

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Fines and Fees Reform

POLICY CHANGES

End driver's license suspensions for unpaid traffic tickets, require courts to consider ability to pay fines and fees, and increase court discretion to waive court surcharges.

RATIONALE

Driving-related fines and fees can add up. If people can't afford to pay their fines quickly, they can lose their licenses, which can lead to job loss and even jail time. Reforming Minnesota's system of escalating fines and excessive fees would allow people to keep living their lives rather than losing their livelihood over low-level traffic tickets. It would make the court system more equitable, regardless of people's ability to pay.

Qualified Immunity Reform

POLICY CHANGES

Create a state pathway to bring civil claims against government agents who violate people's rights.

RATIONALE

Qualified immunity has long stymied efforts to hold police officers accountable for wrongdoing, which perpetuates harm, misconduct and the erosion of trust. Because the doctrine applies to violations of our federal constitutional rights brought in federal court, state law cannot eliminate it. However, lawmakers could create a path to accountability that helps protect our civil liberties by enacting a state law to allow civil cases against government agents in state courts.

Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform

POLICY CHANGES

End low-level money forfeitures, restrict vehicle forfeitures, increase protections for innocent owners, and require law enforcement reporting on spending of forfeiture proceeds.

RATIONALE

When a person's personal property is seized by law enforcement, regardless of whether they are convicted or even charged, they face an uphill battle. Trying to get their property back through a civil court proceeding can cost more than the property itself. Yet the financial impact can be severe: That seized property can be a family's only car or money for rent. Reforming Minnesota's asset forfeiture system would better protect the property rights and due process rights of all Minnesotans, especially those with few resources to tackle our complex legal system. New reporting requirements also would promote transparency and accountability for forfeiture proceeds that law enforcement agencies receive.

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Facial Recognition Ban

POLICY CHANGES

Statewide ban on facial recognition technology use by law enforcement.

RATIONALE

Facial recognition is a powerful technology already used by various law enforcement agencies in our state, with little to no regulation, oversight or transparency. When paired with tools such as security cameras and databases, it can secretly identify and track people, as well as facilitate general surveillance of entire neighborhoods. The inaccurate technology leads to false positives and wrongful arrests, and is less accurate and more risky for people of color.

Civilian Oversight

POLICY CHANGE

Repeal a state law that prohibits civilian review boards from having full oversight over police.

RATIONALE

Under Minnesota law, civilian oversight boards cannot make findings of fact relating to a complaint against a police officer, impose disciplinary sanctions or make binding recommendations. Repealing this statute would allow local governments to decide what kind of oversight is right for their community.

Gross Misdemeanor Sentencing

POLICY CHANGES

Reduce the maximum sentence for gross misdemeanors in Minnesota from 365 days to 364 days.

RATIONALE

A difference between the state and federal definitions creates an inconsistency in Minnesota. Under state law, the maximum sentence for a gross misdemeanor is 365 days, but federal immigration law defines certain offenses that carry a sentence of 365 days or more as an aggravated felony. In Minnesota, two people can be convicted of the same gross misdemeanor, with one sentenced to 364 days and the other to 365 days. The one-day overlap with federal law means these two people will face very different immigration consequences. Reducing this sentence by one day ensures the state's policymaking intent is maintained, and provides greater clarity in the legal system.