



# Election Matters:

## Top Things to Know about Democratic Vice-Presidential Candidate Tim Walz

August 2024



On August 6, Vice President Kamala Harris announced Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her running mate on the Democratic ticket. Despite the lack of name ID, Walz’s selection checks many important boxes. The governor is a military veteran, grew up in rural America, was a public-school teacher, brings strong union and labor support and has a proven track record of winning consistently in very purple parts of the Midwest.

### Top things to know about Minnesota Governor Tim Walz

- **Pronunciation:** *Walz* is pronounced “Walls.”
- **Two-term governor of Minnesota:** Walz was elected governor of Minnesota in 2018 with 53.8% of the vote and re-elected in 2022 (52%). His 2022 re-election ushered in Democratic majorities in both the Minnesota state House and Senate. He is currently chair of the Democratic Governors Association.
- **Progressive priorities and accomplishments as governor:** COVID-19 Response and Recovery; Infrastructure Investments; Education Funding; Climate and Environmental Initiatives; Healthcare Expansion; Affordable Housing; Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform; Economic Development.
- **Rural roots:** Walz was born in Nebraska and raised in a rural community. He often cites his small-town upbringing as a guiding cultural North Star. Walz represented a largely rural district in Congress for 12 years.
- **Elected to Congress from purple district:** Walz served six terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Minnesota's First Congressional District in southern Minnesota. He was first elected in 2006, defeating a six-term Republican incumbent. In 2016, Walz was re-elected with 50.3% of the vote despite Donald Trump winning the district in the presidential race with 53%.
- **Military experience:** Walz enlisted in the Army National Guard after high school. He served for 24 years, attaining the rank of Command Sergeant Major. When he joined the U.S. House in 2007, he was the highest-ranking enlisted soldier in Congress.
- **Public school teacher and football coach:** Walz met his wife, Gwen, when they were both high school teachers in Nebraska. He taught U.S. History and coached high school football in Mankato, Minnesota before running for Congress in 2006. He taught English in China in 1989 and can still converse in Mandarin.
- **Family:** Walz is married to Gwen Walz, and they have two children: Hope, a recent college graduate, and Gus, a rising high school senior. Gwen Walz’s policy priority is criminal justice and education reform.
- **One certainty: A Mountain Dew-loving vice president:** Like GOP vice presidential nominee JD Vance, Walz loves Diet Mountain Dew. Walz does not drink alcohol or coffee.
- **Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, a Native American, is poised to break barriers:** Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan has been a key Walz partner since she and Walz campaigned together in 2018. She is an enrolled member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe. If Walz becomes Vice President, Flanagan would become the first Native American woman to serve as a state governor.





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## Major accomplishments of the Walz administration

As of 2024, the Walz administration achieved several notable accomplishments in Minnesota:

- **COVID-19 response and recovery:** The administration implemented comprehensive strategies to manage the pandemic, including widespread testing, vaccination campaigns and economic relief efforts. They worked on reopening plans, supported healthcare workers and facilitated state-wide vaccination efforts.
- **Infrastructure investments:** Governor Walz has overseen significant investments in infrastructure, including transportation improvements, public transit expansions, universal broadband expansion and maintenance of existing roads and bridges. This includes funding for the state's roads and bridges, support for local infrastructure projects and expanding access to rural broadband.
- **Education funding:** The administration increased funding for K-12 education, aiming to reduce class sizes, improve student outcomes and support teachers. This also includes investments in early childhood education and efforts to close achievement gaps, including implementing free school lunches.
- **Climate and environmental initiatives:** The Walz administration has focused on combating climate change through various measures including investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency programs and policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions. The Clean Cars MN program is one example of their efforts to address environmental concerns.
- **Healthcare expansion:** Under Walz's leadership, Minnesota has expanded access to healthcare, including enhancements to the state's health insurance marketplace and initiatives to reduce prescription drug prices. Efforts to improve mental health services and address disparities in healthcare access and expand paid family leave and reproductive rights have also been a focus.
- **Affordable housing:** The administration has worked on addressing affordable housing challenges through increased funding for affordable housing projects, support for homeless prevention programs and efforts to address housing stability.
- **Public safety and criminal justice reform:** Governor Walz has supported reforms aimed at improving public safety and criminal justice. This includes efforts to address police accountability, enhance community safety and reform the criminal justice system to be more equitable.
- **Economic Development:** The administration has promoted economic growth through support for small businesses, workforce development programs and initiatives to attract new industries to Minnesota. This includes investments in the technology and innovation sectors.
- **Equity and inclusion:** The Walz administration has emphasized advancing racial and economic equity through various policies and programs designed to address disparities in education, employment and other areas.
- **Labor and workers' rights:** Walz has been a strong supporter of organized labor and workers' rights, and labor has supported him. Walz has signed into law the strongest protections against wage theft in the country, a statewide paid family and medical leave program, a ban on non-compete agreements and an array of other pro-worker measures.

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## Top criticisms of Walz and his record

Opponents will likely attack Walz for the following reasons:

- **Handling of the COVID-19 pandemic:** Critics argue that Walz's management of the pandemic was flawed. They cite his implementation of strict lockdown measures, which they claim were detrimental to businesses and the economy. Some felt these measures were overly restrictive and not balanced with the economic needs of the state.
- **Response to 2020 Minneapolis riots:** Walz faced significant backlash for his response to the riots following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Opponents claim that he failed to act decisively to control the unrest in Minneapolis, leading to extensive property damage, violence and ongoing public safety concerns.



- **Perceived partisanship:** Some opponents view Walz as highly partisan. Minnesota GOP Chairman David Hann has described him as "the most partisan governor" in recent memory, suggesting that Walz's policies and actions have exacerbated political divides within the state.
- **Progressive agenda:** Walz has pushed for progressive policies such as tuition-free college and universal school meals. Critics argue that these policies are too far left and not suitable for the broader Minnesota electorate, portraying him as out of touch with more conservative and moderate voters.
- **Perceived disrespect for rural communities:** During his first campaign for governor, Walz made a comment about the electoral map, stating the red areas of Minnesota are mostly 'rocks and cows.' Republicans seized on this as a statement of disrespect for rural Minnesotans. This is an oft-used criticism to paint Walz as an urban elite.
- **General leadership style:** There are broader criticisms about Walz's leadership style, with opponents suggesting that he lacks the decisiveness and pragmatism needed to effectively govern, particularly in times of crisis.

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