



**Minnesota
Matters**
COALITION

2024 Candidate Guide

An introduction for prospective pro-business legislative candidates

As the results of the last legislative session made clear, it's more important than ever to help elect pro-business candidates who want to protect and advance Minnesota's economy. The Minnesota Matters coalition informs voters about changes in Minnesota election laws that allow for early and absentee voting; makes voters aware of key election dates; encourages employers and employees to attend their local precinct caucuses; and engages in what promises to be an important election in our state.

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Introduction

Elections are the lifeblood of representative democracy. The individuals whom voters elect have a decisive impact on the course of Minnesota's current and future prosperity and livability.

Many competing interests and constituencies attempt to influence political elections and policymaking in Minnesota. While Minnesotans may disagree on issues, few dispute the importance of a healthy and diverse economy, a vibrant culture of invention and innovation and the high-quality, good-paying jobs that the private sector provides. For that reason, the Minnesota Matters coalition encourages the election of people who understand both the central importance of what it takes to run and grow a business, as well as private sector businesses' value and benefit to the state.

Improving the state's economy is not a partisan issue. Minnesota is served best when members of major political parties work together to address tax, regulatory, education, workforce, environmental and infrastructure issues. The Minnesota Matters coalition welcomes and encourages pro-business candidates of all political affiliations to run for public office.

This *2024 Candidate guide* is intended to offer helpful, initial advice to prospective and declared candidates, family members and close supporters of a candidate or anyone involved in the recruitment of candidates. It is a companion to the *Minnesota Matters 2024 Candidate recruitment guide*, intended for use by those involved in local efforts to search for pro-business candidates.

This guide presents general information and advice. It is not a substitute for local political knowledge, attendance at campaign schools and the substantial resources available from legislative caucus campaign committees, political parties, local chambers of commerce, the Minnesota Chamber and other trade organizations.

If you are running or thinking about running for public office, we congratulate you for considering something which few people do and has great impact on the direction of the state.

Although the information in this guide is oriented toward candidates for the Minnesota State Legislature, it may also be helpful for candidacies for local office, like the county board of commissioners, city council or school board.

The Minnesota Matters coalition stands ready to support pro-business candidates in the 2024 elections and beyond.

The opportunity to serve



The State Legislature plays a significant role in affecting Minnesota's prosperity and is arguably the single most influential institution in the state.

The Legislature passes the laws governing Minnesota's residents, impacting its businesses and society as a whole. Every two years, it appropriates tens of billions of dollars collected from taxpayers for a wide variety of activities. It determines what local governments and state agencies can or cannot do. While governors have a large say in policymaking and can shape public debate, the Legislature has the leading role in lawmaking.

Among state legislatures, Minnesota's Legislature is comparatively large, with 201 members: 67 Senators and 134 Representatives, but its membership is still extremely exclusive. Fewer than 6,000 people have served in the Minnesota Legislature during its 174 years as an organized government. That is rare company, indeed.

Some are high-minded: Service to the community, championing of a particular cause, a passion to give a voice to communities or points of view that are underrepresented or underserved or a thirst for justice.

Others are more personal: Political ambition, the desire to exercise some measure of influence or power, achieving personal renown or ego gratification. As in all politics, the motivations for most legislative candidates are a mixture of civic-mindedness and self-interest.

Those who run for public office, especially for the Minnesota Legislature, carry a wide variety of life experiences and perspectives.

They represent different genders, personal belief systems, ethnic and racial backgrounds, economic statuses and generations. In many respects, the Legislature reflects the broad diversity of Minnesotans at large, which is how it should be.

Compared to the inertia of the U.S. Congress and a more limited range of issues dealt with at the local level, the State Legislature provides its members with a greater opportunity to shape policy on a broader spectrum than any other office in American politics.

There are many reasons why people consider running for and serving in the Legislature.

Risks and rewards



Running for and holding office requires sacrifices.

Candidates expose themselves to public scrutiny, surrender large amounts of time to politics, may need to put career plans on hold, perhaps make less money and ask family members, friends and coworkers to sacrifice, too.

If you are a candidate or prospective candidate, it is critical that you have a realistic appreciation for both the benefits and downsides of campaigning and serving in office.

There are pros and cons to most aspects of running for and serving in office. Every person has a different tolerance for the risks, and different lengths to which they would go to seek the rewards. You should talk to several current or former legislators who can relate their personal experiences, and help you judge whether legislative service is right for you.

If you run, your personal and professional lives will be impacted in three important areas:

Time | Money | Reputation

Time

Politics is time-consuming. You can devote a huge amount of your own and others' time to running for office without a guarantee of success.

