

## Rep. Karen Clark's 2018 Legislative Summary Letter

June 2018

Dear Friends and Neighbor,

Thank you for giving me the privilege of serving our community in the Minnesota House of Representatives. The 2018 Legislature adjourned on May 20<sup>th</sup> and Governor Dayton signed the state bonding bill but vetoed several other bills, including a giant catch-all appropriations bill that would have funded nearly everything else—jobs, health care, environment, housing, transportation, public safety, education—all issues so critical to our neighborhoods. That giant omnibus bill was a Republican strategy to get the Governor to sign issues he opposed by wrapping them all together. Because Gov. Dayton vetoed that, as promised unless certain issues were removed, many of the issues I worked on were not passed into law in this 2018 legislative session and will await the next session in 2019. **Since, as most of you know, I am retiring from the legislature as of Jan. 3, 2019, my successor will have to pick up those issues.** The following is a summary review of 2018:

I believe Minnesotans want to see one another succeed. Yet when we adjourned this session, Republicans who were in charge of the 2017-2018 Legislature actually failed to invest in what Minnesotans value most – education, health care, public safety, the environment and economic opportunity. Instead, they put corporate interests and the wealthy ahead of working people. Unfortunately, that was a choice that divides and distracts Minnesotans instead of prioritizing an agenda to build a better future for us all.

While some progress was made, there's much more that can be done to make Minnesota work better for all of us. I believe that together, we can strengthen our communities by improving educational opportunities for preschoolers through college; by making affordable healthcare a reality; by ensuring affordable housing for both renters and homeowners; by curbing gun violence and preventing and treating opioid addiction; by protecting our environment (especially our air and water), by safeguarding our civil and human rights protections, and by increasing economic prosperity for all Minnesotans.

Here is a brief round-up of some specific issues we've faced this year, and that DFLers will need to resolve in the future when we can take back control of the Legislature.

### **EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

All Minnesota kids deserve a world class education. That's why I supported Governor Dayton's proposal to provide emergency school aid to prevent teacher layoffs and program cuts, and funding for all-day pre-K across Minnesota. Unfortunately, the Republican Legislative leaders did **NOT** include that in their education agenda and our schools are now underfunded. Minneapolis Public Schools alone are facing a \$33 million deficit!

## **TACKLING STUDENT DEBT**

Minnesota college students carry one of the largest debt burdens in the country, yet this Republican-led Legislature did nothing to make college more affordable. I have been consistently committed to reducing college costs for students and families, and helping graduates reduce their debt. That's why I supported freezing college tuition, increasing funding for the student grant program, and making it easier for students to refinance their loans.

## **PROTECTING OUR SENIORS**

Our parents and grandparents deserve to live in safe environments, but Republicans refused to pass AARP's recommendations for improved oversight, investigative processes, and other common sense means to increase accountability. This is a step backwards for elder care abuse which is reportedly on the increase. Minnesota seniors deserve better.

## **MAKING AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE A REALITY**

After giving health insurance companies an \$800 million handout last year, Republicans ignored proposals to make health care more affordable for families such as the MinnesotaCare Buy-In to give all Minnesotans an affordable health insurance option and also prohibited funding to keep MNSure financially stable. My own long term goal has been single-payer health care, or "Medicare for all"—with both strong state and federal support.

## **FIGHTING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC**

The opioid crisis continues to devastate families across Minnesota, but Republican legislators refused to hold accountable the big pharmaceutical companies that caused it. I supported a simple "penny-a-pill" measure that would have funded treatment and prevention by holding these companies responsible for their excesses, but it was not allowed to pass.

## **BUILDING AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL OF US**

Minnesotans expect taxes to be fair for everyone, but Republican leadership continued to prioritize tax giveaways to the wealthy and to corporations. I proudly fought for fair taxes, for paid family leave, earned sick time, and wage theft protections to benefit working Minnesotans. The final tax bill, vetoed by Gov. Dayton, contained no property tax cuts even though home valuations are rising across the state and it would have offered twice the business tax cuts compared to any cuts for middle and working class families.

## **TAKING A STAND TO PREVENT SENSELESS GUN VIOLENCE**

In the wake of ongoing gun violence across the country, I was proud to support criminal background checks on all gun sales and "red flag laws" to help law enforcement keep guns out of the hands of people who are seen to be dangerous to themselves or others. Unfortunately, Republican legislative leadership prevented these measures from advancing. I joined the 24-hr House sit-in led by Erin Maye Quade to demand common sense gun laws.

## **PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT**

Minnesotans value our clear air, clean water, and clean soil. We are committed to making sure future generations can too, but Republican legislators, like their counterparts in Washington D.C., slashed environmental protections. Now, more than ever, I am committed to protecting Minnesota's environment and natural resources for future generations. One major area I continued the fight for is childhood lead poisoning from toxic lead in housing. Although 700-800 children a year are permanently brain damaged by lead dust in their homes, yards and water, I was not allowed a hearing on this proposal by Republican leaders over the last four years. This is a totally preventable disease!

## **MY UNHEARD BILLS**

Several other important bills I did not get a hearing on will need to be continued in 2019 if DFLers take back control of the Legislature. These bills, which were denied any hearings by Republican leadership, include:

- Investments in **youth intervention programs**, and other resources, to increase safety for residents of the Little Earth of United Tribes Community
- **Reparations** for Minnesotans of African descent and Native Americans
- A comprehensive **Minnesota Cancer Registry**
- Driver's licenses for undocumented Minnesotans
- **Mandatory lead and radon testing** in every Minnesota school building

Please note that I will still hold several summer-time People's Hearings on several of these unheard bills—specifically Reparations and the Cancer Registry. Watch for announcements.

Sincerely,

*Karen Clark*

Rep. Karen Clark  
State Representative – District 62A



*During my farewell speech on the House floor on the last night of Session, May 20, 2018.*

*Being honored by Sen. Scott Dibble on the steps of the Capitol during OutFront Lobby Day*





*Karen joined constituent Jen Kader from the Fresh Water Society at the Capitol rally to protect our waters from environmental contamination.*

Ortega and partner Lance joined Reps. Susan Allen and Karen Clark to win state bonding for the Minneapolis American Indian Center.



*Karen welcomed staff from the Somali Museum on Muslim Day at the Capitol*

*Joining DFL House Minority Leader Melissa Hortman, Senator Scott Dibble, and Rep. Erin Maye-Quade on the steps of the Capitol during OutFront Lobby Day.*



*Witnesses testified in support of Karen's bill to fund a pilot soy-based alternative to asphalt street surfacing in the Agriculture Finance committee.*

*All four out LGBT members of the Minnesota Legislature celebrating the anniversary of the signing of the Marriage Equality bill I authored and helped pass into law in 2013.*

