MINNESOTA TRUTH COUNCIL

Preliminary Report

The Governor's Council on Recording the Truth of Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS

10/31/2026

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Letter from the Chair

To all who call Minnesota home:

First, and foremost, I extend to you, the people of Minnesota, profound thanks and immense gratitude. Thank you for being good neighbors, for lifting your voices loudly and peacefully – sometimes in song – and for organizing and taking care of one another in the depths of a Minnesota winter. The Governor's Council on Recording the Truth of Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS is charged with creating a public record that accurately documents the experiences of Minnesotans. The stories, testimony, research, and quantitative data that the council has received to date are allowing us to build a record that is deep and historically important. Our council is grateful to everyone who is contributing to this work — we are thankful for your courage and commitment to the truth.

This record establishes that federal immigration activities during Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS violated the U.S. and Minnesota Constitutions and laid waste to due process and the rule of law. As Chair, throughout the public meetings, I heard Minnesotans speak to the violent, gratuitously cruel, inhumane, and deeply disturbing actions of federal agents on some of the shortest, coldest days of the year. From the killing of two Americans to the more than 70 Minnesota children detained between December 1, 2025, and March 10, 2026, and the $244 million in lost wages by workers in Minneapolis and Saint Paul alone, the harm was felt both broadly and deeply. Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS produced a much wider social and economic shock across Minnesota. Fear, disruption, and the ensuing psychological trauma are substantive harms, not merely side effects. The impacts include school absences, lost wages, reduced health care access, business losses, and social isolation.

However, documenting harm is not only about creating a historical record; it can also be the foundation for understanding, acknowledgement, reform, accountability, and hope. What we have heard from Minnesotans affirms the fundamental belief in the goodness of people and their ability to help when they see a need. Parents drove childcare providers and teachers to school; neighbors pooled resources to cover rent; local businesses opened their doors to those in need. We witnessed the incredible depth and diversity of formal and informal emergency response systems across Minnesota and the scale at which they responded. These actions are so powerful. Solidarity is powerful.

Minnesota's response is a model to which the world can look to when facing the darkest of days, a model which we very well may need again. As the council heard, violations and abuses continue across Minnesota. The ongoing fear, threats of retribution and aggressive immigration enforcement by the federal government persist. We, as Minnesotans and Americans, are animated and motivated by rights and the law, and we will not cease to call on all to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

As the council works to finish the final report of our findings and recommendations, I encourage you to watch the four public meetings on the Minnesota Truth Council's YouTube channel and submit your own reactions here. Additionally, make sure your own experiences are part of the public record by connecting with The Advocates for Human Rights to share your story individually or to host a community dialogue.

Our goal is that this work can be a source of truth and an example for future efforts to prevent harm and support the long-term recovery of people and communities across Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Chair Peter Cahill

The Governor's Council on Recording the Truth of Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS

Governor Walz Issues an Executive Order Creating the Truth Council

> *"Minnesotans know what happened in their communities, but too many stories have yet to be heard, documented, and shared. For months, families lived in fear, children were separated from their parents, and our neighbors were subjected to racial profiling and unlawful detentions. At the same time, people showed up for one another with compassion, courage, and resilience. This council will make sure we document Minnesota's history." - Gov. Tim Walz, Executive Order signing ceremony, March 25, 2026*

Early on during Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS, Minnesotans began asking, "How do we respond right now *and* for the future?" In his January 14 address about the ongoing federal enforcement, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz asked Minnesotans to "help us establish a record of exactly what's happening in our communities."

In the weeks that followed, the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor researched ways to document the impacts of Operation Metro Surge for the historical record. Minnesota's constitutional officers, including the Attorney General and the Secretary of State, as well as key figures such as the First Lady of Minnesota Gwen Walz, played an important role in shaping the state's response.

Community engagement was central to this process. Extensive outreach was conducted to ensure that the experiences and perspectives of impacted communities helped inform the state's response and the development of a body charged with collecting, preserving, and sharing Minnesotans' stories.

The Governor's office consulted with Mr. Bernard Duhaime, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, for technical assistance in planning for the Truth Council process.

On March 25, 2026, Governor Walz signed Executive Order 26-05, establishing the Governor's Council on Recording the Truth of Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS (Minnesota Truth Council). The council was created to develop a comprehensive public record of the impacts of these operations on Minnesota, documenting both the harm endured by Minnesotans and the generosity, courage, and resilience demonstrated by communities across the state.

The Executive Order outlines the representation and experience required of the 15 council members. One hundred and fifty people applied to be members of the council. After extensive consultation with community members and experts, Governor Walz announced appointments to the council on June 1, 2026.

