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Self-employed/current county commissioner

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Outside of budgeting my own personal business, the nearly four years of being a commissioner has gained me the experience and knowledge of what it takes and what the commitment of being a county commissioner is. The connections I have gained through our legislators to help get the constituents points across so they too can advocate for us in St. Paul.

Why are you running? I am running again because the work that I have been committed to isn't done yet. I feel we have gained a lot of ground but there is more ground that needs to be covered. I will continue to fight against nonfunded state mandates that are one of the factors that drive taxes through the roof. It is not

Why should voters elect you? I feel that I have been transparent through the nearly four years in office which is very important this day in age in government. I have always put the county first including my trip to Washington D.C. where I testified on Capitol Hill and brought attention to this great county and what it offers to the people across the United States. I am passionate about getting new well-paying jobs to come into this county. I am very happy with the work that we have done to get Mesabi Metallica set up to succeed which is going to be a great asset to this county. We have had some very good conversation with privately held companies that are very interested in building facilities in our county. I also have been working hard with our partners on getting our logging industry back on the map in Itasca County.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Ronald Reagan. The fact that he ended the Cold War should be enough, but he restored great confidence in the United States.

ITASCA COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1



Age: 65
Community:
Itasca County

Lonnie Witkofsky

Why are you running? I don't like the way our taxes are increasing I especially don't like the way they are pressuring the elderly so I want to be that strong voice to try and fix those devastating increases. I feel very strong that I can recover some of our lost industrial work mainly an OSB plant to the county which would also help rebuild our logging community. Building our Industrial Industry back up will by itself will take allot of tax burden off of Itasca residents.

Why should voters elect you? I'm a worker a man of my word and I get things done. I have self motivation that's not easily matched and when I start something I finish it I don't give up. You won't hear excuses from me I am use to big dollars , big business and big problems and that is what the county is. The only difference is its your money and I have the experience to make responsible saving decisions with it.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Staying Bi-partisan , our local Sheriff Joe Dasovich, I knew Joe when he was Chief of police in Nashwauk with a budget of almost zero. He was a great role model and a very carrying person of the Community of Nashwauk. He ran for Itasca County Sheriff and was successful . This was a career move 20 times bigger than what Joe was doing and he stepped in not missing a beat no change in personality same down to earth person I've always known. He now treats Itasca County with the same passion he treated Nashwauk with. Itasca county can be grateful in my opinion to have Joe as their Sheriff.

What are the three biggest issues your county is facing?

Property Taxes , Budget over runs ,The lack of Industry and Manufacturing.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

The lack of Industry . We need an OSB plant in our community more than anything to create Plant jobs , Logging jobs , Construction jobs, Equipment service job Ext.....This also would create relief on our property tax burden another one of the top 3 problems . I've been here for 64 years we've had an OSB plant most of those years it left and it hurt us. You can't fix it by bringing another department store to town the only fix is another OSB Plant. The spin off of jobs is huge and I would make it my priority to bring a Plant Back.

What would be your top spending priorities and savings priorities in the county budget?

My top spending would be to help get an Industrial plant to the County but the spending would not be cash but help with land for a plant and wood for awhile . I have not seen enough of the budget and have not had the opportunity to sit down with department heads to discuss possible savings . The savings I can talk about is the taxes that will be paid by the Industrial plant we bring to the County .

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired Construction Project Manager of Multi-ti-Million Dollar Projects

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. As a Construction Manager of Multi-Million Dollar Projects over a 38 year career I have extensive experience overseeing a wide range of subcontractors , Overseeing and directing hundreds of employs on multiple projects at the same time , I estimated the cost of these projects to be completed within the time frame that was directed. My estimates were my budgets. I implemented what I needed to complete these projects on time within budget. My experience is very close to a county commissioners duties. You cant get caught focusing on one thing you need a wide range of vision and I have many years of experience with that.

ITASCA COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 3



Age: 62

Community: Coleraine

John Johnson

important to work hard to maintain that for everyone.

Why should voters elect you? I take the responsibility of being a county commissioner seriously and will continue to work tirelessly to make informed, responsible decisions on behalf of all of the residents of Itasca County.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. IRRR Commissioner Ida Rukavina, Ida leads the IRRR with a clear and steady commitment to fair and equitable support of our region.

What are the three biggest issues your county is facing? Property taxes, regional economic resilience, supporting our youth, senior citizens and veterans.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Regional economic resilience: With economic growth and resilience, several important factors benefit. Industrial growth contributes to our tax base, employment base and economic well being. All of which supports all of the issues we are facing.

What would be your top spending priorities and savings priorities in the county budget? Controlling operational spending in the county. Making informed responsible decisions regarding major equipment expenses. Liquidating all excess county facilities, returning them to the tax base and eliminating the maintenance, utility and insurance cost to the tax payers.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Retired Postmaster, 49'er and veteran.

Why are you running? Itasca County and our region have provided me the opportunity to thrive, I believe it's



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ITASCA COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 3



Age: 43

Community:

Trout Lake Township
(Bovey)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Paradis inc OTR driver

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I ran for office in 2022, which gave me firsthand experience with the political process and community engagement. I also completed a year and a half of college coursework in law enforcement before medical issues prevented me from finishing the program.

Additionally, I owned and operated my own trucking business as an OTR driver for five years. During that time, I learned the importance of knowing the area you work in especially when it comes to efficiently managing loads and getting them where they need to go.

Why are you running? I'm running because we need fiscal responsibility in our area. The Government needs to be smaller and less wasteful. Our

Robert Preble

Property taxes are out of control, and there's too much wasteful spending. We also need real economic growth. Right now the median household income for a family of four is \$68,603, and for a single person it's \$37,533. Our youth are being forced to move away, and our average age is 46.9 nearly 8 years higher than the state average. As our community gets older, reliance on government support grows, and it's getting too hard for young families to stay here. We're forcing them out through high taxes and a lack of policies that support good-paying jobs with benefits. We also need truth and transparency in our local government, and we need to bring the Constitution back into how it operates. That's what I'm focused on.

