

## DFL moves state convention to an online format for 2020

**Friday, April 24:** The Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party announced that the party's state convention will, for the first time in the 76-year history of the party, no longer be held in-person. The convention will instead be moved online and conducted via a remote balloting system.

The Minnesota DFL Party's State Convention was originally scheduled for May 30-31 in Rochester. "Today, the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party's executive committee made the difficult decision to move the DFL Party's State Convention online due to the ongoing threat posed by COVID-19," said state chairman Ken Martin on Friday, April 24. "I understand this is disappointing for our grassroots activists, party leaders, and endorsed candidates, and I share their disappointment. Our state convention has historically been a tremendous opportunity for DFLers to hear from our elected officials, network with other activists, and learn more about the stakes of the upcoming elections. However, our first responsibility is to protect the health and well-being of the people of Minnesota."

"It is crucial we all remember that by staying home, we are protecting the health care workers, first responders, childcare providers, and grocers on the front lines of this pandemic. By staying home, we are taking care of older Minnesotans and those with compromised immune systems. By staying home, we are saving lives. While this was not an easy decision to come to, I am confident that it is the right one and that DFL Party members will understand the urgent need to slow the spread of COVID-19."

## Attorney general wins settlement with Cosmos landlord

**Friday, April 24:** Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison announced that his office has obtained a settlement with a Meeker County landlord who repeatedly disconnected a tenant's water service in violation of Gov. Tim Walz's Executive Order 20-14 and Minnesota's landlord-tenant laws. The attorney general's office has now received 300 complaints from tenants across Minnesota who are threatened with or facing removal that is illegal during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency.

The consent judgment, filed in Meeker County District Court, requires landlord Ikechukwu Michael Nwachukwu, d/b/a Divine Estates, to waive rental and contract-for-deed payments that the tenant previously owed at a manufactured-home park in Cosmos and reduce the tenant's balance to zero. In addition, Nwachukwu is required to pay a \$1,000 civil penalty, as well as an additional \$9,000 if he violates the terms of the consent judgment. Nwachukwu agrees to comply with Executive Order 20-14 and Minnesota law by not interfering with any tenant's ability to live at the park during the peacetime emergency. Further, under the terms of the consent judgment, Nwachukwu may not interfere with any tenant's utility services at any time. Nwachukwu had repeatedly attempted to terminate the tenancy of a tenant who resides in one of the homes in the manufactured-home park in Cosmos. When his tenant told him he could not afford to pay the water bill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the landlord physically terminated water service to the property on two occasions, in violation of Minnesota law. Meeker County District Court previously granted a temporary restraining order requiring that the landlord restore water service to the property.

"It's in every Minnesotan's interest that everyone have a safe place to shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most landlords are doing the right thing by their tenants, and I thank them. But if any landlords illegally interfere with a tenant's need for shelter during the pandemic, I'm showing again and again that my office will quickly take them to court and firmly hold them accountable," Ellison said. Under Executive Order 20-14, property owners are prohibited from filing eviction actions or terminating residential leases for the duration of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency. The disconnection of such services is considered a constructive eviction. Minnesotans can contact the attorney general's office by calling 1-800-657-3787.

## Great River Regional Library introduces new hotline service

**Wednesday, April 22:** The Great River Regional Library (GRRL) introduced a new hotline service. Call the library hotline to ask community and library questions.

Make sure you get reliable and trusted information! Friendly library staff are happy to answer questions about borrowing from the library, accessing your library account, and recommending movies and books. However, you can also call the library hotline to ask your questions about filling out the census, filing for unemployment, using your technology (like your cell phone or laptop), asking general community questions, and getting COVID-19 updates.

Call us! The library's hotline number is 1-833-GET-GRRL (1-833-438-4775). The hours for the hotline are 10 a.m. to 4p.m. Mondays through Fridays. To learn more about the new hotline service and other updates from GRRL, visit the library website at [www.griver.org](http://www.griver.org).

