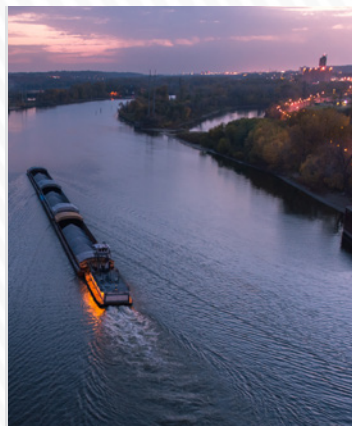




# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2024 FEDERAL PLATFORM



**VIEW ONLINE** [RAMSEYCOUNTY.US/LEGISLATIVEPLATFORMS](https://ramseycounty.us/LegislativePlatforms)

[ramseycounty.us/LegislativePlatforms](https://ramseycounty.us/LegislativePlatforms)



## RAMSEY COUNTY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Residents First: Effective, Efficient and Accessible Operations

Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power

Putting Well-being and Community at the Center  
of Justice System Transformation

Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families

Responding to Climate Change and Increasing Community Resilience

Intergenerational Prosperity for Racial and Economic Inclusion

Aligning Talent Attraction, Retention and Promotion

LEARN MORE [ramseycounty.us/StrategicPriorities](https://ramseycounty.us/StrategicPriorities)





## LEGISLATIVE TOP PRIORITIES

### Family and community stabilization:

- Investing in housing stability—affordability and transitions out of homelessness.
- Addressing racial disparities in out-of-home displacements.
- Preventing and responding to youth violence through innovative community programming and investments.

### Systems transformation:

- Improving mental and behavioral health systems and support.
- Reforming criminal justice approaches, centering community.

### Economic competitiveness and inclusion:

- Funding transportation, including new revenues for transit, roads and bridges.
- Investing in workforce supports for all residents.
- Responding to climate change by prioritizing adaptation and resiliency.
- Funding for Ramsey County capital improvement and infrastructure requests.

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT REQUESTS

### Ramsey County Bonding Requests

1. Rice Creek Commons Infrastructure **\$25 million**
2. The Park at RiversEdge **\$20 million**

### Support for other Bonding Requests

Gibbs Farm-Pathways to Dakota & Pioneer Life, Ramsey County Historical Society **\$9.9 million**

# Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power

## **Protect Basic Human Rights of Immigrants**

- Support immigrants and refugees in navigation and access to core programs and wrap around services such as public assistance, housing, medical assistance, basic cash support and safety and protection from domestic violence and with law enforcement. Continue to be welcoming and inclusive to immigrants/refugees and invest in culturally specific services and community engagement to build stable lives for themselves, their families and to contribute to the communities in which they live. Address barriers that make connecting to services and supports especially challenging for new arrivals, specifically Afghan and Ukrainian communities who are still trying to adjust to their displacement. Further, permanent pathways for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Enforced Departures (DED), post-conviction relief for Southeast Asians in repatriation agreements and access to legal representation continue to be unresolved pressing issues for families and communities. Support legislation and policies aimed at keeping families and children together and united as they undergo immigration proceedings.

## **Misclassification of Hmong**

- Support efforts to ensure the Hmong peoples are not misclassified as East Asian. The U.S. Census Bureau has historically misclassified them which has led to confusion in data, resources and perceptions of Hmong.

## **Affordable Care Act (ACA)**

- Oppose legislation that would change or remove essential provisions of the ACA, including coverage for pre-existing conditions, dependent coverage until age 26, no limits on annual/lifetime coverage, no-cost coverage for preventative care and the mandate for individual coverage. Support the local-state-federal partnership structure for financing health care access and oppose measures that shift federal and state costs to counties. This law has proven effective in significantly expanding access to insurance to more low and moderate-income families and individuals. Ramsey County supports premium assistance to help keep the cost of insurance within reach.

## **Equal Rights Amendment**

- Support efforts to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to provide equal protection under federal law to all people, regardless of gender. The ERA amendment would bolster pay equity, domestic violence laws and pregnancy discrimination protections, among other equity goals.

## **Medicaid Services Financing**

- Support legislation to enhance flexibility in the Medicaid program to support local care systems. Preserve the ability to match local funds and receive targeted supplemental payments and bolster the federal-state-local partnership structures for Medicaid services.



### **Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act**

- Support legislation providing funding to states to carry out programs that improve outreach and assistance to veterans and the spouses, children, and parents of veterans, to ensure that such individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related benefits and programs for which they may be eligible.

