

The Future Is Today

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THE FUTURE IS TODAY

No one better defined democracy in as simple and understandable a way as Abraham Lincoln when he described American government as one “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” That has been the goal for all these decades as we expanded voting rights, instituted direct election of U.S. senators, and embarked on programs that dramatically expanded the middle class and provided a safety net for the impoverished, elderly, sick, and disabled.

However, more recently there has been a relentless attack on all of these accomplishments as well as an assault on democracy itself.

There has also been a more subtle yet potent effort to influence public policy in favor of corporate interests. The 2010 decision by the United States Supreme Court in Citizens United opened the floodgates to corporate monies flowing into America’s political system. This has produced three major changes to our political behavior:

1. Candidates and incumbents increasingly rely on this flow of easy and large donations from these business interests.
2. Over time, public policy has been compromised and more accommodating to those large contributors.
3. Elected officials have come to realize that with this shift to large and highly accessible funds they could solidify their incumbency by storing large sums of monies for their re-election campaigns thereby discouraging opposition.

Political parties, as well as individual voters, have been steadily losing their influence and this has directly contributed to the growth of public cynicism and frustration. Here in Minnesota, from at least the 1950’s to more recent times, both political parties relied heavily on small donors to not only finance their operations but to expand their base as well. Democrats featured \$5 “bean feeds” while Republicans organized community-based campaigns referred to as “door to door” that involved soliciting and identifying political preferences of friends and neighbors. The largest fundraising effort was the annual Republican \$100 dinner and the Democrats’ Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners. Those were the big-dollar events of the day.

Both parties understood that a democracy thrives on involvement, participation, and optimism and those events allowed regular people to meet and exchange views with their elected leaders and candidates. It was largely grassroots democracy.

With the Citizens United Supreme Court decision, all this changed and truly “Big Money” became dominant and redefined our political landscape. The average citizen became more of a commodity and less the basis of our democracy. Now, larger special-interest monies could be utilized to mount massive advertising and communication campaigns with the voter treated as a buyer rather than as an individual who feels some ownership and access. This growing distance reinforced feelings of distrust. When people feel that

the deck is stacked against them by “big money” and a “rigged system,” their enthusiasm diminishes.

In reality, it is becoming increasingly evident that much of our democracy is moving away from Lincoln’s expectation into one that is starting to resemble a corporate state.

This commentary focuses on three projects in Minnesota, how they were managed by the Governor and the Legislature, and whether “big money” had undue influence. They all revolve around a long-standing debate involving jobs and the environment. Two of the projects involve the mining of copper-nickel by PolyMet and Twin Metals and the third is the Line 3 tar sands oil pipeline by Enbridge. All are current controversies and involve the likelihood of serious and permanent damage to our waters and the surrounding physical environment. But the big difference today is that healthy water is no longer an “environmental” issue, but rather a key determinant in humankind’s struggle to survive against the harm inflicted by climate change.

This was further reinforced by the state’s own environmental impact statement that predicted that the PolyMet mining operation would create “500 years of water pollution.” And this would include Lake Superior, one of the world’s largest bodies of freshwater.

Alarm bells have been ringing for years. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 2010 reported that 40% of the rivers and lakes they tested were “polluted” with contaminants, including mercury and animal and human waste. Over the next nine years, the situation deteriorated substantially. On November 13, 2019, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that 56% of our rivers and streams were “impaired” meaning that these waters are harmful to animal and human health. Simply put, the water is not drinkable, fishable or swimmable.

Following this disclosure, on November 27, 2019, the Star Tribune published a commentary by Rich Biske from The Nature Conservancy entitled, “Minnesota Must Act Now To Protect Its Vital Waterways.” This was a plea to the Governor and Legislature to take action now to protect the clean waters that remain. However, our elected leaders plowed forth with these projects without any discernible effort to involve the public or heed the warnings of experts.

THE ART OF STONEWALLING

For the past two and a half years, we have been petitioning the Governor and the Legislature to hold hearings on the PolyMet and Twin Metals copper-sulfide mining projects. We wrote commentaries that were published in various state newspapers including the Minneapolis Star Tribune, Duluth News-Tribune, and Rochester Post Bulletin and engaged in radio interviews. In addition, the St. Cloud Times ran a spread on our interview with them regarding the dangers of copper-nickel mining in sensitive watershed areas.

We also repeatedly sent emails to the Governor and legislators with a particular focus on leadership. And this was done on a bi-partisan basis. A scheduled phone call between Governor Walz and former Governor Carlson was scheduled and then cancelled by Governor Walz.

