

Governor Tim Walz

Testimony before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

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Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the Committee:

I am proud to be here as Governor of Minnesota. Under my leadership, Minnesota has dedicated its resources to ensuring that all Minnesotans can live a dignified and full life, with access to top-notch public schools, quality health care, and good jobs. Thanks to these initiatives, Minnesota has been ranked as one of the best states to raise a family in, one of the best states to find a job in, and one of the best states to live in.

Although Minnesota's programs have overwhelmingly achieved their intended purposes, they are not immune from fraud. Let me be clear: In Minnesota, if you defraud public programs, if you steal taxpayer money, we will find you, we will prosecute you, we will convict you, and we will throw you in jail. Every taxpayer dollar lost to fraud is a dollar not spent on critical programs that serve those most in need: hungry children, parents who need childcare so they can find and keep a job, the elderly, and the disabled.

As Governor, I have an important role on the front lines of combating fraud. While the state legislature and the federal government both play meaningful roles in ensuring our programs have integrity, the buck ultimately stops with me. I do not shy away from that responsibility, and I am prepared—as I have always been—to have a serious conversation with our federal partners about how to ensure fraudsters cannot take advantage of Minnesota taxpayers. I will engage with anyone, of whatever political leaning, who wants to help us stay ahead of those who would steal from the public fisc.

But even as we confront issues similar to all of our sister states, the people of Minnesota have been singled out and targeted for political retribution at an unparalleled scale. Under the guise of combating fraud, the federal government has flooded Minnesota with masked, untrained, and unaccountable agents who are wreaking havoc in our communities.

On the streets of Minnesota, federal agents have detained U.S. citizens who have committed no crimes. They have violated the constitutional rights of our citizens. They have shot first and asked questions later. Time and again, they have gaslit us by demanding that we ignore what we can see before our own eyes. But the American people are not that easily fooled.

The images of this brutal campaign are seared into our collective conscience. The fragile innocence of the five-year-old boy in a bunny hat being led away from his family. The maddening cruelty of a barely clothed man—a U.S. citizen—being dragged from his house in the dead of winter. The sheer devastation we feel at seeing the lifeless bodies of Renee Good and Alex Pretti.

But these are only some of the more visible aspects of this horribly misguided campaign. On a daily basis, in ways large and small, the federal government flouts court orders and tramples on the constitutional rights of Minnesotans. Indeed, in two recent opinions, the Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota identified nearly 100 court orders that ICE had violated in a single month—or, as he put it, more orders in a month “than some agencies have violated in their entire existence.” Respect for the rule of law should not be a partisan issue. As the Chief Judge correctly noted: “This list should give pause to anyone—no matter his or her political beliefs—who cares about the rule of law.”

Americans who are alarmed by this have good cause. The federal government’s actions appear to be unprecedented. As the Chief Judge aptly noted: “The Court is not aware of another occasion in the history of the United States in which a federal court has had to threaten contempt—again and again and again—to force the *United States government* to comply with court orders.”

Separately, another federal judge recently found that the federal government has been routinely denying detainees at the Whipple Federal Building the right to counsel. The court’s opinion paints a picture that should horrify every American: living spaces covered with mud, trash, and excrement; quarters so tight that there is not even room to sit; a lack of beds, blankets, and trashcans. Faced with these scenes of depraved indifference, the federal government had the audacity to argue that the Constitution must yield to its inhumane directives. This prompted the court to issue a rebuke so fundamental that it is shocking that recent actions created the need to articulate it: “The Constitution does not permit the government to arrest thousands of individuals and then disregard their constitutional rights because it would be too challenging to honor those rights.”

And the list goes on and on. Behind each case, there are human faces and human consequences. As yet another federal judge observed after having to enter a contempt order just to ensure basic compliance: “The inability of the U.S. Attorney’s Office to fulfill its duty to ensure compliance with judicial orders has real consequences on real human beings” These are our neighbors—our fellow Minnesotans—and they should be afforded the respect that they deserve and that the Constitution demands.

Although some have justified this perversion of liberty as a necessary sacrifice to fight crime, the reality is that the federal government's efforts have only served to undermine public safety. The ranks of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota have been decimated. The office has shed nearly half of its prosecutors in recent months. Federal prosecutors—the very same ones who are supposed to be putting away fraudsters and violent criminals—are fleeing the office in droves.

If there was any doubt as to the sincerity of the federal government's rhetoric about Minnesota, consider the aftermath of the tragic shooting of Renee Good. Rather than scrutinizing the officer who pulled the trigger, the Department of Justice ("DOJ") attempted to order an investigation of a grieving widow. When prosecutors rejected this ethically outrageous directive, DOJ leadership could have engaged in introspective reflection. Instead, they dug in, reportedly contributing to the decision of multiple prosecutors to resign. No sane system of justice would prioritize gratuitous retribution against a widow over the prosecution of the very criminals whose actions provided a pretext for the enforcement surge.

