



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!

The 2025 Lenten Letter Challenge

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for loving the world so very deeply. Help us to see the brokenness that now mars what you created as perfect, and the struggles of people you created in your image. Help us to reflect your love by loving and serving our neighbors and our vulnerable planet. Please help us be your advocacy ambassadors, bravely lifting our voices with, and for, those whose wellbeing is threatened. Give us the right words to share with our leaders, so that they, too, may see and hear and understand the brokenness, as well as how you are calling them to respond. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lent (*"For God so loved the world..." John 3:16*)

We know the challenges our world faces. The season of Lent emphasizes and helps us remember that God is not through with us, or this world. Our Lenten disciplines remind us that we are called to "pick up the Cross" and follow our merciful God into the neglected, forgotten, broken places where others do not wish to go. It is, as God's servants and ambassadors, to do God's work of mercy, justice, and compassion for "the least of these," those who are vulnerable, who experience hunger, poverty, or homelessness. It is to repent of being destroyers, consumers, and flawed, broken "keepers" of the beautiful life-giving earth God created. Rather, we must heed God's call to be shepherds of this vulnerable place, following in the steps of the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. We must remember our call to love the earth, its creatures, and its people with the kind of love that God shows each of us. Importantly, we must remember that this is not our work, but God's work using our hands (and voices, and pens/paper) – and that God is drawing us, and all that has God created, toward resurrection and restoration.

Advocacy (*Our advocacy seeks to influence public policy toward justice for all that God has created*)



Advocacy, as defined by the dictionary, is "to speak or plead on behalf of another." We ourselves are beneficiaries of advocacy. Jesus is our advocate (1 John 2:1), as is the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

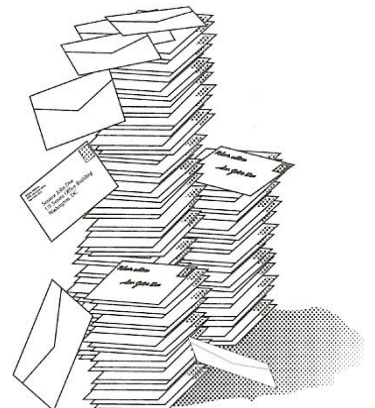
Throughout history, we see examples of God's people acting as advocates by calling upon their leaders to act justly and protect the most vulnerable. Moses was an advocate for his people with Pharaoh, who was the most powerful political leader of his day. The Old Testament prophets were consistent advocates as they called the leaders and the people back to right relationship with God, which includes seeking justice.

Motivated by God's love for us, we carry on that tradition. We can share a vision of the world as God wants it to be and help shape the laws and policies that define how we live together in God's world. We can contact our leaders and lift our voices with, and for, those whose voice is not usually heard in the halls of power. Advocacy is an extension of the church's practice of loving our neighbors and being good stewards of God's creation.

We Need YOU!

We need you – your congregation, campus, youth group, confirmation class, WELCA group, church committee, or whatever – to write letters and be in contact with your Minnesota state representative and senator! It is in relationship with their constituents that our legislators know what we care about, and why.

Your group's action will accomplish what our Lutheran Advocacy-MN staff cannot. Staff can help those in your group be effective citizen advocates. Staff can also follow up with legislators, but **it is their own constituents that representatives and senators REALLY want to hear from.**



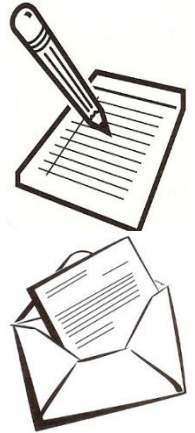
Letters & Other Ways to Make an Impact

Find your Minnesota legislator: <https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>
Find Minnesota Legislative Committee Members: leg.mn.gov/leg/committees

Letters to Legislators (*including email letters*) – for Lent or Anytime!

We need you – your **congregation, campus, youth group, confirmation class, WELCA group, church committee**, or whatever – **to be in contact with your Minnesota state representative and senator!** Letter-writing is one of the **most accessible ways for many people to participate** in advocacy action. Letter campaigns begin to create relationships with legislators, and it is in relationship with their constituents that our legislators know what we care about, and why.

