

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Governor Tim Walz looks ahead to the general election
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MIKE MULCAHY: This is *MinnesotaNow*. I'm Mike Mulcahy. Today, we're talking about Minnesota politics. And joining me now is incumbent Governor Tim Walz, who won the DFL primary for governor yesterday. That means he's now officially the DFL nominee for a second term. Governor, thanks for coming on.

TIM WALZ: Thanks for having me, Mike.

MIKE How do you intend to win in November?

MULCAHY:

TIM WALZ: Well, first of all, I want to thank Minnesotans who got out yesterday and cast their vote, thank Steve Simon and the folks that make Minnesota's the fairest, most secure elections. And I think it's about talking about the things we've done, about proven leadership. Minnesota wants to continue to move forward. We've got some of the best unemployment numbers in the country.

We've got one of the best state budgets in the country. And we've got plans to invest in our people in schools, and roads, bridges, the things that matter to folks, and be a place where all of our families can thrive. So I think it's talking about, and these have been challenging years. Minnesotans came together, we moved forward, and I think the contrast is very clear-- do we want to move forward or do we want to move backwards?

And I think we can make the case that we've done the hard work. We've been there with Minnesotans in the toughest times. And we're coming through to better days.

MIKE There have been a couple public polls published that show this is a pretty close race. Is that how you see it?

MULCAHY:

TIM WALZ: Oh yeah. I think it's always close in Minnesota. I think folks are not starting to engage yet. And I've got an opponent that a lot of people don't know. I think once they get to know, they'll see that those extreme positions and agenda really aren't for them.

But yeah, I think we're in a very polarized national environment, a lot of hard decisions had to be made. And I think that's about right. But at the end of the day, I think Minnesotans want to choose proven leadership rather than taking a risky chance around conspiracies and things that aren't serving us well.

MIKE Well, since you bring it up, you heard what your opponent had to say-- he sort of paints you as a would-be dictator who took too much power during the COVID-19 pandemic, someone who froze when it came to making tough public safety decisions in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder. How do you respond to that?

TIM WALZ: Well, a lot of folks sit on the sidelines. My opponent had opportunities as a senator on all of these issues and did nothing. The fact of the matter is Minnesota fared better than almost any other state during COVID. We have some of the lowest death rates. We partnered together and pioneered things that other states used, whether it would be our testing system, whether it be our wastewater testing, or whether it be getting vaccinations out in a timely manner.

And I think the issue of rising crime is certainly a concern for everyone. But we made hard decisions. I've done this. I understand what it takes to do it. And I have a responsibility that in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, making sure we protected the lives of Minnesotans, as well as property.

And I think all of these things, again, not having set in any position, my opponent has not of any leadership position, not having to lead folks in the military or having any public safety experience, it's easy to sit on the sideline and second guess. But Minnesotans saw us stand up, take responsibility, and learn, more importantly, than anything-- learn what we could do next time better.

Could we communicate better with cities? Are we prepared next time to stockpile things on COVID? And the idea, all of the things we used were clearly in state law. They saved Minnesotans' lives. And we communicated very clearly about that. We've always been able to use those tools to improve Minnesotans' lives.

And during COVID, quite honestly, we were very much right where the rest of a lot of states that did well during COVID struck a proper balance. And I think our economic numbers prove that.

MIKE MULCAHY: Let me ask you an official sort of question here. You said a while ago that you thought Senate Republicans maybe didn't want to negotiate with you on a special session until after the primary. Do you think that'll change now? Do you think there will be a willingness to carve up that big budget surplus before next year?

TIM WALZ: I certainly hope so. And Minnesotans should be outraged that this has not been done. We had an agreement. You have to keep your word. We're the only divided legislature in the country, and we've been able to work together.

We have an opportunity to have the largest tax cuts in Minnesota history, to make sure we're getting the matching funds on roads and bridges in the largest infrastructure bill in over 50 years, invest in our schools appropriately, put money on the bottom line for the rainy day-- all of those things that make a difference. And my opponent was very clear and told them to walk away from that.

And I want to be absolutely clear about this is-- starting in January, I had a public safety proposal that invests the largest amount that we've ever invested, listening to local folks about what they need, making sure state patrol was invested. We need a new helicopter to make sure that we're able to do these pursuits that don't put people in danger and we're able to apprehend people.

That was all stopped when it was believed that you could make chaos and you could say you shouldn't get it done. Minnesotans deserve a check right now. Folks who understand global commodity markets would be very clear that a governor of a midwestern state probably isn't driving all the oil prices, nor the commodity prices. But what a governor can do is provide relief to families, which I've proposed in the form of \$2,000, and the relief to them of easing the cost of child care, health care, and other things.

So we have an opportunity to make a big difference here. And they should come back and do this. Minnesotans should ask for this. This is a once in a generation opportunity.

We've managed state finances well. I compromised across the board with Republicans on this. Again, I can't state this enough-- this will be the largest tax cut on top of the first tax cut in 20 years that I signed in 2019. This would be the largest tax cut since 1858 and it would mainly benefit working families. We should do that.

