



DFL NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Democrats in Aitkin County, Minnesota

August, 2026

Our Initiative For the Future by John McIntosh, Aitkin County Chair

It is an exciting time for the Aitkin County DFL.

It's election season and community sentiment is swinging back in the direction of the Democrats and Democracy. The policies of the Trump administration have failed the vast majority of Americans and it is obvious now that they are structured to benefit the billionaire class, and the January 6 wing of the party. Independents and moderate Republicans are struggling with their votes in 2024 and looking for a new direction.

It is plain to see that the Trump Administration targeted Minnesotans with punishment and retribution because people here openly and vocally opposed their policies and practices. We paid a deadly price and it laid bare the depths to which they would sink to assert power and control.

The response has been a groundswell of community support, which generated an excellent slate of candidates across Aitkin County, through SD7 and SD10 and from the top down from Governor, the constitutional offices, across the federal Congressional Districts and the Senate. DFL'rs are invigorated in every corner of the state, but we need to harness the enthusiasm into organizing and action to turn formerly red votes blue and get out the vote across Aitkin County.

More good news.....we have a strategy to do that and are making quantum leaps forward with a cutting edge social media organizing initiative. We have specialized data analytics, high level social media targeting, custom made content and issue specific messaging. We've received private donations that have allowed us to access expert assistance in developing our new organizing initiative. There has never been a better time to invest in improving and expanding the Aitkin County DFL. We are now able to reach deeper into the community and locate the voters of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

Our expanding profile opens new doors for volunteers and gives hope that we can make new inroads turning Aitkin County blue again and drawing disenfranchised voters back

to the DFL, which is their rightful political home. We are very aware of why some folks drifted away from the DFL, including successful Republican misinformation campaigns. They have used social media to brand us as more interested in protecting Somali fraudsters and trans athletes, than regular folks. But the messages of hate and fear don't resonate the same when families face the reality of economic pain and civil disintegration every night.

We are jumping forward with the truth, which is that far more unites us than divides us. We all face an ever increasing cost of living, loss of health care options in rural MN and loss of government assistance that stabilizes health insurance premiums. No one should have to work three jobs to afford the basics, but that's where we're at. We are working to shape the government back to serving the community, not to facilitate the concentration of wealth at the very top.

Our organizing initiative is a ten (10) year plan to deliver helpful and hopeful content that demonstrates the commitment of the Aitkin County DFL to community wellbeing, equal opportunity, quality public education and policies that serve the general public and not the privileged special interests.

Please visit our website, find us on Facebook, Instagram and You Tube and follow us forward. Like us when you can and comment on what you see. We are watching and listening and actively seeking new members and volunteers and contributions that will allow us to grow and expand and spread hope further into the community.

Thank you for reading this and doing your part to support our efforts!

With hope and gratitude,

John McIntosh – Chair, Aitkin County DFL



Follow Her Lead by Sue Tange

Many of us are feeling exhausted..... from the firehose-delivery of unsettling daily news, from troubling and even deadly events in our communities, from rising hostility and vitriol spewed by many public personas and officials, from the general toxicity of these political times. Sometimes, it even feels hard to attend a neighborhood party or a simple family gathering for fear conversation of current events may bring heated comments and even argument to what otherwise should be fun, even joyous, opportunities to share common connections and community. We feel the divisions; we can even see them. Likely, as individuals we may feel powerless to project a more positive influence. Recently, one of Minnesota's own sent up a flare. It shines on her example. Perhaps it gives us something to follow.

On June 15 in public comments, Vice President JD Vance criticized Senator Amy Klobuchar regarding her views on several subjects. Apparently, he opined out loud, and without Senator Klobuchar in the room, that the Senator's views are contributing to dividing the American people. A Face Book posting on June 16 by Joel Thingvall, a Minnesota actor, writer, and journalist reports Senator Klobuchar's response when she was asked about the vice president's remarks.