Letters can be written during a special time in worship, before or after a meal, as part of a forum or in small groups. It is effective to collect the letters as an offering to God, and to pray that legislators will be moved by them. Remember that we do this as part of our faith, acting as God's advocacy ambassadors for love of neighbor and creation. Notecards, rather than big impersonal pieces of paper, help make the letters/notes feel more personal to the legislator and assist in the relationship-building process. **Use the following pages, which can be printed back-to-back by issue, to organize letter offerings with your group.** Or send the pages out in advance and encourage people to bring their letters to your next meeting or gathering to dedicate them jointly.



Phone Calls & Emails



When **events are unfolding quickly**, phone calls to legislators are an easy and effective way to take action. With a couple days leeway, emails can also be a quick way to reach legislators. Lutheran Advocacy-MN provides **Action Alerts** that include the **Action requested**, the **Main Message**, and various **Talking Points** - the caller (or emailer) is encouraged to choose one or two points or share briefly why they care about the issue. Usually, a message can be left with a staff person. Ask them to record your contact information and tell them you want to know later what the legislator did on the issue; instead of just being a "for" or "against" mark in their tally, the communication may have more of an impact.

Meetings with Lawmakers (*in-person or virtual*)

Magnify the impact of letters or emails by arranging a group visit with your legislator(s). Our leaders want to hear from us and they rely on us to help inform them on issues that are pertinent to their districts. Constituent visits have been identified as the **single most influential way to make a difference** on an issue. When it is possible to refer to several previously written letters and emails by your group, the visit is even more powerful.



Letters to the Editor

If you can write a letter to your legislators, you can also write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Tie your comments to a recent article. Letters to the editor need to be very short and concise—no more than 200-300 words. The first sentence should engage readers immediately.



Social Media

Tagging legislators on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Threads, Blue Sky, or other platforms can be a good way to get their attention. Also, thank you messages can be helpful in relationship building. Photos of a person with a brief, specific action or message written on a whiteboard can be a very effective post – be sure to include your first name, last initial, and the community you're from.

Thank Legislators

Most important – Don't Forget to thank legislators when they support the position you advocate, or if they take time to meet with you and your group. This helps build relationships!

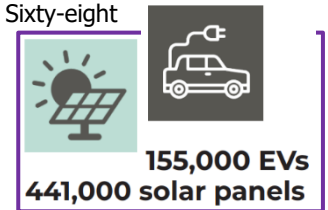
Issue: Electronic Waste Recycling

The Problem: Electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world, growing 3-5 percent per year. In fact, around 20 percent of waste globally is from e-waste, while it comprises 70 percent of toxins in landfills. Yet, most anything with a cord, battery or circuit board can be recycled. Out of 266 million pounds of e-waste generated annually in Minnesota, only about 24% is captured, recycled, and reused.



This presents a significant health risk, as well as an economic loss. E-waste in landfills leaches toxins into water supplies, while that burned in garbage incinerators puts dangerous toxins into the air we breathe. Some e-waste causes fires in waste hauling vehicles, landfills, buildings, and more. This adds expense to collection fees and taxes, not to mention damage to the health of nearby residents.

Economic Opportunity: A recent study discovered that if 100 percent of Minnesota's e-waste were recovered, it **could generate \$2.8 billion and create almost 1740 directly related jobs** (and many indirect jobs). Sixty-eight different minerals/metals are recoverable, the most valuable of which include Palladium, Platinum, Gold, Copper, Tin, Lithium, Iron, Aluminum, Silver, and Ruthenium. Enough silver can be recovered for 441,000 solar panels, and enough copper for 155,000 electric vehicles. [See [The Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling in Minnesota: A Pilot Study](#) - p. 6 element charts; pictures/facts from p.7].