At no time, has any public official been willing to respond to the very public commentaries or answer any of the questions raised. Think about this: just as the world, Minnesota included, was entering the early stages of highly unpredictable weather including droughts, forest fires, flooding, heat waves, and more, our elected officials refused to even hear proposals regarding the necessity of a water study or any other measures to protect the safety of our waters including Lake Superior, which holds 10% of the world's surface fresh water.

Politics and incumbent retention was deemed to be far more important. And avoiding public discussion was the strategy adopted. Stonewalling has increasingly becoming a common weapon for incumbents who realize that when they are in a weak position there is no upside in engaging in a public controversy. With the advent of cable television and social media, the news market is cluttered making it difficult for a local controversy to gain a footing. Further, this also has created more competition in the media market with newspapers losing their market share. The result is the shedding of the more talented and expensive journalists. Hence, the quality and scope of coverage has significantly diminished. In brief, probing investigative journalism is largely gone.

Our newspapers were so vital to a growing democracy that our nation's founders gave them special protection in our Constitution. They understood the critical role a free press would play in keeping the public informed thereby providing a most valuable oversight function. This empowerment of the media also served as an empowerment of the people.

One of our oldest aphorisms is "when the cat's away, the mice will play." That message has an impact on our political system. A weakened media means little oversight which creates enormous opportunities for political mischief and, ultimately, corruption.

Hence, stonewalling has emerged as the weapon of choice in staving off any embarrassing inquiries. And that is precisely what Governor Walz and legislative leaders from both parties have been doing. Early on, the decision was made to block public inquiry on sensitive issues and this strategy has been quite successful.

To date, the following questions remain unanswered and, even, undiscussed.

1. Who will pay for the environmental cleanup from PolyMet and Twin Metals?

PolyMet and Twin Metals are shell companies owned by wealthy, foreign conglomerates, Glencore and Antofagasta, respectively. Neither of these shell companies possesses any discernible assets thereby raising serious questions of their ability to pay liability damages if a major mishap were to occur, as it did in Brazil in 2019 where 270 people were killed with an estimate of over \$6 billion in environmental damages. Interestingly, the same

consultant and technology used in that project are involved with PolyMet. As it stands today, the taxpayers of Minnesota are on the hook.

2. Why did both Governors Mark Dayton and Tim Walz refuse to authorize health studies of the waters affected by the discharge of sulfide mining waste, which includes arsenic and mercury?

The Minnesota medical community, including the Mayo Clinic, called for such a study since the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and the people of Duluth depend on Lake Superior, which sulfide mining will pollute.

3. How many jobs will really be created by these polluting industries for Minnesotans?

The central issue advanced by those supporting these polluting projects has been jobs. All sorts of statements have been made relative to PolyMet creating over 300 well-paying jobs. However, permits issued by the State of Minnesota to PolyMet do not guarantee any number of jobs nor do they specify how many jobs will employ Minnesotans as opposed to bringing in specialized talent from other states and countries. Nor do the permits mention the impact of automation or artificial intelligence. A study by a Harvard economist concluded that over a period of twenty years more jobs and income would be generated by not allowing sulfide mining than if the sulfide mines were permitted to operate.

4. Why is the State of Minnesota doing business with two highly disreputable foreign companies and another with a continuous record of spills and disasters?

Glencore, the owner of PolyMet, may well be the poster child for international lawlessness. Its global record includes violations of child labor, breach of contract, money laundering, price manipulation, bribery of public officials, and more. Just this past March, a Glencore official pled guilty in federal court in New York City to charges of price manipulation and bribery. Further, Glencore remains under investigation for money laundering and bribery of government officials in Brazil, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Antofagasta, a Chilean conglomerate, like its competitor, Glencore, has a record of mining mishaps without regard to the harm inflicted on people or the surrounding environment. One spill alone resulted in the dumping of 13,000 liters of highly concentrated toxic copper waste directly into a river. In addition to the endless incidents of spills and environmental damage, there is also a pattern of financial/political scandals and allegations of tax fraud. Just look at these headlines:

“Bribery, Corruption Surrounds Antofagasta”

- London Mining Network (May 22, 2018)

“Chilean Owners of Trump-Backed Mine Has History of Corruption, Pollution”

- www.accountable.us

“Chile Regulator Draws Up Charges Against Antofagasta’s Los Pelambres Mine”

- Reuters (October 13, 2016)

Enbridge is a Canadian company primarily in the business of moving crude oil and natural gas throughout North America. In the U.S., Enbridge owns 8,627 miles of pipeline with a safety record that goes well beyond spotty. Between 1999 and 2010, the company’s pipelines had over 800 spills leaking more than 6.8 million gallons of oil. Following the catastrophic spill into a tributary of the Kalamazoo River, the National Transportation and Safety Board called Enbridge “incompetent.”

Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, after reviewing the totality of Enbridge’s record, ordered Pipeline 5 to be shut down.

In Minnesota, however, despite being the home of the largest inland oil spill in U.S. history at the hands of Enbridge in 1991, officials were undeterred by this appalling safety record and proceeded with the permits for Line 3. This pipeline goes from Alberta, Canada to Superior, Wisconsin traversing treaty land and hundreds of bodies of water carrying tar sands oil, which the National Academy of Sciences states is “virtually impossible to clean out of a water-based environment.”

The permits for a new pipeline were issued in spite of the fact that the Minnesota Department of Commerce in 2017 declared that “Enbridge has not established a need for the proposed project.” In addition, 68,000 people submitted testimony to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission commenting on the proposed new line with 94% of the comments expressing opposition.

Unlike the decisive action taken by Governor Whitmer of Michigan, Governor Walz has remained silent and allowed the permits to be issued. To date, the Governor, the Legislature, and the Public Utilities Commission have refused to issue any statements relative to Enbridge’s poor safety record or the negative reports from governmental authorities relative to its spills and inadequate responses. In addition, they also failed to deal with the concerns raised by the state’s own Department of Commerce, the affected tribal governments, and the project being in conflict with the Paris Climate Agreement, which Governor Dayton and Governor Walz ostensibly supported.

Again, we have a conflict between corporate interests and the health and safety of people. In all three projects, the resolution appears to rest with agencies of government rather than elected officials. When the public was given the opportunity to comment on controversial projects, they were compelled to do so before boards consisting of members who are appointed by the Governor.

The theory behind giving this power to agencies and boards is largely to put professionals in charge of the permitting process and that is entirely justifiable. However, as the PolyMet permit processing demonstrates, professionalism can be compromised by political considerations directed from their appointing authority. As a consequence, courts have interceded and struck down PolyMet's permit to mine and air pollution permit. These court decisions raise very serious questions about the wisdom of continuing the current process.

Further, the delegation of major decisions to agencies and boards can close the door to the legitimate concerns of the public and create a pathway to decisions that clearly are contrary to the public good. The reason is simple: directives to agencies tend to be specific and confining thereby eliminating some very serious considerations that are not just germane but absolutely vital.

An interview with the former Commissioner of the DNR, Tom Landwehr, is most revealing. After positing that Minnesota's permitting laws are "rigorous," he explains:

"the permitting process . . . relates to environmental impact. So it doesn't look at economic, it doesn't look at cultural, it doesn't look at quality of life. It's a very narrow prescriptive. It doesn't look at health."

MinnPost, March 29, 2019

How "rigorous" is a system that purposely refuses to review economic, cultural, health, and quality of life issues? Who then represents the best interests of the public? Under the prevailing system, the answer appears to be "no one."

In a sense, we currently have a classic case of "Catch-22." The agencies responsible for reviewing the permit claim the law limits their scope of review and, therefore, they cannot consider some absolutely vital concerns such as health. The interested public then goes to the Governor and Legislature for assistance and they say, "Let the process work" and close the door on public hearings and stonewall requests for information.

But even this limited permitting process is not free of political interference. In a 2018 interview, John Linc Stine, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, described the directive he received from Governor Mark Dayton regarding PolyMet:

"I was given instructions to finish the work that's on my plate."

Business North, December 20, 2018

Governor Dayton was leaving office within weeks and it is highly unusual for a Governor to inject himself into the permitting process and, particularly, into this controversial project. By bringing this matter up during the interview, it suggests that the Commissioner felt that he was receiving pressure to finalize the process.

And letting the process work is precisely what the permit-seeking financial interests want because their industry played a role in the original design of those laws and they know the narrow scope of the permitting process.

It is the responsibility of elected officials to bring these major decisions into the public arena. How is it possible for the government of the State of Minnesota and our elected officials including the Governor and the Legislature to enter into relationships with these unsavory companies? At a time when Minnesota is going through a water shortage, how could these officials allow our valuable waters to be entrusted to these polluters?

SEDUCED BY MONEY

Jesse Unruh, a powerhouse Speaker of the California Assembly back in the 1960's, is credited with declaring that "money is the mother's milk of politics." And that certainly appears to be the case today in Minnesota.

