

65A

Editorial Our endorsements

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Minnesota House

Our endorsements

65A — Cy Thao

(Frogstown neighborhood of St. Paul)

We endorse the Democratic-Farmer-Labor incumbent, Cy Thao, for another term representing a district centered in St. Paul's Frogstown neighborhood. Thao is an artist in his third term. His opponent, Republican Paul Holmgren, has run against him in the last two elections. Thao has won easily in this heavily Democratic district.

Thao said immigration and diversity are important — the census shows that the district is roughly one-third white, one-fourth African-American, one-fourth Asian and 7 percent Hispanic. Roughly one-fourth of the district's residents have incomes below the poverty line. Thao said many are on fixed incomes. This is a district that needs active representation at the Capitol.

The two candidates agree that foreclosed and vacant homes are a big problem in the district. Thao said he supports a constitutional amendment that would raise the state's sales tax and dedicate the funding to

the environment and the arts. Holmgren said he opposes such dedicated funding. He said he believes the arts are "just a luxury" and that outdoors projects can be supported by hunting and fishing fees.

Holmgren said he wants to make government less intrusive. Thao said he is concerned that state-level cuts have put pressure on property taxpayers to pick up more of the costs of local government and schools.

Thao said is proud of helping to work on the Central Corridor light-rail project, which will run down University Avenue. He said he wants to work on health care reforms to lower costs and to continue working with neighbors to make the community safer.

We endorse Cy Thao for another term in the Minnesota House and urge him to take a leadership role on behalf of low-income Minnesotans and neighborhoods victimized by the housing crisis.

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VOTE YES MINNESOTA! Protect the Minnesota You Love on November 4th.

www.YesforMN.org

We all know Minnesota's landscape is changing. But how much it's changing may be a surprise. 40% of Minnesota lakes fail to meet basic clean water standards, according to tests done by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Minnesota's population is growing faster than any other state in the Midwest. If we don't conserve while we grow, over 1 million acres of natural areas and farmland could be lost over the next 25 years.

Twin Cities waters are under increasing pressure each passing year. We live in the fastest growing state in the Midwest. Our increasing population will use more resources with more need for clean drinking water, more people on our rivers, and more people fishing our lakes. It is a sad reality that, today, the fish caught in our lakes are often uneatable. Most lakes in the metro have fishing advisories. This means that because of contamination by mercury or another pollutant, you should limit your monthly intake of these fish, or not

eat them at all, depending on the lake.

Our metropolitan area offers an abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities. Our citizens get to choose from such great destinations like Lakes Calhoun, Phalen, Isles, Cedar, Harriet and Nokomis. Sadly, not one of these lakes is free from both fish and swimming advisories. This mirrors conditions statewide, where four out of ten of our tested lakes are polluted. This is unacceptable for the Land of Sky Blue Waters. We must invest in these waters before it is too late.

This November, voters will have a chance to tackle this problem. The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment will provide long-term funding for clean water; fish, game and wildlife habitat; arts access and our parks and trails system. The amendment will provide a lasting legacy by cleaning up our polluted waters,

expanding and maintaining our world-class parks and trails system, and protecting vital fish and wildlife habitat

There is nothing more important than having clean water for the citizens of our metro. Many of our friends and neighbors fish for both pleasure and sustenance. On November 4th, we have the

chance to clean up our polluted lakes and rivers by voting yes on the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.

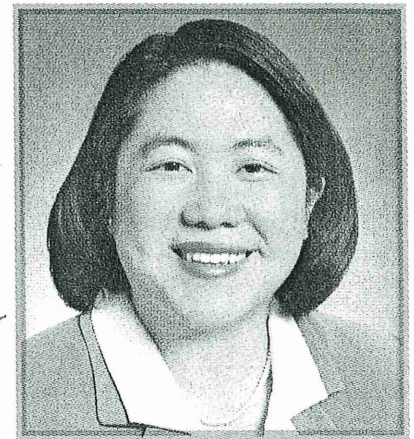
Our kids and grandkids will thank us if we make this investment.

Rep. Cy Thao
651-646-0397

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First Hmong legislators elected

It was a long journey from a Laotian refugee camp to the Minnesota Capitol for Sen. Mee Moua, DFL-St. Paul. She didn't expect to win the DFL nomination when she signed on as a candidate for the Senate in 2002; she simply wanted to mobilize the Hmong community. She ended up doing both; and became the first Hmong-American elected to any Legislature in the U.S. She has been re-elected to the Senate twice since. Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, became the first Hmong-American member of the House in 2003. Like Moua, Thao and his family came to America as refugees. He still serves in the House today.



Rep. Neva Walker

Rep. Neva Walker, DFL-Minneapolis, made history in 2001 when she became the first African-American woman to serve in the Minnesota Legislature. A Minneapolis South High and University of Minnesota graduate, Walker came from a tradition of community service, working for years as a community organizer. Her first bill was a resolution commemorating the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She is still in the House today.

Boozing at the Capitol

A public furor erupted in May 2004 after Fox 9 News broadcast hidden camera videos of a senator and some lobbyists whooping it up in a booze fest in the Senate president's office as a late-night vote was being taken on the floor. The report also showed Capitol garbage cans overflowing with spent bottles of beer, wine and liquor. The news story got the public angry, several of the legislators involved lost their re-election bids – and alcohol consumption has reportedly slowed at the Capitol. In fact, one lobbyist told the Star Tribune recently that it's become downright rare to smell alcohol on legislators' breath. Now that's progress.



