

While Sviggum said the agreement to use the \$549 million figure was "significant," the House and Senate remain in disagreement over how that money should be used.

Of the \$549 million, the Senate is proposing to spend around \$229 million primarily for education and health care.

The Senate tax cut proposal would reduce the rate in the lowest bracket by 0.1 percent and the middle bracket by 0.25 percent. The Senate also now has agreed with the House not to reduce the state's vehicle license tab fees, which Gov. Jesse Ventura strongly favors.

Two of Ventura's other key initiatives also received some attention. On April 26, Republican House members had breakfast at the governor's residence to discuss the possibility of reviving his unicameral proposal.

Such a bill would place a constitutional amendment on the November general election ballot so voters could decide whether the state should adopt a unicameral, or one-house, legislature.

Also, Ventura announced this week that the state has received federal approval to begin final design on the proposed light-rail project along the Hiawatha corridor in Minneapolis.

Sviggum said he and other House members remain unconvinced about the cost-effectiveness of light rail and that obtaining the latest approval was not significant.

"I don't think it was much of a hurdle that was passed," he said.

House proposals currently in conference committee would repeal the unspent funds previously allocated by the state for the light-rail transit project. Officials estimate about \$92 million remains of the total \$100 million in funds.

The governor has said he will veto any bill that would repeal the light-rail project.

With little time remaining to complete work, the Legislature is working to find an acceptable middle ground. The House and Senate can only hold floor sessions for a combined seven more legislative days, as of April 27. ❀

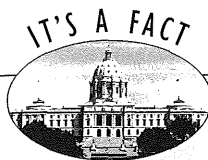
Writer Jon Fure contributed to this report.

Correction

A story in the April 21 edition of *Session Weekly* incorrectly identified the House sponsor of a new law designed to protect unwanted newborns.

Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior) sponsored the legislation, which will allow a mother (or a person of her consent) to leave an unharmed baby at a hospital emergency room up to 72 hours following the child's birth without fear of prosecution for child abandonment. Gov. Jesse Ventura signed the measure (HF2945/SF2615*/CH421) on April 18.

We regret the error.



Prohibition politics

Ties to illegal liquor sales almost cost a veteran legislator his job

The politics of Prohibition marred the career of Ambrose Lennon, a Minneapolis man who spent a total of 16 years in the Legislature.

Lennon became the center of a months-long melodrama that was caused by his standing in a seemingly innocuous fraternal organization. A longtime member of his community's Eagles lodge, the legislator was, in his own words, "pressed into the position of trustee when I personally would have avoided it."

His wish to have avoided becoming a trustee could only have grown after the lodge was raided and several employees and officials were arrested for illegal liquor sales.

Undercover agents had applied to become members of the lodge and were accepted into the group quickly and wholeheartedly. With the trust of their "brothers," the agents then watched the widespread sale of bootleg booze. They claimed to have been witness to more than 3,000 sales of alcoholic beverages.

When the law eventually swooped in, nine bartenders were arrested, along with all officers and trustees of the lodge. Lennon was not present when the raid took place, but he was among those later arrested and charged.

All were convicted. The bartenders each got eight months in jail, and the lodge officials also went to jail. Lennon, who appealed his conviction, was the lone exception.

With his case on appeal, Lennon continued his work in the Minnesota Senate, much to the chagrin of some of his colleagues. Led by Sen. Victor Lawson, an effort began to oust Lennon or to shame him into resigning.

"I have nothing personally against [Lennon], but I do want to state that his continued presence here has been a disgrace to this Senate and you know it," Lawson said. "... It surely can be of little satisfaction personally for him to be here with this cloud hanging over him."

In January 1927, Lawson introduced a resolution asking Lennon to resign from office. The Senate Elections Committee delayed action on the matter for weeks be-

fore finally voting that it should be deferred until the court ruled on Lennon's appeal.

"I give notice that if he comes back next session, whether he goes to jail or not in the meantime, and attempts to sit as a member of this Senate, the proceedings to oust him will be renewed," Lawson said.

And Lawson would get that chance.

In the 1928 election, with his case still tied up in the courts, Lennon won re-election to the Senate, garnering the largest majority he had ever enjoyed in any of his six legislative campaigns. (He had served eight years in the House before moving to the Senate in 1924.)

The 1929 session put Lawson back on the attack, but he wasn't going to be satisfied with an unenforceable resolution suggesting Lennon resign. Lawson and his allies mounted an effort to have Lennon expelled from the body.

On the first day of the session, the Senate took up the matter, and Lennon gave a long and eloquent defense of himself.

He pointed out that he had never been accused of selling liquor, drinking liquor, or profiting from liquor sales. He explained that his accusers had claimed only that he knew or should have known about the illegal activities at the lodge.

"I wonder how well they will have served their own consciences if they succeed in wrecking my life, branding me with dishonor, heaping me with reproach as I near the end of a life that has been clean even if it has not been great," Lennon said. "... My appeal is to men who can be calm and fair and merciful, not to men who regard themselves as divinely appointed censors of humanity."

Lennon survived the ordeal, with 25 senators voting to throw him out and 38 in favor of allowing him to stay on the job, though it would be his last term in the Legislature.

And the 55-year-old knew that his career would be scarred by the event.

"It touches my wife and children," he said. "It touches my lifetime of effort as a human being, and it effects the heritage I shall leave behind me when I am gone from this world."

(N. HEALY)