She began, "JD Vance says my views are contributing to division. But what truly divides people is the belief that only one perspective deserves to be heard while everyone else should remain silent. You know what concerns me even more? When influential people use their platform to dismiss

ordinary Americans simply because they don't agree with a different vision for the future. It's not disagreement that weakens a society. What weakens a society is intolerance, fear, and teaching people to see each other as enemies because of political differences."



Senator Klobuchar neither fell into a "tit for tat" response nor a "what about" listing of the Vice President's behaviors and remarks regarding "division." Instead, she raised the conversation to another level involving her values around respect for her fellow citizens, even those who do not share her views or visions for our state and country. This actually brings to mind another prominent American woman, Michelle Obama, when she said, "When they go low, we go high."

Senator Klobuchar continued, "I'm not a perfect woman. I've made my share of mistakes. But I will always believe that a strong America is one where people can speak freely, disagree honestly, and still treat one another with dignity and respect. America was never built on fear or resentment between neighbors. It was built on opportunity, courage, hard work, and the belief that people with different opinions could still work together for something greater than themselves. So the real question is this --- who is actually trying to bring Americans together?"

VOTE FOR OUR MINNESOTA OFFICERS AND 2026 CANDIDATES

Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator – Our candidate for Governor – amyklobuchar.com

Peggy Flanagan, Lt. Governor - Our candidate for U.S Senate – peggyflanigan.com

Keith Ellison, Attorney General – Running again for this office – keithellison.org

Steve Simon – Secretary of State – Running again for this office – stevesimonmn.com

Officers of the Aitkin County

DFL Central Committee:

John McIntosh, Chair 763-242-1027

Shirley Pick, Vice Chair 218-838-1464

Sue Tange, Secretary

Joel Hoppe, Treasurer

Julia Hipp, Outreach and Inclusion



*Future Meetings: Sept. 22, Nov 25 and Jan, 2027
at the 40 Club Restaurant in Aitkin 5:30 dinner, 6:30 meeting*

JOIN THE DFL CLUB!

DFL Club Officers:

Joel Hoppe, Chair

Sue Tange, Vice Chair

Julia Jaworski, Secretary

Julia Hipp, Treasurer

*DFL Club Meetings held on
the 2nd Tuesday of each
month at 11:15*

*40 Club Restaurant
in Aitkin.*

All DFLers are invited.

Lunch at 11:15 • Business Meeting • Lively Discussion

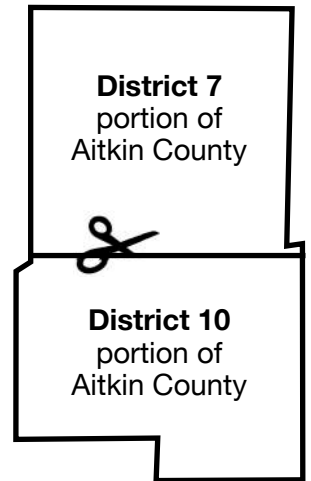
Scratching Your Head Over Aitkin's Legislative Districts?

Minnesota's legislature is divided into 67 Senate Districts. Each Senate District represents approximately 85,000 Minnesota residents. Each Senate District has 2 House of Representative seats....A & B. Every ten years with the Census, Minnesota begins a re-districting process which takes about two years.

In 2022 when the redistricting process was completed and approved, Aitkin County was figuratively 'cut in half' into two Senate Districts numbered 10 and 7. The boundary line for the districts is approximately Hwy 210. North of 210

is District 7 including the City of McGregor, Palisade, Tamarack, Hill City, and Jacobson, and South of 210 is District 10 including Aitkin, Lawler, McGrath, and Glen. Illustrative maps of these districts can be found at: pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us.

or sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/minnesota-legislative-maps/



The Minnesota Legislature has increased the contribution amounts for the Minnesota

Political Contribution Refund (PCR) program!

** This is also Good News for OTHER political parties who take GREAT advantage of this program.*

Please help the Aitkin County DFL support our candidates by contributing through the PCR.

