

MN State House District 59B

* Asterisk signifies incumbent

1 of 5

- elected every 2 years
- works alongside Governor to create laws & establish state budget
- passes bills on public policy, sets levels for state spending, raises/lowers taxes, votes to uphold/override governor vetoes



aaopmn.org



Esther Agbaje (DFL)

Lisa Neal-Delgado (Green Party)

Alan Shilepsky (Republican)

What policies will advocate for to address the rise in microaggressions and hate crimes against our Asian community?

I will implement policies that bring in contextual and cultural learning in our schools. Starting with young people to bring changes in behavior and understanding can also influence their parents and caregivers. The more people better understand the history of the different cultures, with a focus on the Asian community in response to attacks because of COVID-19, within our wider Minnesota community the more we can have direct conversations about and how to identify and combat biases.

Hate crimes are bad, but I'd just focus on crimes. When you talk about "hate" you need a list of things hated, and you come up with "protected classes." So then who is in, and who is out? If category "X" is hated then might some people hate "not-X's?" Might a woman hate men, or a black hate a white or Asian, or a gay hate a straight? I'm of the school that "what's good for the goose is good for the gander." Maybe then every category is or should be a "protected" class. Well, it gets too complicated for me and I'd just stick to determining what actual crime was committed, and punishing that.

Regarding micro-aggressions, I believe that it is impossible to police this area. Just as some people are sensitive to peanuts, or milk, some people are more sensitive to words or circumstances were not necessarily intended to hurt. That is, some of the affront is in the mind of the beholder. And frankly, the world is tough on all our feelings and it is part of the Human Condition. It's always something. Just as unrequited love isn't going away, neither is hurt feelings. People are jerks. Tolerance, acceptance and forgiveness helps reduce the friction between people.

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Many of our youth and young people have been left out of national conversations and financial help, even while continuing to work in essential jobs and balancing that work with their school and families. What are your plans to ensure that our youth and young people's voices are also incorporated within legislative decisions?

As a legislator, I plan to continue to check in with different affinity groups, including young people. I know that there are different organizations focused on young people and led by young people. Those are the types of groups that I will consult to understand what type of legislation they would like to see and their input on upcoming legislation.

Asian American Organizing Project (AAOP) did not receive a response from the Lisa Neal-Delgado campaign.

If you work with the Lisa Neal-Delgado campaign and would like to provide answers, please email info@aaopmn.org.

Youth have been very active in the conversations about the world and our governance, though of course the media has a big role in who gets heard. (Greta!)

And I wish young people were bombarding the Governor about their schools and jobs. When you think about it, the Governor has been closing schools and businesses of everyone to protect the elderly and vulnerable (like me) who make up over 80 percent of the deaths. He should have been developing plans to quarantine people like me rather than shutting down your educations and jobs.

How will you address concerns raised by our youth and young people in regards to Governor Walz's fall semester school plans?

Safety in schools, whether from COVID-19 or other threats, is something that affects students and teachers directly. As noted above, I will consult with young people about their issues, but then voice those concerns directly to bill writers, on the floor of the House, and in front of other decision makers. I also think that when students can build coalitions with their teachers and other staff at schools to express their concerns, that mobilization will be useful to get the attention of more policy makers to make positive changes and responses to student concerns.

Regarding financial supports, first I hope this is over before I would be sworn into office next year, and second I think we've been racking up too much debt already that young people are going to have to deal with. We need to be recharging the economy post haste, not adding new spending programs.

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How will you ensure that our youth and young people also receive financial support during this time?

One topic that has come up during the pandemic is that young people and students have not been eligible for unemployment benefits. I will work to make sure that in financial relief during the pandemic that young peoples' needs are considered because so many youth are helping their families through their essential services jobs.

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There are many small business owners, many of which are Asian-owned and have seen a decrease in business since COVID-19 due to xenophobia. What are your plans to ensure that our small businesses owners, especially our Asian-owned ones, continue to be safe during a pandemic while ensuring the longevity of their business?

This goes back to the concerns about xenophobia and racism related to the Asian community and COVID-19. I would propose more public education and awareness programs to reinforce that businesses owned by Asians are safe places to visit or shop from online. I have seen various events around shopping local, and similar mobilization can be done to support local Asian owned businesses.

I think all small businesses have been undercut by the Governor's foolish shutdowns—we bent the curve and avoided hospital shortages to the point where hospitals were laying off people! He should have listened to additional scientific advice, as well as to economic advisors. Now we have issues of mental illness, domestic abuse and suicide to deal with, besides the economic devastation.

BTW, I was struck by the callousness of the Green Line LRT planners to its the vibrant immigrant businesses that lined University Avenue in St. Paul. I was an occasionally 94 and 16A bus rider, and I was almost killed by the "split-station" design at Western Avenue after meeting a friend at Mai Village for lunch one day. Very confusing.

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George Floyd's murder has pushed the world into more deep conversations around race and policing. One of the components of anti-racist work is in education, and in specifically ethnic studies. Ethnic studies provides students the opportunity to learn and reflect on their racial identity through a historical lens. Do you support mandated ethnic studies as a high school graduation requirement?

Yes, as noted above, culturally contextual education is necessary to combat racism in our society. When people have more knowledge about the fuller history, more than just history focused on struggle, we can engender a greater appreciation for the different communities in our state. At the same time, we also see ourselves as full people and destroy any notions that a person is less than because of where they come from.

I support mandated ethnic studies for high school students and would even support these courses for younger students. We have to start early to break down biases related to race and ethnicity.

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I believe we have over-done "ethnic studies," and insofar as they are encouraging feelings of victimization, grievance and division, I believe they are destructive both to our communities, our Nation, and worst of all, individuals. We should not teach people that they have no agency, and that a ready-made excuse for failure is to blame someone else, or "the system." It is interesting that people with strong family pressure to succeed have done well. Examples are Clarence Thomas and Condoleezza Rice, We should be supporting strong families and high expectations. And equal opportunity under law.

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COVID-19 has shifted many polling places for this past Primary Election. Many organizations and individuals are advocating for absentee voting by mail as well. Absentee voting by mail can be confusing to many and even more so when you can't read or write English well. Many of our Asian community members may not have assistance or language skills to complete an absentee ballot by mail. How do you hope to shift access to the polls for all?

During the primary and for the remainder of my campaign, I am focused on engaging affinity communities in a meaningful way as a method to increase access to the polls. Part of that engagement is education on what the ballot will look like and helping people understand where and how they can find information about how and where to vote because of the changes necessitated by the pandemic. Those voter information sessions should also cover how people can gain access to people who can help them fill out a ballot if there is a language barrier.

These voter information sessions should take place in the language familiar to different communities and should be in places where people are still able to meet, whether online or in person in a safe manner. I will also explore how to recruit volunteers who can be available to help people with their ballots as every voter is eligible to help up to three people at the polls, and there could be a way to develop a volunteer network to help those with language barriers still have access to the polls.

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I'm an election judge and I encourage people to go to their polling place or early vote at a designated voting center. (Hennepin Government Center or 980 E. Hennepin Ave. in Minneapolis.) I consider voting as a civic sacrament, and am very impressed by the efforts and integrity of our election judges and my city's Election Department. If you can go grocery shopping you should be able to go to your polls.