

To members of the Minnesota Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for S.F. 2062, which proposes to remove the population caps (7,500 for cities and 5,000 for counties) from the definition of a "public official" in Minnesota Statutes Section 13.43. This change would ensure that investigation data for officials like managers, chiefs, and department heads becomes public under the same conditions across all jurisdictions, regardless of size. I urge you to advance this bill for the following reasons.

First, this legislation enhances transparency and accountability. In smaller communities, such as St. Joseph (population 7,126), the current law allowed the police chief's 2018 resignation during an investigation to shield the findings from public view due to the population threshold. Removing the caps would close this gap, ensuring residents have access to critical information about their officials' conduct, just as they do in larger cities.

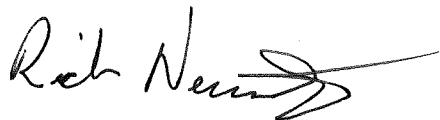
Second, it promotes fairness and consistency. The existing disparity—where a police chief in a city of 7,501 faces public disclosure while one in a city of 7,499 does not—undermines equal treatment under the law. A uniform definition would level the playing field, ensuring all officials in comparable roles are subject to the same standards.

Third, this change strengthens public trust. When residents know that investigations into potential misconduct will be transparent, regardless of community size, they can feel more confident in their local government. This is vital in an era where public expectations for openness are high.

Finally, it serves as a deterrent to misconduct. Officials aware that their actions could become public may be less inclined to violate policies or rules, fostering a culture of accountability statewide. While privacy concerns in smaller towns are valid, the law's existing protections—keeping data private unless an official resigns or is terminated during an investigation—strike a fair balance.

S.F. 2062 addresses real inequities, as seen in the St. Joseph case, and aligns with Minnesota's commitment to transparent governance. I respectfully request that you support this bill and move it forward for a vote. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Neumeister", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rich Neumeister