

## CANDIDATES FOR U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1

*Note: Republican challenger Brian Davis did not respond in time to be included in The Land's election guide.*



### TIM WALZ (DFL) Incumbent

**Age:** 44 **Family:** Wife, Gwen; children Hope, 7, and Gus, 2 **Education:** B.S. Chadron State College, 1989; Masters, 2001; working on doctorate at St. Mary's in Winona **Public service:** 24-year veteran of Army National Guard; U.S. House of Representatives 2006-2008

Growing up, I spent my summers on my cousins' farm, so I know what it's like to make a living from the family farm. That's why I asked to serve on the House Ag Committee as soon as I arrived in Congress. Preparing for the farm bill debate, I held 14 public forums across southern Minnesota, where I talked to hundreds of farmers and ranchers, small business owners, and other rural residents. I'll continue to be as open and accessible as possible, and fight to make sure that southern Minnesota's residents have a voice in Washington.

The skyrocketing cost of feed, fertilizer, fuel and other inputs is making it more difficult for producers to break even, let alone make a profit. That's why I am a strong supporter of the farm safety net in the farm bill and I led the fight against those who wanted to eliminate the commodity program entirely. We need to create new value-added opportunities for our ag products; developing the next generation of bioenergy from our farm products will bring in more revenue for our producers and help reduce energy costs.

I support the use of subsidies and mandates to boost our fledgling biofuels and renewable energy industries. With support, we can move to the next generation of ethanol, biodiesel and renewable energy production, and then we can examine whether further assistance is still necessary. And as long as taxpayers are still shelling out billions of dollars every year in assistance to the major oil and gas companies as they rake in record profits, it's certainly appropriate for us to support the production of renewable fuels here in our heartland.

Addressing the problem of illegal immigration is a federal responsibility, and it's an area where the federal government has failed miserably. I believe that the majority of businesses act in good faith and are not trying to evade our employment laws, but are not given the tools they need to determine whether a prospective worker is in the country legally. We need to create a system that gives employers a reliable, verifiable way to determine the legal status of potential workers and then penalize companies that knowingly hire illegal workers.

I believe that trade is a two-way street, but I think we need to be vigilant about heavily-subsidized imports that are dumped on our market. With one out of every four acres of farm production exported overseas, I support efforts to expand trade and reduce barriers to our farm products. As a strong supporter of the 2007 farm bill, I'm pleased that this legislation increases funding for programs that help expand exports of American farm products.

Organic producers and growers of biotech crops both have a place in Minnesota agriculture. Government shouldn't be in the position of picking winners and losers, but whether it's assistance for growers who want to transition to organic production, or helping producers of biotech crops who are facing import restrictions, the USDA should be in the business of helping our farmers thrive.

Our producers know the value of clean soil, air and water just as much — if not more than — anyone else and I strongly disagree with those who think that farmers don't have every interest in protecting our environment. When the House Ag Committee was writing the new farm bill, I successfully offered an amendment to make it easier for producers to participate in the USDA's conservation programs. Working lands conservation programs are the key to preserving our family farms and protecting the environment.

If we are going to ensure that we have a safe and abundant food supply, we must make it easier for young producers to enter agriculture. I added an amendment to the farm bill that reduces interest rates and down payment requirements for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Down Payment Loan Program. At my request, the farm bill also provides \$75 million in funding for the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which will help more young people get their start on the land.

I'm proud of the important improvements I made to the farm bill, but I'm even more pleased that by holding 14 farm bill meetings across the district, rural Minnesotans had the opportunity to shape an important law like the farm bill. This is a model that I've tried to bring to my work in Congress and I hope you'll continue to share your ideas about how we can change Washington to ensure that our nation's policies are working for you and your family.



### GREG MIKKELSON (I) Challenger

**Age:** 52 **Family:** Two children, Adam and Erin **Education:** High School and a two-year Production Agriculture degree **Public service:** no response

I have lived in the district my whole life and I know and understand the concerns of farmers. I have represented farmers and rural residents in Washington before with the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

Seed, fertilizer, chemicals, fuel and equipment prices have gone up tremendously in the past year, due to inflation and a growing national debt, which is caused by excessive and wasteful spending by the government. As a nation we must be fiscally responsible and control our national debt. We must address the regulations that have caused fertilizer manufacturers, fuel refineries and power plants to quit replacing their facilities and building new ones in the United States, which also contributes to higher prices.

These were a good start, and were needed to get this industry on its feet but eventually they need to stand on their own.

The government should be checking the pre-employment files that businesses are required to send in when hiring a new employee.

I believe in free markets. Tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers are non-productive and many times have a negative impact on American agriculture.

Yes, there is a place for both of these but the market should dictate what is needed. The government should not be promoting one over the other; people should decide what they want or need, and farmers will then produce what the market requires.

Minnesota farmers and ranchers have been doing a great job and are good stewards of the land. In many cases the environment is more protected than when we first got here. There have been many misconceptions about the impact of farmers' actions on the environment, however with research it has been shown to be the contrary. We have a vested interest in keeping this land for future generations and we would be foolish to destroy the land.

Profitability is the biggest factor that will encourage people to get into farming. Like any other business it is going to take a father or relative that is already in the business to get them started, but this works well because the mentioned people are ready to retire or pass on their knowledge of the business.

Minnesota voters should cast their vote for an independent thinker with common sense, who is not run by party politics and political contributions. We need someone who is putting America's best interest ahead of lobbyists and their own personal interest. You should vote for someone who is concerned about our future, our nation's future, and our children's future. I am that person.

**Q1** As you represent Minnesota in Washington, D.C., how would you assure that the concerns of farmers and rural residents are heard?

**Q2** What is the biggest issue facing Minnesota agriculture today, and what can be done to solve that problem?

**Q3** Where do you stand on the use of subsidies and mandates to support ethanol, biodiesel and other renewable/alternative energies?

**Q4** Where does responsibility lie in controlling employment of illegal immigrants in ag-related industries?

**Q5** Describe your position on the use of tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers to agricultural imports.

**Q6** Is there a place for both organic production and cutting-edge biotechnology, and should government promote one over another?

**Q7** What responsibilities do Minnesota's farmers and ranchers have in protecting the state's soil, air and water quality?

**Q8** How will the next generation of farmers be drawn to agriculture?

**Q9** Why should a rural Minnesota voter cast their ballot for you?