

August 31, 2021

Contact: Arne Helge Carlson
612-414-3126

A CALL TO ACTION: THE FUTURE IS TODAY

Today, we are at the crossroads. On one hand, we have the growing threats of climate change which threatens us with fires, droughts, and violent weather. On the other hand, we have government that is increasingly being captured by special interests which - as a result of the 2010 Supreme Court decision known as Citizens United - are able to flood the campaign coffers of incumbents with massive amounts of funding.

Here in Minnesota, legislative caucuses of both parties have fully embraced this new wealth. In 2020, the caucuses went into the campaigns with over \$26 million. If this were to be averaged out evenly between the 201 members of the Legislature, the amount available to each incumbent would be a staggering \$130,000. And this is money only from the caucus and does not include funds from the party or contributions to candidate committees.

This, along with partisan staffs that match or exceed those of political parties, certainly gives incumbents a huge re-election advantage. But, it comes at a cost to the public. A recent study by two Professors at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs concluded that generous donors were accorded special treatment by legislators, including being able to “shape” legislation. We fully agree that money influences policy. For two legislative sessions, we repeatedly petitioned the Governor and Legislature for hearings on legislation designed to protect the waters of Lake Superior and the BWCA.

Time and again, we pointed out the dangers of allowing the PolyMet and Twin Metals projects to become reality. Others petitioned for answers to Enbridge Line 3 which even the Minnesota Department of Commerce declared was not needed. At no point was there any willingness of elected officials to hold hearings or respond to legitimate inquiries. The Governor and legislative leaders simply stonewalled. We could not even get an answer as to why they denied a request by Minnesota’s health community for a health study of the drinking waters that would be affected by the seepage from the mines.

We pointed out the record of international corruption and environmental damage caused by the foreign corporations who own PolyMet and Twin Metals. We further noted the appalling lack of safety involved with Enbridge’s Line 3. We lauded the Governor of Michigan for taking decisive action in ordering the Enbridge pipeline project across Lake Michigan to close.

But, here in Minnesota, we have been unable to even get a hearing while big money donors were able to “shape” legislation. Now, many legislators will say this is not “Pay to Play.” If that be the case, then please tell the public what it is.

All of us have a responsibility to play a role in our governance. We must engage and engage now before it is too late. We cannot allow the forces of greed and the short term to convert public assets into private gain. Our quality drinking water is our most valuable and essential asset. It must not be for sale.

We can begin by adopting a constitutional amendment imposing term limits on Minnesota’s Constitutional officers and legislators. Caucus fundraising must be abolished along with partisan staffs and replaced by a system that provides robust public funding for campaigns as it is done elsewhere.

As authors of “The Future is Today” we welcome a broad public debate that will allow us to build a government that is focused on the long term well-being of the public and only that. Please download and read our report here: <https://www.thefutureistoday.info/>

Respectfully,

Arne Carlson

Minnesota Governor (GOP - Independent)
1991 - 1999

Tom Berkelman

State Legislator (DFL) Duluth
1977 - 1983

Janet Entzel

State Legislator (DFL) Minneapolis
1975 - 1984

Chris Knopf, Executive Director
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Duke Skorich, President
Zenith Research Group