

# ELECTION GUIDE

## 2026 PRIMARY



### AITKIN COUNTY CANDIDATES

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# AITKIN COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

## How primary elections work



In partisan races or those with political parties, only one candidate in each party moves on. For example, the winner of the Republican primary for governor will be on the ballot in the November general election. The rest of the candidates are out of the running.

You can only vote for one party, but you choose which one, as Minnesota doesn't have party registration.

In nonpartisan races, the primary narrows the pool of candidates down to twice the number of available seats. So if five candidates are running for county sheriff, the top two in the primary will be on the ballot in November. If 14 people are running for four seats on the school board, the top eight will advance.

## 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 June 26. 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](https://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 June 26. 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 July 24, 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.

**Aitkin County's early voting locations are the Aitkin County Government Center in Aitkin (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.) and East Lake Community Center in McGregor (Wednesday, July 15, 3-7 p.m., mail ballot drop-off only).**



On **Primary Election Day**, Tuesday, Aug. 11, you can go to your local polling place to vote until 8 p.m. You can find your polling place at [mnvotes.gov/pollfinder](https://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.

# AITKIN COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

## How do I register to vote?



You can register to vote or update your registration online at [mnvotes.gov](https://mnvotes.gov) or by returning a paper form to your local elections office until July 21. You'll need an email address and your driver's license or the last four digits of your 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.

## Where can I find more information?

For more details on voting, you can visit [mnvotes.gov](https://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](https://kaxe.org/election2026).

## What is KAXE?



KAXE is a Northern Minnesota public radio station, founded in 1976. We have signals in Grand Rapids (91.7), Bemidji (90.5) and Brainerd (89.9), and our broadcast can always be streamed at [kaxe.org](https://kaxe.org).

KAXE News began in 2023, and our team of Northern Minnesota-born-and-raised journalists puts together this Primary Election Guide.

## KAXE's Election Guide methodology



KAXE contacted every candidate three times using contact information submitted to the Secretary of State's Office when they filed for office. Candidate responses have not been edited and are published as submitted.

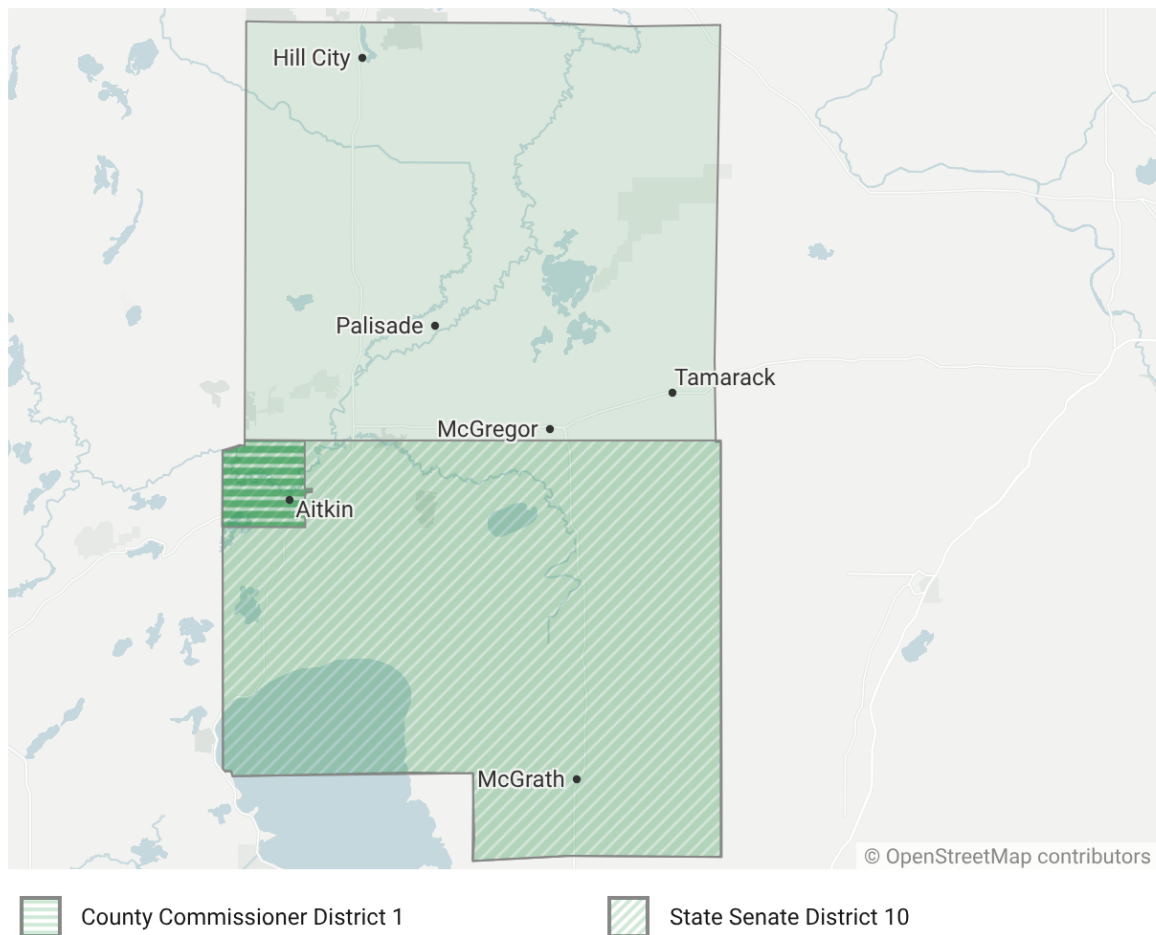
As necessary, our news team added contextual information and corrected inaccuracies, marked with editor's notes in italics.