Why should voters elect you? Why should Voters pick me? Because my opponent has been in office for 4 years and raised the property tax levy by over \$5 million. The only flat year was 2023, when they used American Rescue Plan funds to cover the increase without raising property taxes. Then came 2.5% in 2024, 3% in 2025, and a 5.16% jump of \$2.25 million last year. They also pulled \$1 million from reserves to get it to 5.16% making the real increase about 7.2%. Overall the levy is up about 11%, or closer to 13.5% to 14% when you add the federal funds and reserves. Then Elected officials in 2025 that were already making six figures got 4% raises. Everybody deserves to be paid, but we have to live within our means. I stand for smaller government, lower property taxes, real economic growth, and truth and transparency.

Editor's note: Itasca County's levy has increased by \$3.5 million since John Johnson has been in office. The 2024 budget was the first approved while he was in office. The county attorney and auditor-treasurer both received 4% raises for 2025, and the sheriff and recorder received 6% raises; all four of these elected officials receive six-figure salaries.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

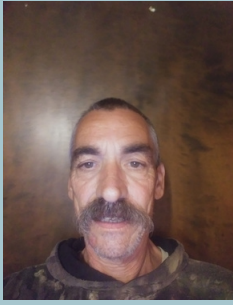
President Ronald Reagan I'd admire his belief that government should work for the people, not the other way around. He also believed in individual freedoms, personal responsibility, fiscal discipline, and creating opportunities for people to succeed through hard work. I also believe government should live within its means, respect taxpayers money, and always protect individual liberties, Benjamin Franklin famously wrote "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." and always stay accountable to the people it serves.

What are the three biggest issues your county is facing?

1- Lack of good-paying jobs and economic opportunity

(continued on page 44)

ITASCA COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, DISTRICT 4



Age: 58

Community:

Trout Lake Township

Dennis Barsness

Kootasca community action council, service on finance committee, governance committee, personnel committee, current and former small business owner, knowledge in budget setting, finances, cost and effect matters

Why are you running? As a civic minded individual it is important that the voters have a candidate that they know and can trust. Someone who will listen and also show proper stewardship over tax payer dollars. A candidate who comes from the people and is for the people. That candidate is me.

Why should voters elect you? As the best candidate for this position, I offer a lifetime of land and water stewardship from agricultural to logging to personal pleasure and beyond. My focus is not only toward the resources but also the means of financial support required while standing up for the tax paying citizen.

What does conservation and natural resource management mean to you?

It is not only important to show proper stewardship of what we have today but to maintain and improve for future generations along with possibly restoration of past generational use. While ensuring the taxpayer of proper financial management.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals.

As a former swcd board member I can step right into work. To bridge a divide between the swcd and our local farmers, to give more voice to our logging industry, to continue the diligent lake preservation and restoration work and ensure taxpayers their tax dollars are being looked after.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Circle of life home care - pca, Dennis Barsness property service - office and residential cleaning, lawn care, property maintenance

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. A pastor and elder of a Christian fellowship, former soil and water conservation District supervisor, current vice president of the board for



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

ITASCA COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, DISTRICT 4



Age: 63
Community:
Pengilly

Marjorie Sella

Board of Supervisors appointed me to the board to fill a vacancy on the board.

Why are you running? As a native to Itasca County, my family has long been involved with the Soil and Water Conservation District. I was raised on a beef farm, my Dad served as a SWCD Supervisor, we own lakeshore and agricultural properties that have been improved by using soil and water protecting conservation practices. Promoting wise use of our resources is a part of who I am, serving on the SWCD Board allows me to be a part of educating others on current resource issues in Itasca County and finding solutions to those issues.

Why should voters elect you? My experience with the Itasca SWCD, the USDA-NRCS and the Minnesota Association of SWCD's has given me a network of like minded individuals with whom I can exchange ideas and solutions to environmental issues facing the landowners of Itasca County. I serve on the Minnesota Association of SWCDs Forestry Committee bringing back information to the Board and Staff on partner activities, and policy and program changes affecting our efforts.

What does conservation and natural resource management mean to you?

The wise use and protection of our resources. Planting, growing and harvesting in ways that limit damage to soil and water resources and provide for continued use of the land. Preventing excellerated erosion along the shores of our lakes and streams. Reviewing the impacts of our land use decisions against the needs of the soil, water, air, plants, animals and humans.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. The SWCD is finalizing our last two watershed management plans. I want to see the goals within the management plans reached. My role as a SWCD Supervisor is to continue to review staffing needs, ensure our staff have the education and resources they need to effectively and efficiently deliver conservation solutions to the landowners of Itasca County.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired from USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Soil Science from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. I worked for the Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist for over thirty years. The last eight, I worked in Itasca County as the District Conservationist reporting to the SWCD Board of Supervisors and working alongside their staff. In October 2024 the current

COUNTY OFFICES CONTINUED

Devin J. Gorski (continued)

That willingness to step up, take accountability, and serve others is the foundation of effective public service.

What do you think more people should know about the role of county attorney?

Most people assume the County Attorney is solely a criminal prosecutor, but the role goes far beyond courtroom trials. The County Attorney is the legal advisor to the entire county government to keep operations lawful. Our work also involves civil law along with the protection of vulnerable children and adult.

Which areas of law are you most and least comfortable with?

My core expertise lies in criminal and juvenile law, from petty offenses to felonies. While I am least experienced in land and real estate law, I have the utmost confidence in other attorney's of the office to assist me in research and counsel.

Robert Preble (continued)

- 2- Property taxes that are too high for working families, seniors, and property owners
- 3- Lack of fiscal accountability and transparency in county government

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Those three all are big issues facing Itasca County but the out of control property taxes and government spending, lack of quality jobs and economic development, and affordability for our families and seniors.

State mandates place real pressure on county government, but that cannot be excuses for every spending increase. We have to as County leaders prioritize essential services, control costs, and remain accountable to the taxpayers who ultimately pay the bill. We also need meaningful economic development that creates good-paying jobs and gives young people and families a reason to build their futures here. Our seniors should not fear being taxed out of homes they worked their entire lives to own, and young families should not feel forced to leave in search of opportunity.

Itasca County should be a place where our youth can afford to stay, families can prosper, and seniors can afford to remain.

What would be your top spending priorities and savings priorities in the county budget?

Here are some of my top spending priorities would be roads and infrastructure, economic development, and maintaining essential county services at a level taxpayers can afford. Investments should strengthen our communities, by attract businesses, in which create quality jobs, and which would ultimately grow the tax base rather than continually increasing the burden on existing property owners or in other words Is decreasing the overall size of the government.

