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Minnesota Unions, Businesses and Organizations Launch *Respect Minnesota*

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(MINNEAPOLIS, MN) On September 23, 2019 unions, businesses, organizations, and individuals launched *Respect Minnesota*, a pledge that aims to create common ground and respects the rights of freedom of speech and personal safety.

During the past year, IOUE Local 49 members have had many conversations with a diverse group of organizations and individuals that want to reset the tone on major energy construction projects across Minnesota.

“We want everyone to go home safe each night – our members working on projects and those who share different opinions on contentious issues and/or sizeable energy projects that impact communities,” Jason George, Business Manager of Local 49 said. “This pledge demonstrates commitment to personal safety of our members and those that express free speech.”

The *Respect Minnesota* pledge:

- I support free speech and a safe environment for everyone.
- I will listen, be inclusive and look for common ground.
- I will respect others, our natural environment, and local communities.
- I will respect the cultural heritage and history of indigenous people.
- I will be accountable for my words and actions and abide by the law.
- Let’s move forward together.

George said his team has been reaching out to Local 49 members, local businesses, local communities, and other union brothers and sisters across Minnesota to introduce *Respect Minnesota* and encourage them to take the pledge. So far, more than 2,500 individuals have signed the pledge from across Minnesota.

“Safety is the top priority for our members in every circumstance. We know people are very passionate about Line 3 and other energy projects that are moving forward,” George said. “Any conversation in advance of starting construction will help to deescalate intense worksite environments and keep our members safe. We want to set a respectful tone for the communities where we work.”

Initial pledge signers include: International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49, International Union of Operating Engineers; Laborers District Council of MN/ND; Pipeliners Local Union 798; International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Jobs for Minnesotans; Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce; River Falls Chamber of Commerce; Itasca County Economic Development Corporation; Minnesota Chamber of Commerce; TwinWest Chamber of Commerce; River Heights Chamber of Commerce; Thief River Falls Chamber of Commerce; Saint Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce; Minnesota AgEnergy Alliance; LaValley Industries; Charps LLC; Gordon Construction.

“Having conversations about topics that spur passion in a respectful manner can only broaden our perspectives,” explains Antonio Franklin, Executive Director of the Thief River Falls Chamber of Commerce. “The Respect Minnesota pledge is something that we can all agree with because it is the only way to move forward together. We need to respect free speech, our communities and each other.”

To learn more and add your name to the *Respect Minnesota* pledge, visit www.RespectMinnesota.org.



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