Please contact us at [news@kaxe.org](mailto:news@kaxe.org) with questions or comments or to report any errors.

# AITKIN COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

## About Aitkin County districts

Two of the races in this guide will only be on some Aitkin County voters' ballots: the races for State Senate District 10 and County Commissioner District 1. Check the map below to see if you live in one of these districts.



Created with Datawrapper

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: DEMOCRATS



**Luke Gulbranson**  
[lukegulbranson.com](http://lukegulbranson.com)



**John Munter**  
[munterforcongress.substack.com](http://munterforcongress.substack.com)



**Trina Swanson**  
[trinaforcongress.com](http://trinaforcongress.com)  
*Party endorsed*

Candidate campaign website as reported to the Minnesota Secretary of State.

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: DEMOCRATS



**Age on Election Day:** 42

**Community:** I live in Eveleth, where I was born and raised.

**Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?** I am a small businessman and hockey coach. My main small business is a maple syrup company.

**Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.** My lived experience has prepared and motivated me to run for office. I am a fourth generation Iron Ranger, and my family really struggled growing up. We got by with the help of government programs like food assistance, free school lunches, and energy assistance. When my dad was able to get a union job with the 49ers, life got more stable. From these experiences, I understand the people of the district and the struggles they face, the importance of good union jobs and the stability they provide, and the importance of protecting programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid that are currently under threat.

## Luke Gulbranson

**Why are you running?** I am running because for too long, working people and the middle class have been getting the short end of the stick. Pete Stauber, and far too many members of Congress, are looking out for themselves and the wealthy. We need a representative who will fight selflessly, not selfishly, every day so that working families can live and thrive in Minnesota.

**Why should voters choose you to advance to the general election?** I will fight everyday for the people of the North and Central Minnesota in Congress. First, we have to win, and as an Iron Ranger, union member, and small business owner - I am the best candidate to take on Pete Stauber. I'm running because families across the 8th district are struggling. Their costs are going up and their wages are nowhere near keeping up. And who is Pete Stauber looking out for? The big money and special interests calling the shots. I'm not a politician and I'm not running to serve the rich and the powerful. I'm running to serve my friends and neighbors in Minnesota so they get a fair shot and a voice in their future.

**What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.** My top three priorities are to lower the cost of essential goods and services, protect Social Security and Medicare, and stand up for unions and workers. First, to lower the cost of essentials, I will tackle the rising cost of healthcare head-on. On protecting Social Security and Medicare, I will support and vote for a bill that reverses

the barbaric cuts made to these programs in the One Big Ugly Bill. Finally, as someone who understands the power of a union job, I will stand up for unions and working people. I will advocate for fair working conditions at all places of work and accountability for corporations that treat their employees unfairly.