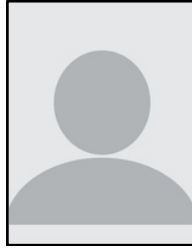
Here are some of my savings priority would be a comprehensive, department-by-department review (3 party independent audit of all assets) and of county spending. We need to identify administrative overhead, duplication, unnecessary bureaucracy, and spending increases that are not producing measurable value for taxpayers. county leaders must also take responsibility for the decisions within their control.

CITY OFFICES

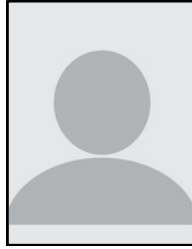
Read more on page 48

Bovey

Mayor



Mike Kilbourn*

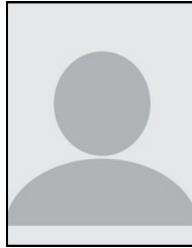


Lauren Meyer

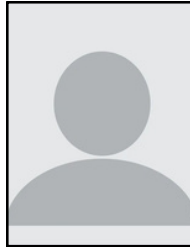
City Council (elect 2)



Larry Allen



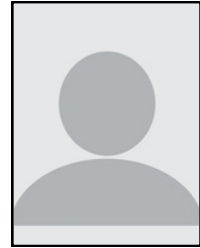
Dion Card



David Doust*

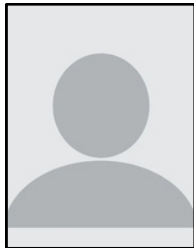


Nancilyn Meyer
Incumbent

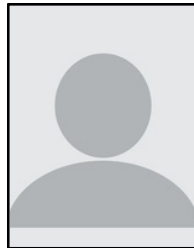


Neal Robyn*
Incumbent

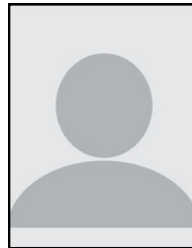
Calumet City Council (elect 2)



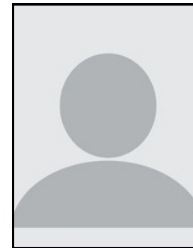
Wendy Chupurdia*



Vern Danielson*



Brandon Hamlin*



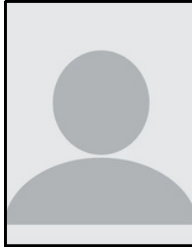
Daniel Strand*
Incumbent

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

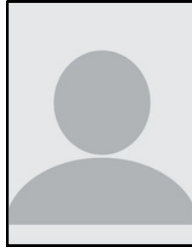
CITY OFFICES

Read more on page 52

Cohasset City Council (elect 2)



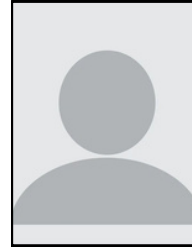
Andy Haarklau*
Incumbent



Richard Lee Kortekaas Sr.*

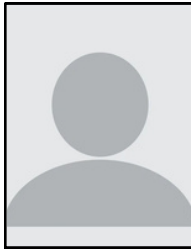


Samuel Soule

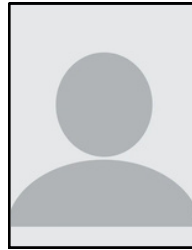


Kevin Tinquist *
Incumbent

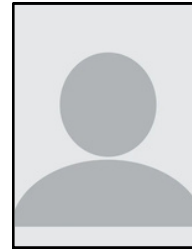
Deer River City Council (elect 2)



Daniel Graf*
Incumbent



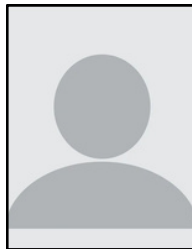
Karla Swisher Kannas*



Barbara Ann Serfling *
Incumbent

Read more on page 53

Keewatin Mayor

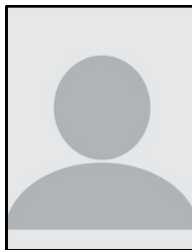


Michael Mick LaBine*
Incumbent

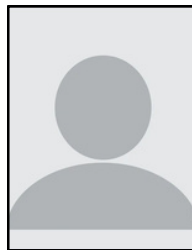


Susan K. Thronson

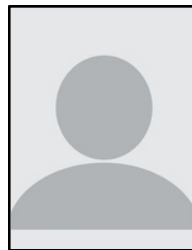
City Council (elect 2)



Jim Avelsgard



Mark Erickson



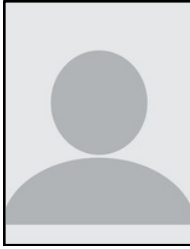
Pamela LaBine
Incumbent



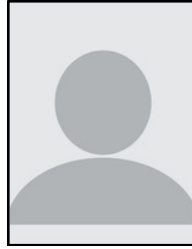
Tawnya Maras

CITY OFFICES

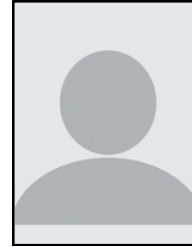
Marble City Council (elect 2)



Bob Knauss*
Incumbent



Merry Lee*
Incumbent



Joseph Procopio*

Marble Ballot Question

Shall Optional Plan A, modifying the standard plan of city government by providing for the appointment by the council of the clerk and treasurer be adopted for the government of the city?

Read more on page 58

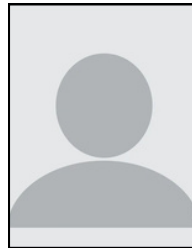
Nashwauk City Council (elect 2)



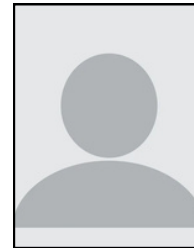
David Bruns
Incumbent



Sheila Jensen
Incumbent



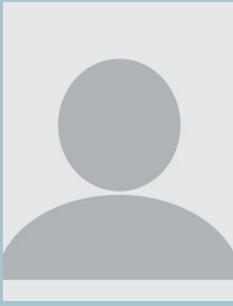
Anthony Marinaro*



Riley Savolainen*

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

BOVEY MAYOR



Age: 37

Lauren Meyer

Adjustments. I am also on Bovey's Planning and Zoning Commission and Bovey's Park Committee.

Why are you running? I am running for mayor because I love this town and the people in it. Bovey has such a unique potential and I want to see it thrive again.