The Great River Regional Library (GRRL) provides library services at 32 public libraries in Benton, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd and Wright counties, including Paynesville. GRRL supplies the residents of Central Minnesota with nearly 1 million books, CDs and DVDs, 250 public computers, programming, and information services.

## DNR, health department offer guidelines for outdoor recreation

**Friday, April 24:** The DNR and Minnesota Department of Health collaborated to create new outdoor recreation guidelines for use during the COVID-19 pandemic. These guidelines apply to both recreational facilities and the public and are based on Gov. Tim Walz's Emergency Executive Order Allowing for Safe Outdoor Recreation (EO 20-38).

Following these guidelines will help protect you and your fellow Minnesotans from this health threat. You can enjoy the outdoors while doing your part to slow the spread of COVID-19.

- Practice social distancing (stay at least 6 feet from people from other households). This isn't just for parks and trails – it is also essential at boat launches, fishing piers, and hunting lands, and anytime you leave your home.

- Stay as close to home as possible. This is not the time to be traveling long distances to recreate. Cherished outdoor traditions further from home will be there for you later, after the public health situation has eased.

- Do not host or attend gatherings with people who aren't members of your immediate household. This includes gatherings like outdoor cookouts or barbecues, because those types of gatherings could spread COVID-19.

- Explore the range of nearby public lands available to you. If you arrive at a park, water access site, or other public recreation land and see that it is busy, choose a different option. This will allow you to maintain social distancing, and reduce impacts on staff and resources. Also, consider visiting at off-peak times, typically early or late in the day.

- Do not carpool to outdoor recreational activities with people other than those in your immediate household. Similarly, do not share equipment.

## DNR: Be safe, practice social distancing on the water

**Tuesday, April 21:** As boaters across Minnesota prepare to hit the water, they need to keep in mind tips for being safe on cold water as well as their responsibility for staying close to home and practicing socially distancing under Gov. Tim Walz's stay-at-home executive order. "As Minnesotans, we have a natural urge to get outside this time of year – and for many of us, that's especially true this spring," said Rodmen Smith, DNR enforcement division director. "We constantly remind people about ways they can stay safe while they're on the water. In light of COVID-19, we also ask this year that you take additional steps to protect yourself, your family, and the people around you."

**Cold-Water Safety** – No matter when the ice went out, there's one common theme: The water this time of year is dangerously cold. Falls into the water can quickly turn tragic. With water temperatures not much above freezing, a fall in will likely trigger cold-water shock. Numbness will set in quickly, and swimming or calling for help will be difficult. You'll probably gasp uncontrollably and draw water into your lungs. Even strong swimmers may drown within minutes. "The best way to prevent that from happening is to wear a life jacket – actually wear it, not just have it along," said Lisa Dugan, DNR enforcement recreation safety outreach coordinator. "It's the easiest and most effective way to prevent an unfortunate situation from turning into a tragedy." The cold-water season isn't the time to boat alone, either. This year, people should head out only with members of their immediate household and let others on shore know where they're going and when they plan to return. Keep the floor of the boat free of clutter to avoid tripping and falling into the water, and ensure the boat has safety equipment such as life jackets, communication and noise-making devices, and a first-aid kit.

**Boating During COVID-19** – When hitting the water, know the DNR's COVID-19 outdoor recreation guidelines and practice the following to protect yourselves and others:

- Maintain social distance of at least 6 feet. This includes places such as fuel stations and community docks, and means no beaching or tying up to other boats.

- Boat only with people in your immediate household.
- Boat close to home. Travel to and from the access site without making other stops.

- When fueling your watercraft, wash your hands as you would when fueling a car. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- When launching and loading your boat, give people ahead of you plenty of time and space to finish launching or loading before you approach.

- Keep in mind water-access site conditions may be different than in previous years. DNR-managed accesses are open, but spring maintenance is not completed.

- If you have been diagnosed with, or are exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing), stay home. This self-isolation period should extend for at least seven days after the illness begins and include 72 hours of being fever-free without using fever-reducing medications and resolution of other symptoms.

- Know what's open. To see what DNR-managed sites are available, see the DNR's COVID-19 website or call the DNR information center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367.