**What are your natural resources policy positions?** My grandfather was a foreman at the Oliver mine. My uncles and dad were heavy equipment operators and Local 49 union members. I know that mining is not only a path to the middle class for thousands of people but the backbone of towns across the district. I also have always had a deep love of the outdoors, like so many people across this district. I don't support mining in the area near the Boundary Waters and would have voted no on Pete Stauber's bill that ends protection for that piece of federal land. The Boundary Waters are too important to us, to our water, to our way of life here. However, I support mining, including copper-nickel mining, at currently operating mines and at proposed sites under development if companies meet all rules and regulations necessary to do so.

**(continued on page 7)**

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: DEMOCRATS

## Luke Gulbranson (continued)

### **How would you ensure constituents who didn't vote for you still feel represented?**

We send one person to Washington DC to be accountable and responsive to each and every person across our district, and I would always work hard to do that if elected. It would be a priority to hire excellent staff representative of the district, to return home and be present in the district outside of session, and to hold regular town hall meetings across the district.

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### **What would you do if what's best for your district differed from your party's position on an issue?**

I'm running for Congress to represent this district. Not a party. Not a president. And certainly not corporations and the wealthy - which is why I will not accept a dime of Corporate PAC money. Every decision I make will be based on conversations with constituents right here at home.

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: DEMOCRATS



**Age on Election Day:** 77  
**Community:** Warba, MN

## John Munter

**Why should voters choose you to advance to the general election?** I have had published in the Duluth News Tribune countless opinion pieces on the issues of the day for the past six years. I feel, also, that I have the best appreciation of many conservative viewpoints betrayed by the current Administration and MN 8 Congress Member as well as liberal viewpoints. See [MunterforCongress.substack.com](http://MunterforCongress.substack.com)

### **How would you ensure constituents who didn't vote for you still feel represented?**

We all want the same things-- jobs, housing, and health care and I look forward to debating the fine points of issues with everyone. I think we all have the common sense that we can no longer afford this extended American empire and need to focus on economies at home.

**Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?** I am retired on my hobby farm and work as an author.

**Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.** I look for solutions. During the Line 3 pipeline hearings I was solely responsible for pushing the State to remove defunct pipelines from private properties with my study showing the pipes were not too close together to be removed safely.

**Why are you running?** I may be old but I can do my age in push-ups and am mentally agile. For example, 21 corporations in Duluth own 10 or more single family homes which should be reserved for young people building equity-- addressed perhaps by taxation, 300 foot separations, or national private equity bans.

**What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.** Jobs, housing, and health care--1) rejecting the data center and copper nickel mining because they threaten more jobs than they create. I support taxes on AI chips and tokens to pay for the white collar job apocalypse retraining 2) I support Ro Khanna's plan to create 3 million more homes paid for with windfall profits tax on oil companies as well as a nation-wide ban on private equity buying up single family homes. I support single payer health care which cuts the cost by half and group buying by the US of pharmaceuticals.

**What are your natural resources policy positions?** Copper nickel mining in Northern Minnesota is stupid in creating toxic waste piles threatening our hospitality. fishing, and tourism industries. The iron ore industry should do better in mercury reduction. Pulsar Helium is non-polluting and promising hundreds of jobs in years to come with great drilling results.

### **What would you do if what's best for your district differed from your party's position on an issue?**

They can go jump in Lake Superior. I have always thought the Ukraine War was stupid in pushing NATO nukes 6 minutes fly time to Moscow-- and aid to Israel in the Gaza genocide was evil. The current US Military-Israel fusion (Section 224 of the NDAA) is treasonous but 94% of Congress takes money from the Israeli lobby. Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie are my heroes for getting some Epstein files released working across the aisle.

*Editor's note: Roughly 94% of current members of Congress have accepted campaign funds from pro-Israel lobbyists, according to [Track AIPAC](#).*

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: DEMOCRATS



**Age on Election Day:** 46  
**Community:** Hermantown

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

**Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.** I began my career as a public servant at just 18 years old at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court. This was my job throughout college and law school. I then joined U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, where I served for almost 20 years. I represented our country in Minnesota, Washington, D.C., Germany, and Kenya. I led international operations and national emergency responses, combated national security and criminal threats, and ensured immigration benefits were granted lawfully, all while working for administrations of both parties, to keep Americans safe. I left a career I loved when I was asked to do things I believed were unethical. I

## Trina Swanson

will use my experience in foreign policy, national security, immigration, and public service to hit the ground running on day one.

