

## District Primer – Minnesota HD-54A

Minnesota State House District 54A is a working class, suburban area a dozen miles southeast of St. Paul. The two largest cities in the district are Cottage Grove and South St. Paul Park. Newport and part of St. Paul Park are also in the district. The district falls in Washington and Dakota Counties. The Mississippi River runs through the district.

### Summary

In 2016, first time candidate Republican Keith Franke won election to the State House by a margin of 3%. There was no incumbent in the race. This seat was held by a Democrat for several terms prior to Franke's election.

### DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE: Anne Claflin



Anne Claflin is a scientist whose area of expertise is environmental policy. She has degrees from Grinnell College and the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Claflin works at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. She and her husband Warren live in South St. Paul with their 2-year-old son.

It is important to Claflin to end the divisiveness at the State Capitol and get back to Minnesota values. She has been active in union organizing and is the chair of the Presidents Committee of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. Claflin would like to encourage more women to enter politics and science and engineering.

**Issues of importance to Claflin:** Claflin wants to safeguard our environment and hold accountable corporations that pollute. She supports policies that will promote renewable energy—and create new jobs in the process. Improving the economy is one of her highest priorities, and she supports measures that would bring more well-paying jobs to the district. Claflin wants all Minnesotans to have quality, affordable health care. Claflin wants to better fund education. She supports early childhood education, and at the other end of the spectrum, career training.

**Campaign Website:** <http://www.annefornhouse.com/>

### REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE: Keith Franke (Incumbent)

Franke is the owner of Park Cafe and Franke's Corner Bar, both of which are located in St. Paul Park. He has a certificate from St. Paul Technical College in restaurant and bar management. He also has a certificate in economic development from Hamline University. Franke is a single father with two daughters and two granddaughters. Franke lives in St. Paul Park.

He served as Mayor of St. Paul Park from 2012 to 2016, where he increased the city's bond rating to AA. He also supported the economic development by sale of city land. In addition to serving as mayor, his community involvement includes membership in the Red Rock Corridor Commission, the South Washington County Cable Commission, and the Holiday Train Committee.

Franke's view of government is that it "should support and protect the rights of all individuals. It should provide and maintain the infrastructure, ensure public safety and promote well-being.

Government is the vehicle upon which elected officials are the voice of the people to ensure the needs of the community are being met."

He will be sober 20 years in February and said he wants to use his experiences as a defendant and a recovering addict to improve the results the state gets for the millions it spends on substance abuse programs.

**Issues of importance to Franke:** Franke wants to reduce taxes on individuals. As a recovering addict, he is interested in drug treatment programs and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

**Potential Strengths:** Some of Franke's votes are moderate. For example, he voted 'no' on the environmental bill HF 3280 in 2018, which was an attempt to exempt Minnesota from the federal Clean Water Act. In the wake of the Parkland shooting, he has co-authored a couple of bills that provide some regulation of guns (HF 4171 and HF 4116).

**Potential Weaknesses:** This is a district that has voted for Democrats for most offices—both state and national—for many years. Many of Franke's legislative votes are likely to dampen his support among Democrats. In a district that has polluted groundwater, Franke voted for the omnibus bill HF 888 in 2017 which would have suspended water quality standards, forbid regulation of lead ammunition on public lands, and more. He has voted to inadequately fund higher education (SF 2214/HF 2477 in 2017) and supported a form of vouchers that would enable public money to be spent on private and religious schools (HF 4, in 2017). Franke's votes demonstrate an opposition to a woman's right to choose an abortion (HF 809, HF 812 in 2017 and HF 3194 in 2018). In 2017, he was a proponent of constitutional carry, the legal carrying of a handgun without a license or permit.

**Campaign website:** <http://www.keithfranke.org/>

## BETTER KNOW THE DISTRICT

**Geography and Environment:** The district is a suburban area southwest of St. Paul. The Mississippi River runs between the district cities of South St. Paul and Newport, and then runs west and south of the district. Like the rest of Minnesota, summers in the area are sticky, winters are freezing, and ice hockey attracts devoted fans. There are two year-round ice skating rinks and a seasonal outdoor rink in the district.

**Citizenry:** The bulk of the population is between 24 and 55 years of age, along with another cohort of younger people—their children. The average age is about 35, which is 2 years younger than the national median age of 37. The least represented age demographic is people of college age.

For households speaking languages other than English, Spanish is most common, followed by Hmong and various African languages. The majority of the population—82%—is white. Hispanics and Asians each comprise 6% of the inhabitants. Another 4% of the population is black. The district is trending towards a more diverse population, as the population under 20 has the lowest percentage of whites.

About 42% of the population is unaffiliated with any religion. Catholics comprise about 27% of the populace, mainline Protestants about 16% and Evangelicals about 14%.