We are only beginning to see the tremendous costs of this foolhardy abdication of prosecutorial responsibilities. Take, for instance, the following account from the Associated Press from the other week of a dangerous offender who recently escaped justice because there was nobody left to prosecute him: "With a three-decade record of violent crime that includes strangling a pregnant woman and firing a shotgun under a person's chin, [he] was scheduled to stand trial [in March] on methamphetamine trafficking charges that could have locked him up for 25 years. Instead, he walked free after the prosecutor on his case retired."

At the same time DOJ is actively undermining its capabilities to prosecute ongoing crimes, President Trump has time and again used his pardon and clemency powers to free individuals who committed prior ones. For example, on January 20, 2025, President Trump granted clemency to around 1,500 individuals who were convicted, awaiting trial, or awaiting sentencing for their actions related to the January 6, 2021 United States Capitol attack. Then, on May 28, 2025, President Trump granted clemency for Lawrence Duran, who was sentenced to 50 years' imprisonment for orchestrating a \$205 million Medicare fraud scheme. More recently, on November 26, 2025, President Trump commuted the sentence of David Gentile, who was convicted of wire and securities fraud and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment by a New York jury for defrauding more than 10,000 investors in a \$1.6 billion scheme.

I long ago learned that actions speak louder than words. And the federal government's actions do not bespeak any interest in addressing fraud. By contrast, my Administration's

actions have routinely demonstrated our commitment to ensuring that every dollar intended to help those in need goes where it's supposed to. That is why, as Governor, I:

- Created an Inspector General position at the Minnesota Department of Education.
- Created a centralized fraud investigations unit, operated by law enforcement out of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, to oversee fraud prevention efforts across state agencies.
- Secured funding for staffing at the Minnesota Attorney General's Office to make sure they had more resources to aggressively pursue Medicaid fraud.
- Ordered a comprehensive third-party audit of Medicaid programs, including stopping payments in 14 Medicaid services for 90 days until the audit was complete. This effort led to the disenrollment of over 800 Medicaid providers.
- Ordered the Department of Human Services Inspector General to implement a proactive, data-driven post-payment review program for Medicaid providers and claims, using data analytics to identify high-risk providers, claims, and service patterns for targeted review. As part of this effort, the Department of Human Services issued a moratorium on new licenses.
- Ordered the Department of Human Services to subject providers with increased risk factors to pre-payment review of claims.
- Created a statewide Inspector General Coordinating Council to ensure Inspectors General are coordinated in their fight against fraud and improve data sharing across agencies.
- Increased transparency by directing state agencies to publish program integrity actions and outcomes.
- Created a new state position in the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension—the Director of Program Integrity—tasked with rooting out fraud in state agencies, and appointed former superintendent of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and former FBI agent Tim O'Malley to lead it.

And I have not been alone in my efforts to combat fraud. Thanks to my Administration's work with the Minnesota state legislature year after year, Minnesota programs are now safer from fraud than they were when I entered office. As just a few examples:

- In 2019—my first year in office—I worked with the state legislature to beef up fraud controls in Department of Human Services programs, including the Child Care Assistance Program. Under this 2019 legislation, we:
 - Lowered the standard of proof of fraud required for enforcement actions, including for county and tribal agencies to stop payments;
 - Increased penalties for certain service providers—requiring a three-year suspension for first-time offenders, and a permanent ban for second-time offenders;
 - Simplified the process for calculating attendance record overpayments; and
 - Clarified recordkeeping requirements for childcare providers.
- In 2022-2023, I worked with the state legislature to create and fund a Statewide Internal Audit Office in the Minnesota Management and Budget office.
- During the 2024–2025 budget cycle, I worked with the state legislature to expand and clarify the Department of Human Services’ antifraud authorities in order to give them additional tools to take action against suspected fraudsters.
- In 2025, I worked with the legislature to make sure that federal criminal prohibitions against Medicaid kickbacks are mimicked at the state level, and to clarify and expand whistleblower protections.

And throughout all this, we have year after year worked closely with our partners in federal law enforcement to catch and punish fraudsters. For instance, we cooperated extensively with the FBI and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Minnesota to investigate and prosecute individuals associated with Feeding our Future. This cooperation has led to criminal charges for over 75 individuals.

Against this backdrop, I would like to take a moment of personal privilege. I have watched with dismay as members of this Committee have made unfounded allegations that I am somehow complicit in defrauding Minnesota programs. As a former member of Congress, I know that this institution can be better than these evidence-free accusations levied for nakedly partisan reasons. I also know that we are capable of the higher calling of working together to address nationwide issues, including fraud.

I am proud of what my Administration has accomplished, but there is still more to do. We will continue to do the important work of combating fraud. But as we do so, we will remain true to our principles.

We will feed hungry children, help the poor afford healthcare, and assist people with disabilities, while also keeping fraud in check. We will demonstrate our decency and integrity, and never yield to political scapegoating, particularly of our most vulnerable communities.

In these extraordinary times, the people of Minnesota have come together to show the world their values. I am proud of them and honored to be their Governor.