



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Tim Walz

Office of Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan

75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. ♦ Suite 130 ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

September 2, 2020

Senator Paul Gazelka
Majority Leader
3113 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Majority Leader Gazelka:

Thank you for your letter. The Governor looks forward to the opportunity to discuss further at your meeting tomorrow.

We are glad you accepted his invitation to meet tomorrow given that you have been shockingly absent throughout this pandemic. The Governor is committed to partnering with the legislature to keep Minnesotans safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, and our office has offered ample opportunities for legislators to provide feedback on the Administration's response. At the same time that you claim the legislature is not involved enough in the process, you neglect to attend many of these critical informational and decision-making meetings.

Of the 10 Legislative COVID-19 Response Commission (LCRC) meetings, you have failed to attend a single one. You also chose not to attend a private COVID-19 briefing with Commissioner Jan Malcolm, and a briefing on the Lost Wage Assistance Program, and a specially arranged tour of the state's Alternative Care site. Most recently, you failed to attend a briefing with White House Coronavirus Task Force Coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx. The Governor wants to work together across party lines to protect the health of Minnesotans, but you make that difficult when you choose not to attend critically important meetings focused on our state's pandemic response efforts.

Before the meeting tomorrow, I also want to address the last sentence of your letter in which you state, "There is no longer an emergency." This could not be farther from the truth. As you know by now, the law states that the Governor may declare an emergency when an act of nature threatens Minnesotans and local resources are inadequate to address the threat. That is obviously still the case. COVID-19 has claimed the lives of nearly 2,000 Minnesotans. The day that you wrote your letter to the Governor, 14 Minnesotans perished from the virus.

Although President Trump and the Governor do not agree on much, even the President agrees that we remain in a state of emergency. The same day that the Governor declared a peacetime emergency, President Trump declared a National Emergency. The President's National Emergency remains in effect to this day. On top of that, every other governor in the country has declared and maintained their own

states of emergency. It is a rare thing when the President and all 50 governors agree on something, but they agree on this, and they all disagree with you.

In the spirit of One Minnesota, the Governor is determined to come together to protect the health and safety of Minnesotans during this unprecedented time. To do so, we must all engage tirelessly in this work and recognize the threat that COVID-19 continues to pose to the people of our state. The Governor looks forward to a productive conversation tomorrow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CS', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Schmitter
Chief of Staff