

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Hello, my name is Sandra Grandmaison.

I am co-president of the League of Women Voters of Duluth and I work as an election judge for precinct 23. The mission of the League of Women Voters is to protect democracy by ensuring free and fair elections. We do this by registering and educating voters, assisting with at-home voting, and informing ex-felons of their voting rights.

Until the 2020 presidential election, my experience as an election judge was positive and gratifying. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the hyper-partisanship surrounding the election, made me question my safety as an election judge.

It has always been challenging to engage volunteers to work the polls. After this election, I believe that it will be even more difficult because of the misinformation and fear spread by some of our Federal and State legislators who refuse to acknowledge the 2020 presidential election results and perpetuate the lie that the election was somehow stolen and fraudulent. This denial and misinformation continues to put poll workers in danger.

I recently spoke with Duluth City Clerk, Chelsea Helmer, who described the high level of harassment and intimidation aimed at our election managers. There were also justified concerns from the black and indigenous community about their safety while voting. The threat of violence hanging over this election forced the City of Duluth to work closely with law enforcement and prepare election workers for possible threats beyond those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is unacceptable.

Election judges and election officials face two significant threats. (1) Politicians who promote disinformation and divisiveness through angry rhetoric that put us all in danger. (2) Intimidation of voters and election judges, including with weapons. When I showed up to my polling site to work the election, which is a church, I assumed that guns were banned. But when I arrived to work the polls, I found out that this was not the case. Weapons are not banned from polling places in Minnesota. This legislation protects poll workers from intimidation in this environment of heated rhetoric where people are carrying weapons into polling places.

If we do not protect our election workers we will not have qualified people to do the work necessary to protect our electoral process.

Respectfully,
Sandra Grandmaison