

Education Minnesota

2025 Minnesota Attorney General questionnaire

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Funding of Public Education:

1. *What is your philosophy on the funding of public education? Specifically, who is responsible for public education funding, what is an appropriate level of funding for public education, and how do you see yourself contributing to this issue?*

Access to equitable education opportunities is key to ensuring all Minnesotans are prepared for success. From preschool through college, every student deserves the right to high-quality, affordable education.

I believe in robust public investment in our students through a progressive tax system that ensures that corporations and the wealthiest among us pay their fair share. That's why I sued the Trump administration for cutting 50% of the Department of Education staff and freezing hundreds of millions in school funding that Minnesota students and teachers depend on.

It's also why I sued the Trump Administration when they tried to cut \$74 million from Minnesota schools just weeks before the start of the new school year. Our educators deserve the resources they need to be successful, and it has been a privilege to defend those resources in court.

A just and inclusive Minnesota:

2. *What strategies do you believe are the most effective in solving the opportunity gap in education? What would you do as a state leader to promote or expand those strategies?*

Universal access to quality pre-k programs is a critical way to close the opportunity gap by helping low-income and at-risk students read and write at the same rates as their peers. We must also invest in full-service community schools with wrap-around services to help all students get the support they need to succeed inside and outside the classroom.

We need to support our teachers with access to high-quality professional development, excellent pay and benefits, and appropriate class sizes. We must also increase college affordability and access by moving to debt-free college.

3. *What actions could you take as attorney general to decrease racial and economic inequality?*

It's my job as Attorney General and the People's Lawyer to help Minnesotans afford their lives and live with dignity, safety, and respect — especially when they have nowhere else to turn for help.

We need to continue to level the playing field to ensure a fair economy for everybody. We must defend every person's opportunity to create a better life for themselves — whether it's getting an education, starting a business, or buying a home. That means holding those in power accountable — taking on big drug companies, exploitative student loan services, and any company that tries to increase profit at the expense of working Minnesotans. That is what I have done as Attorney General.

We are fighting fraud, deception, and antitrust practices by corporations, protecting Minnesotans' wages from theft, lowering pharmaceutical drug prices, holding opioid companies accountable for the deadly opioid epidemic, protecting tenants from exploitation, and more.

Fighting for a more fair society means defending the rights of all Minnesotans. As a former civil rights attorney for 16 years, I know the value of a good lawyer to protect the rights of all to be free from discrimination and harm.

4. *A number of states or local school boards have attempted to limit the teaching of certain subjects or topics in schools that they have misleadingly labeled DEI. What is your opinion about these efforts and is there a role for the Attorney General's Office in challenging them?*

We absolutely must teach the histories of race and racism in our schools so we can equip our children with the knowledge they need to build a vision for the future together. While not within my duties, I support efforts by one of our clients, the Department of Education, to expand social studies and the examination of different races and ethnicities in the core curriculum. Efforts to prohibit teaching about the impact of racism fail to acknowledge the importance of racism to the most critical parts of our history, slavery, the Civil War, the failure of reconstruction, all the way to the impact of the MDHR report on the Minneapolis Police Department's practices and patterns.

Any efforts to ban accurate teaching of our nation's history will not find protection as long as I am the AG. Unfortunately, one need not look far to see how other states' AGs have sought to politicize race, gender, and other identities at the local, state, and national levels. That will not happen as long as I'm the AG.

In fact, when the Trump Administration tried to threaten legal consequences for schools with DEI policies and programming, I joined a coalition of attorneys general in issuing legal guidance affirming the legality and the importance of such programming and policies. I will not allow bad actors to marginalize our students, rewrite our history, and replace the truth with propaganda.

5. *What is your administration doing to challenge federal efforts to crack down on racial equity and LGBTQ inclusion practices in schools?*

Earlier this year, I filed amicus briefs in support of schools not allowing parents to opt their children out of curricula that included LGBTQ+ characters or issues, and in defense of transgender students being able to play sports and use the bathroom of their choice. It is our duty to create a safe and inclusive environment for future generations to learn and grow, and no one, from parents to the federal government, should be allowed to use education as a tool to divide our youth.

