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Readers Write for Monday, July 20

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SECRETARY OF STATE RITCHIE

Instead of thanks, he gets a GOP smear

I'm appalled that less than a month after the Minnesota Senate race has finally wound its way through our courts, the Republican Party finds it necessary to attack Secretary of State Mark Ritchie and call him out while hosting a national secretaries of state conference in our city.

Ritchie, along with Gov. Tim Pawlenty, followed the letter of our laws in a very complete recount process, running all the way to the state Supreme Court. To ignore that process and attack Ritchie publicly in an attempt to smear his name is typical of Republicans' behavior in past years. No wonder they are struggling in Minnesota and nationally to define who they are.

Give Ritchie credit for performing his duties as legally prescribed. He deserves

our thanks and admiration for administering a fair result when handed a very difficult election to oversee. Those visiting secretaries of state from around the country should know the majority of Minnesotans believe he did a top-notch job.

MICK PARENT, MINNEAPOLIS

DATA ON HOUSING TROUBLES

As housing goes, so goes the economy

Your June 15 editorial: "Carefully consider housing data," points to fewer homes for sale yet staying on the market longer and -- compared to the year before, overall -- selling for less. For 2009's first quarter, the Minnesota Housing Partnership's just-released Quarterly Housing Indicators frame another aspect of the housing picture: the real-life impact on Minnesota families.

The data show more households falling behind with no place to go. The picture is especially bleak for low-income families, as more homeowners are unable to keep

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up with mortgage payments. Unemployment and economic uncertainty are taking a toll on renters; those already in lower-cost apartments are falling behind in their rent payments. Through March of the '08-'09 school year, homeless kids identified by Minneapolis Public Schools rose by 42 percent from the previous year. The housing industry continues to suffer declines in residential construction employment.

You are right to note: "Housing troubles are real... But the contradictory data shouldn't paralyze people from making rational investment and spending decisions..." Likewise, state and federal policymakers shouldn't be paralyzed from rational spending: Invest in affordable housing -- create jobs and offer homes within everyone's means. Everyone benefits: families losing jobs, renters losing homes due to foreclosure, and workers building our infrastructure yet unable to afford a house next door. If we fix housing, we begin to fix the economy.

SHANNON GUERNSEY, MINNEAPOLIS;

VICE PRESIDENT OF PROGRAMS,

MINNESOTA HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

SOTOMAYOR'S NOMINATION

Solid experience and stellar qualifications

A July 17 letter writer implies that Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court is based mainly on her ethnicity. In fact, Judge Sotomayor clearly is qualified by both education and experience.

She is a graduate of Princeton University (summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa) and the Yale School of Law. In addition to her service on the appeals court since 1998, she was a former U.S. district judge in New York from 1992 to 1998.

She has more trial experience as a judge than any sitting member of the Supreme Court, more federal judicial experience than any nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court in 100 years and more overall judicial experience than anyone confirmed to the court in the past 70

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