### **Mental Health**

- Support consistent funding for mental health services provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as well as legislation that will increase Ramsey County's ability to provide local systems of care. Funding for the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) block grant should be funded at current levels or increased to rise with demand for services.
- Support the Mental Health Professionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act which will reimburse federal student loans up to \$250,000 for those who pursue a career in the mental health field where there are shortages.
- Support legislation focused on helping schools to work with community groups to bring in more mental health professionals, as well as to train school staff to recognize the signs that a student may be struggling and connect them to help.

### **Infectious Disease Funding**

- Support efforts to provide local and state governments flexible funding that can be used for public health response and community needs related to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Support a robust and flexible budget package that includes direct funding for municipalities of all sizes to aid in local and state economic recovery.

# Putting well-being and community at the center of justice system transformation

## **Firearm Regulation**

- Support legislation to reinstate the Firearms Assault Weapons Ban to take a strong first step in addressing the epidemic number of mass shootings and other gun-related violence. When the 1994 ban sunset in 2004, a surge of automatic weapons shootings occurred, which has not subsided. The ban was effective and should be reinstated.

## **ICE Detention**

- Support the release of immigrants in ICE detention who do not pose a threat to public safety during the length of their removal proceedings, starting with individuals in high-risk categories such as people 60 and over, women who are pregnant, and people with chronic illnesses, compromised immune systems or disabilities.
- Support efforts to ensure ICE detention facilities currently holding detainees are adhering to CDC COVID-19 safety guidelines, are providing effective and timely testing, and offering health supports including medical treatment.

## **Billable Medical Services for Incarcerated Individuals**

- Support legislation allowing Medicaid/Medicare funding to pay for all billable medical services for incarcerated individuals. Most of the patients who are incarcerated qualify for Medicaid and Medicare and many have it before incarceration. Keeping Medicare and Medicaid insurance current and active for individuals increases access to care and ability to receive timely care after release, improving healthcare outcomes and decreasing local and county government cost.



# Responding to climate change and increasing community resilience

## **Equitable Climate Change Mitigation and Resilience**

- Support legislation that addresses climate change, protects and enhances natural environments, addresses the need to expand adaptation and resilience efforts, responds to the potential impact of severe weather events, and promotes sustainability in county operations.
- Support legislation that focuses on increasing use of local energy to create jobs and diversify the local economy.
- Support legislation and funding that addresses reforestation needs for local governments impacted by the Emerald Ash Borer.

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LAWCON)**

- Support continued funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. LAWCON was established to provide grants for outdoor recreation projects and to date Ramsey County has received nearly \$1 million for park projects.

## **Clean Water**

- Support investment and funding for infrastructure improvements relating to any contamination of water systems, as well as improved corrosion control, lead monitoring and public notification of contaminants in public drinking water. Support improvement of storm water, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.
- Support passage of the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative (MRRRI), which will create a new, non-regulatory Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) geographic grant program to provide federal planning and funding support to enhance river restoration, resilience projects and program activities in the Mississippi River states from the Headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico.

## **Recycling and Energy**

- Support increased investments in sustainable and renewable energy. Environmental concerns, particularly climate change, bring waste generation, recycling, and energy production into sharp focus. With international recycling markets stalling, federal efforts are necessary to incentivize industry to invest in innovative recycling practices and to spur communities and individuals to reduce waste and engage more intently in local and national recycling practices.

# Advancing a holistic approach to strengthen families

## **Social Services Block Grant Funding (SSBG)**

- Support legislation to maintain or increase SSBG block grants at the current funding level. SSBG supports services such as adult protective services, special needs childcare, child welfare and child abuse prevention.

## **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

- Support efforts to preserve and expand the SNAP program to address hunger and food security issues for no and low-income residents, including efforts to raise the minimum benefit level and to eliminate three-month time limits on SNAP eligibility for certain working-age adults and college students. SNAP provides food assistance to nearly 63,000 low-income families in Ramsey County. The SNAP Education and Training program, which provides support services (such as childcare and transportation) to SNAP-enrolled students, is a central component to helping families achieve and maintain economic stability.
- Support legislation to allow persons to use SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared meals.

## **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

- Support efforts to increase investment in TANF. TANF funds are a major component of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which provides financial assistance to nearly 18,000 low-income Ramsey County families. TANF also helps pay for childcare assistance for MFIP families and supports county employment services.

## **Families First (Title IV-E)**

- Support efforts to implement full funding and rollout of the Families First promises to address long-standing issues with state and county child protection and foster care systems, including racial disparities of out-of-home displacements. Enriching financial support for prevention, wraparound services that are culturally attuned is essential to improvements in the nation's child protection and family support programs.

