

The late Sen. Hubert Humphrey once quipped that contrary to what the rest of the country may believe, there is no provision in the state constitution requiring that a Minnesotan run for president.

Humphrey was making a small joke, of course, but the one-liner spoke volumes about the place government holds in the minds of many Minnesotans.

State government programs such as the highly touted open enrollment education initiative and the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act have consistently led the way for the rest of the nation.

But the state is perhaps more widely known for the steady stream of national leaders it has produced, from Harold Stassen, the “boy wonder” governor and one-time serious presidential candidate, to the quartet of Minnesota senators who also ran for president: Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy, Walter Mondale and Amy Klobuchar.

From the beginning, the Minnesota tradition has largely been a liberal one. One of the first acts of the Minnesota Legislature was to authorize the sale of \$5 million in railroad bonds to stimulate business in the wake of the economic panic of 1857.

And when business is perceived as posing a threat to the people, Minnesota hasn't shied away from imposing government regulations.

In 1871, when big railroads were commonly looked upon as the enemy, Minnesota created its own railroad commission — years before the federal Interstate Commerce Commission was formed.

At the turn of the century, conservative Gov. Samuel VanSant began a lawsuit against the Northern

Securities Company, a massive railroad conglomerate. Its later breakup was the first step toward making then President Theodore Roosevelt's reputation as a trust buster.

That strong tradition of government regulation of business, borne from the Populist roots of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) in 1944, continues to this day. And it's a constant point of friction at the State Capitol between the DFL and the Republican Party (R), whose traditional roots are also very strong in the state.

There have been long stretches of Republican domination — despite Minnesota's reputation as a liberal state. In 1932, Franklin Delano

Roosevelt was the first Democratic presidential candidate to win Minnesota's electoral votes.

And it wasn't until 1972 that the DFL gained a majority in both the state House and Senate.

The 1998 elections threw a new wrinkle into the political history of the state.

One-time professional wrestler Jesse Ventura was

elected governor, giving the Reform Party, later changed to the Independence Party, its first significant victory. And voters elected a majority of Republicans to the House for the first time in 12 years. With the DFL holding a majority in the Senate, Minnesota began an experiment with tripartisan government.

The House returned to DFL control after the 2006 election, setting up showdowns between the Legislature and Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

But in 2010, voters again sought



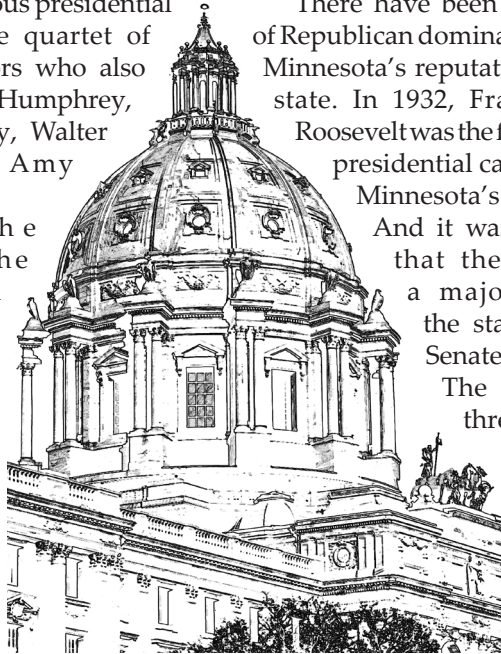
change. DFLer Mark Dayton won the governor's race, but Republicans picked up 25 House seats, and gained 16 Senate seats, and for the first time since 1972, they controlled that body.

But just as with the weather, Minnesotans seem to like to change things up. After the 2012 election, the DFL remained solidly in control of the House and but picked up enough seats to regain control of the Senate. And once again, Minnesota state government was under one-party control. Two years later Republicans took back the House. ▼

Legend

The popular slogan on Minnesota license plates boasts that the state is the “Land of 10,000 Lakes.” Actually, there are 11,842 lakes of more than 10 acres each, giving the state more shoreline than California, Florida and Hawaii combined.

The creation myth of the Ojibwe Indians of northern Minnesota holds that the earth was created when Winabijou, a legendary trickster, finds himself at the top of a pine tree surrounded by water. He asks a muskrat to retrieve mud from the bottom. The muskrat does, and Winabijou makes an island which grows to the size of the earth.



Minnesota pioneers turned to Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox for their creation story. Legend has it that Paul and Babe, headed west from Maine to Washington, and are responsible for creating “the Land of 10,000 Lakes” with their deep footprints.

But the textbook explanation is that four large glacier systems melted as they receded north and created Lake Agassiz, which at one time was larger than all the Great Lakes combined. As the lake level receded, the many depressions on Minnesota’s landscape were filled in. The 10,000 lakes slogan, although inaccurate, is a holdover from 19th century promotion brochures designed to lure immigrants to the state. ▼

History

The abundance of water in Minnesota is also reflected in the very name chosen for the state. “Minnesota” is the Dakota word for “cloudy” or “sky-tinted water” that was applied to the river of that name because of its color.

