



Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota

*In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, we advocate for wise and just public policies
to overcome hunger and poverty, and steward God's creation!
(Lutheran Advocacy-MN Statement of Roles and Responsibilities)*

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka
Senate President Jeremy Miller
Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent

House Speaker Melissa Hortman
House Majority Leader Ryan Winkler
House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt

Commerce & Energy Conference Committee: Chairs Sen. Gary Dahms & Rep. Zack Stephenson, and members
Housing Conference Committee: Chairs Rep. Alice Hausmann & Sen. Rich Draheim, and members

Senate and House Leaders, and Conference Committees -

Thank you so very much for your service! You have a challenging job, particularly at this point in the legislative process, and we want you to know that you are in our prayers!

God created an amazing world – a world perfectly in balance, with everything needed to sustain and prosper that creation. But the world now is not as God created it. Brokenness touches everything, and human actions (both conscious and unconscious) have had devastating impacts. Even so, God is filled with love for us and creation. Our faith teaches us that we are to love God and love our neighbors. In that context, **we should seek the well-being of all people and all of God's creation.** This legislative session, **we are particularly concerned to see progress on clean energy and broader climate issues, and on affordable housing, especially for renters unable to make ends meet during the pandemic.**

ENERGY – CLEAN ENERGY & EMISSION REDUCTIONS

Science has established that dangerous levels of many gases emitted during energy production are adding extra layers to the atmospheric blanket that keeps the earth at the right temperature, causing earth's overall climate temperature to rise. This exacerbates extremes, intensifying rainfall, storms, drought, and wildfires, and disproportionately impacting already vulnerable people. Hunger and poverty increase, and natural disasters displace whole communities, causing migration of people between and within countries and contributing to civil conflicts.

In Minnesota, heightened levels of property and community damage caused by severe weather and pollution impact members of our congregations. Our farmers struggle with more severe flooding impacting when they plant or harming developing crops. Periods of drought, and new pests destroy crops. Lyme disease and other insect born maladies are rapidly increasing along with populations of ticks or mosquitoes less likely to be killed off in milder winters. The Increased intensity of storms do more damage to our infrastructure, while toxic emissions advance rates of heart disease, asthma, and other diseases including COVID-19.

Climate change will continue to accelerate if we do not curb excess carbon emissions and other sources of toxic pollutants. The **costs** that must be borne through emergency aid, increased infrastructure and health costs, or lives lost **are immense**. So are the long-term costs of ecosystems changed or destroyed. **As God's people, we are compelled to action** with and on behalf of our neighbors and God's creation. Opting for safe and clean energy solutions, like wind and solar, is an example of how we can heed our Creator's call to be active participants in healing the earth and its people.

We commend both the Minnesota House and Senate for several good proposals in their Energy Omnibus bills. **However, we note that the House bill does significantly more to move us toward the fuller healing that is needed.** Therefore, we ask that in Conference Committee negotiations for a final Commerce & Energy bill, you include from the House Energy bill

- The transition to clean electricity by 2040 statewide
- Funding and programs for worker transition in host communities of retiring energy facilities
- An update of the 2007 bipartisan Next Generation Climate Act for economy-wide emission reduction goals
- A state goal for reductions of atmosphere harming emissions by 50% from existing buildings by 2035
- Support for transitions to an economy built on clean electricity, especially in transit and other transportation
- Funds for efficient, clean rebuilding in areas damaged by civil unrest

We also ask that you include from both Senate & House Energy bills

- Support for a clean energy job training pilot program for people from under-resourced communities
- Energy efficiency technology accelerator funding
- A revolving loan fund for energy efficiency for state buildings
- Resources for schools to add solar panels (which will save them money in the long run)

HOUSING – EVICTION MORATORIUM

The eviction moratorium has prevented many new cases of homelessness in our communities across the state, and has likely saved lives during the pandemic. While an off-ramp to the moratorium is needed and landlords need payment, **we fear that an immediate cessation of eviction suspensions will cause cascading homelessness, from which it will be difficult to recover.**

Minnesota's affordable housing crisis was already intense before COVID-19. Previous investments allocated by the legislature have played an important role in addressing need, but have not been adequate to meet the scope of the crisis. We cannot afford to further worsen the situation. **Minnesota is receiving almost \$675 million in federal emergency rental assistance.** This assistance is designed to address the very issues of nonpayment that struggling renters and landlords have been facing. Our churches and local nonprofits are already doing what they can, but are also stretched.

As you negotiate bills in conference committees and pass final versions, we ask that you **do not include Senate Omnibus language related to eviction suspensions.** Rather, **support House File 12** to

- transition the current moratorium to a timeline tied to the health emergency,
- create a gradual off-ramp to end eviction suspensions,
- prevent evictions (and subsequent homelessness) by allowing the federal assistance program to have time to take place, and
- seek to ensure both struggling tenants and landlords may be made whole.

In conclusion, there is so much more we need to do, individually, collectively, and as a society. We need to remember that we all are responsible for what our government does. God is calling out to us to be repairers and healers, and our state legislation needs to reflect that. God wants our participation in restoring relationships for the redemption of the world. May God's Spirit come upon us, so that our individual,

collective, and societal action is faithful to the relationships God desires and may God bless you and give you wisdom as you make these important decisions.

In Christ,

Rev. Regina Hassanally, Bishop
Southeastern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Bill Tesch, Bishop
Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Ann Svennungsen, Bishop
Minneapolis Area Synod
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Rev. Amy Odgren, Bishop
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CC: Minnesota Senate Members, Minnesota House Members



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