Past Legislation: Minnesota's Electronics Recycling Act, passed in 2007, is out of date. Some of what it defined as e-waste included electronics like CD/DVD players, VCRs, and other electronics that are no longer popular. Meanwhile, items like Bluetooth ear buds did not even exist until more recent years yet include lithium batteries and circuit boards. E-cigarettes didn't start infiltrating the U.S. market until the late 2000s (and in the case of disposable vapes, aren't even rechargeable). Also, smart phones which most of us now carry (and replace every couple of years) started gaining wide popularity in the years after the introduction of the iPhone at the end of June in 2007 (after the end of the legislative session which passed the Electronics Recycling Act).

At its peak, under the 2007 legislation, around 40 million pounds of e-waste was collected, but by 2021 that was down to only 20 million pounds. Currently, residents and businesses must pay fees (sometimes hefty amounts) to do the right thing by depositing e-waste for recycling. Limited drop-off locations and items collected present further barriers.

2025 Legislative Proposal: Lutheran Advocacy-MN is joining other organizations to pass legislation that would...

- 1) **Change the definition of e-waste** to include any device covered that has a cord, battery, or circuit board. (This is a broad and flexible definition, which covers any device into the future, including those not yet conceived of)
Exclusions:
 - Lead acid batteries (a car battery buyback program already exists, resulting in a 95% recovery rate)
 - Electronic Vehicles & Infrastructure (recycled by a different process and different stakeholders)
 - White Waste – Refrigerators, washers, dryers,
- 2) Provide **free accessible drop-off or collection** of e-waste statewide for residents AND businesses
- 3) Require **manufacturers to cover the cost** of free recycling collection statewide, **based on the percent of gross sales of electronics in the state**. For instance, if Apple or Samsung have 35% of the electronics sales, they would pay that proportional amount for the cost of collection including disposal, shipping, up to two employees per collector, and an additional incentive per pound. This spreads the cost very broadly and is already done for other waste (like packaging). It would be managed by a non-profit under the authority of the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The MPCA will put out an RFP (Request for Proposals) to find the right group to manage the program details.

Sources:

1. Maria Jensen: Repowered (Environment, Health, & Safety); Recycling Electronics for Climate Action (RECA); Areas of Study: Public Health (Research Methods); Environmental Toxicology & Public Health. Presentations: MEP Climate & Energy Cluster; [Ely Tuesday Group](#)
2. Lucy Mullany: Eureka Recycling. Presentations/Discussions: MEP Climate & Energy Cluster
3. Jensen, Maria; Roopali Phadke; Keith Steva; Marlise Riffel. "[The Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling in Minnesota: A Pilot Study](#)." Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability; Repowered; Macalester College. August 2023.
4. "[Harnessing the Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling: A New MN Study](#)." Repowered.
5. Smieja, Jon. "[The Enormous Opportunity of E-Waste Recycling](#)." World Economic Forum. March 24, 2023.

What is Needed for a Good Advocacy Letter?



As you try to get the attention of your legislators, you'll want to **use your own words** and **personalize** your letter as much as possible. They want to know what YOU think. **Notecards** or **stationary** can make the letter feel even more personal. A simple personalized letter, note, or email is usually worth more than hundreds of form letters. Contact Lutheran Advocacy-MN for updates and bill numbers (as available), or check the website for additional resources. ****[Who Represents Me? <https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>]****

A good letter will also include the following elements:

- 1) **Your Name & Address on Envelope & Letter:** Legislators want to know that you are their constituent and where you live (or where you go to church, if you are writing to the legislator from that district).
- 2) **Who You Are:** Mention something about yourself, like what church you are from, and if you have first-hand experience with the issue.
- 3) **Ask for Specific Action:** "Please support..." If there is a bill number, this is the place to include it.
- 4) **Give a Reason or Say Something About Why You Care:** Speak from your heart, elaborate from the talking points, or tell a story.