For instance, in 1976 when records of campaign contributions were first disclosed, the four legislative caucuses in the House and Senate reported raising approximately \$110,000 in campaign contributions. By 2020, that figure rose to over \$26.5 million. This staggering growth has had a most dramatic impact on how our government works and who gets elected to manage it.

It is logical to assume that inexpensive legislative campaigns increase competition because it makes running for public office affordable for more people. For instance, three authors of this commentary ran successfully for the Legislature in the 1970's and all races were competitive. The estimated individual cost of these campaigns was roughly in the \$7,000 - \$8,000 range and the candidates relied almost entirely on contributions from friends, neighbors, community fundraisers and some assistance from the party.

Originally, the Minnesota Constitution envisioned a citizen legislature that would meet once every two years. Since that time, party designation, annual sessions, and increased staff have been the major changes. But, what has not changed is the expectation of a citizen legislature where members would set aside their regular employment and journey to the Capitol to serve the interests of their districts. There was no thought of lifetime service or overly long sessions because members had their main employment obligation. It was simply expected that legislators would be working members of their communities and willing to give some of their time to serve their communities in the Legislature.

As a result, whatever monies were needed to conduct a campaign were largely raised locally and in modest amounts. The entire focus was on community and a citizen legislature.

However, all this has changed and changed dramatically. Very likely, the first step toward building organized party campaigns within the Legislature started in 1973 with the House passing Party Designation legislation. Previously, since 1912, the Legislature was

considered non-partisan although caucuses were loosely organized on the basis of “Liberal” and “Conservative” with very limited ties to their parties.

Party designation was designed to build more accountability into the system. But what was not anticipated was the merging of the party with caucuses and the mammoth buildup of caucus fundraising operations.

In essence, caucuses became extensions of the party and this meant money and organization. According to the Star Tribune, the cost of the average House race in 2002 had risen to \$50,000 with the average Senate race costing \$78,000. By 2012, those numbers jumped to \$91,000 for the House and \$171,000 for the Senate thereby, in the case of the Senate, more than doubling the 2002 amounts. It was clear that a growing arms race was unfolding.

Much of this growth can be tied directly to caucuses organizing their fundraising efforts to attract special-interest monies. Perhaps the first study to identify the relationship between legislative fundraising and its influence in public policy was completed by the Humphrey Institute of Politics at the University of Minnesota in May of 2021. Professor Larry Jacobs and Associate Professor Kathryn Pearson analyzed the activities of seven House committees to determine the tie between campaign contributions and legislative activity. Their report found that:

“people who made campaign donations to committee members had three types of influence: access to the committee, promotion of their interests in public hearings, and opportunities to shape committee decisions.”

Their report further noted that these activities were central factors in making “partisan politics a team sport, contributing to the rise of partisan polarization that makes legislating difficult in the contemporary era.”

Clearly, this report brings together two forces that are harmful to the public’s interest: creating a relationship between public policy and campaign monies and increasing the partisan tension which leads to legislative gridlock and an unwelcoming environment for compromise. In addition, it shifts the debate from the political center to the extremes. The empowerment of the extremes not only creates a toxic environment, but it also moves politics into a highly destructive state of permanent political warfare.

THE CAUCUS IS NOW A POLITICAL PARTY

The trends of big money, the increased influence of contributors, and the rigid polarization of legislative politics have shredded the concept of a “Citizen Legislature” and replaced it with an institution focused on building political power that protects incumbency and gaining or maintaining majority control. It is all about partisan politics and not developing sound public policy.

Note the powers already accumulated by the Legislature. It already possesses control over redistricting whereby incumbents draw legislative lines that are highly favorable to the incumbent and party. As former Vice President Walter Mondale and retired Governor Al Quie would say, "We have a system where the incumbents pick their voters rather than the voters picking their legislators."

In addition, legislators also control the laws that govern campaigns and define the rules of engagement. Add to this the massive monies raised by caucuses and the large staff of legislative partisan employees paid for by the taxpayer and the only logical conclusion is that each legislative caucus has evolved into a political party with all the tools necessary to win elections.

Going into the legislative elections of 2020, the House caucuses raised over \$9.8 million while the Senate raised in excess of \$16.7 million. These numbers are based on funds raised by the House for a two-year cycle in 2019-20, while the Senate numbers are based on a four-year period, 2017-20.