**Why are you running?** I grew up in a working-class home in Hermantown. My Mom was a nurse, and my Dad was a carpenter, later working at the paper mill. Our kitchen conversations weren't about politics. They were about making ends meet, looking out for neighbors, and believing that if you worked hard enough, you could build a comfortable life. I learned that unions strengthen the middle class, that communities thrive when people show up for each other, and that honest work should buy you a life with dignity, not constant insecurity. That's not happening in northern and central Minnesota. The current Representative is putting corporate interests and profits before the working people trying to raise families and retire with dignity. I want to continue my service to this country as an elected official, drawing upon the experience and leadership skills I gained as a 25-year public servant.

**Why should voters choose you to advance to the general election?** Competence, experience, leadership, integrity, grit. These are the traits I will bring to the job on day one. This election is far too important to put forward a candidate without the experience to do the job. I understand the issues. I worked in Washington, D.C. I know why Washington works, but more importantly, why it doesn't work. I spent my career serving under both parties, bringing people with diverse backgrounds and opinions to

the table, identifying solutions, and building coalitions to implement those solutions. Congress needs to get back to this approach, crossing the aisle to solve problems. Furthermore, I am the Candidate that can win in November. I have already shown up for public forums in all 21 counties, answered unscripted questions, and engaged on complicated issues. I earned the DFL endorsement in May on the very first ballot with over 70% of delegates voting for me.

**What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.** Universal healthcare, proper federal funding for childcare, schools, hospitals, and programs the working class relies upon, and attracting new industries with good-paying jobs to the district. I will fight from day one for universal healthcare. We get to decide what our values are and how we spend our money. We currently have a representative who supports cuts to programs that the middle class relies upon, so the 1% can receive greater tax breaks. Minnesota pays more in federal taxes than it receives back in federal funding. I will fight for Minnesota to receive proper federal funding, rather

(continued on page 10)

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: DEMOCRATS

## Trina Swanson (continued)

than placing the responsibility on the state, resulting in property tax increases. I will advocate for new industry investment like clean energy and green steel production, with good-paying union jobs. People should be able to stay in the communities they love, raise families, and retire with dignity.

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### **What are your natural resources policy positions?**

Generations to come must be able to enjoy this amazing land we call home. We must ensure we have clean water. That means we use science, the experts, and regulatory processes to ensure corporations use the most advanced technological means in their industries to minimize the impact on the environment and manage natural resources sustainably. I will ensure proper funding for federal agencies with oversight of our natural resources, to include returning to proper staffing levels after DOGE cuts, and reopening offices that closed, like the U.S. Forest Service research facility in Grand Rapids. Mining cannot be allowed in the BWCA watershed. However, we can continue to advance technologies for mining in the Iron Range, and hold corporations accountable, so mining is done in a responsible manner, minimizing the impact on the environment and water.

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### **How would you ensure constituents who didn't vote for you still feel represented?**

I will show up. A Representative is just that, a representative of all people in their district. I will continue to show up in all 21 counties. This district is so vast and varied that what's most important to one area may not be the most important issue in another. I will make decisions based on what I think is best for the greatest number of people in the district. In order to do this, I will engage. I will have offices staffed around the district, so constituents feel heard. I will hold town halls in person, without requiring prescreened questions. I will explain why I voted for or against a bill, take feedback, and learn and grow. But, this all starts by electing people with integrity, who understand the issues and the implications for the district. I am that person for CD-8.

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### **What would you do if what's best for your district differed from your party's position on an issue?**

I will fight for what's best for the district. I am not running for office for power or to spend decades in the position. It is time to break out of voting party lines and instead come together in Congress to solve problems. For too long now, each side tries to score political points and win elections by politicizing serious issues like immigration, the future of Social Security, taxes, and health care. Rather than worrying about the next election cycle, Representatives need to govern, represent the people, and get things done. We have seen a Congress unwilling to stand up to this Administration and the dangerous implications of their unwillingness. I will take my oath seriously, an oath to defend the Constitution, rather than a party or administration. That's what I did in my 25-year career as a public servant.