If you are elected, legislative service often proves to be a very busy "part-time" job: Months away from your day job during the annual sessions, travel time, meetings, parades and other district events throughout the year, long hours responding to constituents on the phone, by email, or in person and lots of time on the campaign trail – from door-knocking to fundraising.

In addition to these commitments, if you are focused on truly accomplishing things while in office, you will devote even more time learning issues, building strong working relationships with colleagues, outside experts, lobbyists and others, and attending seminars and even more meetings.

The time demands can be more workable for candidates in safe districts for their party, those who come from certain career fields which give them scheduling flexibility, and those who are near the beginning or end of their working careers. But every legislator spends a significant amount of time performing the job.

Compensation

The annual salary of a House or Senate member is \$48,250. During the legislative sessions, members are eligible for an \$86 per diem for living and travel expenses. They also receive generous health care benefits and retirement benefits. Those living more than 50 miles from the Capitol receive a housing allowance as well. The truth is, legislative service doesn't just change your lifestyle, but often involves financial sacrifice.

Reputation

If legislative service is a major time commitment with little monetary compensation, why do it? Because public service generates other forms of fulfillment which can outweigh the sacrifices. Serving as a legislator often enhances your reputation as a leader within your community and affiliated groups, and as a person of influence. It is an experience that can lead to new career opportunities or growth within your existing career.

But this benefit is not guaranteed. Legislators and candidates must be on their guard. Reputations have been damaged – not enhanced – when public figures are not careful. Public figures are regularly open to criticism. Carefully managing your community involvement and constituent responses are important to keeping your community profile favorable. Votes or actions on controversial issues may cause you to lose friends. Problems in your personal life or finances will become public.

You will maintain and enhance your personal reputation by conducting yourself in an honest, fair-minded, pleasant way in an election campaign and in office. But be forewarned: In the public eye, one ill-considered public comment or social media post can quickly undo your reputation and public personal brand.

Public service is important and can be immensely gratifying on many levels. The reason for emphasizing the cautions listed above is that politics can be very heady. Too many would-be candidates are seduced by the fun, exciting trappings of a political campaign and public office but ignore the human realities.

Before you decide to run, understand thoroughly what you are getting yourself into. Do a thorough self-assessment and make sure this is the right time in your life and career to run. If it is and you move forward, you may enjoy – after expending a lot of hard work! – one of the most fulfilling opportunities of your life.

Running as a pro-business candidate

Once you make the decision to run for office, you must cultivate your personal brand.

As a candidate, you run with certain labels attached, whether you choose them for yourself or others use them to describe you. Your party affiliation is the most prominent of these labels, while others might relate to your job (e.g., “farmer” or “small business owner”), your geographic background, ideology (e.g., “moderate” or “fiscal conservative”) or other associations.

Running as a pro-business – or pro-jobs – candidate is another descriptor you may apply to yourself.

What qualities make a pro-business candidate?

At the outset, you should acknowledge that some people may make assumptions about what this description means, and those assumptions may be just that. “Pro-business” should not be interpreted as a code word meaning “Republican” or “conservative.” On the contrary, there are Democrats and political independents who are pro-business, and there are a number of Republicans who are not particularly pro-business. And “pro-business” does not necessarily mean that a candidate subscribes to only certain views on environmental protections, taxes or other issues.

It is important that, in describing yourself as pro-business, you are prepared to explain what it means in the context of your candidacy. Of course, no single definition of “pro-business” can satisfy everyone. Businesspeople across the state may disagree based on local politics and culture. However, the following characteristics of a “pro-business” candidate may be helpful:

A commitment to building upon and improving the state’s business and economic environment

Pro-business leaders share the business community’s goals of job growth and economic vitality for Minnesota. They understand the importance of tax and fiscal policy that improve Minnesota’s competitiveness and foster economic growth. They recognize how government regulations, infrastructure, health care and energy costs, and labor mandates impact employers’ abilities to conduct business in Minnesota. And they know that education and workforce development are key to sustaining and developing Minnesota’s workforce.

An understanding of and empathy for the challenges and responsibilities of establishing and running a business, small or large

Public officials demonstrate their pro-business stance when they regularly examine and act on policy issues from the standpoint of the owners, managers and employees of businesses across the spectrum of industries and professions.