**Education:** College graduates are 37% of the population. Another 55% of the residents have only a high school diploma, and 7.4% percent lack a high school diploma. The percent of Minnesota

residents overall with a college degree is 43%, so 54A lags the state in this area.

**Economy:** The median household income is \$67,000 which is about \$7000 more than for the state at large. Cottage Grove is the most affluent part of the district; South St. Paul and Newport in the northern part of the district are the least affluent. Of all ethnic groups, Asians earn more on average, with a mean annual income of \$97,900. The second wealthiest demographic is non-Hispanic whites with a mean income of \$69,400 annually. The lowest earners are those of mixed race, with a mean household income of \$31,900 annually.

The unemployment rate is 5.6%, with Asians being the least likely to be unemployed (1.98%). The percent of population receiving food stamps is 7.7%, which is lower than the state average of 8.2%.

The largest industries are manufacturing (15% of employment), healthcare (14%) and retail (11%). St. Paul Park is one of the most industrial suburbs in the region, with a refinery, a mine and a heavy rail presence.

**Livability:** A 3M facility in Cottage Grove, which manufactured PFCs until 2002, polluted the groundwater there. In a settlement in 2018, 3M agreed to pay the state \$850 million to address water quality problems in the area. HD 54A is located in a watershed where only 40-59% of lakes and streams have good quality water. The air quality may also be a health issue for some, with 11.0-11.3 micrograms/cubic meter of fine particulate matter annually, and 9.2% of asthma-related ER visits attributable to fine particulate matter.

**Transportation:** In Washington and Dakota Counties, the average commute time is 24 minutes, similar to the national average.

## RECENT ELECTION RESULTS

**2016 President:** In district 54A, Hillary Clinton (D) prevailed with 46.4% of the vote; with 43.2% going to Donald Trump (R).

**2016 US Representative (Districts 2 and 4):** Minnesota House District 54A falls within two U.S. House districts. In the U.S. House, District 2 is represented by Jason Lewis (R), who won with only 47% of the vote; a candidate from the Independence Party received close to 8% of the vote. However, within 54A, the DFL candidate won with 48.5% of the vote; and the third-party candidate got 10% of the vote.

In U.S. House District 4, Betty McCollum (DFL) easily won with 57.8% of the vote; the Republican received only 34.4% of the vote. However, within MN House District 54A, McCollum won with 45.03%, with a margin of only 2.5%.

**2016 State House:** Keith Franke (R) got 51.4% of the vote to defeat Jen Peterson (DFL), who received 48.5%. Republicans have a 77-57 majority in the House.

**2016 State Senate (SD 54):** Dan Schoen (DFL) won within District 54A with 56.6% of the votes cast. Overall, Republicans won a one-vote majority over Democrats in the Senate.

**2014 US Senate Race:** Senator Al Franken (DFL) won a second term with 55.6% of the vote within District 54A, defeating Republican Mike McFadden and candidates from the Libertarian and Independence parties.

**2012 US Senate Race:** Within district 54A, Amy Klobuchar (DFL) defeated Republican Kurt Bills with 67.9% of the vote, surpassing her state wide total of 65.2%.

**2014 Governor:** Mark Dayton (DFL) beat the Republican Jeff Johnson 51.7% to 41.9% in 54A. The remainder of the vote –6.4%–was split among candidates from the Independence, Libertarian and Grassroot-Legalize Cannabis parties. Statewide, Mark Dayton (DFL) beat the Republican Jeff Johnson 50.1% to 44.5%, with 5.4% going to third party candidates.

## SOURCES

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*Side by Side on Key Policy Issues:*

	<b>Democrat Position</b>	<b>Republican Position</b>
<b>Water Integrity and Safeguard Environment</b>	<p>Clafin wants to safeguard our environment and hold accountable corporations that pollute. She will protect our inland lakes from pollution and exploitation. She supports policies that will promote renewable energy and create new jobs in the process.</p>	<p>Franke Supported SF1937, a bill that would jeopardize hundreds of solar industry jobs as well as erode the clean energy progress made in the last decade.</p>
<b>Education</b>	<p>Clafin supports fully funding our public schools for better outcomes in STEM, early childhood education and career training.</p>	<p>Franke supported a bill (HF4) that would provide tax breaks to businesses and individuals who provide vouchers to low-income students at private schools, enabling public money to be spent on private and religious schools.</p>
<b>Rebuild Economy for All</b>	<p>Clafin supports good jobs, good wages, union jobs, and family sustaining living wages. She supports needed infrastructure improvements instead of budget-busting tax cuts for the wealthy.</p>	<p>Franke supported SF1937, a bill that would limit workforce and economic development opportunities throughout Minnesota and jeopardize hundreds of solar industry jobs.</p>