It costs you nothing but an envelope and a postage stamp.

PCR (Political Contribution Refund)

This is a Minnesota program through which Individuals can contribute to a state-level political campaign up to \$75 for a single person or \$150 for a married couple and get reimbursed for the contribution. A contribution is made to a particular campaign or to a political organization and a receipt and PCR request form are sent to the donor from the campaign or organization. The donor then sends the receipt and the PCR request form into the State Department of Revenue. The refund is usually sent from the state Revenue Department to the donor within 2 to 4 weeks.

The best news is that the Aitkin County DFL is an eligible organization for this PCR program! Contributions made to the Aitkin County DFL Central Committee are used to support endorsed candidates and for the operation of the Aitkin County DFL. Aitkin County DFL creates and mails at least one newsletter a year, holds an annual Harvest Dinner Fundraiser, convenes county caucuses and a county convention, rents a county fair booth, maintains a campaign office in election years when funds allow, and sends contributions to local and state candidates. A PCR contribution made to Aitkin County DFL assures that these activities and more can continue.

Make a check out to the 'Aitkin County DFL,' and send to Aitkin County DFL treasurer, Joel Hoppe at 36136 Kestrel Avenue, McGregor, MN 55760. Joel will then send you the necessary receipt and request form for the refund.

Please use the PCR to support the Aitkin County DFL and endorsed DFL Candidates.

"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen." Winston Churchill

Harvest Dinner



Fall Fund Raiser

Bringing People Together

DEMOCRATS UNITE AT THE LLCC ON OCT. 4!

Once again Aitkin County Democrats will gather at Long Lake Conservation Center, the gem of Aitkin County, for the annual **Harvest Dinner and Fundraiser.**

\$40 and can be purchased by completing the attached form or by calling Sue Tange (218-791-1069) or Shirley Pick (218-838-1464).

October 4 is the start of the peak autumn color week in Aitkin County and we are seldom disappointed by the beauty of the grounds at the Conservation Center during this time. Join us, won't you?

When: Sunday, October 4, 2026 Time: 1:00 (doors open) **3:00** (dinner is served) Our theme for the day is "Bringing People Together," inspired by gubernatorial candidate and current U.S. Senator, Amy Klobuchar when she spoke on the importance of bringing people together and how that can be done. The afternoon will have the usual General Store with many items to purchase, such as baked goods and garden produce. There is usually a delicious pie or two. Donations of garden or baked goods are encouraged and may be brought along to the fundraiser. Also, a live auction of a few choice items will be held. The dinner menu of barbecue ribs has been chosen, and we know from experience that it will be smashing. Tickets are

Fundraiser Sponsorships

Help 'jump start' the fund raising and help the planners cover immediate expenses by becoming a sponsor of the Harvest Dinner and Fundraiser. A sponsorship is \$75 for an individual and \$150 for a couple. Sponsors' names will be printed in the event program **AND** a sponsorship is eligible for the Political Campaign Refund (PCR) explained in the article in this issue. Harvest Dinner tickets are not eligible for the PCR and cannot be included as part of the sponsorship. Besides covering planning expenses, sponsorship funds will be passed along to any endorsed candidates.



I'm looking forward to attending the OCT. 4, 2026 DFL DINNER & FUNDRAISER!

_____ *Yes! You can count on me to be a sponsor (see above)! (Sponsorship does NOT include dinner tickets)*

_____ *Number of Dinner Tickets @ \$40 each.*

Name (as appearing in the program if sponsors) _____

Address (w/city/state/zip) _____

_____ I can't sponsor, but send me _____ tickets at \$40 each.

Make checks payable to **Aitkin County DFL**. Check amount \$ _____

Remit to Joel Hoppe, Treasurer • 36136 Kestrel Ave. • McGregor, MN 55760

Long Lake Conservation Center is an awesome place! Located at 28952 438th Lane, Palisade, MN. 18 miles north of Aitkin, and north on Hwy 210 between State Hwy. 169 & McGregor. Turn north on County Road 5 (Nature Trail) and follow the signs. Ample parking available.

