



# Free agent class

Stecher heads UND's class, Page A9

# Grand Forks Herald

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Kerem Yücel / MPR News file

Abortion-rights activists counter-protest against the Pro-Life Action Ministries rally June 24 in St. Paul. A state judge on Monday ruled that Minnesota's existing restrictions on abortion violate the state's right to privacy.

## Judge rules some Minn. abortion restrictions unconstitutional

By Alex Derosier  
Grand Forks Herald

ST. PAUL — A Minnesota district court judge has blocked multiple restrictions on abortion in the state, including a 24-hour wait period and a requirement that minors inform both parents of a procedure.

Ramsey County Judge Thomas A. Gilligan Jr. ruled on Monday, July 11, that many of Minnesota's abortion regulations violate fundamental rights to abortion and privacy

under the state constitution. His ruling granted abortion rights groups' requests in a lawsuit to block multiple restrictions on the procedure and goes into effect immediately.

In addition to the waiting period and parental disclosure requirements, the ruling means medical staff other than doctors can perform abortions and providers are no longer subject to felony penalties for violating state regulations on the procedure.

Going forward, regulations will be enforced through civil and administrative penalties as other medical procedures are in the state.

"These abortion laws violate the right to privacy because they infringe upon the fundamental right under the Minnesota Constitution," Gilligan wrote. "Accordingly, this court is declaring those laws unconstitutional and permanently enjoining their enforcement."

**ABORTION:** Page 6

## Sixth annual Recovering Reinvented to be held in Grand Forks

By Meghan Arbegast  
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — The sixth annual Recovery Reinvented, an event dedicated to eliminating the shame and stigma of the disease of addiction hosted by Gov. Doug Burgum and First Lady Kathryn Burgum, will be held in Grand Forks on Nov. 3 at the Alerus Center.



This is the first year the event will be held in Grand Forks as it has previously been hosted in Bismarck three times, once in Fargo and virtually in 2020.

The daylong event will be free and open to the public and will feature state and national addiction and recovery experts who will focus on reinventing recovery through the sharing of stories; creating recovery-friendly cultures in the workplace and community; and eliminating the stigma surrounding the disease of addiction.

"We continue to build on the message that storytelling is one of the most powerful tools we have to end the stigma surrounding addiction," First Lady Burgum said in a news release. "Bringing this experience to the community of Grand Forks will allow us to lift up more faces and voices of recovery and inspire people to know that recovery from addiction is possible."

Volunteer opportunities at the event will be available and the public is asked to submit nominations for the Recovery Champion awards, which honor local individuals and groups making an impact in the field of addiction and recovery.

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Monika Lawrence for MPR News file photo

A sandbag wall protects buildings June 15 near Ranier, Minnesota. Water levels along Rainy Lake are receding from June's record high, but remain well above normal.

## 'THERE'S A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL'

Residents optimistic as historic Rainy Lake floodwaters recede

By Dan Kraker  
MPR News

Duluth

Gary Potter has spent the past two months nervously watching the swollen waters of Rainy Lake press against the head-high sandbag wall he built in his backyard, to keep the record-setting flooding away from his home.

Now, as the water continues to recede, he and his neighbors who live along

the giant 50-mile-long lake on the Canadian border, just east of International Falls, Minnesota, are beginning to breathe a bit easier.

"We finally feel like we're on the backside of it. Everybody's feeling a lot better today than they were a week ago or two weeks ago," Potter said.

After peaking at a record high level in mid-June, the water has dropped nearly 2 feet. It's now at the base of Potter's sandbag wall, which

has held up through three big storms in recent weeks that sent waves pounding against it.

The National Weather Service predicts the lake will drop by nearly another foot by Friday, July 15.

"So most of us are feeling relieved now that we're over the worst of it. And now it's just a matter of cleaning up, and fixing up our yards again," Potter said.

Some home and business owners began sandbagging in

late April, after record spring rains fell on top of a deep winter snowpack, sending water gushing into the Rainy River basin.

