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Chair Murphy and Members of the Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee

Dear Chair Murphy and Members,

SF386's previous testimony and discussion suggested the current State flag's reflects 1862 when Dakota leaders gave an order for genocide, "kill all whites." Within 24 hours of the order, more than 260 white or bi-racial civilians were murdered. A few names to go with that single day statistic:

Philander Prescott, an elderly unarmed man who was decapitated and his head stuck on a pole;
Annie Reyff, 8, butchered alive and left in pieces;
Wilhelmina and her two year old daughter Caroline Busse shot dead at point blank range;
Caroline Walz, 19, pregnant, whose unborn child was cut from her prior to her death;
Mattie Williams, 17, shot in the torso and gang raped in captivity prior to death.

These stories are documented by oral history, government documents, and eyewitness accounts from survivors. It is this Massacre that caused the U.S. government to act swiftly and severely.

The Minnesota flag shows a land where cultures live side by side in friendship. That friendship existed in August 1862 as demonstrated by the acts of John Other Day, a Dakota who guided 62 white people to safety and again by massacre survivor John Kochendorfer's relationship with a Dakota boy living in the home where John was sent after being orphaned in the Massacre.

If there is a need for a commission, develop one that promotes the positive connection the seal presents for Minnesota's future. No other state suffered a massacre and war under enemy nation attack. This state is unique and the flag depicts that unique relationship between the State's people, their past, and their future. Now is not the time to erase history. Do not support SF386.

To clarify the events of 1862, I've included a copy of a counterpoint editorial published in the Star Tribune on December 29, 2022 written by published historian and military veteran Curtis Dahlin entitled [*We should also remember other victims of 1862.*](#)

Thank you for your time and service to Minnesota,


Stephanie Chappell

Counterpoint: We should also remember other victims of 1862

The 650 men, women and children deserve our thoughts, too.

By Curtis Dahlin

DECEMBER 29, 2022 — 5:45PM

Opinion editor's note: *Star Tribune Opinion publishes a mix of national and local [commentaries](#) online and in print each day. To contribute, click [here](#).*

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In "Riders share history's burden" ([Dec. 27](#)) the Star Tribune reported about Dakota Indians riding to Mankato and gathering there on Dec. 26, the anniversary of the hanging of 38 Dakota in 1862. Gov. Tim Walz was in attendance, and he apologized to the Dakota for the hanging of the 38 and for the removal of Dakota from Minnesota.

But there is more to the story, as Walz, a former teacher, knows.

In 1862, the Dakota were unhappy and angry over their situation for a variety of reasons. By 1862, they had sold most of their land to the U.S. government. By mid-August, grievances came to a head among the Dakota, and some decided to wage war on settlers along the Minnesota River valley.

Early in the morning of Aug. 18, 1862, Dakota attacked the Lower Sioux Agency and then settlers who were living near them in Renville and Brown Counties. The Dakota's attacks that day were devastating, resulting in the killing of about 265 mostly unarmed men, women and children. Five Dakota warriors were killed. In the following days, the Dakota attacked Fort Ridgely twice and the town of New Ulm twice, but they were unable to take either place.

Ultimately, 650 whites were killed. Among them were 40 adult women and 100 children age 10 or under, including infants. Some were killed with great brutality, which particularly enraged the white population. In addition, the Dakota took about 150 white women and children captive, along with many mixed-bloods.

By the end of the conflict some 100 Dakota warriors were killed, but no Dakota women or children.

Gov. Alexander Ramsey learned of the attacks on the settlers on Aug. 19, and he selected Henry Sibley to lead the military response and stop the killing. Things got off to a rocky start for Sibley when on Sept. 2 and 3, a large burial party he had by then dispatched was badly mauled by the Dakota at the battle of Birch Coulee. Sibley continued to gather his force, and on Sept. 23 he

defeated the Dakota at the Battle of Wood Lake. Three days later, he freed the captives at what became known as Camp Release.

Sibley established a military commission to try those Dakota who were accused of crimes. Nearly 400 were tried, with just over 300 being convicted of capital offenses. The trials were brief and the Dakota were not represented by counsel. But neither were Civil War soldiers accused of crimes. It was a different time. White settlers were clamoring for justice, and after the war ended, had made several attacks on Dakota prisoners, killing three.

President Abraham Lincoln had his staff review all the trial transcripts. He cut the number to be executed to 39, and one late reprieve brought the number to 38. Lincoln spared the lives of 265 convicted Dakota.

The 38 were hanged at Mankato on Dec. 26, 1862. It was the largest mass execution in U.S. history, in response to the deadliest Indian uprising in U.S. history.

In November 1862, about 1,600 Dakota dependents were taken to a camp at Fort Snelling. Here they were humanely treated, fed soldier's rations and protected from revenge-minded whites, of whom there were many. While at least 100 Dakota died in the camp from disease that winter, the same type of disease toll was taking place in the white community. The following spring, many but not all Dakota were shipped out of the state, to ensure none could resume killing settlers.

The war was the most significant and tragic event in Minnesota's history. If violence were to erupt today killing the same proportion of the state's population, there would be some 18,000 dead.

So governor, we know your feelings about the 38. What are your feelings about the 650 who were murdered? Are they worthy of being mentioned and remembered? Since this is now a public issue, I would request that you respond in a public setting.

Curtis Dahlin lives in Roseville.