SUPPORT & VOTE FOR OUR CANDIDATES!

(Biographical information gathered from their websites)

MELISSA MAERTENS

DFL-endorsed candidate for MN House District 10A



Melissa is running for the Minnesota House of Representative seat in District 10A. The incumbent is Republican Ron Kresha and he is retiring at the end of this year.

Melissa was born and raised in Minnesota. She grew up in the Twin Cities and attended college in Moorhead. She now lives in the Brainerd Lakes Area. Melissa has also lived in London, England and has traveled extensively in Europe.

Melissa indicates that she developed a true passion for economics while in college, and this is a field that continues “to shape my perspective on growth, opportunity, and community.” She has over twenty years’ experience in property management, and is an Area Manager for an inventory management company. “I built a career centered on problem solving, organization, and serving people. As a small business owner, I understand firsthand the many hats entrepreneurs must wear and the challenges they face every day. I am deeply committed to community and service.”

Melissa has worked in animal rescue and she lives with rescued dogs, cats, and a bird. She is an advocate for healthy living and sustainability, and is a plant-based chef who teaches community classes. She does hydroponic gardening, stating, “I am invested in innovative, local food solutions.” She enjoys skiing, kayaking, and a wide variety of sports. She is a life-long Vikings and Golden Gopher fan.

Visit her campaign website: mmformn.com

TARA KILLEN

DFL-endorsed candidate for MN Senate, District 10



Tara Killen is running for Minnesota Senate. The incumbent in this seat is Nathan Wesenberg.

Tara is a United States Air Force veteran where she trained to be a NACE certified corrosion inspector. She also attended Cedar Valley

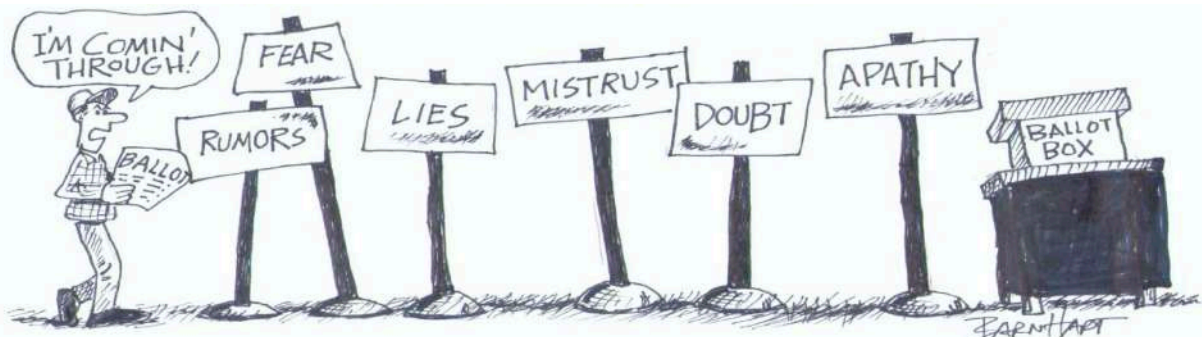
College, North Carolina State University, and Life Mastery Institute. She has been a project coordinator and resident engineer in the energy industry, a construction manager in her own business, and a life manager consultant in her own business. She lists her strongest areas of expertise to be market analysis, client relations, strategic planning, forecasting, and team building.

Tara is committed to empowering families, strengthening education, supporting local businesses, protecting natural resources, restoring trust in government, and protecting freedom, faith and fairness.

Tara writes: “This campaign is not about left or right – it’s about right and wrong, about restoring balance where imbalance has taken hold. Together we can renew the promise of self-governance: where faith informs compassion, history guides wisdom and the people lead their government once again.”

Visit her campaign website: tkforanewday.com

Democrats will get out and vote this November! We're fed up! We're excited! We're pumped!