After months of stress and exhaustion, building and maintaining sandbag walls, and monitoring water pumps through the night, Koochiching County Sheriff Perryn Hedlund said there's a lot of optimism in the community.

**RAINY LAKE:** Page 7

## Speaker at Park River Bible Camp backs out after anti-LGBTQ backlash from surrounding communities

By Ingrid Harbo  
Grand Forks Herald

PARK RIVER, N.D. — A speaker at an event hosted by Park River Bible Camp near Park River, North Dakota, backed out after backlash from surrounding communities about the speaker's gender and sexuality.

Pastor Drew Stever — a queer, transgender pastor at

Hope Lutheran Church in Hollywood, California, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-affiliated church — was scheduled to speak at Park River Bible Camp's Youth Fest on July 10, but decided not to after people in surrounding communities expressed their disapproval to camp leadership and on social media.

He cited concerns for his and his family's safety for his

decision to back out.

"Camp is supposed to be a place where you can go and just be, and we didn't feel like we could be at camp and be in the town fully present, fully comfortable and fully feeling like our safety was a priority," said Stever.

Youth Fest, taking place July 10-15, is a new event for the ELCA camp, and was created for seventh- through

12th-grade students as an alternative event for the ELCA's National Youth Gathering, which was canceled due to COVID-19. Each day of the event had a speaker scheduled to give a talk about that day's theme and be present for activities at the camp. Stever's talk would have been about goodness and kindness.

**BACKLASH:** Page 6

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# Crime a top concern for AG candidates, but solutions vary

By Dana Ferguson  
Grand Forks Herald

ST. PAUL — Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Republican challenger Jim Schultz on Monday, July 11, shared concerns about violent crime in Minnesota and laid out their proposals to combat it.

And their plans highlighted stark differences between the Democratic-Farmer-Labor and Republican-endorsed candidates.

Ellison met with gun control advocates in Maplewood and afterward said the state needed to do more to prevent gun violence.

“We can’t have a serious conversation about public safety and exclude a conversation about guns,” the first-term Democrat said. “It’s time to make our community safer by stopping the ready access to these guns.”

Congress took a positive step by implementing additional restrictions for young people buying firearms and putting in place provisions that encourage states to adopt red-flag laws, Ellison said. But more could be done to prevent gun violence, he said.

Schultz, the Republican Party-endorsed candidate running to unseat Ellison, on Monday said additional regulations on firearms aren’t the answer.

“You have so many things,



Dana Ferguson / Forum News Service

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, right, and U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, left, speak with reporters Monday outside the Maplewood Library.

so many laws on the books, many of which we’re failing to enforce adequately,” he said, noting that the state should first focus on enforcing existing laws.

The state should also boost penalties for violent offenses and ensure that prosecutors and judges hold offenders to account, Schultz said.

At a news conference at the Capitol earlier Monday, Schultz said that, if elected, he would transfer 30 prosecutors in the Attorney General’s Office to the criminal division from divisions that regulate businesses, set a specific penalty in law for carjacking, form a blue ribbon panel to study violent crime in Minnesota and raise awareness about county

attorneys that he feels miss the mark in their charging decisions.

“The Attorney General’s Office is focused on many other things other than the crime that is plaguing communities,” Schultz said. “So we have to have dramatically more criminal attorneys in the Attorney General’s Office.”

Ellison earlier this year requested additional funding from the Legislature to bring on nine additional criminal prosecutors but lawmakers didn’t approve the money. There are currently three prosecutors in the criminal division who are charged with supporting county attorneys with criminal cases.

Schultz also criticized Ellison for not taking violent crime more seriously in his capacity as attorney general. And he said he disagreed with Ellison’s handling of the prosecution of former Brooklyn Center police officer Kim Potter.

Schultz said he would support commuting Potter’s sentence if he was elected and made a member of the Minnesota Board of Pardons. Potter was convicted of manslaughter after she fatally shot Daunte Wright during a traffic stop in 2021 after yelling “Taser.”

