

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **PUBLIC TELEVISION, OR THE WALZ CHANNEL? *First lady's event goes badly, and tpt2 deletes the footage***

[ST. PAUL, MN - September 17, 2019]

A story published yesterday on the Minnesota Public Radio website alleged that the Walz administration was displeased with a Minnesota Public Television forum in which the First Lady, Gwen Walz, played a prominent role. The story claims that tpt2 destroyed footage of the event at the request of the Walz administration.

MPR reported that according to multiple accounts, the recorded event promoted initiatives allowing inmates to take college courses, earning credit and potentially a degree. The event became tense when the moderator pressed participants about race.

Instead of focusing on the program and its participants, the moderator, Toussaint Morrison, repeatedly tried to discuss why racial minorities are over-represented in the corrections system.

Although she later denied it, the First Lady clearly was not ready to answer those types of hard-hitting questions and expected a softball interview with uplifting stories about inmates who had benefited from going to school while in prison.

"Taxpayers will pay over \$3.6 million from the general fund and another \$8 million in legacy funds to Minnesota Public Television next biennium," said Rep. Steve Drazkowski (Republican - Mazeppa). "The risks of it becoming a propaganda machine for the state are incredibly high. And now the propaganda effort has been unmasked. This was not a news effort. It was a cozy agreement between the Governor's office and Minnesota Public Television. When the Governor's expectations were not met, he communicated his anger, through his staff, and public television pacified him by deleting the footage. Governor Walz and Twin Cities Public Television are clearly corrupt."

"There are a lot of terrible things about this story," said Rep. Tim Miller (Republican – Prinsburg). "First of all, we have Mrs. Walz going from supporting a cause to doing what for any other citizen would be lobbying, which would require her to register with the campaign finance board. But on top of that, she is using a public resource, something that the state taxpayers support through the State Government Finance budget. Presumably, tpt2 had to pay those videographers to record the event. Was the moderator working for free? The Walz administration let it be known that they were displeased with what happened at the event and tpt2 didn't only archive the video; they deleted it. Taxpayer money down the drain."

Rep. Jeremy Munson (Republican – Lake Crystal) said, "This is why the public distrusts the media. Here we have local public television that somehow tries to pretend that it is unbiased and holds itself to the highest standards of journalism. Yet when someone from the Walz administration is unhappy with a recorded event that they thought was going to be a positive story for them, it quickly results in the footage being destroyed. That behavior is shockingly cavalier and tells us a lot about the priorities of public television and the ethics, journalistic and otherwise, of everyone involved in this sordid episode."

Rep. Cal Bahr (Republican – East Bethel) said, "This is a great example of why public television should be privatized. When funded by the government, it is not independent. It is extremely susceptible to pressure by government officials and can be a propaganda arm of the government. If it had private ownership, they would not have to worry about their funding being cut because they ran with a hard-hitting piece."

The NHRC is led by Rep. Steve Drazkowski (Republican-Mazeppa). It includes Rep. Cal Bahr (Republican-East Bethel), Rep. Tim Miller (Republican-Prinsburg), and Rep. Jeremy Munson (Republican-Lake Crystal).

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