In practical terms, if funds were allocated equally in the House and Senate, it would mean that each incumbent legislative seat in the House would have approximately \$73,000 behind it, while each incumbent Senate seat would have \$250,000. These campaign funds are parceled out by the caucus leadership and spent on a variety of campaign expenses, ranging from opposition research and negative advertising to direct donations to a candidate.

But the bottom line is simple and that is that challenging an incumbent is a steep uphill climb because of the huge war chests amassed by caucuses. Overall, the Minnesota Legislature, consisting of 201 members, had over \$26.5 million to ward off challengers or to be used to gain the majority.

As if this financial advantage were not not fully sufficient, all four caucuses have available to them non-partisan and partisan staffs, which assist legislators and their caucuses in managing the affairs of the Legislature and also service defined political goals. This area is confusing because of the mix of legitimate legislative business and blatant partisan politics.

Overall, the Minnesota Senate has 254 employees including 154 that are listed as "Partisan Staff," while the House has 282 staff members with 163 listed as members of the Partisan Staff.

The staff referred to as "Partisan" are employees who are hired, assigned duties, and managed by the caucus. However, they are paid for by state taxpayers. The non-partisan staff is the professional arm that manages the operations of the Legislature and provides to legislators a host of non-partisan services.

What makes this confusing is that many of these partisan employees perform essential duties that would normally be considered professional and impartial. This would certainly

include serving as a committee administrator or performing necessary secretarial and scheduling duties. However, it is the Legislature itself that has created this confusion and does all in its power to keep these activities from the public.

Regardless, a total of 317 employees are listed as “partisan” and a significant number are engaged, at the public’s expense, in highly partisan activities that are normally performed by political parties. In fact, each caucus is its own political party fully equipped with all the necessary tools -- money, staff organization, messaging. And paid for by the public.

The one question studiously avoided by legislators on both sides of the aisle is, “Why should the taxpayer pay for this highly partisan buildup that creates gridlock and blocks effective legislating?”

What should also be clearly understood is that there is no valid reason whatsoever for a partisan staff. Professional duties including serving as a committee administrator or providing secretarial services can, and should be, a responsibility of the state and performed by competent professionals who do not have a partisan agenda.

PAY TO PLAY

The inevitable question that will be raised is whether or not this constitutes “Pay to Play” meaning exchanging policy for campaign monies. Considering the enormity of the funds made available, it is hard to reach any other conclusion. Special interests traditionally trade in money. What does the Legislature possess that has value?

Regardless of the conclusion, we have clearly reached the point where this accumulation of monies and staff is eroding the important role of the public, erecting barriers for challenges to incumbents, escalating the partisan wars and giving us too much gridlock, and “shaping” too much policy for those who pay.

A CRY FOR A CITIZEN LEGISLATURE

In so many ways, the early 1970’s were a renaissance for Minnesota in the sense that issues of legislative reform, consumer rights, and environmental protection dominated the legislative agenda. A small group of Republican legislators, led by Majority Leader Ernie Lindstrom, boldly challenged the pervasive influence of special interests in the caucus and prevailed. On the DFL side, a host of newcomers like Tom Berg, Ray Faricy, Harry Sieben and many others drove reforms through the Legislature that opened the process, empowered members to get their bills heard, and replaced entrenched autocratic power with an open and more democratic process. Minnesota politics was alive with reform and ideas that challenged the hold of the past. For instance, thanks to outspoken and persistent leadership from legislators of both parties led by Willard Munger, a courageous federal district court judge, Miles Lord, and an involved media led by the Star Tribune, Reserve Mining Company was compelled to shut down its operations that dumped taconite railings into Lake Superior.

When Governor Wendell Anderson's picture appeared on the cover of Time Magazine in August of 1973 pronouncing Minnesota as the "state that works," all Minnesotans, Democrat and Republican, celebrated. Yes, government was working for the people in an open and democratic fashion with citizens in charge.

What this commentary has presented is alarming. Clearly, Minnesota has slipped. Money has pushed aside citizen participation, secrecy and stonewalling has replaced public participation, and community organization has given way to professional caucus partisan operations funded by the taxpayer.

All this power concentrated in the caucus system clearly deters competitive challenges to incumbents and strengthens the influence of the monied few. Not only does the public not get to "shape" public policy, it cannot even obtain a hearing or receive an answer to critical public policy questions.

The reality is that this buildup of caucus power not only deters competition for legislative seats, but also concentrates power in the hands of a few caucus leaders who control the fundraising and the distribution of monies as well as the hiring and managing of staff. This power also extends to selecting committee chairs and the committee assignments for members. Clearly, caucus leadership is in full control and this control extends to deciding which bills get a committee hearing or not. This automatically limits the power of an individual legislator attempting to represent the interests of his or her district.