## U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: REPUBLICANS



**Anthony Hamilton**

[anthonyhamiltonforcongress.com](http://anthonyhamiltonforcongress.com)



**Pete Stauber\***

[petestauberforcongress.com](http://petestauberforcongress.com)

*Incumbent  
Party endorsed*

\*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

Candidate campaign website as reported to the Minnesota Secretary of State.

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: REPUBLICANS



**Age on Election Day:** 43  
**Community:** Mora

**Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?** I am a farmer. I farm my own land.

**Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.** Our founders never intended for Congress to create career politicians. They envisioned citizen legislators to temporarily occupy these seats. Farmers, veterans, tradesmen, working class people who would step away from their lives to serve and return home. That is the tradition I intend to keep. I am a farmer, my qualification isn't a resume built inside Washington rubbing elbows with lobbyists. It's a lifetime of solving real problems with limited resources. I know what the cost of gas, doctor bills, grocery costs, vet bills, and when the harvest doesn't go as planned, do to a monthly budget. The 8th district is full of people who work with their hands, manage their own finances, and deal with the

## Anthony Hamilton

consequences of decisions made by people who have never lived anything close to their lives. I am one of those people. That is my qualification.

**Why are you running?** I'm running because I'm no longer willing to sit and watch our government act this corrupt. I spent years doing what most people do, calling and emailing my representative, hoping someone would listen. Nobody did. Our government isn't broken, it's corrupt and there is a difference between those two words. Broken things can be fixed by accident. Corrupt things are working exactly as designed, just not for you and me. Lobbyists write our laws. Members of Congress trade stocks on information you and I will never have. The government shuts down and the people who caused it still get paid. I got tired of waiting for someone else to fix it. So I wrote the CAPT Act. A five-part reform bill covering stock trading bans, lobbying restrictions, salary accountability, attendance requirements, and term limits. I'm serious about this, I am willing to go do it myself. That's why I'm running.

**Why should voters choose you to advance to the general election?** I am not a performance. I don't have a consultant telling me what to say to a donor expecting something in return. I've taken zero PAC money. I don't owe anyone anything except the people in this district. Pete has been in Washington since 2019. Our debt has climbed toward \$40 trillion, our grocery bills have gone up, healthcare costs have gone up, and the lobby

money flowing into his campaign has gone up. That is not a record to run on. That is a record to run from. I'm running because I want my children to grow up knowing their government won't cheat them. That it belongs to them. Right now it doesn't, and Pete is part of the reason why. Voters should choose me because I'm the only candidate in this race who can't be bought. That is not a talking point, it's just the math.

**What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.** My top priority is congressional reform and real accountability. I authored the CAPT Act, a five part bill that addresses the core corruption that drives every other problem in Washington. One: Term limits. Three in the House and Two in the Senate, no more career politicians feeding at the troughs for decades. Two: End lobbying corruption and foreign money in our legislative process. Lobbyists write our laws, that has to stop. Three: Ban congressional stock trading for every member of Congress and staff. Four: Financial accountability for shutdowns and unbalanced budgets. Shut down the government, lose your salary for the full

**(continued on page 13)**

# U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 8: REPUBLICANS

## Anthony Hamilton (continued)

duration, no pay back. Every year without a balanced budget triggers a 10% pay cut. Five: Mandatory attendance. Show up and do the job you were elected to do or you don't get paid. Same as every other job in America. Fix Congress first, then fix everything else.

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### **What are your natural resources policy positions?**

Minnesota's natural resources belong to the people of this state, not to foreign corporations, not to Chilean mining companies shipping the output to China and then call it American energy independence. I support domestic mining and timber. CD8 was built on resource industries and I will not apologize for that. That doesn't mean we have to risk destroying the Boundary Waters to watch Chilean companies get rich while supplying Chinese domestic production. Pete sponsored opening the watershed to sulfide mining through H.J.140 knowing the outcome and who would benefit. I would not have let this happen.

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### **How would you ensure constituents who didn't vote for you still feel represented?**

Every constituent in this district deserves to be heard. That starts with showing up, something that Pete has failed to do. He has not held a single in-person town hall in over seven years in office. That is not representation, that is avoidance. I have been holding town halls before I am even elected. That is the standard I intend to keep. Beyond that, I am looking closely at congressional staffing allowances and how they can be deployed to actually serve constituents across this district, not donors, not lobbyists, not party leadership. People who call my office should reach someone whose job is to listen and help, not manage them. You don't have to agree with me on everything to deserve a representative who answers the phone. That is the baseline and I intend to meet it.

