

Voters' Guide 2020

Minnesota House District 11B



Nathan Nelson - Republican
(Incumbent)

How do you feel the state government is handling the Pandemic?: During the first few weeks of the pandemic, there was awareness and support for the shutdown, people understood why it was necessary, even if they were negatively impacted. Partisanship disappeared; Covid-19 was our common enemy. Now as the months have dragged on, it has unfortunately become a very partisan issue. The threats of Covid-19 are not over, however, we should no longer be in a state of emergency, we need to be in a management phase. Yet Governor Walz continues to keep his emergency powers, not allowing the legislature to do its job. Keeping the legislature out of the pandemic management process is not good leadership. Emergency powers were not meant to be used by a governor for months, they were meant to respond immediately to an emergency. We need the legislature to be part of the process moving forward.

What are your top priorities for the upcoming term?: Public safety is critical, not only as it relates to health but also to law enforcement. We can support our police, work towards justice, and hold those accountable for their violent crimes. We need to keep the conversations open and address these concerns civilly. We also need to focus on our state's budget. This pandemic has turned a sizable budget surplus into a multi-billion dollar budget deficit. We need to figure out what our state's true needs are and prioritize our spending to continue the programs we are obligated to fund. Many families have been financially devastated over the past few months, so now is not the time to raise taxes to fund state government. State government is going to need to tighten its belt much like everyone else has.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing our area and the state of Minnesota?: Locally, we need to find ways to keep and grow jobs. Not long ago the Walz administration announced it was planning to close two area correctional facilities. These are good paying jobs for our district that would create a void in our local economy. We need to ensure the opportunities are there for our residents to find a job and remain employed. The biggest challenge for the State of Minnesota will be eliminating our projected budget deficit next session, and we're going to need to use some common sense to make this shortfall disappear. Raising taxes should not be an option. Finally, we need to get back to working with each other rather than finding reasons to be mad at one another. There is so much division in our state, ranging from politics to race to illness. More people need to be listening and talking to one another rather than talking over each other. We have more in common with each other than we might think. Whether you are a Republican, Democrat, or something else, I pledge to work with you, for you, listen to your concerns, and try to solve your problems. I ask for your support on Election Day



Jack Frechette - DFL

How do you feel the state government is handling the Pandemic?: It's an appealing but ultimately futile exercise to play Monday morning quarterback, especially with something as complex as a pandemic. As I see it, the State Government based their decisions on well-respected science, and I will always support using science to guide our thinking. The fact that our community

has been spared the widespread death and illness that has plagued other areas does not mean the State Government was wrong — it means we are very lucky. And so rather than talking about how difficult the summer was, I suggest we celebrate our good fortune, and work together to safely ease the burdens that still exist for our local economy.

What are your top priorities for the upcoming term?: As we speak, jobs in our community are being lost because of partisan stonewalling. The Willow River CIP, a program that has universal acclaim from everyone who has experience with it, is being shuttered because the obstructionist wing of the Republican Party refuses to pass a budget bill — one of the most critical responsibilities for State leaders. And while these jobs (over 100, in fact) are being lost, and the area loses a talented and caring workforce, and the tax base shrinks, and a taxpayer cost-saving program is thrown in the waste bin, those currently in leadership are unable or unwilling to boldly go to their own party and say "We've gone too far, and now families in my District are hurting." Blindly walking the Party line has delivered us to this dangerous place, and we must remember that people, not Party, come first in our community.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing our area and the state of Minnesota?: The polarization we are seeing in our community has transcended politics and is now felt in our daily interactions. Neighbors are no longer cooperating. Certain family members are no longer invited to dinner. Businesses here in District 11B are being boycotted. Whatever happens next in Washington, the greatest challenge that our District must face is the effort to return to a sense of decency, of community, and of common purpose. For when our current president leaves office, be it next year or in four, our neighbors remain our neighbors, and we will need them. Dispelling the myths of our divisions and uniting under our common, rural Minnesota values is critical if we are ever going to advocate for ourselves as a District.

