

MN Democracy Defense Plan

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Landscape Assessment & Context

Minnesota has DFL control of all constitutional offices (e.g. Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General) and the Minnesota State House. The GOP controls the Minnesota State Senate. In this context and given our experience of the state's August primary, we expect our elections to be administered without state-driven suppression. However, in Minnesota, elections are administered mainly at the County level. This means much of the process will be in the hands of local county officials (including security from County Sheriffs). Such officials may be unfriendly or open to coercion by right-wing violence. Even in friendly counties, local officials could be subject to similar coercion for non-local actors.

Over the past four years, Minnesota has seen rising white nationalist organization and activity in the state, primarily home-based in Central Minnesota (historically) and The Range (new). During the most recent uprisings, Minneapolis and to a lesser degree St. Paul experienced multiple nights of infiltrator terror that targeted Black and brown business corridors and nearby neighborhoods.

We know there are multiple white nationalist organizations operating in Minnesota and we have in-state expertise tracking them. In 2019 the [Southern Poverty Law Center tracked 12 active hate groups](#) in our state. From our on-the-ground knowledge, we know Aryan Cowboys are active in St. Cloud.

During the uprising immediately following the murder of George Floyd and since then, the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) is either disengaged or instigating tension. The Governor has activated the National Guard and State Patrol twice, and is prepared to do so again. From both those experiences, the National Guard and State Patrol remained under the expected chain of command. It is unclear who the MPD is accountable and answering to.

Since the uprising, there has been ongoing civil unrest recently peaking in property destruction in Downtown Minneapolis and tied to the court proceedings for officers at George Floyd's murder. We

expect any mass protest - no matter how positive - to create cover for further not pointed, unstrategic, infiltrated civil unrest and property damage in Minneapolis.

Minneapolis and St. Paul had a powerful experience of community care and safety during the uprising. Folks rapidly organized neighborhood patrols, mutual aid networks and emergency response teams to ~~keep the community~~ ~~keep community~~ safe. This was a transformative experience for the Cities, particularly in South and North Minneapolis. It was not widely felt or experienced beyond that geography.

Theory of What Will Happen

We believe that regardless of the strength of the Minnesota election system, mass mobilization will and must happen in Minnesota to defend democracy. We expect that this mobilization will create space and opportunity for unrest, primarily in Minneapolis. In this context, the situation could rapidly spiral beyond control depending on the nature of the unrest and the State's reaction.

The possibility of right-wing violence is real, as is the possibility of MPD inciting or enabling violence. We have primarily seen this focused on Black and brown business corridors, mosques and synagogues in the Twin Cities. It is possible Black churches may also become a target. St. Cloud and Duluth are also two cities to keep in mind given their proximity to large white nationalist geographies and demographic & ideological make-up. Additionally, we know of white nationalist infiltration and organization at Greater Minnesota universities.

In the best case scenario for our state a powerful, positive container within which a multiracial, ideologically diverse mass of people peacefully mobilize to defend democracy and any activity intended to incite violence or destruction is contained and de-escalated. A worst case scenario includes a minority of violent activity rooting, spreading spurred by either or both a poor state response and white nationalist instigation.

We predict three primary scenarios as relates to election administration: (1) contest in Minnesota; (2) contest in neighboring state; and/or, (3) contest in non-neighboring state.

In the event of a contest in Minnesota, our role will be to support efforts by the State (led by the Governor, Attorney General and Secretary of State) to resolve the contest rapidly and to prevent right-wing vigilantes, with or without the support of local officials, from interfering with the certification of Minnesota's electors by the safe harbor date. In addition, we must be prepared to support state efforts to prevent illegitimate Federal efforts to intervene on behalf of local right-wing groups.

In the event of contest in a neighboring state, we will be ready to respond as asked by our allies. Knowing that there may be energy to join nearby mass mobilizations, we may choose to host actions here to diminish the amount of out-of-state actors activating in that contest. For contests farther away,

we will work to maintain public demand as asked to support their work and coordinated via national infrastructure.

Role and Responsibility of Democracy Defense Organizations

This is a moment for all hands and no elbows. It's a time for organizations to be clear on their highest and best use in this moment and to find their lane. This will require a degree of trust that we may not fully have as a collective and as parts. We will operate using the following principles to best guide our work:

We Keep Us Safe: We respect one another and seek to heal and look out for one another. We reduce the potential for our people to get hurt, to be unwell, and during a global pandemic, to fall ill. We support non-violent resistance and unarmed responses.

