COALITION OF GREATER MN CITIES

DEDICATED TO A STRONG GREATER MINNESOTA

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CGMC recognizes city officials, legislators during 2024 Summer Conference

ST. PAUL—On July 25, the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) hosted a Legislative Awards dinner recognizing city officials and legislators for their advocacy and contributions to Greater Minnesota throughout the 2024 legislative session and their careers. The event was held in Waite Park and St. Joseph as a part of the Coalition's annual summer conference.

"This year, we have witnessed advocacy at its finest," said CGMC Executive Director Bradley Peterson. "These recipients have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to supporting Greater Minnesota communities through their dedicated service. We could not have achieved all that we did without their steadfast efforts." Read on for a complete list of award recipients.

Legislator of Distinction Award: Awarded to legislators who played key roles in the CGMC's policy success or advancing CGMC priorities during the preceding session.

Representative Jeff Backer (R – Browns Valley)

During the 2024 legislative session, Rep. Backer drew on his own experience as an EMT to passionately advocate for rural EMS. As a member of the joint legislative committee on EMS issues, Rep. Backer was a key voice and partner in crafting legislative solutions for rural Minnesota to address this critical need.

Representative Lisa Demuth (R – Cold Spring)

As Minority Leader in the House, Rep. Demuth was a strong vocal advocate of the need for emergency EMS funding and worked closely with the CGMC to pass a bill providing urgent EMS aid to communities statewide. [PHOTO]

Senator Grant Hauschild (DFL – Hermantown)

As Chief Author of the EMS bill in the Senate, Sen. Hauschild was a driving force for pushing the EMS legislation across the finish line. His energy and diligent work throughout the session was critical to its success, delivering much-needed aid to Greater Minnesota communities.

Representative Ginny Klevorn (DFL – Plymouth)

As Chair of the House State and Local Government Committee, Rep. Klevorn was instrumental in helping add balance to the discussion around zoning and housing. Relying on her background in mediation and local government, she added a thoughtful and calm voice to an otherwise contentious issue. [PHOTO]

Senator Jordan Rasmusson (R – Fergus Falls)

As a member of the joint legislative committee on EMS issues, Sen. Rasmusson rolled up his sleeves and did the hard work that accompanies problem solving. His original thinking and inventive approach were key to the creation of the distribution formula that paved the way for the passage of the EMS emergency aid bill.

Excellence in Service: Awarded to CGMC elected officials, city managers, administrators, and/or city staff who demonstrated knowledge, leadership, and active participation in CGMC program areas over the preceding session and/or an extended period of time.

Larry Cuffe Jr., Mayor (Virginia)

During the 2024 session, Mayor Cuffe was instrumental in advocating for emergency EMS aid for rural ambulance providers. He was tireless in his efforts, communicating with lawmakers, speaking at press conferences, and always being available to lend a hand when necessary. [PHOTO]

Marshall Hallock, Administrative Business Director (Red Wing)

Marshall has long been a stalwart CGMC Board member. This year, using his experience as an EMT, Marshall was instrumental in shaping the CGMC's EMS policy and strategy through his participation on the M.E.D.S. Task Force as well as the CGMC EMS Working Group. [PHOTO]

Sharon Hanson, City Administrator (Marshall)

Sharon exemplifies a truly engaged CGMC Board member. Over the last several years, she has served on the MPCA's municipal stakeholder group on behalf of the CGMC Environment Committee and took an active role in formulating the CGMC's response to the missing middle housing bills, providing feedback, testifying, and helping craft a path forward. [PHOTO]

Brian Holmer, Mayor (Thief River Falls)

Using his experience as an EMS provider, Mayor Holmer represented the CGMC on the M.E.D.S. Task Force and was a leading contributor to the CGMC EMS Working Group. His insight and passion were tremendously valuable throughout the CGMC's EMS advocacy this year. [PHOTO]

Kevin Wilson, Councilmember (Cokato)

As a new CGMC Board member, Kevin has hit the ground running and was instrumental in organizing a regional meeting in Cokato focused on EMS issues. This gathering brought together over 40 lawmakers, EMS providers, city officials, and other stakeholders for a robust and effective discussion about the challenges facing EMS in rural Minnesota. [PHOTO]

Jack Murray Award for Distinguished Rural Leadership: Awarded—upon their retirement from public service—to CGMC mayors and elected officials who have made special contributions to the CGMC over a multi-year career. The award is named after Jack Murray, former mayor of International Falls, who was instrumental in the CGMC's formation.