A willingness to find practical solutions to the state's major needs and problems

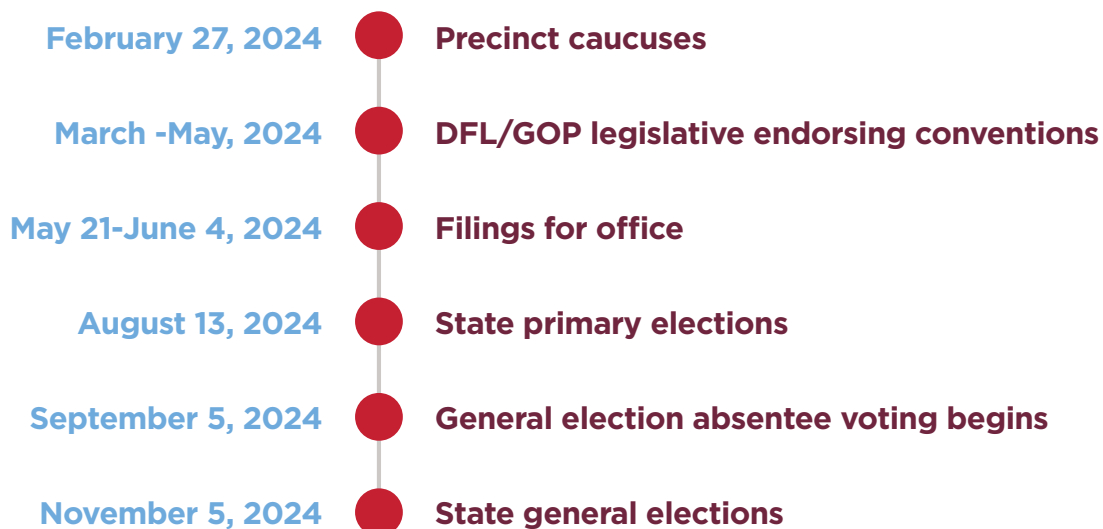
A positive personality, ability to sense changing attitudes and curiosity about other points of view are critical traits for both a candidate on the campaign trail and for a businessperson listening to the marketplace. They are also signs of a person who wants to accomplish things – not just score political points. Adherence to political principles is an important strength in politicians; however, the most effective policymakers are those who make a habit of working across the aisle and demonstrate openness to compromise in order to move good policy forward.

Most Minnesotans agree that the creation and retention of good jobs are essential and support a “pro-jobs” agenda. Expressed in the terms above, being pro-business can be a strong, positive attribute for your personal brand and candidacy.

Getting your campaign started

Once you have decided to run, you need to get organized.

First, you should acquaint yourself with the timeline of essential events in the elections process:



Next, you need to **be able to tell voters and supporters why you're running**. It is surprising how many candidates have difficulty articulating this! You should develop and practice your elevator speech, a 15- to 30-second description of your reason(s) for running. You will repeat it literally thousands of times during the campaign – while raising money, door-knocking, offering encouraging and thankful words to campaign volunteers, and even to yourself when some personal encouragement is needed after a long, grueling day on the campaign trail. Make sure it is sincere, explain why you want to serve your community and solve problems affecting our state.

Election campaigns are a team sport. A candidate cannot win on his or her own. You need your family and close circle of friends to be supportive and have a clear understanding of the demands on you and themselves. You need committed volunteers – the more, the better. Most of the work in a legislative campaign is inevitably done by a core group of super-volunteers. You should begin organizing your committee with a few key principles in mind:

A campaign manager needs to be ultra-committed and well organized. They are managers of tasks and people and should have the ability to encourage volunteers. The manager should also be given the authority to say “no” to the candidate when necessary. **It is a very bad idea for the candidate to be, in name or practice, his or her own campaign manager.**

Every good campaign has a steering committee (kitchen cabinet), made up of people who are connected to the community and district, know the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, have and exercise good judgment. This group should be a sounding board for the candidate and for the campaign manager and be prepared to offer necessary but difficult advice if problems develop. **Typically, a campaign chair (usually a well-known member of the community) convenes this group.**

Whether the candidate likes fundraising or not (not all do), having a strong finance committee is key to a well-rounded and well-funded campaign. Leaders in the local business community can play an invaluable role here.

Organize the campaign's work so that you don't burn out volunteers. Involve several people, each with a manageable task, rather than relying on only a few who quickly get overwhelmed.

Make sure all those associated with the campaign speak and act in a manner that reflects well on the campaign. Avoid offensive social media posts. Don't make off-color jokes. Don't steal other candidates' lawn signs.

Understand the legal requirements of campaigning (see section on legal requirements). You will need to designate a chair and treasurer, open a bank account and file your committee with the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board.

