

Dave Lislegard
State Representative



Minnesota House of Representatives

February 29, 2024

Scott DaRonco
President, AFSCME Local 454
118 Central Ave
Nashwauk, MN 55769

Dear President DaRonco and the dedicated membership of AFSCME Local 454,

I write to you to express my solidarity with your membership as you announce your intent to strike, as well as my deep disappointment in the behavior of Councilmember Julianne Paulsen at City Hall this week. Councilmember Paulsen's grandstanding – attempting to antagonize hardworking city employees with a basket of pacifiers – was embarrassing to the city and beneath the dignity of public service. Regrettably, this action has now drawn attention statewide and casts the entire community in a poor light.

It's completely unacceptable to belittle people who are fighting to provide something all of us deserve: prosperity for their families. Everyone, no matter who you are or what you do for a living should expect to be treated with respect. The behavior of Councilmember Paulsen has no place in any professional setting, much less one with emotions as high as they are because of the current labor dispute. Despite the message she was attempting to send, it's in fact Councilmember Paulsen's own immaturity that has now become crystal clear.

Councilmember Paulsen's behavior has also fed resentful comments throughout the community implying city employees are overpaid. Given the sacrifices workers have already recently faced to balance the city budget – including cuts of positions, cuts to overtime pay, and lower employer health insurance contributions – any insinuation that workers earn excessive wages and benefits is laughable. The City of Virginia, its elected officials, and the administration should seek to make it a rewarding, fulfilling place to show up to work every day. Actively undermining employee morale as Councilmember Paulsen has done will only serve to make the city a less desirable place to work, which can lead to an inability to recruit and retain high-performing staff members. If such a reputation is sustained, it could result in a lower quality of life for residents.

Like the Iron Range lawmakers who came before me, I'm committed to upholding our deeply rooted values of collective bargaining and the expectation that this will be upheld by both sides in good faith. I stand by AFSCME Local 454 in your effort to secure a reasonable agreement that



February 29, 2024
Page 2

ensures workers and their families can continue to thrive, and as you do so, I hope your membership can be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Lislegard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Lislegard
State Representative – District 7B