Minnesota Senate District 11



Jason Rarick - Republican
(Incumbent)

How do you feel the state government is handling the COVID-19 pandemic?: I believe that the State's handling of the COVID response has been good at times, and not so good at others. In the beginning, when not much was known, the response and message was pretty good. We all agreed that we needed to flatten the curve, and let our hospitals get prepared. Unfortunately, due to some poor modelling, we were trying to prepare for a much more severe situation than what was to come.

There has also been very confusing and contradictory information given to the public along the way. I think that what has been handled the worst though is how small businesses have been treated. Most were shut down, while large businesses were able to remain open, with no option to show that they could be open and operate just as safely as the large stores. Now I believe we have moved passed the emergency, and all Governors should end their emergency powers, and return to working with Legislatures to make decisions together as we move forward. Statewide plans and mandates do not work well, so we should bring in the ideas from elected officials from around the state so that we can make better plans for the entire state.

What are your top priorities for the coming term?: My priority for the coming session is going to be figuring out how to put together the State's budget for the next two years. We know that the shutdown has created a large deficit, now we have to figure out how we will be able to cut the State's spending, with the least impact on the services provided to Minnesotans. I am also hoping to be able to get a bill done next year that will reform the Conservation Improvement Program for our Electric Utilities companies, like East Central Energy. It is reform that has been being worked on for three years, and we were very close to getting it done this last year. Even though there have been other issues that have been getting so much more attention, I have continued to work on this as well, and believe the support is there to finally get it done.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing our district and the state of Minnesota?: Like every other area in the country right now, the biggest issue we need to deal with is how do we get our economy going again safely. How do we get our kids back to school so that they can get the education they need and deserve. One of the issues we have talked about for years that has been really emphasized now, is our areas lack of internet service. Continuing to invest in rural broadband is going to be critical now more than ever, but we are also going to have to balance that with the other services Minnesotans expect. We also need to promote manufacturing in our area, processing facilities for our local farmers, mining on the range, and getting the pipeline built to protect our environment and bring needed infrastructure jobs to a part of the state in need of an economic boost.



Michelle Lee - DFL

How do you feel the state government is handling the COVID-19 pandemic?: Lives and livelihoods have been lost in this pandemic and yet I am hopeful we will continue to work together by following common sense precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19 and limit its devastating toll on our communities. Sadly there are those who have chosen to politicize this pandemic. In these uncertain times the health and welfare of our communities must be among our greatest

priorities as citizens. I support our governor and our health experts as they work with the knowns and many unknowns surrounding this baffling threat as they continue to make decisions based on science and common sense to help us protect our families, friends and neighbors. In a post pandemic world our continued reliance on one another's strengths and our shared values will be critical in rebuilding our communities. I know we are up to the task.

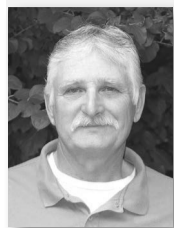
What are your top priorities for the coming term?: Our communities in Senate District 11 are more than a pit stop on a super highway to something better. We deserve better. As the next senator to represent our district I will fight for our rural communities. I believe the best economic tools available to us are an educated and a healthy workforce. Regardless of our zip codes our families deserve fully funded public schools and access to affordable and accessible healthcare. The men and women who get up and go to work everyday to support our families also deserve a living wage and safety on the job. My priorities also include supporting our small businesses that also support our families. Whether they are located on our main streets, on the outskirts of town or outside the city limits, small businesses are the backbone of our economy and they deserve a fair shake in the work of serving the needs of our communities. I'm not looking for a career. I had a successful career as a journalist sharing your stories and how decisions in St. Paul and Washington impact your lives. As your next senator I look forward to being your voice in St. Paul..

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing our district and the state of Minnesota?: Our biggest challenge will be maintaining the public services to the standards we rely upon to thrive as communities, including public safety, healthcare systems and our public schools. It's no secret our local, county and state governments will face difficult decisions due to deficits caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before these decisions are made it will be up to each of us to provide input on programs and services critical to the success of our communities. It will also be essential for us to build consensus regardless of political affiliations. The health and safety of our families must not be at the mercy of political winds. For too long the word compromise has been missing in the vocabulary of our elected officials. Whether we identify as Democrats, Republicans or Independents, we all value the benefits of our way of life in our towns and rural communities. This is our common ground. This is where we will build a better Minnesota for everyone.