Why should voters elect you?

I should be elected because I have vast knowledge and hands on experience with all the current projects in Bovey. I've helped lay the ground work for future projects in Bovey. I've worked side by side with the Itasca County Sheriff Department to clean up the town. I've created new revenue streams for the city. To maintain transparency and accountability amongst the council I pushed for all the meetings to be live broadcasted and recorded.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I admire all public

leaders because they display the tenacity and courage that it takes to make a change.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Housing/Rental properties, increasing our tax base and ordinance enforcement

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

All three of them can be fixed by updating our cities ordinances, which is what I'm currently working on with a few others. Our ordinances are out of date. By updating things we've been able to create new revenue streams and clean up the city in the process.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Manager at Hollywood Bait

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have an AS degree from ICC. I've been on city council for the past two years. I've been doing the ordinance enforcement for three years. I am on Itasca County's Planning Commission and Board of



Photo credit: Lorie Shaul



Age: 71

Larry Allen

YOUTH WRESTLING COACH
USA WOMEN'S FREESTYLE
WRESTLING COACH
MN/USA WRESTLING LEADERSHIP
AND BOARD SERVICE
AUTOMOTIVE EDUCATION AND
TECHNICAL SCHOOL ADVISORY
BOARDS
GOODWILL-EASTER SEALS AUTO
ADVISORY BOARD

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. After more than five decades in the automotive industry, I recently retired from my role as Regional Operations Manager for Honest-1 Auto Care MN, where I helped oversee 16 locations and played a key role in opening and developing new locations. My career taught me the importance of responsibility, teamwork, leadership, and listening... qualities I will bring to Bovey City Council.

COMMUNITY HAS ALWAYS MATTERED TO ME. HERE TO LISTEN. READY TO SERVE.
I've spent much of my life volunteering and giving back, including:

WHITTIER ALLIANCE
COMMUNITY SAFETY &
CRIME PREVENTION

Why are you running? I want to give back to the community I live in. I would like to help bring businesses to our town which will help it grow and bring in tax money to support ideas & programs to make Bovey a better place to live.

Why should voters elect you? I'm running for Bovey City Council because I believe my 50+ years of professional experience and lifelong commitment to volunteering will help make our community stronger. I'm ready to listen to our residents, bring a fresh perspective, and help move Bovey forward.

- *Bovey resident & homeowner since 2024.
- *Member of St. Augustine Catholic Church.
- *50+ years in the automotive industry.
- *Experience in operations, business development, hiring, training, and marketing.
- *22+ years supporting youth and amateur wrestling.
- *Lifelong volunteer and community advocate.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

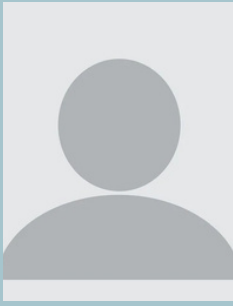
Charlie Kirk because he was God fearing man that was trying to bring Americans together. Charlie was not afraid to listen to difficult issues and speak the truth to try and attain an answer for love & peace in the USA. He gave his life to better our country.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Lack of small business, appearance of some properties, and home ownership.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

I think we should focus bringing business to Bovey to help create a tax base to help pay for the needs of the community. I would try to assess what the community needs are, what properties are available for business to consider, and research what programs are available to help a new business startup. More business drives visitors which will make things more affordable for our community members. It would be nice to have a place to go to breakfast in Bovey.



Age: 48

Dion Card

same purpose. Working directly on local land use, regional recreation, and community park development gives me a deep, practical understanding of how local government works and how to get things done for Bovey.

leadership was grounded in community care and the principle that "we all do better when we all do better." He showed that real public service isn't about orders from above—it's about showing up, listening to everyday people, and bringing neighbors together to make things better.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Grand Rapids Area Library, Children's Librarian

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. My entire career is built around serving the public, managing resources responsibly, and connecting people with the services they need. Professionally, I have worked 3 years as a Reading Tutor for AmeriCorps, 5 years as an elementary school paraeducator, and 9 years as a children's librarian. As a volunteer, I have served on the Bovey City Park Committee, the Greenway Joint Recreation Association, Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board with that

Why are you running? As a 15-year Bovey resident, I'm invested in the everyday life of our town. Having served on our local boards and park committees, I've seen firsthand what hands-on community care can accomplish. I'm running for council to make sure our neighborhoods and local services continue to get the dedicated advocacy they deserve.

Why should voters elect you? I'm running because Bovey is my home, and I care deeply about the everyday quality of life here. Through my work as a librarian and my service on our park committee, rec association, and planning board, I've spent years listening to neighbors and working on local projects. I want to bring that energetic, community-first leadership to City Council.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I deeply admire Paul Wellstone because his

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Our top priorities are keeping up with street and water repairs, supporting local businesses to keep downtown thriving, making our parks vibrant spaces for families, and watching every city dollar.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Seeking regional recreation grants and working with neighboring communities to fund street and water project helps us take care of our city without putting extra financial strain on residents.



Age: 55

Nancilyn Meyer

Why are you running? I am passionate about Bovey! We have some big goals we're working toward and I'd like to continue the progress we've made. The projects I've been putting my time into are: updating the blight/parking ordinances, housing and fundraising projects (can someone say Splash Pad?!). I created the rental moratorium which has been a bit controversial but I think our town and renters deserve better quality housing. We are working towards new ordinances with the help of the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund and this will be a historic change for the city. These projects are very dear to my heart and I'd like to make sure they get finished. It is hard to imagine handing these projects over to someone newly elected who doesn't have the knowledge of these complex issues. I also have a vision of financial expansion for Bovey that includes economic development and increasing our housing capacity.

Why should voters elect you? I believe there are two types of people who run for office: those who think they can do it better than others, and those who love their community enough to serve it. I am the second.

I didn't grow up in Bovey, but I found my home here. After losing my parents at a young age, I spent my entire adult life searching for a place where I truly belonged. I unexpectedly rented a place in Bovey with no intentions of staying. Twelve years later, I'm a homeowner.

I love Bovey's rich history and all its future potential. I spend countless

hours volunteering and educating myself as a councilperson which has allowed me to make connections that will continue to benefit Bovey.

