

# “The Man Had Been Shot...”

By Minnesota State Senator Julianne Ortman

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The man had been shot.

Just moments before, I heard the 911 dispatch radio: “A woman heard shots in the area of...” and then “A call from a mechanic’s garage, a man has been shot...” A dark, frozen Friday night, police lights and sirens, and two officers and I are speeding through the streets of North Minneapolis.

The mix of his fear, the smell of the old oil from the garage, a bloody leg with almost neatly chiseled-out flesh and muscle, his moans of pain and panic, the ambulance siren – I can barely breathe, barely stand. “Breathe...don’t worry,” I told myself, “these officers are very well-trained, and know what to do.”

The officers, Nick and Mark interviewed him, and Nick went with the victim to HCMC in the ambulance to learn more about the two men the victim claimed had tied him up for an hour, and later shot at several times, with one hit to the leg: “One white skinny guy and one heavy-set black man with a red shirt and blue jeans.”

Mark and I got in the squad car to find the scene of the shooting, and we did: an unlit, shadow-filled, icy, uneven and frightening ally behind a two-story, four-apartment building. We found where the fight had taken place, between two cars, one

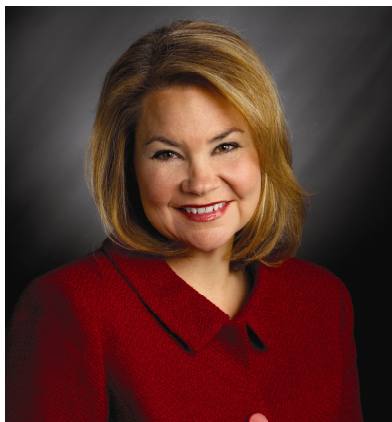
with a broken out window. I found three bullet casings in the snow.

I don’t think I had started breathing again before a man emerged from an upstairs apartment onto a balcony with stairs; he fit the victim’s description perfectly. I couldn’t see, did he have a gun? Mark and I both were easy targets from where he stood (and we were just a few blocks from where, just days before, an officer had been shot at while writing snow-emergency tickets). “Don’t worry...” I told myself, “Mark is well-trained and knows what to do.”

He started down the stairs, toward us; Mark talked to him, began to direct him, set some limits: “Stop, don’t come near this fence...” Mark talked him into handcuffs, just as a sergeant arrived. The sergeant marked the area of the fight and the bullets with police tape while

Mark walked the suspect, and me, through the dark, up the uneven, slippery stairs up to the apartment to get his coat. But he began shouting at someone; was there someone inside? Mark pulled out his gun, got the suspect on his knees, left me at the door with the suspect, and quickly began to search the apartment. “Don’t worry...” I told myself, “Mark is well-trained and knows what to do.”

Another sergeant arrived from the front door and helped, but there was no one else inside. We began to search for a gun (a “plain view” search only), and we see a lot of drugs on the bed, more are pulled from his pockets; clutter and garbage everywhere; dirty, filthy pots and dishes; and heart-wrenching signs that children live here too: a crib filled with garbage, little shoes in the hall, a storybook under a full ashtray next to a soiled, worn out



*Julianne Ortman is in her second term as a member of the Minnesota State Senate (R-Chanhassen). She served previously as Carver County Commissioner. In the Senate, she has served on the Tax Committee as the Minority Lead.*

mattress; and there are RCA cords everywhere. Were they used to tie up the victim as he had claimed? I'm forcing back emotion; what is this place? I've been "riding along" for the shortest and longest hour that I can remember.

## **Senator Julianne Ortman**

**Capitol Office:**

100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
State Office Building, Room 125  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1206  
651.296.4837

**Email Address:**

sen.julianne.ortman@senate.mn