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Contact: Media@MPPOA.com

MEDIA AVAILABILITY: MPPOA Executive Director Brian Peters is available for in-person, computer, or phone-based interviews.

Demands for answers on residency and blocked body camera video persist after traffic citation of State Rep. John Thompson

(St. Paul, Minn.) - Several serious issues have arisen after the citation of Minnesota State Representative John Thompson (D-St. Paul). In the early morning of Sunday, July 4, Rep. Thompson was stopped by a St. Paul police sergeant for driving without a front license plate on his vehicle, which is unlawful in the state of Minnesota. The police citation can be [found here](#), or by accessing the public [Minnesota Court Records Online \(MCRO\) database](#), and searching for case 62-VB-21-25140. Serious and unresolved issues include:

The available but blocked body camera and dash cam footage:

The St. Paul Police sergeant was wearing a body-worn camera and the squad car also has dash camera footage - two videos of the incident. In the days following, Rep. Thompson made several disparaging public remarks on the incident, alleging he was “driving while Black” and saying he was [racially profiled](#). However, when asked to make public the body camera footage from several media outlets, Rep. Thompson declined and blocked it from becoming public on Friday, July 9.

Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association Executive Director Brian Peters said, “Rep. Thompson’s [signature issue](#) at the state legislature was advocating for rapid release of police officer’s body camera footage. Now he’s blocking the public release of the body camera footage of his own incident with law enforcement this past week. As a public official, it’s hypocritical and irresponsible. Constituents have the right to see how their legislator conducted himself, particularly when he made such strong claims about what happened during the traffic stop.”

St. Paul Chief of Police Todd Axtell wrote in a Facebook post on July 9, “Two days later I was shocked to hear that driver accuse the sergeant of making the stop based on race. These aren’t accusations I take lightly, so I looked into the traffic stop, watched the body worn camera footage and spoke to the sergeant. This stop, made at about 1:20 in the morning, had absolutely nothing to do with the driver’s race.

What it did involve was a public servant doing what the community asks of him. He was working a Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) traffic safety detail, which is a grant-funded initiative administered by the State of Minnesota. One of its goals is to ensure compliance with traffic laws. Simply put, the traffic stop was by the books. What happened afterwards was anything but.

I’m dismayed and disappointed by the state representative’s response to the stop. Rather than taking responsibility for his own decisions and actions, he attempted to deflect, cast aspersions, and deny any wrongdoing...The driver, an elected official who does not dispute driving without a front license plate, owes our sergeant an apology.”

State law allows law enforcement’s body camera footage to be made public only if the subject (Rep. Thompson) agrees. He has declined that request. State law says, “(2) data are public if a subject of the data requests it be made accessible to the public, except that, if practicable,”

Residency questions and how this could disqualify Thompson from office

John Thompson was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in November 2020. Notably,

- He did not file an address with the MN Secretary of State’s office on his affidavit of candidacy. The MN SOS said he would have then been required to fill out a separate form attesting his residence, but the SOS’s office “wasn’t able to fully confirm this on Friday.”
- When questioned by police, he presented a Wisconsin driver’s license, which was confirmed to be valid by the Wisconsin Department of Public Safety. It has been reported that Rep. Thompson has held the Wisconsin license since July 2000 and had it renewed in Wisconsin in 2005, 2012, and November 2020. Under Wisconsin law, driver’s licenses are only available to Wisconsin residents. The application form, found here, requires driver’s license applicants to sign below the line, “I certify that the information on this application is true under penalty of perjury, and I am a resident of Wisconsin. (s. 343.14(5) Wis. Stats.).

- The Minnesota Department of Public Safety has confirmed Rep. John Thompson does not - and has not - had a Minnesota Driver's License.
- **NEW and unreported: In the police citation on July 4, 2020, the address listed for John Thompson is outside his legislative district.**
- The Minnesota Constitution outlines the qualifications of legislators:

Article 4, Sec. 6. Qualification of legislators; judging election returns and eligibility.

Senators and representatives shall be qualified voters of the state and shall have resided one year in the state and six months immediately preceding the election in the district from which elected.