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**What would you do if what's best for your district differed from your party's position on an issue?** I would unapologetically side with my constituents. That is the job. I am not running to be a reliable party vote, I am running to represent the people of the 8th district. If those two things conflict, there is no conflict, my constituents win every time. This is why I wrote the CAPT Act. A member of Congress who is financially beholden to a party, donor, or PAC cannot make that choice freely. The money owns the vote before the vote is even cast. I don't have that problem. I don't owe anyone anything except the people in this district. The founders didn't design this system for party soldiers. They designed it for citizen legislators who would use their own judgement on behalf of the people they represent. That is the job I am applying for.

# MN STATE SENATE DISTRICT 10: REPUBLICANS



**Deb Holthaus\***  
[holthausformn.com](http://holthausformn.com)



**Nathan Wesenberg\***  
[wesenbergforsenate.com](http://wesenbergforsenate.com)  
*Incumbent*  
*Party endorsed*

\*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

Candidate campaign website as reported to the Minnesota Secretary of State.

## MN HOUSE DISTRICT 10A: REPUBLICANS



**Brian Lindquist\***  
[lindquistformn.com](http://lindquistformn.com)



**Mark Striemer**  
*Party endorsed*

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

# MN HOUSE DISTRICT 10A: REPUBLICANS



**Age on Election Day:** 69  
**Community:** Upper South  
Long Lake, Brainerd, MN

**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.A Biology and Education. Educator and coach, small business owner in insurance and securities, and sales representative promoting prescription medications.

**Why are you running?** The state of Minnesota is at a tipping point with all the corruption and billions of dollars stolen. We need to take our state back from the radicals who do not genuinely uphold the constitution or laws of the United States.

**Why should voters choose you to advance to the general election?** I am the endorsed candidate by the delegates to the Republican endorsing convention for house seat 10-A. I have a strong desire to pass on a state to my grandchildren that

## Mark Striemer

continues to respect our Christian values and upholds our constitution and supports law enforcement that protects our God given rights.

**What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.** Equal justice under the law. We need to prosecute and incarcerate the people who were complicit with the theft of thousands, millions, and billions of dollars in government funds regardless of who they are.

The elections need to be secured with voter ID that allows only legal citizens to vote and have one day voting with hand counted ballots. There must be equal number of election observers from each party represented with transparent validation for those voting. Removal of all illegal aliens ending all government funds from going to illegals. This should help our medical costs to go down and taxes to be reduced.

*Editor's note: Only U.S. citizens can legally vote. Evidence shows that the number of noncitizens illegally registered to vote is exceedingly small. Voting machines are faster and more accurate than hand counts.*

**What environment and natural resources policies do you support?** I believe there can be a balance between the growth of industry in harvesting wood products and processing metals and carbon based energy sources while keeping our environment safe and clean. If we rely on other countries like China, the results will include more pollution and less control of the resources we need for national security.

**What policies do you support to address concerns of widespread fraud in state-run programs?** Protect and encourage independent journalists like Nick Shirley and remove judges and leaders in government who do not uphold the constitution and our laws. That would be a good start. Support our laws enforcement who are doing their jobs honorably.

**What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level? What changes, if any, would you support to Local Government Aid?** End the family leave act. Government was never meant to be a nanny state, Just removing the illegal aliens in our state and country would go a long ways to reduce the fraud and excess spending we are burdened with. Our taxes should be reduced as a result.

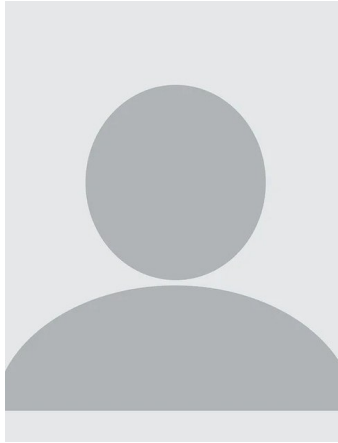
**How would you ensure constituents who didn't vote for you still feel represented?** Just laws, benefit all citizens.