My greatest strength is listening. When issues arise, I research them, seek input from residents, and make thoughtful decisions based on what is best for our community.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Alexander Hamilton because he was a great thinker and wrote with eloquence. He made mistakes but he overcame. Other leaders looked to him for innovative solutions. He was not afraid to speak his mind and he made waves! He was confident. Besides all this, he made some great music!!

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

- 1) Finding ways to expand the tax base or bring in additional revenue.
- 2) The ordinances are incomplete and out of date.
- 3) Lack of affordable, quality housing.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

I think all three are interwoven. I would continue working on the ordinances which is the foundation the other two will work from.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?

I am a Registered Nurse at Fairview Range Hospital. I'm also a small business owner.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

I have been a councilperson for Bovey for 8 years now. Prior to that, I was a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission. So, I have about 10 years experience with local government. Currently, I volunteer on a few committees. I am the Chairperson of Beautiful Bovey which is a committee of people who work to make our community a better place. I continue to be a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, The Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board, and the Enstrom-Wilden Memorial Park Committee. Most of my education is in healthcare and sciences. I attended the University of Minnesota with a major in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology and then decided to make a life change and become a nurse. I attended ICC and Mankato State University. I've been an RN for about 15 years and prior to that worked for the DNR.



Age: 22

Samuel Soule

politics, but I have lived in Cohasset all my life. Through living here and talking with the residences I believe I have a firm grasp of what the community needs and could benefit from.

Why are you running? I'm running to grow a better Cohasset for it's current and future residents.

Why should voters elect you? Voters should elect me because I bring a new view to local politics.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

I admire Congressman Thomas Massie because of his views on civil liberties, constitutional originalism, and fiscal conservatism.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

I believe our biggest issues are lack of high paying employment opportunities, housing/apartment shortage and increasing property taxes.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

The most important issue to me is the lack of high paying jobs. I would address this by making Cohasset a place where businesses want to invest.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I'm currently employed at Boswell energy center in Cohasset, where I'm a environment system operator

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have no formal education concerning

Know your voter's rights. You have the right to:

- Take time off work to vote, without losing your pay, personal leave or vacation time.
- Vote if you are in line to vote anytime before 8 p.m.
- Register to vote on Election Day if you can show the required proof of residence.
- Bring your children with you to vote.
- Ask anyone for help, except for an agent of your employer or union. A voter who requires assistance in marking a ballot, by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write, may be given assistance to do so by a person of the voter's choice, other than the employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union.
- Vote if you are not currently incarcerated for a felony conviction, even if you are on probation or parole, or have other conditions like restitution.
- File a written complaint at your polling place if you are unhappy with the way an election is being run.

KEEWATIN MAYOR



Age: 68

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired from City of Keewatin

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have vast knowledge on how the City of Keewatin runs from working as City Deputy Clerk and Public Utilities Clerk for nine years (2011-2020). Before the clerk positions I worked as a utility person for the City from 2002 - 2011. During this time I was certified as the city water operator, I also acquired my CDL Class B to operate city equipment. I received my Minnesota Food License to oversee the many community dinners that were held the Keewatin Community Center. More recently served four years 2021-2024 on the City Council after my retirement. I

Susan K. Thronson

have served on the zoning board for over 10 years along with the EDA (Economic Development Association) board.

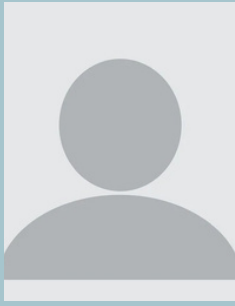
Why are you running? I am running for the Keewatin Mayor to create healthy, safe, and positive environment for all the people who live in Keewatin. It would be a honor to serve as Mayor for Keewatin and I will do the hard work necessary to fully represent our residence in Keewatin. I have lived in this community my entire life, and I have watched it grow and change through the years. I am very passionate about our community and I know how important the decisions by the council mean to the people who live in Keewatin. I want to be involved in the conversations and decisions that will be a positive impact for Keewatin.

Why should voters elect you? I will be honest, show transparency's to the city employee's and residents. I will be open minded and listen to the concerns and suggestions of employees and residents. I am also very fortunate to have had a fantastic network of people I had worked with when I was in the Clerk positions. I have a very strong work ethic and will hard to gain trust in the community continue to work on city infrastructure and our public water concerns.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I admire several but one in particular that comes to mind. As a public and global leader, I would have to say Pope Leo. The reason I admire him would be for his compassion and care towards people and his kindness to all humans.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing? The city infrastructure, continued tightening financial restraints and work to gain more business growth.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Aging infrastructure, I would work on grants with federal and state agencies to support the many improvements that are needed throughout the city. I would also talk to other area mayors and see how they are dealing with the same issues. Hoping to better understand how to help Keewatin moving into the future.



Age: 58

Jim Avelsgard

Why are you running? I believe that a change of leadership is needed. I want to be here and advocate for the community not for myself. The community trust and the leadership we currently have has declined over the years. As a member of this local community since 1981 I have witnessed a change in community fellowship and pride. I believe that a change is needed in our small town. We need to get back to having a small community with trust and pride. I believe that with better leadership we can regrow our community.

Why should voters elect you? Voters who want change should vote for me because if I am elected to council I believe I can provide fair and honest decision making on behalf of our community. If I am elected I would like to reestablish the mutual trust and respect for the community and its workers. I want to be the voice for the concerns of this city.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

David Tomassoni. He was a strong advocate for the state of Minnesota he showed integrity and strong leadership skills. He was an advocate for places like ours with his concerns for mining and environmental development.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Streets in disrepair and aging infrastructure. Establishing respectful relations with our city employees. Blight

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

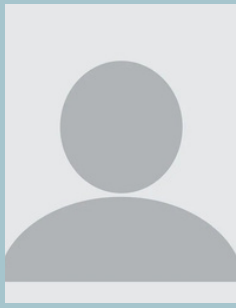
Blight is a big issue in my opinion. Our community deserves to be prideful in where they live. I would like to establish rules and guidelines and ensure they are followed.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Ulland Brothers Construction

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am the current President of the Keewatin Trail Runners ATV Club. I am on my second term of being president and have been a club member since the club was established in 2020. I am the Vice commander for The Sons of the American Legion Post 452 for 2 years now. I have been a member for 7 years.



