



Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota

**The 2025
Lenten Letter
Challenge**

**The 2025
Lutheran Letter
Campaign**

We need you – your congregation, campus, youth group, confirmation class, WELCA group, church committee, or whatever – **to participate in our annual campaigns.** It is in relationship with our legislators that they learn what we care about, and why. We also need your help to **spread the word in January & February each year!!** The legislative session runs from January – May, and we need Lutheran Citizen Advocates to take action throughout on our issues of poverty, hunger & care of creation. [Find downloadable resources under “Campaigns & Action Alerts” at www.lutheranadvocacymn.org]

NEW (& UPDATED) RESOURCES

Tired of divisiveness?
Eager for honest engagement?
Ready to contribute to discourse more gracefully, rather than wringing your hands on the sidelines? (5 sessions)
[Available Under “Resources” at www.lutheranadvocacymn.org]



Affordable Housing Bible Study:
Preparing a Place (7 sessions).

Poverty Simulation: Step into the shoes of a family experiencing poverty with a free, in-depth simulation. All materials are printable and included in the download.

[Both available under “Issues” and then “Poverty/Housing.” Scroll to the bottom.
www.lutheranadvocacymn.org]

OTHER NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES

Jacob Summerville joined Lutheran Advocacy-MN in September for a 1-year **Hunger Advocacy Fellowship**. He previously worked in youth ministry and direct service. He has a degree from Luther Seminary and is pursuing ordination as a deacon.

LA-MN Director **Tammy Walhof, and Jake**, both had the opportunity to **virtually attend COP29, the International Climate Conference** held in Baku, Azerbaijan **as ELCA Faith-based Participants** (which meant attending meetings and sessions between 10:30pm and 9 or 10 am from Minnesota). In 2023, Tammy represented the ELCA in person in Dubai, U.A.E.

2024 LEGISLATIVE RESULTS

2024 was the second year of the legislative biennium, with the focus on bonding and policy (not budget). Sadly, the session ended chaotically as simmering divisions arose on many issues. Minnesota often has more collaboration across parties than has been true at the federal level for some time, but **national polarization is infecting state and local relationships.** Lutheran Advocacy-MN remains committed to working with all parties as we seek to live into the ELCA vision to “Step forward as a public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created.”

Our **Electronic Waste Collection & Recycling bill** would dramatically **reduce costs to counties** due to fires in vehicles, facilities, and landfills caused by electronics and batteries in the waste stream. It would **protect against toxins** infiltrating groundwater and dispersing particulates in the air. Further, it is estimated that recycling the bulk of our electronics (anything with a battery, circuit board, or cord), rather than the current 23%, **could generate 1700 jobs** and **capture nearly \$3 billion in minerals** needed in new production. It had **bipartisan support**, but it is unusual for a bill to pass the first year it’s introduced. Our coalition regrouped, made some changes, and are **trying again in 2025.**

Although no full bonding bill passed, **\$50 million was approved in Housing Infrastructure Bonds (HIBs) for new housing development and preservation/ rehabilitation.** In addition, **\$10 million** was authorized for **housing-related initiatives**, and **\$50 million** of 2023 appropriations was **redirected to improve conditions** in subsidized housing. Preservation (& rehab) will decrease instances of investors buying older lower-rent properties (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing or NOAH), making cosmetic changes, and jacking up rents to unsustainable levels for many households (service workers, elderly, disabled).

Affordable housing regularly gets **bipartisan support**, and we work hard to make sure that continues. However, the **amounts are never enough.** While \$60 million may sound like a lot of money, it is estimated that **\$35 billion for new production is needed just to address our state’s housing deficit.** A crisis decades in the making, with years of underspending doesn’t turn around easily or quickly. Minnesota Housing calculates that **annual spending to fully address needs** would be \$805 million* for new rental production, \$500m for rehabilitation of existing rental housing, \$100m for single-family housing, \$2.1 billion for rental assistance, and \$264m for down-payment assistance over 11 years (or \$2.9 billion total).

642,000 Minnesota households pay disproportionate sums of their **income for housing.** In fact, high housing costs are a serious cause of hunger (or poor nutrition) as families cut costs elsewhere. (The pay gap, especially for service workers, is an underlying issue, but there is little political will to address wages).