# AITKIN COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1

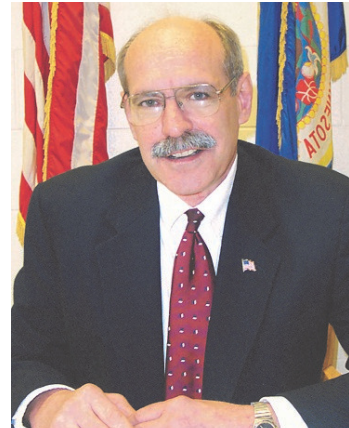
**Voters will select one candidate.  
The top two vote-getters will advance to the November ballot.**



**Timothy Catlin**



**Christopher S. Dotzler\***



**J. Mark Wedel**  
*Incumbent*

\*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

# AITKIN COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1



**Age on Election Day:** 64  
**Community:** Aitkin

## Timothy Catlin

residents face — from rising costs to limited access to services — and I believe our county deserves strong, steady leadership that listens and responds.

**Why should voters choose you to advance to the general election?** My goal is simple: to bring common-sense leadership, practical problem-solving, and a commitment to serving the people who built this community.

**Name a public leader you admire and explain why.** Abraham Lincoln, I admire him because he was a unifying force during a time in our country when we were the most fractured.

**What are the three biggest issues your county is facing?**

Economic development  
Providing essential services  
Fiscal responsibility

**Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?** Fiscal responsibility has to remain at the center of every decision. With limited resources we need to make sure every tax dollar is used wisely. That means careful budgeting, transparent spending, and making sure we're getting the best value for the money we invest in county operations.

**What would be your top spending priorities and savings priorities in the county budget?** My top priorities in the county budget would focus on protecting essential services while being responsible with every tax dollar. In a county with one of the lowest income levels in Minnesota, we have to make sure our spending reflects the real needs of the people who live here.

**How should counties best use limited resources to root out potential fraud?**

In a County with limited resources, we have to be smart, practical, and focused when it comes to preventing and identifying potential fraud. The goal isn't to create more bureaucracy — it's to protect taxpayer dollars and make sure the people who truly need help are getting it.

**Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?** Retired from Law Enforcement, Currently working part-time for the Aitkin County Sheriff's Office at the Judicial Center

**Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.** Public Service for over 40 years including roles as the Aitkin County Sheriff and the City of Aitkin Chief of Police, Entrepreneur

**Why are you running?** I am running for Aitkin County commissioner because I've spent my life here, and I care deeply about the people who call this place home. Having lived here my whole life, I understand the challenges

# AITKIN COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1



**Age on Election Day:** N/A  
**Community:** City of Aitkin

**Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?** Aitkin County Commissioner

**Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.** Currently serving as Aitkin County Commissioner. Prior experience includes Aitkin City Mayor, Aitkin City Council, Aitkin School Board, Aitkin Municipal Airport Commission, Aitkin Fire Department (28 years), Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Board, Minnesota Board of Teaching. Education includes Aitkin High School, Brainerd Community College and Mankato State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration.

## J. Mark Wedel

**Why are you running?** To put my experience at work for the people of my District and to maintain fiscal integrity and responsible spending for the taxpayers of Aitkin County.

**Why should voters choose you to advance to the general election?** Having lived in this District my entire life I can identify with the needs and concerns of the people of this District. Also, I believe my "track record" reflects that I have been very cautious about spending taxpayer dollars.

**Name a public leader you admire and explain why.** President Harry S. Truman who, after the sudden death of FDR abruptly inherited the totality of WW2 along with the "Manhattan Project". Also, and very importantly he would "Say it Like it Is" even if it wasn't always "Politically Correct" !!!!!!!

**What are the three biggest issues your county is facing?** 1.) Having to deal with the "unfunded mandates" forced on us by the State and Federal Government; 2.) Assuring that affordable healthcare is available to all citizens; 3.) Keeping the tax levy as low as possible.

**Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?** Maintaining essential services while being responsible to the taxpayers of Aitkin County.

**What would be your top spending priorities and savings priorities in the county budget?** Public Safety, Veteran Services and maintaining safe roads and bridges.

**How should counties best use limited resources to root out potential fraud?** Continuing to monitor ALL county expenditures and not be afraid to question any expenditure that is not a direct benefit to the citizens of Aitkin County.