Photo credit: Lorie Shaul



Age: 54

Mark Erickson

Why are you running? I believe that a change in leadership is needed. As a citizen of Keewatin the the past 24 yrs I have witnessed the decline of community pride. I would like to reestablish a sense of pride and community growth. I believe Keewatin is a City with great potential to become even better with proper leadership and decision making.

Why should voters elect you?

Voters who choose to elect me will find themselves with a fair honest councilor with no agenda other than the betterment of our community. Transparency and integrity will be my priority. Voters should know what is happening and have a voice in those decisions, I will be the person they can rely on to voice their concerns.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Former Senator Paul Wellstone, was a wonderful advocate for community. Senator Wellstone was a passionate supporter of farming, family and community. Like former Senator Wellstone I too am passionate about healthcare, the environment and labor. He was an

advocate for domestic violence and farming, family and community. Like former Senator Wellstone I too am passionate about healthcare, the environment and labor. He was an advocate for domestic violence and mental illness which is a major problem in society today. He was an inspirational leader who's passion for community has inspired me for years.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Streets in disrepair, aging infrastructure , and blight.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

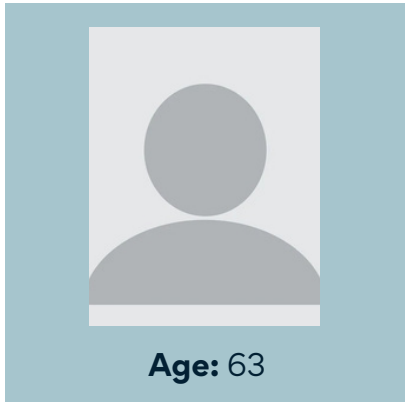
Blight is an issue that has solutions readily available, that being said I believe we could accomplish a lot in that area. Street maintenance will always be an ongoing endeavor.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I have worked the past 18 plus yrs for Hibbing Taconite Co where I am employed as a Blast hole Driller.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I currently Chair the Zoning Board and have been an Officer for the Sons of the American Legion at the Post and District level. I am VP of the Keewatin Trailrunners ATV Club and former Chairman of the House Committee of Legion Post 452. I believe I have what it takes to make a positive impact within our community.



Photo credit: Lorie Shaul



Pamela LaBine

strides improving the city. I would like to follow through with our current street and housing initiatives. The council has obtained several grants and federal funding to assist with our projects. The current council and city staff is working together for the betterment of the city and I am proud to be involved.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? City Clerk

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have been a City Clerk for 26 years and have extensive knowledge of City government and City operation.

Why are you running? I am running because the current council has made great

Why should voters elect you? I have 26 years of involvement in city government. I was born and raised in Keewatin and want to see our city grow and improve.

I am honest and will keep my decisions in the best interest of the taxpayers.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Noone in particular. I believe it takes a certain person to be a leader and be strong when involved in government.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Being land locked. The city isn't able to expand for housing and attracting business to increase the tax base.

Ageing equipment and the costs to provide employees with up to date equipment to do their job without the burden on the taxpayer.

Infrastructure improvements and the costs for projects

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Infrastructure projects. Trying to find funding to make these improvements without increasing taxes.



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull



Age: 50

Tawnya Maras

friends, and community. I care deeply about the future of our city and want to continue being involved, listening to residents, and helping make decisions that are in the best interest of Keewatin. I'm proud of the work I've been able to do for our community, and I want to continue serving, giving back, and helping make Keewatin a strong place for our families and future generations.

Why should voters elect you?

Voters should elect me because I genuinely care about Keewatin and the people who call it home. I'm not running for the title, I'm running because I want to serve my community, listen to our residents, and be someone they can count on. I bring experience, dedication, and a willingness to work hard to find solutions and make responsible decisions for our city. I want to help keep Keewatin moving forward while protecting what makes our community special. Most importantly, I will always remember that my responsibility is to the people of Keewatin.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Denis Leary - for all the work that he does for firefighters.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Aging infrastructure, housing, maintaining city services while being financially responsible.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Housing - our city is land locked and with the loss of our elementary school we need to find ways to attract families to our city. As chair of the economic development board I am committed to pushing forward to building housing and growing our community.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) - Youth Services Program Manager

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I served as City Clerk for 8 years and I have been on the City Council the last 4 years

Why are you running? I'm running for Keewatin City Council because Keewatin is more than just a place I live it's my home, and the people here are my neighbors,



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull



Age: 65

David Bruns

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have been on the Nashwauk City Council for the past 6 years.

Why are you running? I care about our City, and I want to continue working toward improving it, and our quality of life.

Why should voters elect you? I believe I have been an effective and approachable voice for our residents. I will continue to attempt to move us forward in a fiscally responsible manner.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. No current answer.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing? Street and infrastructure deficiencies, lack of business options, current traffic congestion.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? We need to work more efficiently on acquiring funding for infrastructure projects.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? US Steel Keetac.
Mechanic

What happens after you vote?

- In-person ballots, cast on Election Day, are typically counted quickly, often by machine.
- In Minnesota, mail-in and absentee ballots begin processing 18 days before the election but are not counted until after polls close at 8 p.m. on Election Day.
- Following Election Day, county election officials audit and proof their work to make any corrections as necessary before they canvass their results. It is routine for election officials to discover small errors or typos, such as entering the number 48 instead of 84.
- Election results are not official until they have been reviewed and certified by a canvassing board. If necessary, the canvassing board oversees a recount. Canvassing boards are also involved in the process of randomly selecting precincts for review after every election.
- Canvassing boards convene at the municipal, school district and county levels. Statewide races and those crossing county lines are certified by the State Canvassing Board.
- The county canvass report is sent to the Secretary of State's office, where it is reviewed and presented to the State Canvassing Board.
- Election results aren't final until they're certified, a process that varies by state. The State Canvassing Board will meet to certify results on Nov. 19.



Age: 67

Sheila Jensen

Why should voters elect you?

I always try to be cognizant of the taxpayers and how our actions affect them and their wallets. I firmly believe government should be careful in how it spends taxpayers hard-earned money. Both on the council and at my job, I am repeatedly shocked by how much everything costs! And everything that citizens want done, deserve to have done, costs money. A LOT of money. So it is a balancing act every day, trying to accomplish things that need to be done while also being thoughtful in how we spend folks' tax dollars.

