

\$12 million for Carlson-supported boarding schools for at-risk teens.

The K-12 bill also would abolish the State Board of Education and begin a major reform of the state's special education system.

An omnibus crime measure already signed into law imposes tougher sentences for a variety of felons and includes funding for more probation officers and for a project to have inmates build low-income housing.

But the so-called "three strikes" plan, which would have mandated life sentences for criminals convicted of violent crimes three times, did not make it into law.

And after much debate over whether to increase abortion restrictions, lawmakers passed a \$58 million health and human services bill that calls for more abortion reporting but does not prohibit so-called "partial birth" abortions.

Other initiatives this session include two proposed constitutional amendments to be placed on the November ballot: One will ask voters whether hunting and fishing should be preserved as a valued part of the state's heritage, and the other will ask whether the state treasurer's office should be abolished.

Also beginning this year, some employers will be required to provide space and time for nursing mothers to privately pump breast milk, and telephone companies will have to provide more detailed information when trying to entice customers to switch long-distance plans.

And awaiting Carlson's signature is a plan that would introduce a three-stage license system for teen-age drivers.

Still, of the more than 1,600 bills introduced in the House since January, several notable ones were defeated or watered down somewhere along the way.

A much talked-about proposal for a three-year moratorium on feedlots eventually passed the Legislature as a two-year ban on only new open-air lagoons for swine waste. But another measure signed by Carlson included funding for the first year of a three-year feedlot study.

Also arriving on the governor's desk in a more modest form than originally conceived was a plan to increase restrictions on personal watercraft operations. Under that bill, which awaits action by the governor, operations would be prohibited for about a 12-hour overnight period and the shoreline no-wake zone would be expanded.

Some other high-profile bills never did make it to Carlson's desk, including a proposal to prohibit banks from levying fees on ATM users.

Likewise, a House-approved plan to lower the legal blood-alcohol content for drivers did not make it out of the Senate, and a proposed constitutional amendment to create a permanent children's endowment fund will not be on the November ballot. ❀



## Simoneau says being in Legislature was like 'going to college constantly'

By Matt Wetzel

When former Rep. Wayne Simoneau started out as a mechanic in the late 1950s, he had no idea that roughly four decades later he would be capping off a career in public service as the commissioner of the Department of Finance. And working for a Republican governor, yet.

"Didn't even think about it. Just had to go to work and buy a house," said Simoneau, a former lawmaker, auto mechanic, and Teamster.

And it will soon be former finance commissioner. With Gov. Arne Carlson leaving office in less than a year, Simoneau's service as commissioner will be over.

"I'm going to retire," said Simoneau, a father of six and grandfather of seven who has put in 23 years of work in state government.

Simoneau, 63, lives in Fridley with his wife of 39 years, Jane. He served in the Legislature from 1974 to 1995, representing District 46B, which includes Columbia Heights and part of Fridley.

Born in Washburn, Wis., he attended Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis to learn auto mechanics, and in 1957, went to work. He was active in his union, the International Brotherhood of the Teamsters, and his Fridley DFL precinct, where he became the chair. In 1974, he became the chair of his Senate district, and soon after, he ran for the Legislature.

On the first day of his first term in January 1974, he knew he had a lot to learn.

"You've got to know how things work in order to make them work for you," he said. "I understand government and large systems and how they work. We're bigger than 3M. You've got to understand how big government systems work."

The best way to do that is to wait, watch, and think, he said. And, he said, flexibility is a must, whether guiding a bill through the Legislature or negotiating with special interests.

"Each situation is different. It's like going to college constantly," he said.

During his legislative career, Simoneau served as chair of the House Governmental Operations Committee and the House Appropriations Committee. He last held the

position of chair of the House Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee.

Regarding his legislative work, he is most proud of an initiative to bring state employees under one collective-bargaining agreement in 1980.

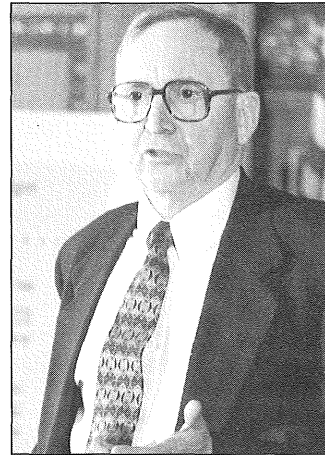
"We gave complete bargaining rights to state employees," he said.

The goal was to keep the Legislature out of setting employee salaries, except those of the commissioners, department managers, and essential employees.

He also was the House author of legisla-

tion that provided critical assistance for Northwest Airlines in 1993. And he was House author of a bill in a 1987 special session that helped protect Minnesota employers from hostile takeovers. That came when Dayton-Hudson Inc. was threatened, he said.

Carlson appointed Simoneau in 1995 to go to



Wayne Simoneau, an auto mechanic turned politician, is currently the state's commissioner of finance, but his long career of public service will end when Gov. Arne Carlson leaves office.

work at the Department of Employee Relations, first as deputy commissioner and later as commissioner.

Simoneau said he doesn't consider it surprising that a lifelong DFLer, as he is, was appointed to an administration job by a Republican governor. Simoneau said he considers himself closer to the center than to the far left, and that Carlson has long had a reputation as a moderate Republican, closer to the center than to the far right.

"We're in the middle. That's pretty much where almost everyone in the state is," Simoneau said.

In October 1996, a vacancy occurred for the commissioner of the Department of Finance. Simoneau and Carlson went over the possible choices for a replacement.

"One day Arne just called me up and said, 'You're it. Won't you go upstairs?'" And Simoneau did. ❀