Pine County Board of Commissioners –District 3

The District 3 seat on the Kanabec County Board of Commissioners represents the City of Hinckley and the townships of: Munch, Crosby, Hinckley, Barry, Arlone, Clover, Ogema, Dell Grove, Wilma and Arna.



Steve Chaffe (Incumbent)

Occupation: Business Owner- SC electric, 31 years
Three most recent or significant roles in civic involvement:
 - I have represented district 3 on the Pine County board since 2009. I have worked to deliver common sense leadership that puts taxpayers first. Over the past 12 years we have put the county back on solid financial footing by reducing wasteful spending and eliminating unnecessary redundancy in county government.

- Currently, we are in the process of refinancing the courthouse bond. The lower interest rate will save taxpayers almost \$800,000 and allow the county to invest in critical services. Good financial decisions have allowed us to build the general fund reserve, add an agriculture educator to help farmers throughout pine county, and build a new Health and Human Services building with space dedicated to serving our veterans.

- We have made investments in the things that taxpayers expect and deserve – better roads and public safety. I have supported dedicated revenue to fix our roads as well as resources to add additional sheriff's deputies. I have also worked hard to support seniors in Pine County. The county has continued to contract with Arrowhead Regional Transit. This service is available to everyone in the county but has been especially important for our seniors – making sure they have safe and affordable access to the grocery store, medical appointments, and their families.

It has been an honor to serve the community that I have lived in all my life. I hope that I have earned your continued support.

What are your top three priorities for the county?: My top priorities are keeping taxes low, providing quality services to residents, and investing adequate resources in public safety to keep our families and communities safe.

How can the county provide adequate services while being mindful of property tax impact?: We need to continue our balanced and fiscally responsible approach to county government. We need to continue to seek out opportunities for reform and cost savings and ensure that county spending has a good return on investment for taxpayers. During my time on the board I have led efforts to reform county government; we have combined departments, reduced management positions, and administrative overhead. This has allowed us to keep taxes low and reinvest those savings into improving critical county services and funding for public safety.

What can the Board of Commissioners do to help Pine County prosper?: First and foremost – by keeping taxes low. Keeping money in the pockets of our residents and businesses will help grow our local economy. In addition to supporting local businesses, we need to seek out opportunities to expand our tax base and attract new business and investment in the county.

The board also needs to play a role in addressing housing needs. Communities throughout rural Minnesota have a shortage of available housing and Pine County is no different. A shortage of available housing hurts our local business and our ability to compete for economic investment in the county.

Pine County Board of Commissioners –District 4

The District 4 seat on the Pine County Board of Commissioners represents the Cities of Bruno, Denham, Finlayson, Rutledge, Sturgeon Lake, Willow River and the townships of Pine Lake, Bremen, Kettle River, Norman, Birch Creek, Sturgeon Lake and Windemere.



John Mikrot Jr. (Incumbent)

Occupation: Currently I am a small business owner, and a farmer. I am also a current Pine County Commissioner.
Three most recent or significant roles in civic involvement:
 I am on the committee for Pine County's Chemical Health Coalition, the East-Central Regional Development Committee, and recently spoke at the rally for Willow River's C.I.P. in Moose Lake.

What are your top three priorities for the county?: 1. To provide the best possible services to the citizens of Pine County with the least possible financial impact. 2. To bring my knowledge and common sense to the board so that we can best serve the citizens of Pine County. 3. To equally and impartially represent all citizens of Pine County.

How can the county provide adequate services while being mindful of property tax impact?: Getting bids for services that are provided by the county (such as road construction/repairs, insurance for county employees, etc.).

What can the Board of Commissioners do to help Pine County prosper?: The Board can help Pine County prosper by always being willing to explore new avenues to bring businesses in to the county, by exploring housing options for those who need them, and by using commonsense and being fiscally physically responsible.