Mail the letters to these addresses:

Sen. _____, Minnesota State Senate, MN Senate Building, 95 University Ave. W., St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. _____, Minnesota House of Representatives, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155

Talking Points & Sample Letter: E-Waste

Legislative "Ask":

Please support SF1690 (senate)/HF1426 (house), the bill to update MN's 2007 Electronics Recycling Act to

- Expand the **definition of electronic waste**
- Provide for **statewide free e-waste drop-off**
- Require **manufacturers to pay the recycling collection costs** for e-waste (like other programs also managed by the MPCA)

Possible Talking Points (choose a couple):

- I believe we must be good stewards of all that God has created.
- Electronic waste leaches toxins into our water and air.
- Anything with a lithium battery is a fire hazard in the trash, including air pods, singing cards, and e-cigarettes.
- The 2007 Minnesota Electronics Recycling Act is out of date as many new technologies are not covered or collected.
- Research shows that people are more likely to turn in old electronics if drop-off sites are free and accessible.
- Electronic waste contains high value metals like copper, platinum, silver, gold, & iron that can and should be recycled.
- Of 266 million pounds of e-waste produced in Minnesota annually, only about 24% gets collected and recycled.
- The minerals in Minnesota's e-waste would be worth 2.8 billion annually if captured and recycled.
- In moving from fossil fuels toward cleaner options to address the climate crisis, these minerals are increasing in demand.
- Recycling (or mining) of e-waste could add more than 1700 jobs

Example (please use your own words)

Date
Dear Rep. _____ (or Sen. _____),
We've been learning about e-waste at our church (2 nd Lutheran, Lovelytown) & want to be able to recycle our old electronics. Putting them in the trash is a fire and health hazard, as toxins leach into our water and air.
There aren't any electronic drop-off sites in this part of the state, and even where there are, not all electronics are collected or recycled. Only about 24% of 266 million pounds of e-waste annually produced in MN are collected, recycled, and reused due to outdated laws.
It's time to update our 2007 Electronics Recycling Act to expand the definition of e-waste, provide accessible and free drop-off or collection, and have manufacturers pay the cost of collection. <u>Please support</u> the bill led by Rep. Hollins and Sen. Kupec.
The minerals and metals in e-waste are increasingly in demand as the world works to move away from fossil fuels. Not only that, it could be an economic boon for Minnesota, worth \$2.8 billion annually and creating more than 1700 jobs statewide.
Thank you! Name Address

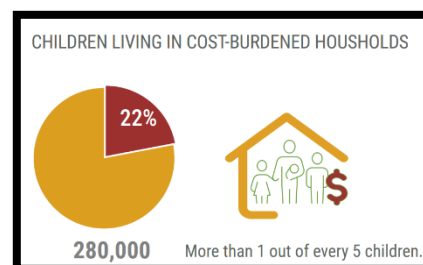
Issue: Affordable Housing

The Problem:

Minnesota has had a housing crisis for several years. There is not enough housing, much less housing that could be considered affordable. The Homes for All Coalition, in which Lutheran Advocacy-MN plays a very active role, believes...

...that no full-time employee should have to choose between paying rent or filling prescriptions. No working parent should have to cut back on food for their children to make the mortgage. But that's a daily reality for more than [642,000] Minnesota households who pay more than 30% of their income on housing and don't have enough left over to make ends meet to cover basic necessities, like transportation and groceries. (*Homes for All Handout, with MHP update*)

In fact, 48 percent of Minnesota rental households pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing, including 85 percent of low-income renter households and 68 percent of senior households. Minimum wage earners in Minnesota need to work 82 hours/week to afford a basic one-bedroom apartment. That increases to 101 hours for a two-bedroom place. [Find your district's [housing profile](#) from Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP) / Illustration borrowed from [MHP's 2025 State Housing Profile](#)].



Recent Accomplishments: Several Homes for All Coalition initiatives from the last several years passed. With other Homes for All partners, Lutheran Advocacy-MN helped generate broad statewide grassroots support for **significant housing investments** for

- new housing construction, rehabilitation, and preservation,
- rental assistance,
- down-payment assistance for new low-income or BIPOC homebuyers, and
- homeless shelter creation. (See the full summary of our [2023-24 biennium session results](#)).

Lutheran Advocacy-MN also worked closely with Settled and Joint Religious Legislative Coalition to pass **Sacred Settlement legislation**, changing zoning laws to allow faith communities to host small settlements of tiny homes for people who have experienced chronic homelessness and "Good Neighbor" volunteers. **Several churches** are now working with Settled to consider being Sacred Settlement hosts or **partnering** in other ways **to support the settlements**. (See our [Poverty/Hunger page](#) in the "Issues" section of our website for more information on how your church can participate).