Chair
Peter Cahill

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Jennifer Prestholdt, The Advocates for Human Rights

American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota Representative
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Jose Pablo Obregon
Zena Stenvik
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Ex-Officio
Rebecca Lucero, The Minnesota Department of Human Rights
Carin Mrotz, The Minnesota Attorney General's Office
Alexis-Clair Roehrich, The Governor's Office

The Truth Council is Unique to the Context and Opportunities in Minnesota

In societies that have lived through serious violence, repression, and human rights abuses, establishing the truth is an important first step in moving forward. It helps answer two questions: who did what, and what is the appropriate response. The truth is usually uncovered by examining the past and holding people accountable, especially through a careful review of serious human rights abuses. Looking back in this way is often key to helping damaged societies heal, change, and rebuild political and social trust.

Like all truth commissions, the process is created for a specific context. The Minnesota Truth Council was tailored to what happened in Minnesota, and as a result, it includes both the harms people suffered, and the extraordinary ways in which the people of Minnesota responded.

The process is unique because the federal government that sent more than 3,000 federal agents into the state remains in power and is not the government entity putting forth the effort to uncover the truth. The process is also unique, because limited time has elapsed between the events that occurred during Metro Surge *and* immigration enforcement is ongoing in Minnesota. Ongoing surveillance and criminal prosecutions by the federal government have meant that many Minnesotans are still afraid to share their stories. The federal government's weaponization of federal funds chilled the ability of people in some sectors such as healthcare to speak publicly for fear of losing funding. There has been impunity for actions of federal agents, as well as lack of cooperation with investigations and prosecutions. Minnesotans remain fearful. Some are still sheltering in place or have left the state.

The world was watching closely what was happening in Minnesota during Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS. Minnesotans brought their human rights concerns to the international community through meetings

and formal communications with UN human rights experts. International human rights law provides appropriate language to describe the scope of the harm and the lack of accountability.

The Truth Council is not a legal process and does not have subpoena power. The Truth Council also does not have a law enforcement role. The Executive Order specifically instructed the council to avoid any interference with ongoing investigations and prosecutions. "In particular, the Council will not engage in reporting around the shootings of Renee Good, Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis, or Alex Pretti." In this respect, it is consistent with other truth-seeking processes in that it is one part of a larger, more comprehensive long-term society wide strategy to investigate crimes, hold people accountable, and provide reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The Truth Council Operates as an Independent State Council

A small group of representatives from The Advocates for Human Rights, Management Analysis and Development (MAD), the Office of the Governor, and the council chairperson formed the Planning Team. Over the course of 23 meetings starting on May 5, 2026, the team planned and supported the work of the council.

Council members participated in a kickoff meeting online on June 24 during which the draft charter and initial individual feedback was discussed, introductions were made and support team and data team roles were clarified, qualitative and quantitative data collection processes were reviewed, and initial thoughts were shared regarding the approach to the public meetings. A draft of the Minnesota Truth Council Charter and Operating Procedures was reviewed and revised at the council's July 15th meeting. The charter outlines council operating procedures, responsibilities, group agreements, decision-making processes, and adherence to Open Meeting Law and data practices.

The council accomplished its non-public meeting responsibilities in four work sessions, and five public meeting debrief sessions. Phase one (work sessions #1 on July 15 and #2 on July 30) involved determining the broad topical framework and data collection process for the public meetings. Phase two (August 7-September 30) involved collecting information, providing feedback and planning input for the public meetings. Phase three (work sessions #3 on October 15 and #4 on October 29) focused on synthesizing information, reviewing report drafts, and discussing recommendations for the final report.

The Advocates for Human Rights Develops a Story Collection Process

The State of Minnesota entered into an agreement with The Advocates for Human Rights as the implementing partner for the Truth Council. As a volunteer-based organization with extensive experience and expertise in international human rights law and transitional justice, The Advocates was well-placed to develop a story collection process appropriate for the context in Minnesota.

The story collection process was developed based on the community organizing structures that developed in response to Operation Metro Surge and in consultation with civil society and impacted communities. The Advocates and the Governor's Office also met with members of the Illinois Accountability Commission to learn from their experience. The Advocates staff developed story-collector training materials to provide consistent training for volunteers and for community organizations teaching their own volunteers to collect stories. The final story collection packet includes a detailed guide with instructions, informed consent, personal information form, and mental health and immigration referral information. The story collection packet has also been translated into Somali, Hmong, and Spanish. The Advocates staff also developed a group story collection process

with a flexible approach that allows for different models depending on the size, needs, and preferences of the community group.

As of October 2026, more than 2,500 people and more than 185 community organizations have contributed to the community outreach and story collection activities of the Minnesota Truth Council process. This includes:

- More than 1,300 Minnesotans reached through engagement with community groups and networks statewide. In-person community outreach events were held in cities including Minneapolis, Falcon Heights, Rochester, Willmar, and St. Cloud.
- More than 26 story-collector trainings held, and 330 story collectors trained statewide. Community organizations participating in the story collection process trained additional story collectors.
- More than 700 Minnesotans have participated in story collection by sharing their individual stories with trained story collectors. Stories have been collected in English, French, Hmong, Somali and Spanish.
- At least 290 Minnesotans have participated in collective story collection at 20 community dialogues in locations including Blaine, Buffalo, St. Paul, Northfield, Plymouth and St. Cloud. Community dialogues have been conducted in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, and Somali.

