

The bill would raise the drug to the same status as cocaine and heroin and would make the manufacture of any amount of methamphetamine a first-degree controlled substance offense.

The bill also makes the drug ephedrine a controlled substance, to be dispensed only by prescription in most instances. The targeted over-the-counter products containing ephedrine are reportedly taken by teenagers and others looking to achieve a legal high.

Drive-by shootings

A provision in the omnibus bill makes murder committed during a drive-by shooting a first-degree murder crime, increasing the prison sentence for the offense.

The crime bill would also raise the maximum penalty from a five-year prison term to a 20-year term for firing into an occupied vehicle.

Conditional release

The omnibus bill would make several changes to the state's probation and conditional release law. Most notably, the bill would require that each convicted felon released on probation carry a card that would state the terms of the individual's release.

The person on conditional release would be required to produce the card when requested by a police or probation officer, which would allow the officer to know if the parolee is violating the terms of his or her parole.

The bill also would allow peace officers to detain for 36 hours a person on conditional release if the officer has reasonable cause to believe that the individual has violated the terms of his or her release.

The bill also prohibits courts from releasing individuals on bail who have been found guilty of a crime where the Sentencing Guidelines Commission requires a prison sentence. Currently, offenders can be released on bail before sentencing in these situations.

Juvenile criminals

The omnibus crime bill would also open some juvenile court records and proceedings to the public.

For juveniles under 14 years old, the bill would make court records available to the public if the juvenile is found guilty of a third felony or gross misdemeanor level offense.

For juveniles who are 14 years old or older, the bill would open all court hearings to the public, regardless of the offense. The records would be closed to the public when the juvenile turns 21.

The omnibus bill also would increase pen-

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Growe steps from one House term to six terms as secretary of state

By Sandy Donovan

There was only one other woman in the Legislature when Joan Anderson Growe was elected to the House in 1972.

Still, when Growe and four fellow female freshmen brought that number up to six, one newspaper warned: "The women are taking over."

However tongue-in-cheek that headline may have been, in Growe's case it was an apt description: In the 25 years since then, she has taken over the state's voting and election procedures, improving voter turnout and pushing for reforms in the election process.

"It's been a wonderful experience for someone who once never thought of making a life in public service," the six-term secretary of state said. "And I've enjoyed every minute of it."

Growe spent only one term in the House before moving on to the secretary of state's office, but Minnesota's current open meeting laws are a testament to her time as a DFL lawmaker from Minnetonka.

"It was a long and interesting debate on open meetings," she said. "I hadn't realized the force of opposition."

In fact, she said, there was much to learn when she made the transition from full-time homemaker to legislator in January 1973. She made an almost snap decision to run for the DFL endorsement after her friend, the local Independent-Republican chair of the League of Women Voters, was not endorsed by that party.

"I ended up reading her speech at the DFL endorsement convention with the word Republican crossed out and DFL penciled in," she recalled. "Then I called another friend who had been on vacation and said, 'Guess what I decided to do while you were away?'"

And although Growe went on to win the House seat in a district that was 70 percent Republican, it was her gender that grabbed attention.

"The attention was unmistakable," she said. "And it could be to your advantage because the minute a woman started to speak in the chamber, it would grow quiet and the cameras would focus. But of course if you failed, you were that much more visible."

She ran for secretary of state during her second year in the House, and took office in January 1975 as Minnesota's first woman to be elected to statewide office without having been appointed first.

She found her new office to be a different world from the Legislature.

"I missed some of that camaraderie at first," she said. "And to a degree, I missed the wide range of issues that you deal with as a legislator."

She got right to work as secretary of state, implementing the election-day voter registration law, passed by the Legislature while Growe was a member.

"I also came in with some things I wanted to see changed," she said.



Joan Anderson Growe, Minnesota's longtime secretary of state, got her start in the House in the early 1970s. She will retire at the end of this year after six terms in her current job.

She pushed for simplified absentee voting procedures and helped secure mail-in balloting for many areas of the state.

She also oversaw Minnesota's pioneering motor-voter law — allowing people to register to vote while licensing their vehicle — and testified before Congress when the federal equivalent was being put together.

And she has lent her expertise internationally as well, serving as an election observer twice in Romania and, through the United Nations, once in South Africa during that country's first democratic election, in 1994.

Growe will step down as secretary of state at the end of this year, and she intends to focus on two things once she leaves office: stepping up her involvement in promoting democracy internationally and spending more time with her grandchildren.

She has three granddaughters and predicts that her fourth grandchild, due in May, will also be a girl because "we don't do boys." ❁