

## **Take it from a lawyer: DFL candidates need to stop suing to get their way**

*By Daniel Suitor*

The center flank of the Minneapolis Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party has gone all in on litigation. Not content to contest this year's elections in the hearts and minds of voters, so-called moderates have taken their fight to the courtroom. These legal actions seem to be motivated less by genuine legal affront and more by political dissatisfaction and emotional grievance with the left wing of the party. But in taking their claims to the courthouse steps, these DFLers are undermining their party's values and sowing division rather than promoting the merits of their positions.

For example, two members of the DFL's Minneapolis Ward 2 Committee sued to enjoin the Ward 2 endorsement convention just five days before it was set to take place. While the plaintiffs claimed their concerns were procedural and logistical, it seems their true motivation was to sway the results in their favor by preventing more progressive student delegates from participating. Elsewhere, moderate City Council candidate Becka Thompson subpoenaed two journalists in an administrative proceeding, seeking to identify the creator of a slapdash website satirizing her candidacy. Then in two separate cases with the Campaign Finance Board, Thompson directly accused those journalists of participating in an unregistered committee operating against her. And allies of Mayor Jacob Frey, two donors and Council Member Linea Palmisano, have spent most of this year suing Council Member and former candidate for mayor Emily Koski for alleged campaign finance violations stemming from a transaction that Frey himself performed in his first mayoral campaign.

Maybe these litigants all believed, in good faith and earnest spirit, that they were wronged and they could win. But it's more likely their goals were to frustrate and harry their detractors in an effort to discourage participation in the political process altogether. Who wants to be sued for doing their job? No one. And whom does all this legal wrangling serve? Certainly the lawyers. Billable hours remain undefeated. But candidates, volunteers, and voters all grow weary of these proceedings. Take it from an attorney who has defended one of these suits: for the good of the DFL and our democratic systems, this needless litigation should stop.

Harassment and extortion by lawsuit is the domain of people like President Donald Trump. His deluge of lawsuits challenging the 2020 election was soundly rejected. And since his victory in 2024, the President has filed numerous dubiously grounded cases against media companies that seem intended to punish his critics rather than address any actual wrongdoing.

That is the strategy some DFL moderates have embraced: if your ideas are insufficiently popular and you can't win at the polls, bury anyone who opposes you in legal filings. These efforts do not advocate for any policy position and do not engage with the concerns of voters. They suggest the litigants know they've lost on their own political merits and must instead cry foul to the courts. They've been mostly unsuccessful there as well, but the cost to the party is real:

candidates have dropped out, party officials have quit, and activists on all sides have been discouraged.

This is not how the DFL should settle its disputes. The judge in the Ward 2 case noted these “rifts” and “frustration” between different factions in the DFL. In declining to stop that convention, she observed that “it is likely these issues will arise regardless” of the outcome of the case. Sage words from a wise jurist. Lawsuits will not bridge these divides. They do not help the left and center find common ground. They do not persuade the public. They do nothing but stoke rancor and erode the foundations of democracy. And now more than ever, the DFL needs to present a unified front to the challenges facing our city.

So, centrists: stop suing, start listening. It’s the only way forward.

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