I am not afraid to ask questions to better understand an issue, even when it might make me look a bit silly, because I want to be an informed member of the council, making the best decision I can.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

I admire Kentucky Representative Thomas Massie. He has stood firmly in his beliefs and convictions in representing his constituents and America even when he faced massive opposition, even from his own party. That takes guts and commitment to truth. I appreciate that.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

1. Trying to find the money to get things done.
2. The growing pains of having a large industrial business ramping up to begin production.
3. The controversy over the access to Blue Lake has been on a lot of people's minds.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Actually, all three of the items I listed are connected to the Mesabi Metallica project. The Blue Lake access decision affects MM future plans which will benefit our region with additional jobs; the traffic difficulties, while real and troublesome, are temporary; and the additional revenue that will be coming into the city from MM opening and beginning production will ease some of the city's budgetary strain. I would continue to support the MM project while keeping the needs and concerns of citizens in mind.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?

Deputy Clerk, City of Coleraine

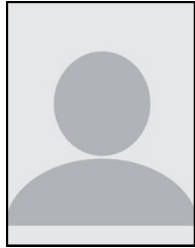
Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

This will be my second term as Nashwauk City Councilor. The experience of the my initial term plus my role as Deputy Clerk in a nearby town has been a great combination for beginning to understand the inner workings of city government.

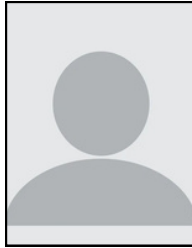
Why are you running? I have enjoyed my first term and believe I can still contribute to the City of Nashwauk through serving on the city council.

TOWNSHIP OFFICES

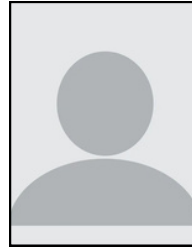
Bearville Township Board of Supervisors Seat A



Michael Laulunen*
Incumbent

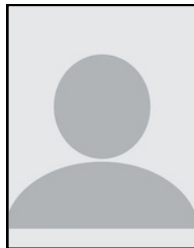


Brian Wilde*

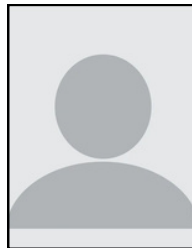


Andrew Zahorsky*

Bigfork Township Board of Supervisors Seat A

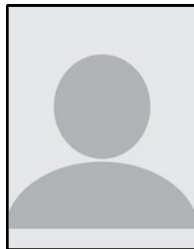


Dean Haley*
Incumbent

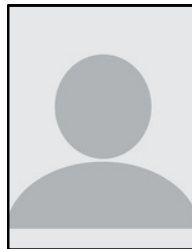


Tammy Mosher*

Carpenter Township Board of Supervisors Seat B



Donald W. Nelson*
Incumbent



Greg Renner*

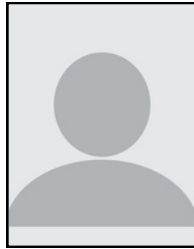
*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

TOWNSHIP OFFICES

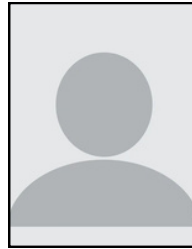
Deer River Township Ballot Question

Shall option B, providing for the appointment of the clerk and treasurer by the town board, be adopted for the government of the town?

Trout Lake Township Board of Supervisors Seat C

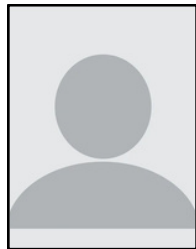


Nikki Aronson*

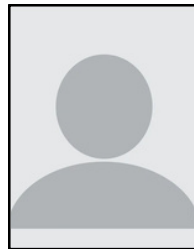


Pam Perry*

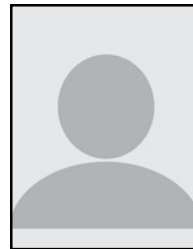
Wabana Township Board of Supervisors Seat A



Tommy Bennett*



James Brooks



Lafe Ness*

Read more on page 62

Wirt Township Ballot Question

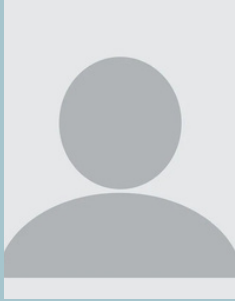
Shall Option B, providing for the appointment of the clerk and treasurer by the town board, be adopted for the government of the town?

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

WABANA TOWNSHIP

SEAT A

James Brooks



Age: 57
Community:
Wabana

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Minnesota North College Hibbing

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Retired Sheriff Deputy dedicated to service of my community and life long resident of Wabana Township

Why are you running? Help my community

Why should voters elect you? Dedicated public servant

Please describe the roles and responsibilities of the office you are running for. Assisting in governing Wabana Twp, budgeting, and

decision making community functions

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. President Ronald Reagan. He was a proven leader with a great sense of humor even when it came to diversity

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. Fiscal responsibility, Transparency, and a stronger community

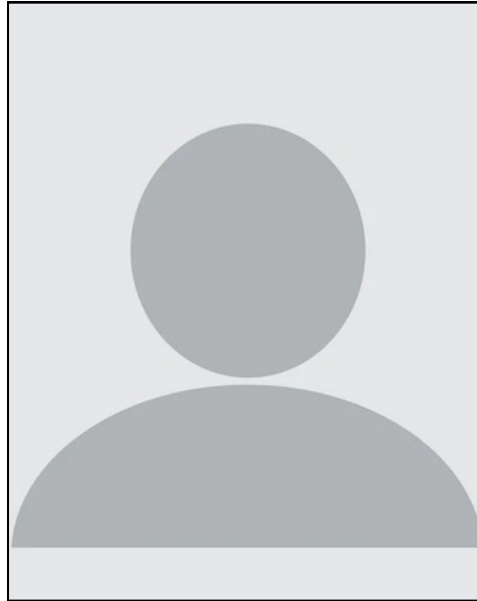


Photo credit: Lorie Shaul

9TH DISTRICT COURT SEAT 2



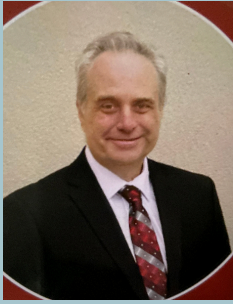
Matthew Mallie
Incumbent



Henry C. Ambelang*

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

9TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT SEAT 2



Age: 56

Community:

Brainerd/Baxter of Crow
Wing County

Matthew R. Mallie

city prosecutor for Brainerd, Baxter, Nisswa, Pequot Lakes and Jenkins and as a contract attorney for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. I also practiced in the areas of family law, estate planning, civil litigation, while also serving as a civil city attorney.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Judge David Ten Eyck. He was always well prepared and thoughtful with his decisions.