6. *What actions can you take, as the Attorney General, to ensure that access to the ballot in Minnesota remains open and voter participation remains high?*

I am committed to protecting Minnesotans' right to vote and the integrity of our elections. Minnesota has consistently been ranked #1 in turnout in the country; we must continue to work hard not only to preserve that but also to expand it to

those who have been marginalized. Early/absentee voting & same-day voter registration have helped close that gap.

In 2020, I got wind that a private security company, Atlas Aegis, was planning on sending armed private security contractors to patrol Minnesota's polling places. This was a clear attempt to intimidate voters and I could not allow that to happen. I immediately launched an investigation into Atlas Aegis and compelled them to sign a legally binding agreement pledging not to deploy armed, private individuals to Minnesota polling places.

In 2003, in my first session as a state representative, I introduced Minnesota's first Restore the Vote Act. I actively supported the campaign to Restore the Vote for 20 years, and lobbied for and celebrated its passage in 2023. In 2024, after Restore the Vote was signed into law, a judge from Mille Lacs County attempted to override the law during criminal sentencing. While sentencing several individuals to felony probation, this judge added an item to those sentencing orders declaring Minnesota's new Restore the Vote law unconstitutional and barring the people being sentenced from exercising their legal right to vote until the end of their probation. I intervened in the case and secured a ruling from the Court of Appeals undoing this judge's actions and defending Minnesotans' freedom to vote.

7. *What will you do to protect immigrants generally, as well as immigrant students and educators in our schools?*

As Attorney General, I have worked to combat a rise in hate crimes that target our most vulnerable. I have assembled a coalition of federal, state, and county law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to address bias-motivated crimes and to better identify risk factors to head off acts of domestic terrorism before they happen.

One of the first actions I took once elected was to hold a Hate Crime Summit and a series of community listening sessions throughout the state devoted to learning about community experience with hate crimes and bias incidents. I also testified at the Legislature for a bill to increase reporting of hate crimes, because more reporting and accurate data are needed for us to fight them effectively.

I have also worked closely with our immigrant community on our consumer

protection work, like rising costs of prescription drugs, healthcare, and higher education, and fraud, deception, and antitrust practices by corporations. At the beginning of the second Trump Administration, I issued legal guidance to organizations maintaining sensitive locations, including schools, houses of worship, courts, and more, making clear what their rights are when it comes to complying or not complying with immigration enforcement. This guidance made it clear that if ICE attempts to access non-public spaces without a court-issued subpoena or warrant, they can be turned away.

I believe that this work is critical now as we see the GOP double down on their anti-immigrant agenda and sow fear as they push for policies that violate the civil rights of those they disagree with.

Union rights:

8. *How have you supported unions and collective bargaining as Minnesota attorney general and how will you do so if re-elected?*

Defending the right to collective bargaining is paramount to my work as Attorney General protecting Minnesotans. In *Uradnik vs. Inter Faculty Organization*, a 19-year professor at St. Cloud State University argued that being represented by the Inter Faculty Organization — which was elected by a majority vote and certified under the Public Employees Labor Relations Act (PELRA) as the exclusive representative for traditional teaching faculty at the seven MnSCU campuses, including St. Cloud State — violated her First Amendment rights of free speech and association.

Our office filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court urging that they not accept the case for review, and instead uphold the *Knight* precedent, which says that exclusive representation does not infringe upon speech or associational rights of non-union members.

I also led a coalition of 20 attorneys general in filing an amicus brief opposing the Trump Administration's firing of Gwynne Wilcox from the National Labor Relations Board, which rendered the NLRB, one of the most important tools for resolving labor disputes, non-functional, as it left the board without a quorum.

I will always stand up for the principle that employers and unions have the right to set up exclusive-representation agreements, which guarantees strong unions

and good wages and benefits for employees.

9. *Will you oppose any legislation or constitutional amendments that would weaken collective bargaining rights, the right to strike, payroll deduction of union dues, union release time, union access to workplaces or other anti-union policies backed by anti-worker groups?*

Yes. I will always protect workers who exercise their legal right to join together and fight for higher wages and better working conditions. Furthermore, I am very interested in supporting an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution that would guarantee the right to organize workers.