## **Parenting Time Orders**

- Support legislation allowing the use of Title IV-D funds to get parenting time orders set for Recognition of Parentage (ROP) families like what is currently allowed for court-ordered paternity adjudication families. Currently county staff cannot talk about parenting time with ROP parents, except to give them resources to do this on their own, if they do the responsible thing and sign a Recognition of Parentage (ROP).



## **Hunger Relief**

- Support additional funding and policy changes to address hunger and food insecurity relief needs in Ramsey County for children and adults. As a result of systemic racism and other long-standing issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity continues to disproportionately affect our racially and ethnically diverse communities.
- Support legislation to permanently provide no-cost school lunch to all children.
- Support efforts to continue increased summer EBT for children and youth who wouldn't receive the School Lunch Program.

## **Additional Cash Payments or Economic Supports to Families**

- Support legislation to provide cash payments or other economic supports, like the child tax credit expansion, to families in a way that will not make them ineligible for income, food or medical assistance, with the goal of removing barriers so families can self-stabilize.

# Intergenerational prosperity for racial and economic inclusion

## The Park at RiversEdge

- Pursue \$20 million from federal partners for acquisition, design, furnishing and construction of a land bridge extension of the public realm space called The Park at RiversEdge. RiversEdge is an innovative public-private project revitalizing the historic riverfront and expanding public access to the Mississippi River. This new nine-acre urban park space includes: expanded public access to the river from the downtown bluff to the shoreline, community gathering space for public events, and trails that connect to the river, the rest of downtown and the other regional park trail systems.

## Rice Creek Commons

- Pursue \$25 million in funding for the Rice Creek Commons development project in Arden Hills on the former Twin Cities Army Ammunition (TCAAP) site. The project consists of building stormwater infrastructure and a public roadway (known as the Spine Road) that will connect County Road H and Highway 96 through the Rice Creek Commons development.

## Transportation

- Pursue funding for critical Ramsey County projects. Including, but not limited to:
  - Riverview Corridor: Between Union Depot and the Mall of America.
  - METRO Gold Line Corridor (Gateway): Between Union Depot and Woodbury.
  - METRO Purple Line (Rush Line Corridor): Study underway 2023.
  - Bruce Vento Trail: From Buerkle Road to Highway 96.
  - Rice Street Revitalization: From Pennsylvania Avenue to Wheelock Parkway.

## Digital Inclusion

- Pursue and support state and federal efforts and funding for digital inclusion and equity to ensure all residents have access to affordable broadband choices, computing devices and training and internet-safety skill. This includes, but is not limited to: increasing the federal standard for broadband speeds; increasing the availability of high-quality and competitive broadband choices for residents in single-family homes, public housing, and apartment buildings and condominiums, particularly in urban digital desert census tracts; and supporting perpetual funding of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and other affordable, sustainable and subsidized device ownership programs and multilingual digital literacy navigation and skills training that ensure all residents can participate in the economy and digital life.

## Heading Home Ramsey Continuum of Care

- Pursue funding and policy legislation in partnership with the Heading Home Ramsey Continuum of Care to fund homelessness work until the affordable housing investments come online. This funding will support operations and shelter capacity for single adults, families with children, day services and critical supportive services for individuals and families seeking shelter.



## **Affordable and Stable Housing**

- Support an increase in public funds for affordable homeownership and the production and preservation of affordable ownership housing.
- Support legislation to advance policy and practice reforms that reduce barriers to affordable homeownership, such as reducing the cost of production.

## **HOME Investment Partnership Program**

- Oppose legislation to change or eliminate the HOME Program, which provides important funding for affordable housing units in market-rate multifamily new construction, foreclosed/forfeit property acquisition, rehabilitation and resale, and down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers throughout suburban Ramsey County cities. Ramsey County is part of a four-county consortium and currently receives approximately \$400,000 per year from HOME, a reduction of more than \$350,000 per year over the past 10 years.

## **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

- Support legislation to restore funding to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). CDBG supports community development programs for low- and moderate-income families in suburban Ramsey County. Ramsey County currently receives approximately \$1 million, down 50% from historic levels. The county supports the restoration of funding for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant.

## **Tax incentives for the Development of Affordable Housing**

- Support passage of the Affordable Housing Improvement Act to increase the development of affordable housing nationwide by approximately 450,000 housing units. The bill provides incentives to developers by increasing the housing credit allocation by 50%, phased in over five years. It would also lock in the 4% LIHTC credit rate for financing with housing bonds and tax credits.