Find Your Lane: This moment will require all of us to win. Whatever you do, do it for the hope of justice and full democracy in our country. This is an "all hands, full hands" moment. Find your lane, name it and fill it.

Operate with integrity: This is a high stress, high octane moment. We need to move fast - for some of us that means faster than the pace of trust. We will navigate this together, communicating with transparency and integrity, naming tensions and what we need.

Be about it, don't talk about: We will win if we all do the work we commit to doing. Panic is not a plan and admiring the problem will not serve us. We will lead with solutions, make commitments we can deliver on and follow-through.

Biggest tent: Recognize this is a moment where we need a bigger tent than even the biggest we have built before. Our work must hold space for people across the ideological spectrum to see themselves in and act in.

Respect BIPOC, femme and working class leadership: Center the experiences and leadership of most impacted communities. Recognize that we need these styles and forms of leadership not because it is right, but because it is necessary to win.

Make the road as we walk: Our work must elevate and demonstrate the world we want to live in and our demands. We will beat hate with our joyful rebellion. In our relationships and our action we will show - not tell - what a new world can look like.

Together we do a lot, but we cannot and should not be and do all things. We assume others will do essential work. Particularly, we believe the following will be covered by others and is not our role:

- The Democratic Party and their election protection apparatus will exist to manage recounts or court action
- Minnesota state leadership will act to protect people from armed militia violence

While many of us have long-term relationships and agendas we work on together, this particular formation is coming together to meet the existential threat(s) in a contested election environment. Our role and orientation in this moment may be different than what we do or hold long-term. Our time frame is Election Day to Inauguration Day. Our role during that time is:

- Collect and share information
 - Act as clearinghouse for accurate and trusted information in fast-moving moments
 - Provide accurate information about where things are at nationally, regionally, and locally
 - Function as a platform for infrastructure and collaboration for a wide range of movement actors allowing for a clear exchange of information across the state and meet local needs as possible
- Prepare and care for our people
 - Prepare our organizations and people with the tools, skills and messaging needed to organize and mobilize quickly, safely and effectively
 - Connecting and supporting mutual aid and collective resourcing efforts at a larger scale
- Mobilize popular support
 - Elevate an unequivocal demand for a fair outcome where every vote is counted
 - Provide a container that advances discipline and credibility with prepared, disciplined leadership and strong validators
 - A one-stop digital platform for the person who isn't deeply embedded in collective structures but who is googling "what can I do and where can I show up?"
 - Coordinate with national efforts, finding opportunities to add capacity and people-power to the region and to states whose electors and votes. might be more directly contested than ours.
- Advance a bold, clear narrative
 - A multiracial demand that every vote is counted
 - Communicating a public narrative that counteracts what will definitely be an attack on protestors and violent backlash that will be increased by that
- Interface with elected officials and former candidates
 - A coalition that can function as a credible actor and broker in back-end negotiations with the DFL and elected officials, with the express purpose of bringing a progressive frame that lifts up BIPOC, queer, trans, and young folks and that lifts up people power.
 - Maintaining progressive support behind newly flipped MN Senate

Phases

Phase 1: Now → Election Day: Responding to pre-election voter suppression and de-legitimacy work by Trump and the GOP, preparing for post-Election Day

Phase 2: November 4th → 14th: The immediate response to the election where we anticipate Trump and the GOP will use institutional capacity to control election information and manipulate the results. Here, our response will focus on mass mobilization efforts

Phase 3: November 14th → ??: The final phase of the plan will be the most speculative at this time and will need to be revisited as the potential outcome are clearer. We will look ahead to the three most probable scenarios for election results

- Scenario 1: Inconclusive results that are taken to the judiciary
- Scenario 2: Biden is the clear winner but Trump refuses to accept the results
- Scenario 3: Trump is the apparent winner but there are widespread credible concerns regarding election interference and vote counting (Here we will work on sustained mass mobilization efforts and move towards more strategic disruption.)

Key Dates and Election Process

The table below outlines the election administration process in our state. Of most importance are times when ballots are being handled (e.g. open envelopes and counting) and moments most susceptible to misinformation.