Be prepared at the very beginning to raise money. If you find it difficult or distasteful, try to embrace it. Most candidates dislike fundraising. But some candidates are exhilarated by it, even feed off of it. Successful fundraising means that you are getting people to invest in your candidacy. The most prevalent reason campaigns fail is a lack of sufficient fundraising.

Also, at the outset, talk to local party leaders and activists, and prepare (most likely) to seek the party endorsement (see section on endorsements and nominations). Speak with former and current legislators for advice.

Contact the legislative caucus for advice. They hold campaign schools, can provide detailed district voting profiles and precinct targeting information, often help shape candidates' messaging and campaign plans and are a source for richly experienced advice. For candidates in highly competitive seats, the caucus campaign committees provide even more direct support.

Build your network of contacts in key groups in the district. As a pro-business candidate, your goal should be to get business people attracted by and to your campaign.

Although it is not a first priority, within a few weeks after your campaign launch you should **have a campaign plan and budget.** Your campaign manager can get help putting this together with input from the legislative caucus or people in the community who have helped run campaigns in the past.

Finally, **be humble...or be prepared to be humbled.** You are running for office to represent others. Though voters expect you as a candidate for public office to talk about your opinions, they will give you more serious thought if you take the time to listen to and understand them.

The party endorsement/nomination



In recent decades, nearly all Minnesota state legislators have been nominated as candidates by either the Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) or Republican parties. Running as an independent or third-party candidate rarely provides a good chance for success.

Minnesota's two major political parties are largely organized on a grassroots level. This can be both a blessing and a curse. The benefits are that ordinary citizens can easily get involved, fresh ideas can gain

currency and new candidates can emerge quickly. However, it also means that both parties can be more easily influenced by special interest politics.

Other people may be running against you for your party's nomination in your district. You will need to make a decision whether to pursue endorsement at the beginning of your candidacy. You will be asked about it immediately upon your public announcement.

The DFL and Republican parties will endorse legislative candidates at local conventions in the spring of 2024, before the filing period opens. The party endorsement process is not a legal mechanism to get on the ballot but, in most cases, it has the practical effect of narrowing the field down to a single candidate in each party for the primary election and can be tantamount to winning the nomination.

When choosing among two or more candidates, party endorsing convention decisions can sometimes be ideologically driven and even reflect opinions outside of the mainstream attitude. But some conventions have a strong pragmatic streak and choose the most electable candidate to represent their party in the general election. As you assemble your core campaign team, it is wise to include individuals who have been through endorsement processes in the past who can offer advice on the general tone and processes involved in both contested and uncontested endorsing conventions.

As a candidate, an endorsement can give you access to valuable official party resources, including voter and contributor lists, the assistance of party volunteers, sample ballots, coordinated voter contact and get-out-the-vote efforts.

In rare instances, a candidate may decide to bypass the endorsing convention altogether or run in the primary, even if they unsuccessfully sought the endorsement, to avoid leaving the fate of their candidacy in the hands of a relatively small number of party insiders. However, it is important to understand that the odds are usually against this course. It is rare in Minnesota politics that an unendorsed candidate defeats an endorsed one in a legislative primary election. Party resources will be deployed for the

endorsee and against you, and most party primary voters give the benefit of the doubt to the endorsee. As a result, in the vast majority of cases, candidates are best served by submitting to the party endorsement process, even if the candidate does not closely align with the ideological tendencies of the local party activists.

While the process of seeking the endorsement can be time- and energy-consuming, you can use it to your advantage. Approach it with a positive attitude as the phase of the campaign in which you strengthen yourself as a candidate, test and build your volunteer team and prepare yourself for the larger battles ahead. You may find that the endorsement phase makes you a better candidate. For this reason, you should gain a firm understanding of the political complexities and personalities of your local party early in your candidacy.

You can help control your destiny by bringing your own supporters into the party precinct caucuses and getting them elected as convention delegates. Legislative endorsements can be decided by as few as a couple dozen delegates. Filling the delegate spots with your campaign's supporters can make an enormous difference.

Your campaign should organize slates in each precinct of your supporters ahead of precinct caucuses. As soon as the precinct caucuses are finished, obtain the delegate list, and start contacting them right away and continuously, right up to the endorsing convention (which is typically just a few days or weeks after precinct caucuses). The most effective techniques for winning over delegates involve direct contact from the candidate (one-on-one or small group meetings, door-knocking and phone calls) as well as direct mail and volunteer contacts.

While party endorsement is usually worth earning, be on guard that the endorsement process doesn't damage your personal brand as being too closely associated to ideological positions which may be detrimental in the eyes of mainstream voters. Be prepared to win the endorsement on your own terms.