KIM McLAUGHLIN

DFL-endorsed candidate for MN Senate, District 7



Kim is running for MN Senate seat currently held by incumbent Republican Robert Farnsworth.

Born and raised in Chisholm, Kim is a native Minnesotan, and a committed Iron Ranger. She attended Chisholm High School, Hibbing Community College, and the University of Minnesota at Duluth. She is now a certified

public accountant and a certified fraud examiner working as the business manager of Minnesota North College. She is also currently on the Hibbing School Board and has been so for ten years. She was a labor union member (MAPE) for eighteen years and grew up in a union household. She and her husband have raised a daughter.

One of Kim's key issues is economic development and job creation. "I believe in standing up for the workers who keep our community strong, and in supporting the industries that power our regional economy," she states. Other areas on which she will focus are strong public education, accessible and affordable health care, and accountability in government.

Kim states, "My career and public service have been all about working to make government work for people." Further she states, "I believe government must be transparent, fiscally responsible, and focused on delivering concrete results for people it serves. That's why all the work I'll do and every vote I cast in St. Paul belongs to you, the people."

Visit Kim's website: kimfords7.com

ERIN McCABE NINGEN

DFL-endorsed candidate for MN House District 7A



Erin is running for the House of Representatives seat in District 7A. The incumbent is Republican Spenser Igo.

Erin is a native Minnesotan, having grown up on the Iron Range. She attended Bemidji State University where she studied history and political science. She has developed a dedication to the issues faced by working-class families, and

a passion for public service. She is currently working two jobs --- one as a restaurant server and the other as a crisis counselor for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. She is a single mom raising two children.

Her beginning experiences into government and leadership were when she worked for Governor Perpich, Congressman Oberstar, and Paul Wellstone. She also served on the Minnesota Community College Board and the Minnesota State university Board. However, she says she didn't learn about the impact of politics on real people from government offices and Boards, she "learned it at my kitchen table."

Her key platform issues are money in politics, fair funding for schools, fraud prevention, affordable housing, healthcare and diversifying the economy. "I see our community's struggles firsthand, and I'm running to make government work for the people who live here again."

Visit Erin's campaign website: teamerin7a.com

ZACK FILIPOVICH

DFL-endorsed candidate for State Auditor



Zack is running for the office of state auditor. The incumbent is Julie Blaha and she is not running for another term.

Zack brings a decade of financial experience to his campaign for state auditor, and he is the only accountant running for the office. (His Republican opponent is a medical doctor and former state representative.) Zack's other credentials are a bachelor's degree in accounting and an MBA, both from the University of Minnesota in Duluth. He is a certified management accountant and is currently the finance manager for a non-profit organization. He held a prior

elected office as he was a city councilor in Duluth for eight years. He continues to live in Duluth.

Zack's philosophy about government is that it should be transparent; it should be accountable; it should share our values. He indicates that our units of government, from townships, to cities, to counties, are struggling from cost shifts. These smaller units of government are taking on more financial responsibilities and are expected to "do more with less." He states that the auditor's office works as a partner with local government units to provide technical assistance, education, oversight, best practices, data, and transparent reporting.

"The auditor's office is all about making sure local governments can make the best decisions with the tax dollars closest to each of us," he writes.

Visit Zack's website: ZackforMN.com



TRINA SWANSON
DFL-endorsed candidate
for Congress
in District 8

Trina is running for the US House of Representatives in District 8. The incumbent is Pete Stauber.

Trina was born and raised in the Hermantown area of CD8. She grew up in a union working-class family. She was educated in Minnesota and finished up her schooling at the William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul. She has spent twenty-five years employed by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which oversees lawful immigration and naturalization. During her employment she worked in Minneapolis, Washington D.C., Germany, and Kenya. She left the

USCIS when it became clear that the current administration would likely have her and her colleagues taking actions that would either be illegal or unconstitutional.

Trina indicates she will focus on affordable health care which includes improving access to health care for rural families. Her focus will also be on protecting working families and on education-to-career pathways. Further, she wants to be a Congresswoman who will engage with constituents, hold in-person town halls, and advocate for citizens.