What are the biggest challenges you would face in this role, and how would you overcome them? An ever increasing case load,

addressed by working evenings and weekends as needed.

How do you plan to improve transparency and trust in the judicial system? Working with Court Administration to assist and increase access for and with the public.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? District Court Judge

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Prior to my

appointment on the bench, in June of 2019, I was a practicing attorney in the Brainerd Lakes area for approximately 20 years. During this time, I served as a

Why are you running? To continue to serve the people of the 9th Judicial District and the State of Minnesota.

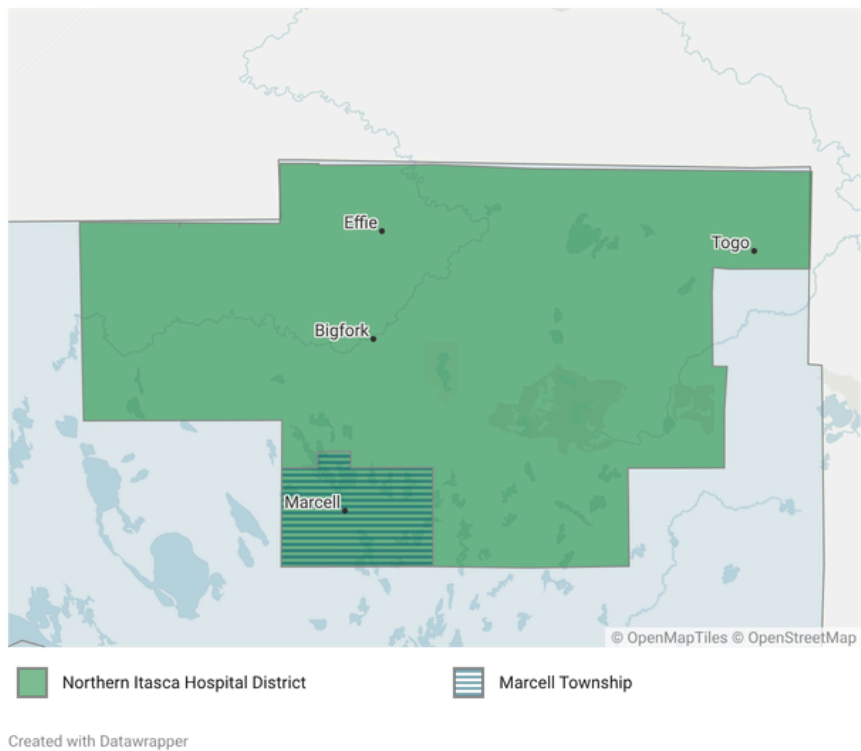
Why should voters elect you? I believe the I am best qualified to serve based on my prior experience as an attorney, prosecutor, and past several years of service as a District Court Judge. I was selected to the bench after an extensive vetting process in which the commission for judicial selections recommended me. This selection was based on my application, letters of reference, a thorough interview process and background check.



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

NORTHERN ITASCA HOSPITAL DISTRICT BOARD

District Map

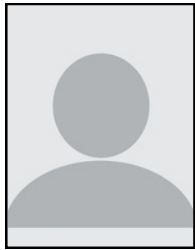


Read more on page 66

At Large Member



**Ellen
Bomstad**

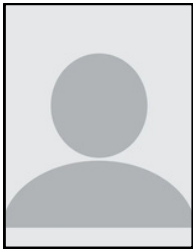


**Carol
Gilbertson***

Marcell Township Member



**Tracy
Boldt**



**Matthew
Niemala***

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

NORTHERN ITASCA HOSPITAL DISTRICT BOARD (AT LARGE)



Age: 68

Community:

Bigfork, Stokes Township

Ellen Bomstad

work history, caring for and about people is central to my being. In addition to spending time as a RN in hospitals, I have worked in the Medicare office, as a data analyst, an investigator, a quality assurance specialist and an employee trainer. I began volunteering at the Bigfork Valley Hospital Gift Nest when it reopened in 2025; I have had the honor and privilege to be on the Board of Directors of three 501(c)3 organizations in the past.

Why should voters elect you?

I feel a strong and growing local hospital will directly improve the well-being of the communities it serves. My goal is to contribute to our hospital by serving to the best of my ability if elected to the Board of Directors.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Mother Teresa gave her entire life to serving people who needed help and hope.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? no, retired

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have been a registered nurse for over 45 years and with my critical care

Why are you running? As an interested community member, I have attended most of the Bigfork Hospital District Regular Board and Finance Committee Meetings for the past three years, which has sparked my interest in running for this position.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. To review the issues, data, and to use this information to make decisions that will maintain the hospital as a thriving and vital part of the community.



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

NORTHERN ITASCA HOSPITAL DISTRICT BOARD (MARCELL TOWNSHIP)



Age: 56
Community:
Marcell, Minnesota

Tracy Boldt

Why are you running? Lend my experience and ensure rural MN has accessible healthcare for many.

Why should voters elect you? With over 20 years in the healthcare field both at the bedside and behind the scenes in Revenue Cycle, I can help work through problems, thought partner on solutions while supporting the community I live in.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I am a practical leader defined by clear judgment, steady follow-through, and a bias toward action. I focus on solving real problems rather than chasing abstract ideals, using operational thinking to break big challenges into manageable steps. My communication is direct and grounded, and build trust by

being consistent, transparent, and hands-on. It's important to listen closely, collaborate widely, and make decisions based on evidence, community needs, and workable solutions rather than ego or theatrics. Visual leader whose impact is seen — smoother processes, stronger teams, and problems actually getting fixed.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. Learn and listen to current challenges within rural healthcare impacting Bigfork Valley Hospital while looking at future change.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Essentia Health Senior Director Middle Revenue

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Over 20 years of experience in healthcare as a Registered Nurse and a small business owner in Itasca County.

Looking for statewide candidates?

Visit the link below for detailed guides on who's running for U.S. Senate, Minnesota governor, attorney general, secretary of state and auditor.



kaxe.org/electionguide