## RAMSEY COUNTY **SUPPORT OF OTHER POSITIONS**

In addition to the recommendations contained in this platform, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners generally supports the legislative recommendations of the organizations in which it holds membership, including, but not limited to:

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and its associated professional organizations, not including any recommendations that are inconsistent with Ramsey County's values and strategic goals.



RAMSEY COUNTY **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**



**Trista Martinson**  
District 3, Chair  
651-266-8360  
Trista.Martinson@ramseycounty.us



**Nicole Joy Frethem**  
District 1  
651-266-8362  
Nicole.Frethem@ramseycounty.us



**Rafael E. Ortega**  
District 5  
651-266-8361  
Rafael.E.Ortega@ramseycounty.us



**Mary Jo McGuire**  
District 2  
651-266-8356  
MaryJo.McGuire@ramseycounty.us



**Mai Chong Xiong**  
District 6  
651-266-8365  
Maichong.Xiong@ramseycounty.us



**Rena Moran**  
District 4  
651-266-8364  
Rena.Moran@ramseycounty.us



**Victoria Reinhardt**  
District 7  
651-266-8363  
Victoria.Reinhardt@ramseycounty.us

RAMSEY COUNTY **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**



**Jennifer O'Rourke**  
*Director of Government Relations*  
Personal: 651-724-3461  
Work: 612-468-6217  
Jennifer.O'Rourke@ramseycounty.us



**Melissa Finnegan**  
*Government Relations Specialist*  
Personal: 651-278-8374  
Work: 612-791-8490  
Melissa.Finnegan@ramseycounty.us

## LEGISLATIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These legislative guiding principles provide a foundation for the specific initiatives and support items that are included in the 2024 Federal Legislative Platform. In a field as dynamic as the legislative session, these basic tenets inform Ramsey County's response to legislative proposals as they are introduced and move through the process.

### **RESIDENTS-FIRST FOCUS**

- Prioritize support for legislative proposals that clearly improve how government works with and serves Ramsey County residents.
- Evaluate the impact of legislative proposals on residents and provide opportunities for affected communities to publicly discuss and influence legislation.

### **Responsible, Responsive Government**

- Communicate openly with the public and operate transparently.
- Observe good data practices to protect individual privacy and provide access to public data.
- Equalize access to government resources, opportunities and services across all communities.
- Respond proactively to address the needs of vulnerable children and adults and at-risk families who are experiencing instability and difficulty in meeting basic needs.
- Tend to ongoing maintenance and planning for future infrastructure needs.
- Advance information/data technology and ongoing updates that support program integrity and efficient service delivery.
- Increase citizen access to the polls and voter participation.
- Engage in good stewardship of natural resources.
- Encourage inter-governmental collaboration built on the goals of improving performance, increasing efficiencies and building trust across programs, government agencies and communities.
- Support local authority to define local priorities.

### **Stable, Sufficient, Flexible Funding**

- Allocate sufficient state funding to counties to carry out state mandates.
- Distribute funding equitably, based on fair and practical distribution formulas.
- Acknowledge county costs for existing or new state mandates.
- Support county innovations in the delivery of mandated service when efficiencies can be gained.
- Respect local government control of their resources and budgetary processes.
- Expend funds for the purposes for which they are collected or allocated.

### **Practice-Based Policy**

- Invest in practice-based policies that include ongoing assessment and adjustments to improve effectiveness of services and to save tax dollars.
- Emphasize prevention and early intervention.
- Promote stable families, safe neighborhoods, public safety, health and wellness by engaging individual and community strength.
- Foster economic development, broad access to education and training, and growth of living-wage jobs.
- Pursue policy that is not impinged by excessive, unnecessary regulation.



## Vision

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

## Mission

A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.

## Goals



### WELL-BEING

#### **Strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being**

through effective safety-net services, innovative programming, prevention and early intervention, and environmental stewardship.



### PROSPERITY

#### **Cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty**

through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.



### OPPORTUNITY

#### **Enhance access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses**

through connections to education, employment and economic development throughout our region.



### ACCOUNTABILITY

#### **Model fiscal accountability, transparency and strategic investments**

through professional operations and financial management.

Information about how the county is pursuing its mission and goals is available in the county's strategic plan at [ramseycounty.us/StrategicPlan](https://ramseycounty.us/StrategicPlan)

Information about performance measures related to the county's mission and goals is available in the county's Open Data Portal at [opendata.ramseycounty.us](https://opendata.ramseycounty.us)



**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS** 250 Courthouse, 15 West Kellogg Blvd, Saint Paul, MN 55102

**[ramseycounty.us](http://ramseycounty.us)**