Working families:

10. *What actions have you taken to regulate the health insurance industry and/or help reduce the cost of health insurance to school districts? What further actions would you plan to take if re-elected?*

I believe that access to affordable healthcare is a fundamental human right. As Attorney General, I am proud to have been part of a broad coalition of AGs that successfully defended the Affordable Care Act all the way to SCOTUS, which upheld it against years of right-wing challenges. This means that the ACA will continue to provide coverage to 2.3 million Minnesotans with pre-existing conditions, will continue to guarantee preventive healthcare to 2.7 million Minnesotans — including contraceptive healthcare for 1 million Minnesotans — and will continue to provide coverage for 300,000 lower-income Minnesotans who might have lost it if the ACA had been overturned.

I have actively supported single-payer health insurance for many years: single-payer would single-handedly make insurance more affordable and cover many more.

In my first year as attorney general in 2019, I convened an award-winning task force on lowering pharmaceutical drug prices and have fought successfully for a number of those recommendations to become law, including prohibiting drug manufacturers from imposing excessive price increases on generic drugs sold in Minnesota, and establishing a Prescription Drug Affordability Board that is

empowered to investigate cost increases of prescription drugs. I actively supported Minnesota's first law regulating pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and have led several national bipartisan coalitions of attorneys general in support of other states' – including several red states' – legal right to regulate PBMs, in the context of lawsuits that Big Pharma has filed against them.

I'm very focused on fighting consolidation and antitrust behavior in health insurance, which drives up costs. Our office sued UnitedHealthcare to prevent their attempt to acquire a rival claims-editing firm that would give United control over 75% of the so-called "first pass" claims-editing business in America. This proposed merger would increase costs and decrease the quality of healthcare for Minnesotans and all Americans. It would put too much market power and data in the hands of one corporation at so many levels of the health care industry, and that would raise costs and decrease choice for consumers in an already deeply flawed system.

When I saw the University of Minnesota and Fairview headed towards a dangerous and destabilizing unwind of their historic partnership, I worked hard to get the parties to the negotiating table to resolve their disagreements in a way that will protect the patients they are providing care for and ensure the University of Minnesota can continue its essential work of training the next generation of Minnesota physicians.

My job is to help Minnesotans afford their lives — and it's already tough enough to do that these days, especially with the rising cost of health care.

11. What actions could you take as attorney general to ensure Minnesotans earn living wages, including school employees?

I believe that everyone should take home every dollar you've earned on the job: this means your employer should pay you every dollar you've earned, including overtime. That is why I created the first-ever Wage Theft Unit in the Attorney General's Office that investigates and litigates complaints of wage theft and other workplace fraud and abuse perpetrated against Minnesotans of all backgrounds, especially the most vulnerable. So far, we've put \$2.2 million back into Minnesotans' pockets by enforcing a new law I helped pass to fight wage theft. I also stood up to a Trump administration rule that would have removed overtime protections for 8 million workers nationwide.

I've been a steadfast champion to raise wages, including carrying the bill for a \$15 minimum wage and supporting workers on the front lines to unionize. As Attorney General, I will continue to support all working Minnesotans, including school employees, collectively organizing for better wages and working conditions.

12. What are your top two priorities to assist working families should you be re-elected?

My top two priorities are to continue to defend working families and to fight for a fairer economy and fairness for workers. I will continue to fight fraud, deception, and antitrust practices by corporations, protect Minnesotans' wages from theft, fight to lower pharmaceutical drug prices, hold opioid companies accountable for the deadly opioid epidemic, protect tenants from exploitation, and more.

13. What actions could you take as attorney general to address the education debt crisis?

Students take out loans for higher education to better their futures and afford their lives. I have previously called for the cancellation of all publicly held debts for student borrowers, plain and simple. We need widespread action from the federal government to provide relief for many more.

14. How will you hold student loan service providers accountable for predatory lending practices and a lack of accountability to borrowers?

As Attorney General, I hold for-profit schools and predatory loan-servicing companies accountable. I have taken countless lenders and institutions to court for practices that took advantage of, misled, or defrauded consumers. These cases have resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars being returned to Minnesotans and, in some cases, with companies being banned from ever doing business in the state again. We need to do everything we can to ensure students who took out loans in good faith aren't shackled with debt for the rest of their lives.