Courtesy of Fox News – KMSP-TV 9

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Local Hmong in suits meet with State Representatives

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans hosts a meeting of the Hmong Professional Working Group at the State Capitol, Representatives urge community to voice concerns to lawmakers

By Ted Meinhover

(St. Paul) Members of the Hmong Professional Working Group, who currently gather monthly to share lunch, network, and educate themselves on issues important to the Hmong business community as well as the greater community, gathered at the State Capitol on Thursday, April 24th. The Hmong

Professional Working Group has been meeting for a number of years, though it has changed names to be ever more inclusive, said Txiabneeb Vaj, who chaired the meeting. The group now includes Hmong professionals and service providers, and is open to anyone providing services to the Hmong community.

Despite the rainy, cold weather last Thursday, April 24th, over twenty members of the group ascended the marbled stairs of the Capitol building to hear a presentation from the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans. The

focus of the presentation was how the community can communicate their concerns to lawmakers and how those concerns can become policy. It was an opportunity to learn about this government body and to learn their way around the halls and offices that produce many of the laws that impact their lives and businesses, as well as see the faces of many of the legislators that craft those laws.

The State Legislature is currently in session, and the Capitol building was teeming with lawmakers, lobbyists and other professionals hurrying to meetings and sessions

of the senate or House. Many representatives and senators were at the Capitol to attend these sessions, giving the Professional Group a chance to meet them in person.

The Council on Asian Pacific Americans was created by the States Legislature in 1985 in order to advise the governor and members of the legislature on issues pertaining to Asian Pacific Minnesotans, to advocate on issues of importance to the Asian

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Representative Cy Thao and Senator Linda Higgins spoke to the group of Hmong professionals, encouraging the community to voice their concerns to the Capitol. Photo by Ted Meinhover.

Local Hmong in suits meet with State Representatives

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Pacific community, and to act as a broker between the Asian Pacific community and mainstream society. The Council gave the AAPI community an "insider approach" to dealing with lawmakers, said Ilean Her, Executive Director of CAPM, since the Council was created with the power to directly advise the governor and legislature of the State. The Legislature observed that minority communities in Minnesota did not have an adequate voice and that there was no accountability from the state to minority groups. It proceeded to create several Councils that were responsible for policy based research and for advising lawmakers. The CAPM was the last of these Councils to be created and funded by the Government.

David Zander, a Research Analysis at the Council, said he was an effective starting point for members of the community wishing to bring their concerns to policy makers. He and Miss Her urged the visiting professionals to contact them about any ideas that they had for legislation, saying that it was their office's job to do research on issues of concern to the community and turn that research into policy.

Evan Xiong, attending the monthly meeting of Hmong Professionals for the first time, has just moved to the Twin Cities from Colorado. He asked Senator Linda



About twenty members of the Hmong Professional Working Group met with the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans at the Capitol Building in St. Paul to learn how they can work with the State government to improve the community. Photo by Ted Meinhover.

Higgins of North Minneapolis and Representative Cy Thao of St. Paul, visiting the meeting in between meetings, how he could become involved. Both lawmakers, as well as the CAPM presenters, stressed the openness of the Capitol building in St. Paul, "the most beautiful building in Minnesota" as Representative Higgins put it. "Our Capitol is still very accessible," said Ms. Her, where citizens still have the ability visit any office in the building, despite recent security concerns. It was important to lawmakers, she said, that citizens of Minnesota have the opportunity to enter their Capitol and voice their concerns to Representatives.

Senator Thao answered questions about the Asian Pacific Cultural

Center, which was vetoed last month by Governor Pawlenty. "We worked really hard" to get the APCC into the bonding bill he said, "and it got vetoed." "Now it's all in the Governor's hands," he continued, saying that the Center could still be included in a supplemental bonding bill.

CAPM presenters talked about different ways for community members to voice their concerns to lawmakers. There are some success stories, they said, of citizens that organized around a specific issue and affected legislation. "Regular people don't always have the time" to go through the long process of taking ideas to policy, said Her. The Council is set up to listen to these ideas and help them become

policy, she said. Also, some groups hire lobbyists to be their voice to lawmakers, and some people turn to non profit organizations that exist to influence policy.

In order to locate and contact your state and representatives, citizens can use the District Finder on the State's website, www.leg.state.mn.us.

Council members announced a large event being held on May 19th at the Capitol building, as part of Asian Heritage Month. The rotunda of the Capitol and the main corridor are reserved for displays. The legislature will be in session at that time, so "many legislators will be in the Capitol to see it," said Mr. Zander.

Members of the Council said

that the CAPM website was being recreated and was due to be launched at the May 16 Annual Dinner. This website will be a resource for the Asian American community, providing useful information and links.

Those interested in joining the Hmong Professional Working Group for their monthly meetings can contact Txiabneeb Vaj at txiabneeb@gmail.com. The Council on Asian Pacific Americans can be reached at 651-296-0538. Executive Director Ilean Her can be reached at kao.ly.her@state.mn.us, and David Zander can be reached at david.zander@state.mn.us.