

NINA MOINI: The governor has filled all the seats on the truth council he created in March to document the events that unfolded during this winter's federal immigration enforcement surge. Established by executive order, the council is a 15-member body tasked with collecting stories from the surge and synthesizing the findings into a final report. I'm joined now by the vice chair of the council, Jennifer Prestholdt, for more on the work that lies ahead. Thanks for coming back on the show, Jennifer.

**JENNIFER
PRESTHOLDT:** Hi, Nina. Thanks for having me.

NINA MOINI: What are the goals of this council specifically? You just heard us talking, perhaps, with our reporter, Estelle, about just the economic losses that people are trying to figure out how to address. There are a lot of other stories and other threads to pull on. So what are some of the goals of this council?

**JENNIFER
PRESTHOLDT:** Yeah, thank you for that first story. I think it really highlights the importance for a truth council like this. For every headline, there are hundreds and hundreds of stories. So the executive order sets out some very specific goals for the council, and that is to create a public record of what happened during Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS, and to create that public record, but also to make recommendations. And I think one thing that's really important is that the public record will show not just the harmful impacts, but also the incredible things that Minnesotans did to come together and stand up for their neighbors.

NINA MOINI: And I'm seeing here your deadline here is December 1. So almost to the end of the year here, you're going to be hosting some public forums and gaining stories that way. But who are the 15-- you don't have to list all the 15 people, but what agencies are represented? What stakeholders are represented when we're talking about this council?

**JENNIFER
PRESTHOLDT:** I think that the truth council is really an amazing group of people, leaders in a lot of different sectors representing a lot of different communities. The chair is retired judge Peter Cahill. I'm serving as the vice chair, as the representative of the Advocates for Human Rights. The ACLU will have a representative as well. And then there are 12 community members that the governor's office selected through an application process. And I think more than 150 people applied.

But there are folks that represent law enforcement, that represent faith communities, that represent greater Minnesota, metro Minnesota, international experts on human rights and immigration law. So really, it must have been a really difficult job to pick the 12 members. But we're lucky to be here in Minnesota where we have such a depth of experience and expertise. So I can't wait to get started working with the council members.

NINA MOINI: Can you describe for people what kinds of stories and testimonies the council is looking for?

**JENNIFER
PRESTHOLDT:** Yes, so the Advocates for Human Rights, as the implementing partner, has been working since the executive order was signed to set up a story collection process to make it possible for people to share their stories in a secure way. And it is an open process. It's a voluntary process. So people can share stories about what worked with their neighborhood group, to bring food to neighbors. They can share stories about what they experienced, if they were arrested or detained or if they witnessed anything.

NINA MOINI: So one thing I wanted to make sure we got to touch on, Jennifer, is why there is this need? How do you approach this? And what are you hoping comes out of assembling this report?

JENNIFER Well, I think that your first story actually touched on that and the importance of saying, we don't know what
PRESTHOLDT: happened to everyone. We don't know what happened to people that were removed. So this is really an incredible opportunity to get those stories.

And we have looked at what's happened in truth commission process, truth-telling mechanisms around the world, and seeing how that sharing the experiences and making recommendations for recovery and non-recurrence can have a really powerful impact and make change long-term. So what I'm hoping to see come out of this is that as many Minnesotans as possible, even if they're no longer in the state, share their stories and help us to create that public record about what happened.

NINA MOINI: Will you tell us a little bit more about how people can deliver their testimonies? You mentioned it could be secure, or is it anonymous? And then are there other materials that you want to collect from people, perhaps videos or photos?

JENNIFER Right, so we're able to collect all of that information. To submit your story, you can go to the Advocates website
PRESTHOLDT: and the Minnesota Truth Council page or to M-N-T-R-U-T-H-C-O-U-N-C-I-L dot O-R-G. That's mntruthcouncil.org. So you can submit a form in order to tell your story individually, and we'll connect you with a staff member or a volunteer story collector.

And most of them will be audio recor-- we'll go through the process, explain, get consent. I should say that people can share their stories anonymously, or they can choose to share them publicly. We're also looking at how working with community-- or we are working with community organizations, and so meeting people where they are. So whether it's coming to your community group and studying-- and doing a process there to share stories individually or as a group.

NINA MOINI: And it's important to mention, too, that this council doesn't have a law enforcement role, right? Because I think people may wonder about potential bad faith actors or if there's a need to verify some of the accounts that are coming in, or how you would even do that?

JENNIFER Yeah, thank you so much for bringing that up. This process was developed and led by community members, and
PRESTHOLDT: a very clear division between the investigations and prosecutions that will be done by prosecutors. This is set up to be a truth-telling mechanism for people to share their stories. So it's not a court. There's no subpoena power or anything like that. So what we're looking for is the big picture, the stories that will help us identify the patterns and practices of what happened during the operations.

NINA MOINI: And this idea of a truth council, we've seen similar mechanisms used in different parts of the world with different world events. What can you tell us about the history of this type of an assembling in the state of Minnesota? Is this different somehow?

JENNIFER This is groundbreaking. We're making history with doing this. But I think as you alluded to, this fits into the
PRESTHOLDT: context of what's happened in other situations around the world. So it fits into that in that it's independent, it is transparent, it's victim-centered. And also, it's been created by an official entity, created by executive order. So as far as I know, this is the first public-centered, large-scale truth-telling process in the United States.

NINA MOINI: Tell us before we have to go, Jennifer, when the first meeting is going to be for the council and how people can continue to follow the work and engage with it.

JENNIFER Yeah, so the council will be-- we'll have our orientation before the end of the month and work through the
PRESTHOLDT: summer. We expect four public meetings, and the first one will probably be the end of August, and then go through [? the end of September, ?] early fall. People can stay involved. Again, you can reach out to us through the website, either to share your story individually or to connect with your organization and folks that you work with.

People can view the public meetings, they can attend in person, and they can also watch online. And then the report will be due December 1. And so we really encourage people to read the report and to contribute to the recommendations of that report.

NINA MOINI: All right, Jennifer, thanks so much. Appreciate your time. Jennifer Prestholdt is vice chair of the governor's truth council. She's also deputy executive director at the Advocates for Human Rights.