JJ Waldham

Candidate Waldham was contacted but did not respond to the questionnaire .

Scope out other local and national races on our website at PineCountyCourier.com



Terry Lovgren

Occupation: I have served the residents of Pine County the past 34 years beginning in the Assessor's Office working my way up to my current position of Chief Deputy Auditor. It is because of conversations with many of you I feel have led me to want to serve you as your County Commissioner

Three most recent or significant roles in civic involvement:
 - Hinckley Township Supervisor: During my 15 years serving on this board I helped establish our townships zoning laws, worked with the other supervisors with road maintenance, budgeting, paying of bills and all other situations that needed attention.

- Volunteer with TreeHouse Sandstone: bringing hope to teens. Working with teens for 5 years being part of a weekly support group listening to them, helping them communicate with their peers and giving them positive support while allowing them to be vulnerable.

- Foster parent/family: Created a safe home to over 50 foster children giving them unconditional love and support, helping them to find meaning at a time life was difficult.

What are your top three priorities for the county?: To be fiscally responsible and transparent with the spending of taxpayer dollars.

To help our small businesses to succeed during these difficult times giving residents the opportunity to continue working and being self-sufficient. It is these businesses that keep our county stable allowing growth and self-respect of our citizens. Pine County allocated funds locally from the CARES Act legislation which is a great start, I would like to continue to seek ways to help our businesses and residents be the best they can be.

I, along with most residents today, are concerned with family, safety and property - from the safety in our neighborhoods to the conditions of our roads. I would continue the service of keeping our community safe and roads maintained thru working together with our County Sheriff and County Highway Engineer as well as the Administrator and department heads while listening to the residents' concerns.

How can the county provide adequate services while being mindful of property tax impact?: The commissioners must take time to research ideas when presented making sure that it is the best option for our county. This is the only way to make sure our taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and all services are met with thoughtful consideration.

What can the Board of Commissioners do to help Pine County prosper?: Pine County Commissioners are elected to be public servants for their constituents. It is vital the residents of Pine County's voices are heard. Residents are the eyes and ears with what is going in our communities. We must listen, then make decisions based on researching what you are telling us. For example, there was a home that had been forfeited multiple times, when it came time for the prior owner to repurchase this property again residents requested the application be denied due to illegal activities. We investigated their concerns; the findings were as they had stated. Our office, for the only time in my 34 years of service, recommended the county commissioners deny this repurchase whereby protecting our residents. At the end of the day, if we do not take time to listen to our constituents, we fail them and our county as a whole.

VOTE EARLY BY MAIL

To vote by mail, apply to have an absentee ballot mailed to you. You do not need to be registered to apply.

- For your** ballot to count, remember this important information:
- **Read** the instructions that come with your ballot carefully.
 - **Your** signature envelope might have a box for a witness to complete and sign. Due to COVID-19, there is no witness requirement for registered voters for the September 3, 2020 election. Non-registered voters will still need a witness, to indicate their proof of residence.
 - **Mail** the ballot and forms back right away after you finish. Your returned ballot must be postmarked on or before Election Day (November 3, 2020) and received by your county by the day before the county canvass, which may take place on the second or third day following the election.

Apply for absentee ballot:

To request an absentee ballot for the August primary and/or November general election, use the online absentee application at mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us. Return your completed absentee application to your county election office by mail, fax or email.

Application deadline

You can apply for a ballot any time during the year, except the day of the election. Leave time for election officials to mail your ballot. Your returned ballot must be postmarked on or before Election Day (November 3, 2020) and received by your county by the day before the county canvass, which may take place on the second or third day following the election.

Deadline to return your ballot

Your ballot will not count if it is received after the deadline. It must be postmarked on or before Election Day (November 3, 2020) and received by your county by the day before the county canvass, which may take place on the second or third day following the election. Return your ballot by mail or package delivery service (such as FedEx or UPS). You can also return your ballot in person no later than 3 p.m. on Election Day to the election office that sent your ballot. You can drop off ballots for up to three other voters. You will need to show identification with name and signature when returning a ballot for someone else.