Each house shall be the judge of the election returns and eligibility of its own members. The legislature shall prescribe by law the manner for taking evidence in cases of contested seats in either house.

- Also under state law, a candidate for the Legislature needs to have lived in the district for at least six months on Election Day.
- There have been past examples of state legislators cited for residence issues with Rep. Bob Barrett, and House candidate Sue Ek.

Mark Ross, president, St. Paul Police Federation said, “Representative Thompson's false allegation of racism to deflect from his own egregious behavior is unconscionable and completely unjustifiable. His audacious claims against a St. Paul police officer are simply nonsense. We look forward to the transparency that the body camera and in car camera will provide. St. Paul's east side residents deserve better than Thompson's lies and potential criminal behavior. For an elected state legislator of Minnesota to present himself as a licensed resident of Wisconsin to law enforcement is beyond the pale. It will be telling to discover what kind of identification he's provided in the past with his many law enforcement interactions, and where he truly resides.”

Removal of Office:

The Minnesota Constitution provides that the Legislature could remove a member that doesn't meet residency requirements via:

1. Removal from office by the House, OR

2. A recall effort may be possible given the various misdemeanors involved that can be considered dishonest (not getting a MN license after 60 days) and perhaps obstruction of justice (intentionally preventing a proper election).

Article 8,

Sec. 6. Recall.

A member of the senate or the house of representatives, an executive officer of the state identified in section 1 of article V of the constitution, or a judge of the supreme court, the court of appeals, or a district court is subject to recall from office by the voters. The grounds for recall of a judge shall be established by the supreme court. **The grounds for recall of an officer other than a judge are serious malfeasance or nonfeasance during the term of office in the performance of the duties of the office or conviction during the term of office of a serious crime.** A petition for recall must set forth the specific conduct that may warrant recall. A petition may not be issued until the supreme court has determined that the facts alleged in the petition are true and are sufficient grounds for issuing a recall petition. A petition must be signed by a number of eligible voters who reside in the district where the officer serves and who number not less than 25 percent of the number of votes cast for the office at the most recent general election. Upon a determination by the secretary of state that a petition has been signed by at least the minimum number of eligible voters, a recall election must be conducted in the manner provided by law. A recall election may not occur less than six months before the end of the officer's term. An officer who is removed from office by a recall election or who resigns from office after a petition for recall issues may not be appointed to fill the vacancy that is created.

-Malfeasance means intentionally doing something unlawful or wrong while performing duties of the office; the act must be substantially outside of the scope of duties and substantially infringe upon another's rights. · Nonfeasance means intentionally and repeatedly not performing required duties of the office. · Serious crime means a crime that is a gross misdemeanor and involves assault, intentional injury, threat of injury, dishonesty, stalking, aggravated driving while intoxicated, coercion, obstruction of justice, or the sale or possession of controlled substances. **Serious crime also means a misdemeanor crime that involves assault, intentional injury or threat of injury, dishonesty, coercion, obstruction of justice,** or the sale or possession of controlled substances. An individual who is convicted of a felony is automatically removed from office, so a felony conviction is not specified as grounds for recall.

Past criminal and civil activities of John Thompson:

Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association Executive Director Brian Peters said, “State Representative John Thompson’s public record of violent crime is extensive and alarming. There have been serious violent charges, such as making terroristic threats, several incidents of domestic assault, and trespassing, all in addition to other civil matters regarding child support and more. He even has a criminal trial starting next week.

This shows a continued pattern of violent, threatening, and criminal behavior towards others. Last summer Thompson threatened to burn down a neighborhood and beat an effigy of a police officer’s wife, a reporter, while standing outside their home.

These criminal and civil charges, created by his own actions - along with his own lack of transparency and honesty about his record, including his most recent traffic stop - make him unfit to serve in the Minnesota Legislature.”

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The Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) represents Minnesota’s 10,000+ public safety officials who hold active law enforcement licenses in the state of Minnesota. Members include police officers, correctional officers, dispatchers, and firefighters. MPPOA is the largest association representing public safety professionals in the State of Minnesota.

The St. Paul Police Federation proudly represents all sworn officers at every rank, excluding the chiefs.

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