For instance, this last session, 42 members of the House affiliated with the same caucus signed on as authors of a clean water bill referred to as "Prove It First." This legislation emanated in Wisconsin and would require copper-sulfide mining companies to demonstrate that a similar mine had operated elsewhere in the United States for at least 10 years and had been closed for at least 10 years without polluting before their mines could operate in Minnesota. In short, Minnesota should not be a guinea pig for such risky, toxic mining.

One would expect that with half of the caucus members signed on as authors that the bill would, at a minimum, get a committee hearing. But that was firmly denied. When pressed, some members pointed to the Speaker's Office. Not only would there not be a hearing, but also no further attempts to move the bill.

Clearly, the possibility of losing a choice committee assignment or being threatened with a primary opponent backed by the caucus and its campaign war chest has a chilling effect on any desire to buck the caucus powers. But this is the likely reality in all four caucuses. Nothing, including necessary and sound public policy, is to interfere with the caucuses drive for money and political power. And this will be enforced by caucus leaders.

This raises the interesting question of why do we have 201 legislators when only a handful of caucus leaders are actually needed?

WHERE WE ARE

This commentary is written to stir public debate and reshape government so that it can reflect the wisdom of Abraham Lincoln.

We believe that there must be a compelling interest in the survival of our planet. It is in jeopardy not just because of environmental abuse by humankind but, more importantly, by the continued focus on the short term and human greed. Far too many public officials have placed the protection of their incumbency and power above all else. We have noted the stunning willingness to place our most valuable natural resource -- clean water -- in peril and to do so without any public hearings.

Last May, the Humphrey Institute sent up a red flag warning of the coziness between campaign finance money and legislative policymaking. To date, Minnesota legislators have ignored this report and there had been very limited public comment. This indifference is what will destroy us.

We seek to stir into action the young people who are inheriting our indifference to the seriousness of climate change and the incredible shortages of food and clean water that it will create in addition to untold damage to our physical environment. It is imperative that every student realize that the future is today and that, if they chose not to fight for it as students did during the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights battles, they will be the victims.

We encourage young people to run for public office, speak out, organize, demonstrate. Their voices must be heard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ongoing vigilance is our strongest weapon, and we must always be on guard against those forces of greed that want to convert the public's assets into private gain. This compels us to have a system of government that is fully transparent, representative of the people, and honest.

Below are specific recommendations for addressing the assault on democratic processes in Minnesota and for protecting Minnesota's most precious resource -- clean water.

Creating a Citizen Legislature

- 1. Adopt a Constitutional amendment permitting voters to impose term limits on Minnesota legislators and constitutional officers.** It is our belief that the central driving force behind this enormous buildup of caucus power is the overwhelming desire to protect incumbents from the competition that is essential to a vibrant and responsive governmental system.

2. **Abolish caucus fundraising and eliminate partisan staff.** The fundamental basis determining a conflict of interest is that one cannot serve two masters at the same time. But that is precisely the core of current legislative activities and the people are the victims.
3. **Implement robust public funding of campaigns for Minnesota legislators and constitutional officers.** There are public-funding approaches for Minnesota to emulate, most notably Connecticut's Citizens Election Program, which has been successful in curbing the influence of special interests. Common Cause regards the Connecticut approach as a model for the nation.
4. **Enact legislation requiring the disclosure of campaign contributions to their source.** Presently, we have a confusing set of laws that permit the laundering of monies that prevents anyone from accurately knowing the source. Colorado and New Jersey have campaign disclosure laws that provide greater transparency and can serve as models for Minnesota.

Protecting Our Clean Water

1. **Institute a comprehensive statewide study of the condition of waters in Minnesota with recommendations to protect our access to clean water for the foreseeable future.**
2. **Institute a moratorium on all permits that threaten the health and safety of our waters, including those for Line 3, PolyMet, and Twin Metals, until the comprehensive statewide water study has been completed and its recommendations implemented.**
3. **The Minnesota Legislature should review the entire permitting process to ensure that all relevant factors are assessed, including culture, quality of life, and human health and that the Governor and Legislature have the final sign off.**
4. **Remove the obligation to promote mining from Minnesota DNR's responsibilities.**
5. **Create a "no-build" default position for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Minnesota DNR when analyzing any new projects that could threaten Minnesota's clean water.**