



NEWS

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Paul Wellstone: The Ted Kennedy of the Midwest

Embattled U.S. Senator will have difficult time defending his record on taxes to MN voters.

WASHINGTON – In American politics, ousting an incumbent senator is like picking a fight with a character from a Dr. Seuss story: You're underpowered, he can pull bizarre tricks from his hat, and more often than not you'll walk away humiliated. But no matter what Minnesota incumbent Paul Wellstone pulls from his reelection cap this fall, there's one thing he can't hide from: his record on taxes.

Since 1995, when Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), the nation's leading taxpayer advocacy organization, began issuing its annual congressional scorecard, Senator Wellstone has averaged an abysmal 3.5% score, including scores of zero in 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1995 and 1994. The scorecard, which can be viewed on ATR's website at www.ATR.org, judges approximately twenty congressional votes on taxes each year. **Members of Congress can score between zero and one hundred, where a zero rating means a senator or representative voted against taxpayers every single time in a given congressional session.**

"If Paul Wellstone conscientiously tried any harder to vote against taxpayers, I don't think he could do any worse," said taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, who heads ATR in Washington. "With a 3.5 out of 100 average on our scorecard, it's almost like he defined his political career by siding against taxpayers. **Wellstone has become the Ted Kennedy of the Midwest.**"

Most recently, Wellstone voted against President Bush's 2001 tax relief plan, and voted in June against the permanent repeal of the Death Tax, the inheritance tax that forces sales of thousands of farms and small businesses each year. **According to the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), seventy percent of family-owned businesses do not survive the second generation, and 87 percent do not make it to the third generation because of the Death Tax.** Wellstone also voted for President Clinton's massive 1993 tax hike, which, among numerous tax increases, **raised taxes on Social Security benefits for senior citizens.** Wellstone also vociferously opposed the highly successful 1996 welfare reform law, and is expected to vote against its reauthorization this fall.

Wellstone's opponent, Minneapolis mayor Norm Coleman (R), has taken ATR's Taxpayer Protection Pledge, which is a written promise by candidates and elected officials to their constituents to oppose tax increases. Currently, 249 members of Congress, eight governors and over 1,250 state legislators have taken the Pledge. Wellstone has refused repeatedly to take this Pledge.

"Washington politics is a continuing battle between taxpayers and big government spenders," continued Norquist, **"and in Minnesota's election this fall, the candidates' positions couldn't be any clearer."**

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jcollegio@atr.org