



★ MINNESOTA ★

PUTTING MINNESOTANS *FIRST*

AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE

# Why Minnesota Needs America First Policies

Minnesota is known by two common nicknames. Its official slogan, L'Etoile du Nord, “Star of the North,” reflects the state’s deep connection to the rural and urban history of the Upper Midwest. The other well-known nickname, featured on state license plates for decades, is “Land of 10,000 Lakes.” This name highlights how the Great Lakes, the Mississippi River, and the state’s many interior waterways fostered a network of settlements that supported both rural and industrial communities that have long relied on mills, mining, and especially steel and ironwork to sustain their economies. Mid-sized cities like Rochester and Duluth grew and prospered during this time, and today stand as reminders of once vibrant cities.

Granted statehood in 1858, Minnesota grew rapidly as the Nation expanded westward, with many new settlements emerging along the Mississippi River corridor. The currents of St. Anthony Falls, the [head of navigation](#) for the Mississippi River, were strong enough to drive a thriving milling industry, fueling the development of Minneapolis and St. Paul on opposite sides of the river. These cities, collectively known as the Twin Cities, became a major grain hub of North America. St. Paul, notably, became the railroad and shipping hub that exported grain and other products produced in Minnesota’s interior. Today, while the Twin Cities metropolitan area has diversified into post-industrial sectors (such as high-tech, the medical device industry, retail, and finance), the manufacturing and mining industries and a strong agribusiness industry remain in the region as a reminder of this sector’s foundational presence in the state.

Minnesota has a proud history. It’s the state that helped save the Union, where volunteers from the 1st Minnesota Infantry Regiment fought valiantly at Gettysburg. Once known for its world-class industry, educational achievements, innovation, and growth, Minnesota proudly symbolized “The Good Life” when Governor Wendell Anderson stood beaming with a Northern Pike on the 1973 cover of Time magazine.

Of course, no account of Minnesota’s culture would be complete without mentioning its harsh, snowy winters. Enduring these long, frigid months demands not only resilience and industriousness but also a strong sense of community, hospitality, and neighborliness. In popular culture, this unique blend of traits has come to be known as “Minnesota nice,” a term that captures the famously friendly nature of the state’s residents.

## Minnesota's Harmonious Past in Tension with Its Tumultuous Present

It may sound counterintuitive that a state with a reputation of “niceness” and a history of heavy industry that drew workers from many ethnicities and cultures should, in the last decade, be marred with mass civil unrest and political violence. From the 2020 race riots, which were sparked by occurrences in Minnesota, to the 2025 assassinations of two elected officials by a deranged man planning to kill many more people in a spree of political violence, the state has recently been dubbed the “[Capital of Chaos](#).”

Indeed, no one who lived through 2020 can forget the racial strife that erupted following the distribution of a video capturing the May 2020 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the mayhem that ensued in the wake of Floyd’s death which led to a week of intense civil unrest, with [half a billion dollars in property damage](#) and damage to more than [1,500 structures](#) in Minneapolis and St. Paul alone. The violence culminated in the deployment of the National Guard and the ensuing arrest of more than [600 people](#) for arson, assault, and even attempted murder during that initial week of chaos.

The ensuing disturbances and radical lurch left in the months and years following the Floyd incident imprinted an indelible mark on Minnesota and gave rise to its reputation as a place systemically unable to protect its [small businesses, support law enforcement, and maintain civil order](#). As elected officials and activists launched a new era of a budding anti-law enforcement movement, the Minneapolis City Council stood on a stage adorned with the words “Defund the Police,” which would catapult around the Nation. This also led to the perception that state leaders are unable or unwilling to fight the chaos. This reality was reaffirmed by the state’s poor administration in other areas where citizens rely on their government. Minnesota seems determined to leave its complex and onerous state tax system in place, maintaining a top income tax bracket at an astonishing 9.85%, [one of the Nation’s highest](#), while schools produce worse outcomes and fall in comparison to its peers, regulations and unfunded mandates multiply, and the state’s hostility to businesses and job creators of all sizes is codified in statute. Starting in 2024, the state added a new 1% tax on investment earnings exceeding \$1 million. The AARP has calculated the average [cumulative tax burden of state and local taxes at a staggering 8.12%](#).

The ongoing, years-long chaos, lack of public safety, and high taxes have all contributed to the state’s cost of living, [notably for seniors](#). Combined, these have undoubtedly been factors in the state’s sluggish population growth. Hindered from attracting investment and new businesses, the goal of transitioning the state’s historic industrial areas to the new economy has stalled. Notably, [the state avoided losing a congressional seat](#) after the

2020 census by just 26 people. Entrenched leftist leaders have largely been free to impose their ideology on public education and the administration of justice. Additionally, the state's inconsistent and fragmented election laws have compromised citizens' confidence in election integrity and the protection of their votes. Sadly, a tangible exit of common-sense voters has been driven by these radical policies, which have rendered their state unrecognizable.

Minnesota needs an immediate infusion of America First policies to revitalize its rural and post-industrial areas while securing its urban dwellers in the Twin Cities. Minnesotans deserve to be secure in their neighborhoods with full access to public space, free of anarchy. Entrepreneurs need to be able to keep more of their profits, and seniors must be able to subsist on their fixed incomes. The ongoing, decades-long slow growth and even the recent phenomenon of residents fleeing the state both indicate a potential breaking point.