The leaders of the legislative caucuses, who are typically politically pragmatic, are especially keen to see the most electable candidates earn party endorsement, win the party nomination in the primary election, and vie for the seat for their caucus in November. These leaders can provide advice and help on how to navigate through the party endorsement process.

Running for office is HARD WORK



While building a strong campaign organization involving others is a key to success, the candidate should never think that others will win the election for them.

Make no mistake about it: There will be times of loneliness for the candidate. You need to be self-motivated and find ways to press on in tough situations and on tough days.

Math is important to campaigns. Your campaign's end goal is to earn at least 50 percent plus one of the votes. Three-way races are increasingly common and all you need is the most votes. A mathematical approach to your campaign can be vital to success. The number of votes you need in each precinct, based on past voting patterns, the number of households you have to door-knock in a precinct, the number of daylight hours you have to campaign, the number of times you should door-knock the entire district, the number of contributors at some reasonable average contribution amount to reach your fundraising goals, the number of days you have left to door-knock and raise money and the votes you need in each precinct, etc. Dealing with all these numbers

doesn't have to be daunting, but it does require organization, accountability and determination.

REMEMBER: Keep the big picture of your campaign in mind when talking to individuals or saying good or bad things about your campaign or your opponent. Don't be overconfident or upset by individual anecdotes.

The single most important activity for a candidate is door-knocking. Start it early, do it daily and don't stop until the polls close on Election Day. It will make the difference between winning and losing. Push yourself and get ready to wear out a few pairs of shoes (if you don't, you'll probably lose the election). You'll probably lose weight in the process and be in better shape than when you started the campaign. Get comfortable in coping with dogs. Use sunscreen in the summer. And learn the laws around crossing a threshold and distributing campaign literature in Minnesota.

Through all the door-knocking, fundraising, candidate forums, etc. – no matter how hard you work and tired you may get – remember to stay “on,” be positive, show appreciation to your volunteers, always be respectful to voters (and everyone else), and gracious to political opponents and those who are not supporting you. You may be exhausted by Election Day, but you will feel good about running a campaign that reflects you in the best possible light.

Legal information

Running for public office requires knowledge of and compliance with the state's elections laws. Candidates and their key campaign workers must become aware of these legal requirements and should ask for advice or help when in doubt.

The Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board provides an updated, user-friendly Legislative and Constitutional Office Candidate Handbook on its website at https://cfb.mn.gov/pdf/publications/handbooks/candidate_handbook.pdf?t=1701635312. It provides comprehensive information about financial compliance in an easy-to-use format and is essential reading for candidates and their key campaign volunteers.

Registering a committee

A candidate for legislative or other state office must register a campaign committee with the Campaign Finance Board within 14 days of raising or spending more than \$750 for the campaign. Registering a committee requires creating a committee name, setting up a bank account in the name of the committee, and the designation of a treasurer and committee chair. The registration form is available on the Campaign Finance Board's website (www.cfboard.state.mn.us).

Financial reporting

When the candidate's campaign committee has been filed, its treasurer must properly maintain financial records and periodically report receipts and expenditures to the Campaign Finance Board. The reporting requirement is serious business, so a competent, honest and well organized treasurer is an essential person on the candidate's team. The board offers training sessions and online tutorials to help campaign treasurers learn how to file reports correctly. See the Campaign Finance Board's website and handbook for details.

Fundraising

Minnesota election laws regulate how much money candidates may raise from particular sources (private individuals, lobbyists, political action committees and party units). These laws also limit campaign spending if the candidate chooses to accept partial public financing. See the Campaign Finance Board's website and handbook for details.

Filing for office

The candidate must officially file an Affidavit of Candidacy during the filing period (May 21 – June 4, 2024) to have their name on the primary (if necessary) or general election ballot. The affidavit is filed with the Minnesota Secretary of State's office or local county elections office (depending on the district), along with a filing fee or sufficient petition signatures. See the "Elections and Voting" page of the Minnesota Secretary of State's website (www.sos.state.mn.us) to find more information and forms.

Campaign practices

Political campaigns are tough and sometimes rough, but there are laws which govern the conduct of campaign activity. The Minnesota Secretary of State's office publishes a campaign manual of all applicable laws, which can be found on its website. The political parties and caucuses typically offer a review of these laws in their campaign schools and can often provide helpful advice to individual candidates. Candidates must be aware that some local jurisdictions also have ordinances affecting campaign activity, notably on the timing and placement of lawn signs.

