



## REPORT: GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE FORUM *on* HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS, *and* POVERTY

September 29, 2009

The gubernatorial debate at the [Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless](#) conference drew nine contestants to the Minneapolis Hilton. The event—also sponsored by [MHP](#) and [A Minnesota Without Poverty](#)—heard candidates respond to questions about poverty, homelessness, and the lack of affordable housing. Candidates were provided questions in advance, but only given one-minute for each response. At debate conclusion, candidates had time to summarize their positions on poverty and housing.

While all candidates who filed for the governor's position were invited, the roster that night heavily tilted toward the DFL. Only one of the Republican candidates, Michael Jungbauer, attended, and all but one (Matt Entenza) of the DFLers were there: Susan Gaertner, Paul Thissen, Steve Kelley, Tom Bakk, Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Tom Rukavina, John Marty, and Mark Dayton.

While not many specifics came out, a few of the candidates mentioned initiatives they would undertake as governor. Jungbauer said the state should relax zoning requirements so the private sector can provide needed housing. Kelley said that he would put more affordable housing in the suburbs. Anderson Kelliher wants housing programs based on measurements and goals. Thissen said that he was proud to have carried the bill to put \$60 million into supportive services.

How would they pay for their housing efforts? Again, not a lot of detail, but a few took a stab at identifying funding sources. Dayton was most direct: he would "tax the rich and put the needed money into ending homelessness." Rukavina would "pass a big bonding bill for affordable housing and transportation." Bakk said that Minnesotans will support a tax bill to help the homeless once they know where the money goes and efforts have been made to put a face on homelessness. And Marty said that the governor should be sued to undo the unallotment of the renters' credit. Bakk did add that the approach to meeting housing needs must be cooperative with other efforts; Minnesotans don't get ahead by bringing someone else down, he added.

Why should the state do this? Candidates drew from personal experience with poverty, pulling out some of their campaign slogans. Kelliher: "The cycle of poverty begins with youth who become homeless." Gaertner: "There is an immense social cost in not paying attention to homelessness and foreclosures." Dayton: "The need to address homelessness and poverty is a moral test of society." Kelley: "We can't have a just society when the happiness of the many is built on the misery of the few."

Finally, a couple of candidates were asked for qualities they would look for in a housing commissioner under their administration. Rukavina and Jungbauer said that they would look for a commissioner who had personal experience and connection with people who are struggling to find a job and housing they can afford. Marty added he wanted a housing commissioner who believes it is his job to make sure that people have housing in this state, though he offered that the current commissioner is the best one in the cabinet.

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