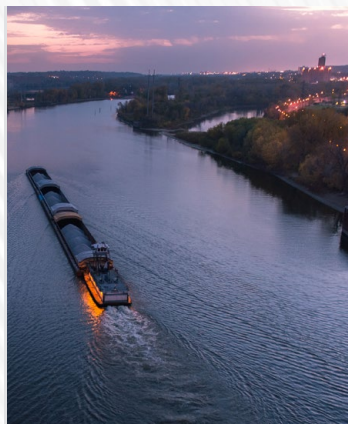


# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2021 FEDERAL PLATFORM



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

# RAMSEY COUNTY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Resilience: Building Capacity to Respond,  
Adapt and Thrive Under Changing Conditions

Residents First: Effective, Efficient and Accessible Operations

Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power

Aligning Justice System Outcomes with Community Values

Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families

Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion

Stability Starts with a Place to Call Home

Talent Attraction, Retention and Promotion

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

## LEGISLATIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These legislative guiding principles provide a foundation for the specific initiatives and support items that are included in the 2021 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, opportunity 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.

## FEDERAL PLATFORM **PRIORITIES**

- ✓ Fund Ramsey County's COVID response and recovery needs.
- ✓ Improving mental and behavioral health systems and supports.
- ✓ Investing in housing stability – affordability and homelessness.
- ✓ Support Ramsey County transportation and infrastructure needs.

### **RESPONSIBLE, RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT** *Cont.*

- Encourage inter-governmental collaboration built on the goals of improving performance, increasing efficiencies and building trust across programs, governmental agencies and communities.
- Support local authority to define local priorities.

### **STABLE, SUFFICIENT, FLEXIBLE FUNDING**

- Allocate adequate 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.



# Racial and Health Equity

*Ramsey County supports deconstructing systemic and organizational barriers to create fairer, more inclusive government.*

## **PROTECT BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS**

- Oppose increased efforts to discourage immigrants from accessing public assistance, such as housing, medical assistance, basic cash support and law enforcement protection. Inhibiting immigrants through fear or threat of consequence when they need services deprives them of access and denies them the opportunities to build stable lives for themselves, their families and to contribute to the communities in which they live. 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 immigrants and the communities in which they live. Keeping families and children together and united as they undergo immigration proceedings.

## **AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA)**

- Protect 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.

## **ERA RATIFICATION**

- 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**

- 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.

# Resiliency

*Ramsey County supports policies that are responsive to changing environmental, economic and social conditions.*

## **COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDING**

- Provide local and state governments flexible funding that can be used for the public health response, community needs and revenue replacement with clear guidance on usage. Support a robust and flexible economic stimulus bill that includes direct funding for municipalities of all sizes to aid in local and state economic recovery.

## **LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ACT (LAWCON)**

- Provide continued funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In 1964, LAWCON was established to provide grants for outdoor recreation projects and to develop and redevelop parks. To date, Ramsey County has received nearly \$1 million from LAWCON 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.

## **RECYCLING AND ENERGY**

- Increase 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.

## **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.



# A Holistic Approach to Strengthening Families

*Ramsey County supports listening to families' needs, understanding needs and providing non-traditional services and opportunities that promote wellbeing for infants, children, youth and their families.*

## **SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT FUNDING (SSBG)**

- Maintain or increase SSBG block grants at the current funding level. SSBG supports services such as adult protective services, special needs child care, child welfare and child abuse prevention.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**

- Preserve the SNAP program to address hunger and food security issues for no and low-income residents. Given the recent efforts by the White House to eliminate or reduce eligibility through rule, it is increasingly important to voice strong support for services that address basic human needs, such as food security. 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 child care and transportation) to SNAP-enrolled students, is a central component to helping families achieve and maintain economic stability.

## **TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)**

- 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 child care assistance for MFIP families and supports county employment services.

## **FAMILIES FIRST (TITLE IV-E)**

- 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, wrap-around 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 similar to 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).

# Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion

*Ramsey County supports strategies that advance economic competitiveness and inclusiveness by creating greater prosperity and opportunity for all.*

## **RIVERSEEDGE**

- Riversedge is an innovative public-private project revitalizing the historic riverfront and expanding public access to the Mississippi River. Ramsey County seeks \$40 million from state and federal partners for design and construction of a land bridge extension of public realm space over Shepard Road and the adjacent railway extending downtown Saint Paul directly to the river and doubling the usable area of the site.

## **PASSENGER RAIL**

- Support for passenger rail needs to be enhanced through increased funding to the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program, and by authorizing the State of Good Repair grant program. Additionally, funding needs to be provided for rail improvements from Union Depot in Saint Paul, MN to Chicago, IL, which will enable a second daily passenger train for this corridor and for the completion of an environmental assessment of existing rails.

## **TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION**

- Provide reliable funding for planned transportation projects. Sustained transportation reauthorization will benefit the following Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority Projects serving Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul:
  - Riverview Corridor: Between Union Depot and the Mall of America.
  - METRO Gold Line Corridor (Gateway): Between Union Depot and Woodbury.
  - Rush Line Corridor: Between Union Depot and White Bear Lake.
  - Red Rock Corridor: Between Union Depot and Hastings.
  - Second Daily Train: Between Union Depot and Chicago.
  - Bruce Vento Trail: From Buerkle Road to Highway 96.

## **FIXING AMERICA'S SURFACE TRANSPORTATION (FAST) ACT**

- Implement provisions in the FAST Act, reauthorizing highway and transit programs, as well as Amtrak, through 2021, including:
  - Expanded funding options for programs under the Capital Investment Grant program (Core Capacity/Small Starts/Fixed Guideway Capital Projects).
  - Conversion of the Surface Transportation block grant program.
  - Modifications to the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, making transit-oriented projects eligible to apply for TIFIA loans.
  - Fully fund capital improvement grants.



## Justice System Outcomes

*Ramsey County supports policies that align justice system transformation with state and community values.*

### **FIREARM REGULATION**

- Reinstatement of 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 DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

- Support the immediate 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.
- 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.





## Housing Stability

*Ramsey County supports programs that provide access to safe, healthy, stable and accessible housing options for all residents.*

### **AFFORDABLE AND STABLE HOUSING**

- Increasing public funds and attention to the preparation of homeowners and the production and preservation of affordable ownership housing.
- Advancing policy and practice reforms that reduce barriers to affordable homeownership, such as reducing the cost of production.

### **HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

- Protect 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)**

- 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.

The county board reserves the option to oppose individual items in the NACo platform that are contrary to the interests of the county.



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## 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](https://ramseycounty.us)