“It’s become a fundamentally political office, much more interested in the headlines in the Star Tribune, much more interested in pleasing the far left within the Democratic Party than an office that simply does justice every day of the week. That’s what the Attorney General’s Office should do,” Schultz said during a news conference at the Capitol.

Ellison is set to face Bill Dahn in the Democratic-Farmer-Labor primary contest on Aug. 9, while Schultz is set to square off against Sharon Anderson and Doug Wardlow in the GOP race. The winner of each primary will move on to the general election in November.

Follow Dana Ferguson on Twitter @bydanaferguson, call 651-290-0707 or email dferguson@forumcomm.com.

## RECOVERY

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Addiction- and recovery-related nonprofit organizations and service providers are also encouraged to join the Recovery Resources Expo, meant connect people to extensive addiction, recovery and mental health organizations and resources from across the state.

Registration for the event will open at a later date. More information on the event and to sign up for volunteering opportunities can be found on the Recovery Reinvented website.

## ABORTION

From Page 1

Gilligan also blocked a requirement for second-trimester abortions to be performed in a hospital and ruled the state’s requirement for health care providers to give abortion seekers an “informed consent” statement to be in violation of free speech protections. Abortion providers must continue to report certain data on abortion to the state of Minnesota — something advocates were pushing for the court to block as well.

“With abortion bans in half the country set to take effect in the coming weeks and months, it is more important than ever to leverage protections in state constitutions like Minnesota’s,” said Amanda Allen, senior counsel and director at the Lawyering Project, an attorney on the case. “Today’s ruling brings us one step closer to a Minnesota where everyone can get an abortion without the government getting in the way.”

Despite the U.S. Supreme Court ending federal abortion protections last month by overturning Roe v. Wade, the legal right to an abortion remains protected by the constitution in Minnesota under the 1995 state Supreme Court ruling Doe v. Gomez. Minnesota’s protections have rendered the state an island for abortion access in the Upper Midwest, with neighboring states either banning abortion or appearing poised to ban the procedure.

While Gomez protects the right to an abortion, as well as state funding for the procedure, Minnesota’s Legislature had passed some restrictive laws. Abortion rights activists filed a lawsuit in 2019, Doe v. Minnesota, challenging Minnesota’s restrictions on abortion in a bid to expand constitutional protections for the procedure in the state.

Gilligan in his ruling said Gomez abortion protections would be “meaningless without the right to access abortion care.”

It was not immediately clear if Attorney General Keith Ellison would file an appeal in the case. Ellison at an unrelated news conference said that he’d not yet reviewed the opinion but appreciated the judge’s thorough consideration for the issue in his 140-page ruling. The attorney general said he’d not yet decided whether to appeal.

“We will be taking a good look at it,” Ellison said. “I make no secret about it, I believe in women’s right to choose. I also have the duty to defend Minnesota statutes. Both of those are my job at the same time.”

Ellison has 60 days to file an appeal, if his office chooses to do so.

Ellison, a Democrat, said his office would do everything in its power to protect abortion rights in Minnesota following the overturning of Roe v. Wade, including protecting women seeking abortion in Minnesota from legal action by states where abortion is illegal. Ellison’s office is responsible for defending challenges to state law in court.

Ellison’s Republican-endorsed challenger Jim Schultz, who favors restrictions on abortion, called the district court decision “remarkable judicial activism.” He questioned whether Ellison mounted an adequate defense of standing Minnesota abortion restrictions given his support of preserving women’s access to the procedure.

“He’s interested in voicing his personal beliefs on Minnesotans and was uninterested in aggressively defending Minnesota law,” he said. “What I will do is defend Minnesota law every day of the week.”

Follow Alex Derosier on Twitter @xanderosier or email aderosier@forumcomm.com.

## BACKLASH

From Page 1

Rebecca Kjelland, executive director of Park River Bible Camp, said all speakers at the event were chosen intentionally and the group contained an Indigenous speaker, Black speaker and disabled speaker along with Stever, who represented the LGBTQ community.

