

## **Blake, Cumah (GOV)**

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**From:** Swenson, Matt (GOV)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 25, 2015 8:59 AM  
**To:** Mark Dayton; Smith, Tina (GOV); Tincher, Jaime (GOV); Piper, Emily (GOV); Hardy, Shawntera (GOV); Dornfeld, Joanna (GOV); Hume, Bob (GOV); Zakula, Linden (GOV); Maes, Jennie (GOV)  
**Subject:** PIM: Protests push prospects for special session

## **Protests push prospects for special session**

By: Chris Steller November 24, 2015 0

*Editor's note: Interviews and other reporting for this article took place before the shooting of five protesters late Monday near the Black Lives Matter demonstration site in Minneapolis.*

Demonstrations following the Nov. 15 police shooting of a black man in Minneapolis have buttressed calls for a special session of the Minnesota Legislature that would deal, in part, with the state's racial disparities.

Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk, DFL-Tower, first proposed that the Legislature grapple with racial disparities as a special session topic on Nov. 18, just days after the fatal shooting of Jamar Clark.

Bakk made his proposal in response to Gov. Dayton's call for a special session to extend unemployment benefits for workers in the steel industry on Minnesota's Iron Range. Dayton quickly embraced Bakk's racial-disparities idea the same day.

Then on Nov. 21 the governor included the special session in a statement on the situation in North Minneapolis: "I also reiterate my call for a Special Session of the Minnesota Legislature to address the racial disparities in North Minneapolis and elsewhere in Minnesota."

Dayton repeated his support at a Monday morning press conference, saying he would "meet with my staff and talk about how we carry forward on our commitment to take this tragedy and make improvements in terms of racial disparities throughout the state of Minnesota, especially in North Minneapolis but really everywhere."

Dayton also said Monday he had "promised to meet with Black Lives Matter in December and will do so," adding that North Minneapolis was "teetering on the brink of a very, very volatile situation."

Extending unemployment benefits for steelworkers on the Iron Range "should be a reason by itself to hold a special session," Dayton said, adding that "not to do what can do and should do to try to put additional resources into reducing the racial disparities is just inexcusable."

In October, Dayton pledged to "redouble" his administration's efforts to close racial disparities, following the September release of U.S. Census figures that showed tumbling income for African-Americans in the state.

Dayton said he had not spoken to House Speaker Kurt Daudt about a special session. Daudt was unavailable for comment this week, according to House Majority Caucus spokesperson Susan Closmore, who referred to Daudt's Nov. 19 special-session comments, in which he said he wanted to see specifics on any racial-disparities proposals.

NAACP Minneapolis included a policy provision in a statement responding to Dayton's Monday press conference: "To give hope to the community, a Northside jobs program must be created to close the gaps in unemployment and income for black residents."

That's in line with proposals by Sen. Jeff Hayden, DFL-Minneapolis, that the House and Senate take up job training and small business legislation to benefit urban communities of color at any special session, according to MPR.

Rep. Raymond Dehn, DFL-Minneapolis, whose District 59B includes the Fourth Police Precinct, said in an interview Monday he has been at the demonstration site every night since Clark's shooting. Several other state legislators, including the district's senator, Bobby Joe Champion, DFL-Minneapolis, have also been present, he said.

"All the [Clark] shooting has done is raise the profile of these issues that have been around for a long, long time," Dehn said.

Dehn, a member of the House Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy and Finance, identified restoration of felons' voting rights as a racial-disparity issue with broad bipartisan support.

The issue of re-enfranchisement of felons has been a priority for Rep. Tony Cornish. "It's one I felt strongly about," said Cornish, R-Vernon Center, who chairs the House Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy and Finance Committee and authored a bill on the issue earlier this year. But he doesn't see how it could gain a place on a special-session agenda.

In an Oct. 21 Capitol Report column, University of Minnesota School of Law Professor David Schultz, wrote that in Minnesota, Black Lives Matter "has not brought policymakers to the table." On Monday, Schultz said by email he remained skeptical, speculating that the Jamar Clark killing and resulting protests could work to the detriment of racial-disparity legislation: "I see greater Minnesota looking at the shooting and the protests as a criminal justice problem necessitating support for the police to keep law and order. Additionally, BLM needs to articulate specific policy proposals for addressing the disparities and I am not sure how well they have done that and if they have, how much support there will be for them."

Whatever topics it includes, a special session would face logistical challenges. House Majority Leader Joyce Peppin, R-Rogers, speaking to Minnesota Public Radio on Tuesday, said planners of any special session would have to wrestle with lawmakers' holiday plans in trying to reach quorum; costs including mileage and per diem payments; and the question of where to hold House sessions. "We are not ready to have session in the state Capitol," she said, because of ongoing construction work there. She said it was likely the House would meet in the State Office Building for a second special session, as happened during the special session last summer.

But special session or not, Dehn urged continued attention to how the Legislature deals with the pressing problems of the state's racial disparities.

"Follow up a few months down the road and see what's happened," he said.

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