Crisis Not Over: Despite this success, much of the funding was a **one-time investment**, rather than ongoing. Shelter funding was only half of our request, and **much less than what is needed statewide**. These new funds, along previous bipartisan investments, have not kept up with both demand and the amount of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) lost each year often due to investor buyouts which is then transitioned into higher-cost housing. Further, it is important to remember that **a crisis that is decades in the making does end with a few years of one-time allotments**. It is an entrenched problem that will take much more investment to overcome.

2025 Legislative Agenda: As part of the Homes for All Coalition, Lutheran Advocacy-MN continues to work for

- 1) \$500 million for **new housing production** & housing **rehabilitation**, with direct new funding or (which can leverage \$3.00 - \$4.00 of private and other funds, for each dollar designated by the state),
- 2) At least \$50 million more funding for **safe shelters and transitional** housing (\$400m is needed),
- 3) \$200 million in **Emergency Rental Assistance** (to keep people/households from losing current housing)
- 4) **Source of Income Protection** to prevent discrimination against those using housing vouchers to secure housing,
- 5) **Defending the gains that have been made** in previous years to keep a strong foundation for affordable housing.

Sources:

Homes for All Coalition (presentations, handouts, coalition meetings, etc.)

[Minnesota Housing Partnership](#)

"[State of the State's Housing, 2024](#)" Report and "[2025 State Housing Profile](#)." Minnesota Housing Partnership Research, 2024/2025.

[National Low Income Housing Coalition](#)

"[Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing](#)" Report. National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2024.

Extra: Learn about [MN's housing continuum](#) from MHP, check out the maps in [Out of Reach](#) to see how parts of our state/nation are impacted by housing shortages or the level of income needed to rent a basic apartment.

What is Needed for a Good Advocacy Letter?



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Talking Points & Sample Letter: Housing

Legislative "Ask":

Please support funding for

- \$400m investment in **housing production, rehabilitation, & preservation**, as direct funds or through housing bonds
- \$50m for the creation of **more safe shelters** (\$400m needed)
- \$200m for **Emergency Rental Assistance**

Possible Talking Points (choose a couple):

- In the Bible, God reminds us to protect people who are most vulnerable. Through the prophets, God calls many leaders to task for not caring for those who are poor.
- Children do much better in school when their family has a stable place to live.
- Housing is considered to be a "cost burden" when households spend more than 30% of their income on a place to live. In MN, 48% of renters & 85% of low-income renters are cost burdened.
- More than 1 of every 5 MN children live in households paying too much for housing, which may mean fewer or less nutritious meals.
- When people have homes, they are healthier, better able to hold a job, and much more stable overall.
- Only 7 of MN's 87 counties have enough shelter beds.
- Almost half of the people experiencing homelessness are children and unaccompanied youth under the age of 24.
- Seniors are the fastest growing population of homeless.
- The funding amounts allocated in the last few years are a good start, but much more needs to happen to dig out of the crisis.
- The housing crisis was decades in the making and needs a consistent ongoing commitment greater than we've had so far.

Example (please use your own words)

	Date
Dear Rep. _____ (or Sen. _____),	
My church (2 nd Lutheran, Lovelytown) has been very engaged in homeless & housing issues. Many families around here have difficulty meeting all their needs because they spend so much on housing. I know of 2 families that spend more than 50% of their income on housing (in one of those families, the parents have 4 jobs between them to try to make ends meet).	
Significant investments continue to be needed for affordable housing. Please support \$400m in bonds to increase the amount of housing available, especially rental housing. In some cases, that means building more, and in other cases it may mean rehabilitating or preserving the housing that already exists.	
To begin to address the shortage of homeless shelters & transitional housing please work for at least \$50 million (\$400m is needed). My county does not have enough shelter beds, and recently I learned that only 7 of Minnesota's 87 counties do have enough.	
Thank you!	
Name	
Address	