“We wanted to make sure that all voices were heard, that they all were people that would be a part of the table — table meaning table of the church that we’re all a part of,” said Kjelland.

She started hearing backlash about Stever’s gender and sexuality, as well as about one of his tweets from three years ago that mentioned sex toys.

“Absolutely not was that going to be the conversation this week or when he was going to be speaking for the half-an-hour time slot that I gave every speaker,” she said. “It is unfortunate that that was blasted on social media.”

A local church also published a statement against the camp’s event. In the June 26 bulletin of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Grafton, a message was posted warning parents not to send their children to the event because the event would have left-leaning speakers promoting “things contrary to the Catholic Faith,” specifically a transgender speaker.

“Unfortunately, this camp can no longer be trusted to promote genuine Christian morality,” read the message.

Father Jeff Eppler, pastor at the parish, said the list of speakers was brought to his attention by a number of parishioners.

“I knew from the past that we had some parishioners sending kids to the camp, and that what the camp was promoting was contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church, so as a pastor, I had a responsibility to let people know this is what’s going on,” said Eppler.

Kjelland says it was disappointing that leaders at St. John’s the Evangelist Catholic Church did not reach out to have a discussion with her about the event or the speakers before publishing the notice.

“I am not someone where it has to be where we agree at the end of the conversation, but at least then they have all the information from myself or one of my board members,” she said.

People also took to Facebook, posting comments on Park River Bible Camp’s posts, speculating the political views of the speakers at Youth Fest, accusing the camp of indoctrinating children



A sign for Park River Bible Camp, installed in 2021, at the junction of Highway 17 and Highway 32 reads, “All Are Welcome.” Executive Director Rebecca Kjelland says if people do not feel welcome at camp, like a transgender pastor invited to speak at an event, the sign should be changed.

Contributed photo / Rebecca Kjelland

**PARENTS BEWARE!!!** The Park River Bible Camp Youth Fest on July 10-15 has a list of speakers that promote things contrary to the Catholic Faith. All of them are far left-leaning Lutheran pastors, most of which promote the LGBTQ agenda. One pastor in particular is a transgender, a woman pretending to be a man. To quote that individual from their Linked-In page: “I am a queer, transgender ELCA Lutheran pastoral candidate with a Masters of Divinity from Luther Seminary. I am pursuing a career in Word and Sacrament in a small, medium, or large-sized congregation that is dedicated to social activism, diversity, and inclusion. I am passionate about LGBTQIA, racial, and sexual and gender justice.” Parents, please do not send your children to this! Unfortunately, this camp can no longer be trusted at all to promote genuine Christian morality.

Contributed / St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church

In the June 26 bulletin of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Grafton, a message was posted warning parents not to send their children to the event, because the event would have left-leaning speakers promoting “things contrary to the Catholic Faith,” specifically, a transgender speaker.

and calling for Kjelland to be fired, said Kjelland.

In a July 7 statement, Kjelland reiterated the camp’s stance on LGBTQ individuals, saying the organization

does not see identifying as part of the LGBTQ community as a sin. This is in line with ELCA policy.

One of Park River Bible Camp’s messages, and one that has been the same for the last 22 years she has worked at the camp, said Kjelland, is that all are welcome at the camp. This message is even on a sign for the camp posted at the junction of Highway 17 and Highway 32, which has the name of the camp, and beneath it, “All Are Welcome.”

“If we cannot welcome all people into this camp, then we need to change our sign, which makes me very sad, because for years, we have welcomed all people onto this site,” said Kjelland.

Stever says it is disappointing to have to make the decision to not speak at Youth Fest.

“It’s mostly the kids that I’m sad for. I think the camp was trying to be really intentional about having a really diverse slate of leaders and speakers and to allow for that broadening of worldviews, not just for the kids, but other adults who would be at camp too,” said Stever. “I think they’re still going to get some of that, but it’s going to be smaller than what it was intended to be.”

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