My office has taken a very active role in standing up to student loan debt relief scammers who prey on people struggling to repay their loans. These predatory

lenders illegally charge up-front fees to enroll consumers in federal repayment programs that consumers can enroll themselves in for free. So far, our work against these lenders has put almost \$2 million back in the pockets of Minnesota borrowers.

Charter Schools:

15. Since their inception, Minnesota has experienced challenges with charter schools, including financial solvency, quality of educational offerings, and exacerbating racial segregation. We've seen a number of scandals in recent years related to the gross financial mismanagement of charter schools. What role does your office play in minimizing the frequency and scale of mismanagement by charter school leaders?

I am highly skeptical as to whether many charter schools are succeeding in delivering an excellent education to their students. As with any such cases, when instances of fraud and financial mismanagement that hurt Minnesotans are brought to my attention, we investigate and seek damages to the fullest extent allowed.

16. What role does the Attorney General have in the oversight of charter schools?

The Attorney General has a crucial role in ensuring that, as non-profits and recipients of state education funding, charter schools are using their funding appropriately and for the benefit of students and teachers. The Charities Division of my Office has successfully held several charter schools legally accountable for misusing funds.

I will use the power of the office to ensure that charter schools are held to equivalent standards as regular public schools. It's unacceptable to me when charter school leadership doesn't give teachers the ability to unionize if teachers choose to collectively bargain. As Attorney General, I will always defend educators' right to join the union.

17. If the Supreme Court holds that states have to fund religious charter schools, would your administration work to defend laws that require such schools to continue following the Minnesota Human Rights Act and not discriminate against students, parents, or staff?

All people deserve to have an equal shot, no matter who they are or where they are. If public dollars are going to any program or institution, there is no circumstance in which discrimination will be tolerated.

Earlier this year, I filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in this very case, encouraging the court to reject the creation of the nation's first taxpayer-funded religious charter school. I fervently hope the court sees the wisdom in the principles undergirding our argument. Regardless, it is my job as Attorney General to defend our state constitution and the Minnesota Human Rights Act. If a SCOTUS ruling contradicts our laws, I will do everything in my power to defend the laws that we have passed to protect Minnesotans.

Working with educators:

18. *What have you done to become informed on issues relating to public education? What organizations or news sources do you go to for your information on public education?*

Serving in the Legislature and Congress throughout my career, I am well-versed in issues relating to public education. I also regularly hold town halls and forums across Minnesota, where I hear directly from Minnesotans, many of whom are educators, about the challenges they are facing and the needs they have. I believe in particular in listening to teachers, who are the best equipped to know the needs of their students.

19. *How do you envision working with Education Minnesota if you are re-elected?*

As Attorney General, I believe that it is essential to the work of governance to have good working relationships with labor leaders and members alike. I've enjoyed a long working partnership with Education Minnesota, and would continue that partnership as Attorney General as we continue to fight for workers, like protecting their right to form and join a union, protecting their paychecks, and ensuring that they have the ability to live with dignity, safety, and respect.

20. *Have you visited a public school in Minnesota in the past year? If so, which one? What were your observations from your visit? How will that experience inform your work as attorney general? If not, would you like us to help arrange a visit?*

I visited Las Estrellas Dual Language Elementary School earlier this year for a Black History Month event. I was delighted to see a multiracial group celebrating Black History Month at a time when President Trump is attacking DEI, and I enjoyed the chance to meet a dedicated group of educators, parents, and families. In the chaotic first weeks of Trump's second term, the visit served to remind me about my commitments to fairness and equality.

State Board of Investment:

21. As Attorney General, you would serve on the State Board of Investment. What will be your role and your priorities while serving on this Board?

My top priority has been, and will continue to be, protecting the ability of teachers and other state employees to retire with dignity by safeguarding state pensions.

Higher Education:

22. In 2023, the Legislature adopted a prohibition on requiring faith oaths of PSEO students attending private colleges with public dollars, and that law saw immediate litigation. Is it possible to craft a narrower provision that protects the interest of the public in not funding educational institutions that may discriminate on the basis of religion?

Yes I believe that is possible, and I would be willing to work with the MN Dept of Education to craft appropriate language for the legislature to adopt.