Sources: [Minnesota](#) & [U.S.](#)

Date	Election	Citation
10/13/20	Last date to pre-register before Election Day	M.S. 201.061
10/14/20 to 11/2/20	Health care facility voting outreach period	M.S. 203B.11, subd. 2
10/14/20 to 11/2/20	SOS mails late and deficient registration letters	M.S. 8200.2900; 8200.3100; 8200.3110
10/19/20	Counties & municipal clerks post early voting locations	M.S. 204B.34, subds. 1 & 3
10/20/20	Last day for OSS to mail ballots to voters	M.S. 204B.45, subd. 2
10/20/20	Absentee ballot counting starts in counties & cities	New law in 2020 amending M.S. 203B.121, subd. 4; 204B.45; subd. 2
10/27/20	Final updated voter registration list available	M.S. 201.091, subd. 2
10/27/20 to 11/3/20	Agent delivery to incapacitated voters permitted	M.S. 203B.11, subd. 4

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10/29 to 11/3	Spoiled ballot notification period; OSS notifies voters over email and phone	M.S. 203B.121, subd. 2(c)(3); 204B.45, subd. 2
10/31/20	Saturday voting from 10am-3pm	M.S. 203B.085
11/2/20	Early voting locations open till 5pm	M.S. 203B.085
11/3/20	Polls open from 7am-8pm	M.S. 103C.305, subd. 1; 204C.05; 204D.03, subd. 2; 205.07, subd. 1; 205A.04, subd. 1; 447.32, subd. 2; 3 U.S.C. § 1
11/3/20	Absentee delivery open until 3pm in person at County locations, or 8pm by USPS or paid services	M.S. 203B.08, subds. 1 & 3
11/3/20 to 11/4/20	Total # of absentee ballots requested totaled, candidate & ballot question totals counted	M.S. 203B.121, subd. 5, M.S. 203B.121, subd. 5
11/10/20	Date by which absentees must arrive by mail	
11/10/20 to 11/13/20	County canvass boards meet, sends electronic & certified results to OSS	M.S. Repealed 204C.30, subd. 1; 204C.33, subd. 1; 204C.37
11/6/20 to 11/13/20	Random sample recanvass by OSS	M.S. 206.89
11/6/20 to 11/15/20	Single county publicly funded recount (i.e. less than 0.5% for State House or Senate; less than .25% for Congressional or statewide) notification from County to candidate; Candidate has two days to request recount	M.S. 204C.35, subd. 1(b)
11/6/20 to 11/20/20	Single county contestation and discretionary recount request period lasting 7 days after completed canvass	M.S. 204C.35, subd. 2; 209.021, subd. 1
11/14/20 to 11/20/20	OSS Post Election Review (PER) Phase 1 must start & conclude for non-recount races; results submitted to State Canvassing Board	M.S. 206.89, subds. 2-3 & 6-7
11/14/20 to 11/22/20	PER Phase 2: 2nd review triggered if OSS PER is more than .5% different than manual count; recount must include 3 additional precincts	M.S. 206.89, subd. 4&5
11/14/20 to 11/29/21	PER Phase 3: 3rd review triggered if 2nd review is more than .5% different than manual count; recount must include all precincts	M.S. 206.89, subd. 5
11/14/20 to	PER Phase 3: 4th review triggered if 3rd review	M.S. 206.89, subd. 5