## This is the mission and vision of the America First Policy Institute's Minnesota Chapter: End the chaos and restore the state's livability.

The America First Policy Institute's state chapters serve as more than just regional branches; they are purpose-driven centers designed to transform our national America First vision into tangible legislative achievements, meaningful policy engagement, and enduring cultural impact. The Minnesota chapter stands out as a bold, scalable, and innovative blueprint for advancing America First policies within the state. Rooted in policy expertise, energized by active citizen participation, and committed to reshaping the political landscape, it represents a dynamic force for change.

Establishing a state chapter in Minnesota goes beyond simply promoting policies—it's about cultivating influence, mobilizing communities, and creating a lasting foundation for long-term policy impact and building a resilient grassroots movement. By prioritizing listening, developing thoughtful policy solutions, recruiting bold legislators, and engaging communities across the state, we're not just shaping legislation—we're building a movement. America First is more than a slogan; it is a strategic effort to restore our institutions, revive civic courage, and return governance to the people.

# *We base our work on the following policies:*

## **Lower Minnesota's COST OF LIVING and Revitalizing the State's ECONOMY**

Revitalizing Minnesota's economy requires a comprehensive approach that strengthens former industrial towns, supports rural and once-thriving manufacturing regions, and lowers the cost of living for all residents. Targeted tax credits will encourage investment in struggling areas, while reduced sales and property taxes will ease the burden on small businesses. At the same time, cutting burdensome regulations will lower consumer prices and boost business growth. Limiting the ability of local jurisdictions to raise sales taxes will further remove barriers to the consumption of necessities and help increase sales. To ensure lasting growth, implementing proactive public safety measures will protect business owners and promote stability, while expanding essential services in rural communities and disadvantaged urban neighborhoods will create broader economic opportunity.

## **Restore FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY and Reform State and Local Taxes**

Restoring fiscal responsibility in Minnesota means streamlining government, cutting unnecessary bureaucracy, and ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent prudently. These policies would include lowering the overall tax burden, especially by reducing the state income tax and repealing the recently imposed capital gains tax. These reforms are essential to easing the financial strain on seniors, small businesses, and working families, allowing them to keep more of what they earn and encouraging private sector growth in the state.

For more information and policy recommendations, check out AFPI's website today!

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## **Restore ORDER and PEACE to Minnesota Communities**

Never again must state and local leaders permit the violence and civil unrest that persisted through the initial years of the 2020s. Elected officials and law enforcement must be firm that violence, private property destruction, and occupying public spaces will not be tolerated, and that violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The state should also restore respect for law enforcement by supporting, ensuring adequate funding levels, and providing due process when allegations of misconduct are made.

## **Combating FRAUD, WASTE, and ABUSE**

Minnesota is uniquely challenged with [ongoing fraud](#). Even Joe Biden's U.S. attorney was forced to admit that "no other states have had the kinds of problems we've had with government [fraud](#)." With documented fraud totaling in the hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years, the time is now for Minnesota to strengthen its state auditor's office to aggressively oversee all state agencies, especially those administering high-risk funds. The state must also work toward tightening eligibility and oversight for public programs.

## **Protecting Minnesotans by ENFORCING IMMIGRATION LAWS**

Illegal immigration in Minnesota threatens public safety and puts a strain on hardworking taxpayers. Sanctuary policies create safe havens for illegal aliens, straining resources and endangering communities. Offering taxpayer-funded benefits like [in-state college tuition](#) to illegal aliens is misguided, diverting aid from Minnesotans who struggle to afford higher education. These incentives also attract human trafficking and exploitation. Minnesota must put its citizens first and reject policies that draw illegal aliens to the state.

# A Strategic Approach for Minnesota

To develop these strategies in Minnesota, AFPI-Minnesota brings key partners together who can help build out these policy prescriptions. Minnesota has a legacy of liberty and freedom-oriented thought-leaders, including academic institutions, think tanks, civic groups, and religious organizations. Many of these organizations can be counted on to help reverse the decline of this great state.

## WE WILL BUILD THE **AMERICA FIRST** MOVEMENT FOR MINNESOTA THROUGH:

### Engagement

By connecting with Minnesota communities, we strengthen alliances and foster new relationships.

### Policy Development

We are building out an agenda that develops Minnesota-specific policies and solutions, tapping into best practices from academic experts, policy practitioners, and other thought leaders.

### Research Partnerships

By bringing together like-minded Minnesotans, we work as a force multiplier for each other's work so that our assets go even further.

### Events

By regularly convening speakers and meetings across Minnesota, we reinforce the message that there are still many hardworking, honest, and thoughtful Minnesotans who want to save their state.

By mobilizing these efforts, we are expanding upon the America First Agenda and addressing the needs of hardworking Minnesotans.

**IT IS NOT TOO LATE, AND IT NEVER WILL BE TOO LATE.**

For an in-depth understanding of our work, please visit  
[americafirstpolicy.com/state-chapter/america-first-minnesota](https://americafirstpolicy.com/state-chapter/america-first-minnesota)



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