The two main groups of American Indians in Minnesota are the Ojibwe and the Dakota. Their presence is most visible in the place names of many Minnesota towns and counties. Fifteen of Minnesota’s 87 counties took their names from the Dakota language, either directly or through translation; 12 came from the Ojibwe language.

The French were the first Europeans to explore the area that is now known as Minnesota. So extensive was their contact with the Indians that the French greeting, “bonjour,” is still used by the Ojibwe. The greeting, however, is pronounced “boozhoo.”

Minnesota became a territory in 1849 and the nation’s 32nd state in 1858. The first U.S. Census, conducted in 1850, listed the state’s population at 6,077 — a fraction of the 5.66 million people who live here today.

Although Germans comprised the largest group of settlers, Minnesota is said to be the only state in the country where Smith isn’t the most common name in the telephone book; it’s Peterson, an indication of the state’s deep Scandinavian roots.

Minnesota also played a role in the annals of African-American history: Dred Scott came to Fort Snelling in 1836 as the property of a military surgeon — even though slavery was outlawed in the territory. Scott later appealed for his freedom in the federal courts, but was turned down by the Supreme Court in 1857. The final disposition of the slavery question raised by Dred Scott came only after four years of the tragic Civil War. ▼

Economy

Minnesota’s early economy was dominated by the lumber, agriculture and mining industries. Each continues to play a large role in the state’s economy, but they are no longer alone.

The state’s dynamic economy has resulted in an increase of Fortune 500 companies calling the state home from 14 in 2000 to 21 in 2010. That number is 17 in 2019. The state ranks fourth nationwide in Fortune 500 companies per capita. According to the Department of Employment and Economic Development, Minnesota is home to 24 Fortune 1,000 companies, representing a wide variety of industries.

Among small cities, Mankato ranks 16th, Rochester 37th, and St. Cloud 20th in Forbes 2019 ranking of “Best Small Places for Business and Careers.”

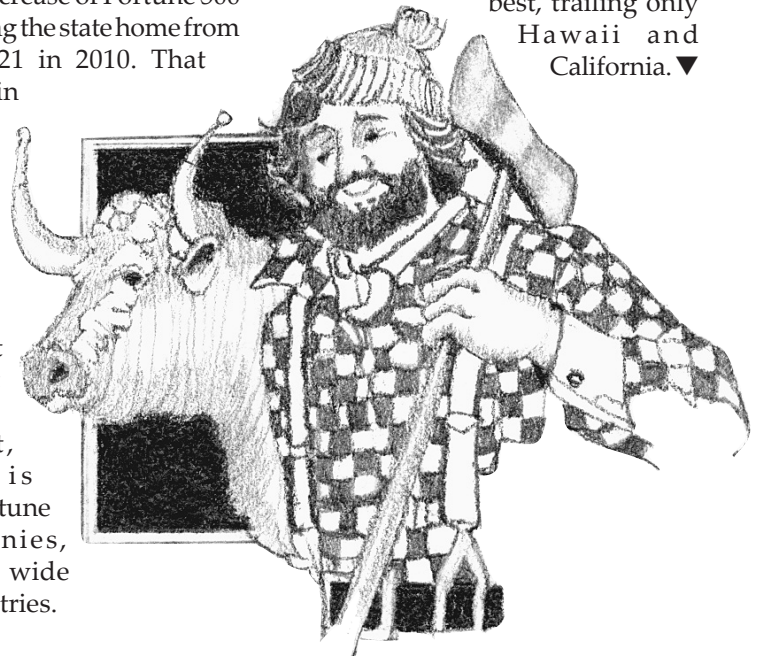
The state received nearly \$786.5 million in venture capital investments in 2018.

Companies bring high-paying quality jobs to the state, in part, because of a dedicated and highly educated workforce. Minnesota ranks third in the nation with 93.4 percent of adults having at least a high school diploma, while 36.7 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher, ranking 11th in the country.

Seventy percent of Minnesotans participate in the state’s labor force in 2019, the highest rate in the nation, with the per capita personal income ranking 13th in the country in 2018. The state also ranked 14th in median household income in 2018 at \$70,315.

Minnesota ranked 13th in a 2018 Prosperity Now Scorecard. The report indicated Minnesota showed strength in measures of financial assets and income, education and home ownership.

More than 95 percent of Minnesotans have health insurance, and our life expectancy of 80.7 years is third-best, trailing only Hawaii and California. ▼



 twitter.com/MNHouseInfo
 facebook.com/MNHouseInfo
 youtube.com/user/MNHouseInfo

Sources: Lass, William E., *Minnesota: A History*; Upham, Warren, *Minnesota Geographic Names*; Department of Employment and Economic Development; Department of Natural Resources; *U.S. Geological Survey Minerals Yearbook 2003*; Forbes; CEO.com; Department of Education, CQ Press; PricewaterhouseCoopers; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

This document can be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities by calling 651-296-2146 or 800-657-3550 toll free (voice).