Tom Kuntz, Mayor (Owatonna)

Mayor Kuntz is retiring after years of service to the City of Owatonna. "Mayor Tom" has also served many years on the CGMC Board both in leadership positions and as past President. He has been a steadfast supporter of the CGMC's mission and has always looked out not only for what was good for Owatonna, but also for Greater Minnesota as a whole. This one for all, all for one spirit is the essence of the CGMC organization. [PHOTO]

Ben Schierer, Mayor (Fergus Falls)

When he became Mayor of Fergus Falls, Mayor Schierer had some big shoes to fill, but in every way rose to the occasion. His strong support for the CGMC translated into numerous years of Board service, including as co-chair of LGA/Property Tax Committee. His knowledge and experience helped guide the CGMC, and he will be missed for his inquisitive attitude and open spirit. [PHOTO]

Rick Schultz, Mayor (St. Joseph)

During his time as a Board member and leader of the organization, Mayor Schultz has often challenged the organization to think differently and often more broadly about our mission and the issues we tackle. During his term as President, the CGMC has jumped into the EMS

discussion with both feet. Mayor Schultz's good humor, easy going attitude, and thoughtfulness have immensely benefitted the CGMC. [PHOTO]

Friend of the CGMC: Awarded to individuals or organizations who have helped advance CGMC priorities and/or made important contributions to Greater Minnesota.

Buck McAlpin, Minnesota Ambulance Association

Buck is a long-time fixture at the Capitol as an advocate on EMS issues. His knowledge and deep connections were invaluable in helping to move the EMS aid bill forward at the legislature. Without his and the Minnesota Ambulance Association's support, the EMS aid bill would not have had the success that it did. [PHOTO]

Minnesota Legacy Award: Awarded—upon their retirement—to legislators who have demonstrated unfailing commitment and made extraordinary contributions to Greater Minnesota during their legislative careers.

Representative Pat Garofalo (R – Farmington)

Rep. Garofalo is a legislative original. His career is defined by thinking outside the box and looking for common sense solutions. As Chair of the House Jobs Committee, Rep. Garofalo was instrumental in bolstering the critical resources available for the Greater Minnesota Business Development Public Infrastructure program as well as the grant and loan programs of the Public Facilities Authority, which are critical to building and sustaining vibrant communities in Greater Minnesota. [PHOTO]

Representative Frank Hornstein (DFL – Minneapolis)

As Chair of the House Transportation Finance Committee, Rep. Hornstein has been greatly attentive to the needs of Greater Minnesota. Rep. Hornstein has been a staunch advocate for the Small Cities Assistance Program and was one of the chief architects of the Corridors of Commerce program, which has helped to safely connect many communities in Greater Minnesota.

Representative Dave Lislegard (DFL – Aurora)

No one is more passionate about their part of the state than Rep. Lislegard. Luckily for the rest of Greater Minnesota, that passion extended beyond the Iron Range. During his career, Rep. Lislegard had an outsized impact on everything from LGA to EMS. As Chair of the House

Property Tax Division, Rep. Lislegard was instrumental in shepherding an updated LGA formula and increasing appropriation through the House.

Representative Liz Olson (DFL – Duluth)

During her time in the House, Rep. Olson rose quickly to several key leadership roles, including Majority Whip, Deputy Majority Leader, and Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee. While serving in the legislature, she was a key author and champion for numerous bills looking to enhance access to child care throughout Greater Minnesota. Her welcoming manner and sharp intellect will be sorely missed.

Representative John Petersburg (R – Waseca)

Throughout his career, Rep. Petersburg has been a strong advocate for the transportation needs of Greater Minnesota. He has been a key supporter for funding the Corridors of Commerce program and making sure that it works effectively and efficiently for communities statewide.

Representative Dean Urdahl (R – Grove City)

Like Teddy Roosevelt, Rep. Urdahl speaks softly and carries a big stick. His commitment and perseverance have been the hallmark of his legislative career. As both Chair of the House Capital Investment Committee and as Minority Leader, he has had an outsized influence on bonding projects throughout Greater Minnesota. The CGMC appreciates the steadfast partnership of Rep. Urdahl over the years in bringing clean water, safe roads, new jobs, and community amenities to people in every corner of the state. [PHOTO]

Tim Flaherty Legacy Award: Awarded—upon their retirement—to advocates who have demonstrated unfailing commitment and made extraordinary contributions to Greater Minnesota during their careers.

Dave Smiglewski, Mayor (Granite Falls)

Dave embodied the best of Greater Minnesota leadership. As a council member and mayor, he served his community in countless ways, including guiding Granite Falls' recovery from devastating floods and tornados. His curiosity, passion, and humor drew others to him. As a longtime member of the CGMC Board and president of the organization, Dave's impact and leadership is impossible to measure. More importantly, wherever he went he either found friends or fast made news ones. [PHOTO]

President's Award – Awarded to the outgoing CGMC president.

Rick Schultz, Mayor (St. Joseph)

During his time as President, Mayor Schultz served as a skilled spokesperson and showed his dedication to CGMC communities through various letters and interviews. Despite his busy schedule as mayor, he has been relentless in his advocacy for rural Minnesota communities. His earnest attitude and intuition have enabled him to be a champion for Greater Minnesota. [PHOTO]

The CGMC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization representing more than 100 cities outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Coalition educates legislators about issues important to Greater Minnesota.

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