12/13/22	is still off and comprises more than 10% of voters in given race; recount must include all all ballots in all affected counties	
11/24/20	State Canvassing Board Meets; the board is the SOS, two District Judges; two Supreme Court Justices	M.S. 204C.33, subd. 3
11/24/20 to 11/26/20	Multi-county publicly funded recount (i.e. less than 0.5% for State House or Senate; less than .25% for Congressional or statewide) notification from State Canvassing Board to candidate; Candidate has two days to request	M.S. 204C.35, subd. 1(b)
11/24/20 to 12/1/20	Multi-county contestation and discretionary recount request period lasting 7 days after completed canvass	M.S. 204C.35, subd. 2; 209.021, subd. 1
12/2/20	First day to issue certificates of election to federal, state, and judicial candidates after elapse of 7 day contestation period after State Canvassing Board certification	M.S. 204C.40
12/8/20	State "Safe Harbor" deadline; date by which states must resolve disputes concerning Electors	M.S. 3 U.S.C. § 5
12/14/20	Deadline for State Governors to report ascertainment of in-state results of Presidential election to Archivist; before Electoral College votes	3 U.S.C. § 6
12/14/20	Presidential Electors vote at MN State Capitol; Votes are mailed to President of the U.S. Senate, County Judge, and kept by OSS	3 U.S.C. § 7; U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 4.
12/23/20	Deadline for receipt of certification of electoral votes by U.S. Senate & Archivist	3 U.S.C. §§ 12-13
1/3/21	U.S. Congress convenes	U.S. Const. amend. XX, § 1.
1/4/21	Minnesota State Legislature convenes	M.S. 103C.315, subd. 2; 123B.09, subd. 1; 204D.02, subd. 2; 367.03, subd. 4; 412.02, subd. 2; 447.32, subd. 1
1/6/21	U.S. Senate, U.S. House meet at 1pm to announce results of Electors' votes	3 U.S.C. § 15.

Purpose: Establish a set of mass mobilization containers, on and offline, that can serve to advance our agenda in the days immediately following Election Day in order to provide essential structure and show (not just tell) our message

Goals:

- Events in Minneapolis - St. Paul, St. Cloud, Duluth, Rochester, college towns and online scheduled for November 4th and weekend following Election Day
- Training curriculum and schedule for de-escalation, COVID safety and other essential marshalling roles
- Share information and establish alignment about what we believe and how we see what's happening.

Community Preparedness

Purpose: To develop training and resources that can be shared widely that prepare community for what is happening & what could happen providing direction towards planning & not panicking

Goals:

- Create We Keep Us Safe community care and safety toolkit and training
- Have training and resources supporting political education
- Establish a clearinghouse communication infrastructure to be used in case massive mutual aid is needed somewhere
- Support community-based leadership preparing in communities most at-risk of white nationalist attack

Narrative and Messaging

Purpose: To establish a multiracial, popular message that invites the most amount of people in and prepares media to cover actions powerfully & effectively

Goals:

- Narrative and message guidance that is customizable and used broadly
- Communication treatment plans for particular constituencies
- Identify, train and activate diverse validators
- Message that invites this as a safe place to participate, clear on who we are and who we are not

Elected Official Engagement

Purpose: Establish healthy lines of communication between the field and governing actors, and support their preparedness

Goals:

- Agreement from and establishment of communication from state leadership and the field maximizing our aligned efforts
- Training and preparation for allied local elected leaders supporting successful relation to protest and ability to prepare communities
- Communication network for elected officials to be in relationship with democracy defense coalition work

Election Administration Process

Purpose: Support mass and localized mobilization to defend free & fair elections and any necessary state intervention to protect elections against right-wing coercion.

Goals:

- Clear ways to plug-into existing election protection programming and plug-in de-escalators as needed
- Clear communication with state officials
- Establish network to provide local intel
- Articulate clear point of view *where* mobilization is appropriate - ballot counting and official administration spaces sacred and should be monitored and uninterrupted; open public convening spots are good places to demonstrate

Nerve Center and Communications Systems

Purpose: To be an accountable, representative and nimble group of people able to relate across sectors and support a strong, effective and trusted communication systems across MN Democracy Defense groups

Goals:

- Trusted point of contact for state and movement leaders
- Clear mandate from MN Democracy Defense organizations, practicing liberated gatekeeping
- Steward the effective use of any funds raised for this shared effort

Additional Resources and References

- [Hold the Line Guide](#)
- [Messaging for the election](#)
- [Presidential Election Timeline](#)
- [Contested Election Threat Matrix](#)
- Digital Security: [Equality Labs Videos/Cheatsheets](#)
- [Vision Change Win's Toolkit on Community Safety](#)
- [Paramilitaries at Your Protest: An Activist Field Guide to the Armed Far-Right](#)

- Neighborhood Watch + Resources: <http://bit.ly/MplsNeighbors>
- [Women's Participation and The Fate Of Nonviolent Campaigns](#)
- [Everyone Counts Project Metanarrative](#)
- [US Institute of Peace -- Global online course catalog](#) (virtual trainings on demand)
- Transition Integrity Project Report: [Preventing a Disrupted Presidential Election and Transition](#)