Trina is a candidate with years of experience in public service, a working-class perspective and a commitment to integrity over political theatre. She wants to conduct a campaign that avoids personal attacks, and she wants to be a leader that "works with neighbors, listens to opposing viewpoints, and focuses on solutions rather than division."

Visit her website: TrinaforCongress.com

HOW SHOULD I PLACE MY POLITICAL SIGN FOR MY CANDIDATES?

Highway Right of Way and Political Signs

The Aitkin Highway Department asks that citizens use common sense when placing informational signs including political signs. Informational signs should not be placed within the *highway right of way*. One of the troubles is that 'rights of way' are not uniform around the county or state. Within a neighborhood/township/county the 'rights of way' will vary from road to road and not many roads are marked with 'RW' stakes.

The county engineer gave a few '*rules of thumb*' regarding the measurement of the right of way:

Gravel road – 33 feet from center of road

Paved road – 50 to 60 feet from center of road

(some roads/highways may have 100 foot RW from center of road)

For good measure – 10 to 15 feet from the shoulder

Other advice is to not place informational signs on or around highway signs, particularly STOP SIGNS. Do

not block drivers' views of highway signs, roadway entrances, and driveways. Don't block the postal service from mailboxes. When there is a ditch or a slope, place sign on the backside of the slope. Be mindful of the maintenance of a road (mowing/grading, etc.)

Highway Department personnel may take down signs that are clearly in the right of way and perhaps are causing some of the issues noted above. County engineer assures citizens that no political signs are targeted by the staff, and they try to exercise leniency and common sense, also. However, if they have to remove a sign, they will bring it to the highway department building out by the airport and store it. It is possible to go there and retrieve confiscated signs.

Questions about individual roads in the county may be directed to the county highway department at 218-927-7469.

Visit the Aitkin County DFL Website! AitkinCountyDFL.org
Email us at: DFLAitkinCounty@gmail.com

AITKIN COUNTY FAIR BOOTH WAS A SUCCESS AGAIN!



DFL PARADE FLOATS ARE WELL RECEIVED BY PUBLIC!



From setting up the fair booth, greeting visitors and making over 50 pounds of popcorn, we are convinced the 2026 Aitkin County Fair was a success and enjoyed by all. Even Republicans came over from their booth to enjoy our pop corn and that's OK! We're a kind, sharing bunch! The Aitkin County DFL parade team has been extremely busy, not just in Aitkin County but far and wide like Milaca and Foley. They have received positive greetings and cheers from the communities they've visited. They are seeing a growing spirit of connection and support. This is a very good sign for Democrats looking forward to the November election. We thank them for all their dedication and candy throwing arms! The photo above is from the River Boat Days parade. There's more to do so please volunteer when and however you can! JOIN IN! MEET NEW FRIENDS! HAVE FUN! THANKS!

WE THANK ALL OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS WHO'VE GIVEN SO MUCH TIME & ENERGY!

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OUR MISSION - The Aitkin County DFL, a unit of the **Minnesota Democratic Farmer Labor Party**, provides organization and support for local, state, and national Democratic candidates, and provides a vehicle for participation in Aitkin County in the democratic process.



UPCOMING 2025 AITKIN COUNTY DFL EVENTS:

- October 4 – Fundraiser at Long Lake Conservation Center
- November 3 – Election Day
- December 8 – DFL Christmas Party Location TBD
- The DFL Club meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 11:15 a.m. at the 40 club in Aitkin; except for the December Christmas party.
- The DFL Central Committee meets on the 4th Tuesday every other month. Gather at 5:30 p.m. for dinner. Meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the 40 club in Aitkin.

Bill and Shirley Pick • 49336 405th Place • Palisade, MN 56469



the people who show up.
Benjamin Franklin



AITKIN COUNTY DFL encourages you to REGISTER to VOTE NOW. Participate in upcoming elections. MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.