The State Supports the Council with a Cross-Agency Data Team

In January and February 2026, the Governor's Office convened weekly meetings with agency leaders to ensure there was a shared awareness of major issues related to the considerably increased federal immigration enforcement and its collateral consequences. The meetings were intended to build a mutual understanding of how agencies were addressing emerging challenges, identify gaps, and foster a collaborative, interagency approach to response efforts within existing resources and capacity. The weekly convenings also set up a data collection process to inform messaging and decision-making. The Executive Order included a specific directive to continue, enhance, and refine this data collection process.

To fulfill this directive, a cross-agency team composed of representatives from Minnesota State government was established. This Data Team aimed to provide the council with compelling and accurate data by developing a data framework, sourcing data from state agencies, identifying meaningful patterns, conducting desktop research, and providing insights to inform the council's recommendations. The data framework helped organize information around direct impacts, broader ripple effects, and community and institutional responses. The data framework allowed the team to identify gaps, guide more targeted data requests, and bring greater consistency to how submissions were assessed and analyzed.

After incorporating insights and guidance from the council, the team designed and launched an outreach process where they met with 17 agencies across the Minnesota State government enterprise to discuss available data, data security, and a submission and analysis process. To support accuracy and responsible public use, the team reviewed sources, time frames, geographic scopes, comparison points, and limitations of the data submissions. The team followed up with agencies and partners as needed to clarify methods, verify findings, and confirm appropriate use. Recognizing differences in data availability, completeness, and methodology, the team distinguished what the data clearly showed from what it only suggested, acknowledged gaps and uncertainty, and avoided drawing conclusions beyond what the evidence could support.

The Truth Council Holds Four Public Meetings

The council held four public meetings to create a public record of the impacts of Operation Metro Surge and Operation PARRIS. During July work sessions, the council agreed on the following public meeting topics:

- Violations of the Constitution and the Rule of Law
- Direct Harm and Ripple Effects on Families, Businesses, and Communities
- Communities Respond with Resilience, Support, and Solidarity
- A Window into Policies and Systems Contributing to Harm

Across the four meetings, the council heard testimony from 74 people over 13.5 hours. Individual council members with expertise related to the meeting topics provided framing comments and introduced and thanked witnesses.

The meetings were livestreamed, and video recordings of each public meeting are available on YouTube. The public meetings were conducted in accordance with Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. The council also held two press availabilities, one before the first meeting and another before the fourth meeting.

The Data Team used data from state agencies and publicly available sources to create and distribute eight data reports that complemented the themes of each of the council's public meetings. In addition, the Minnesota State Demographer Center also created a background and context summary for the first public meeting. Finally, crowd-sourced volunteer data testimony was also submitted to the council. This data set drew on experiences reported by volunteer observers connected through decentralized, encrypted Signal groups during and after Operation Metro Surge. It created a contemporaneous record of federal immigration agents' actions and behaviors.

Minnesota Truth Council Data Reports:

- MN Truth Council Data Report - Violations of the Constitution
- MN Truth Council Data Report - Childhood Uprooted
- MN Truth Council Data Report - Economic Damage
- MN Truth Council Data Report - Barriers to Basic Needs
- MN Truth Council Data Report - Protests and Artivism
- MN Truth Council Data Report - Mutual Aid Networks
- MN Truth Council Data Report - Community Systems
- MN Truth Council Data Report - Policies and Systems Contributing to Harm
- Crowd-Sourced Volunteer Data Testimony
- Immigrant Minnesotans Background and Context for the Minnesota Truth Council

Before each public meeting, a briefing was provided for the council members and the speakers, covering the logistics of the meeting. The Data Team also briefed the council on the findings. Key statistics were included in council members' remarks during the meetings. Psychosocial support and private rooms were made available to

all speakers. A volunteer team from the University of Minnesota Human Rights Program took notes and provided summaries of the public meetings.

In addition to the meetings, wraparound activities included an opening smudging ceremony on the Minnesota Capitol steps; an artist display by Owen Brown; a grounding exercise by a local faith leader during the public meeting break; a gallery hosted by the Rebel Loon Archive in the East Hall of the Minnesota State Capitol, titled *Art Against Operation Metro Surge: Selections from the Rebel Loon Archive;* and a singing action led by Singing Resistance in the Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda.

The Truth Council Will Present a Final Report and Recommendations

The council is now preparing the final report and recommendations. By December 1, 2026, the council's final report will be delivered to the Governor, the majority and minority leaders of the Minnesota legislature, and Minnesota's congressional delegation pursuant to the Executive Order.