MIKE MULCAHY: Will you call a special session even if there's no prior agreement?

TIM WALZ: Well, the Republican Senate has proven to be very vindictive. They fired incredible public servants simply because they were doing their job, whether it would be moving Minnesota forward to a cleaner energy economy or enforcing our labor rules in the case of Labor and Industry Commissioner Lepping. They did those things and said it was simply because they could.

Most governors have most of their appointments approved by now to boards and things like that. I have the lowest number confirmed of any governor in the state's history. So I would have to get a little confirmation from them. And since we we agreed to a deal publicly on the budget and they walked away from that, I think this one probably needs to be in writing.

MIKE

MULCAHY:

TIM WALZ: No, I think at this point, I would be hesitant to do so. I want them to come back-- and I think the deal being that I agreed to the positions we had. We reached the agreement. That's the way this is supposed to work. And the goalposts just kept moving for Minnesotans.

I want to be very clear-- there's no new programs in here. There are only the things that Minnesotans have asked for. They will lower their taxes. They will lower their property tax. They will invest in their schools. They will invest in long-term care and child care-- all of that while maintaining some of the largest reserves in the country and, what the rating agency said, the strongest outlook of any state for potential growth into the future.

It's simply irresponsible not to come back and do it. So I'm not shutting the door in its entirety. But I'd like to get a little commitment that we'll do Minnesotans work, not just political, just to score points.

MIKE

MULCAHY:

Let me just get back to issues for a minute because Scott Jensen said the biggest issue will be public safety and crime. Were you too slow to respond to the rise in violent crime?

TIM WALZ: I think we responded with what the state can do. The state has two major tools. We have the trunk highway system that we're responsible for-- it's the largest amount of miles in the country, and that's the state patrol. I've been asking since 2019 for an increase to state patrol and numbers.

I also asked for a fusion center that would provide some of this communication among cities. I think providing that piece of it, we have done that. We've seen the decline and almost the elimination of the street racing. I think folks have seen, especially in the metro area, but this is statewide and nationwide.

And then I asked what the main thing we could do and I've been doing for three years and I did it in January-- asked for the funding that the local folks are asking for. That is what needs to be done. I think most of your listeners know the state is not the police force, nor are they in every place that can be.

But we asked for folks who could process these gun crimes. There's way too many guns on the street. My opponent needs to acknowledge the ridiculous nature of having guns, and especially weapons of war and fully automatic weapons.

We asked for money to be able to process those, take them off the streets. And that's what got killed in this. My opponent's put out what he says is a public safety proposal. It has no funding. It has no funding in this. And we know this is the case.

Whether it's new equipment in Duluth because of the weather that's taken on it, or if it's more officers in Minneapolis-- and as the state responds, we respond-- and we've seen this across the country. But this idea of sitting on the sidelines being second guessed, I said, apparently my opponent would have won all four Super Bowls if he'd had Bud Grant's job. That's not the way this works.

You respond in real time, you provide leadership. We stand up. And as I said, we experienced some of the biggest civil unrest that the country has ever seen. These things spread globally-- they spread from DC to Berlin. Here in Minneapolis and in Minnesota, we're working together. The numbers are too high.

Minnesotans have low tolerance for crime. I'm in total agreement with that. But complaining doesn't solve it.

MIKE Governor, will you debate your opponent again? We'd love to host it at the state fair.

MULCAHY:

TIM WALZ: Yeah. We'll do it again. We did last week. The one thing I'd like to say is I think we need to be very clear on this-- my opponent's barred from a lot of media platforms for misinformation that was dangerous during COVID. I think denying the 2020 election needs to be cleared up. I would hope, Mike, if we do these debates, that moderators would be very clear about this.

Putting out false information around COVID, yourself not being vaccinated and telling others to, is killing people. And I think that giving a platform for that, which is denied in many other places-- I know my opponent was quite proud that Russian television highlighted his words. That's not who we are.

I followed the advice of medical experts, Mayo Clinic and others. And because of that, Minnesotans are in a better place on COVID. So of course, we will debate again. But we need to be very clear about what a debate means.

It's not spewing conspiracy theories, it's debating about the plans-- and, more importantly, running on a record. If you run as a senator and your claim to fame was being caught on the golf course during hearings instead of doing the work, that's not a real issue where I was standing there making sure that tests, and vaccines, and that the state patrol was responding. And I think that's what the debate will be about.

MIKE Governor Tim Walz, officially nominated for a second term by the Minnesota DFL party, thanks so much for coming on. I hope you'll come back as the campaign goes on.

TIM WALZ: Absolutely. Thank you, Mike. Have a good week.

MIKE You too. That's Governor Walz. He says this song *Here's to Everyone* by Minnesota-based musician Martin Zeller shares the message of his campaign.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[SINGING]

MARTIN These are troubled times we live in now. I know we can hold our own somehow.
ZELLER: