

We do need government...but smaller is better.

For my Democratic friends, let me repeat this: We do need government. We do need a government to handle public safety, courts, snow plowing roads, and many other tasks that do make sense for government to do. The problem is that we could do just as well with a much SMALLER level of government, both in terms of its size and intrusiveness into our lives.

Minnesota ranks 21st in total population, but ranks 5th in the size of its legislature¹. Minnesota supports a total of 201 legislators, far exceeding our neighbors in Iowa (150), Wisconsin (132), North Dakota (141), and South Dakota (105). Here's how Minnesota compares against other states of similar size on a legislator-per-capita:

	Population	Legislators	Per Capita	
Minnesota	5,132,799	201	25,536	
Wisconsin	5,536,201	132	41,941	64%
Washington	6,287,759	147	42,774	68%
Tennessee	5,962,959	132	45,174	77%
Missouri	5,800,310	197	29,443	15%
Maryland	5,600,388	188	29,789	17%

As state senator, I would support and continue to author Gen Olson's 2011 legislature reduction plan at the beginning of EVERY legislative session, which would reduce the number of legislators in Saint Paul by over 17% (Senators reduced from 67 to 56, House Reps reduced from 134 to 112). This would proportion 7 Senators and 14 House Reps for each Congressional District. Not only would the State save money on all the legislator's salaries, we would also be able to reduce the cost of staffing. While the savings would only amount to a million or two, this is spending we can certainly make do without. Senator Olson's bill did pass many committees in the 2011 legislative session and had support from both side of the aisle.

Making unelected government more accountable

Many of my constituents have become very frustrated with unelected governmental bodies, which have the power to tax you, but are almost completely unaccountable to anyone. The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and the Metropolitan Council are two such bodies that wield great authority with little or no accountability. Their members are appointed to represent distinct areas, but are more a reflection of the people that actually appoint them than the people they represent.

Do I want to make them elected officials? Absolutely not. How much do you know about the views of your Soil and Water Conservation supervisor candidates before you vote for them? Or all those judges on every ballot? There has to be a solution. And there is.

These seats should continue to be appointed, as they are now. BUT...they need to be accountable to the cities they represent. When the Governor appoints the Met Council or the counties appoint their Watershed managers, at least 50% of the City Councils within their individual district area must to ratify the appointment. This would give YOUR local officials a voice in who represents YOU on these unelected bodies. This would force each Met Council appointee to seek support from each city and be more reflective of the needs of his/her district. And if the appointee was found to NOT be representative of the views of their district, they would not be ratified and the Governor would have to seek a new appointee.

I stand for smaller government, which is responsive and accountable. No elected official is closer to you or more approachable than your local elected officials. I stand for more local control where people have the strongest influence, not less.

We can do better, we can spend more wisely, and we don't need more taxes to do it. We need leadership that isn't afraid to look at things in a new way. I made it work in Mound...I can make it work in Saint Paul.

¹ <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=13527>