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Legislators and the Public

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THANKS to Rep. Robert Renner, a path is being smoothed through the House for most of Gov. Harold DeVander's governmental reorganization package. The reorganization of the state's executive branch would be the first in 30 years and, as most Minnesotans recognize, is long overdue.

While Renner deserves credit for taking on the difficult task of moving the package, we question his statement that the public is not interested in the issue, and in fact does not understand it. We also question Renner's naivete in saying—in this period of intense public interest in the responsiveness of lawmakers and in the way in which tax revenues are spent—that he mistrusted the collective wisdom of voters on “any issue involving major policy.”

If Renner cared to look, he might find that he and the public are on the same side of the reorganization issue. A sampling of state residents by the Minnesota Poll, taken last November, disclosed that 60 percent believed the consolidation of 144 different boards, agencies and commissions into 10 major units “would be a good change.”

Renner also displayed the kind of contempt for the public that was too evident in the recent junking by a Senate committee of another attempt to pin party labels on legislators. “I don't have a great faith in the electorate,” the Walker Conservative said. “Their level of sophistication is not high.”

The sentiment is unquestionably returned, particularly by those of the electorate who feel some lawmakers are not responsive to their desires and needs. The cloak of omniscience ill suits Renner and others who feel as he does.