

MINNESOTA CLIPPING SERVICE

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DFL: Taxes create 'two-tier' state

Suburbs experience
lower tax hikes
than rural areas

By KURT NESBITT
Journal Staff Writer

MANKATO — Democratic lawmakers charge that a recent House property tax report shows a pattern of unfairness in the amount of property taxes Minnesotans pay.

House Minority Leader Matt Entenza, DFL-St. Paul, visited several cities around the state Thursday and gave press conferences where he and other local legislators talked about the report.

Cities and counties experienced cuts in state aid made by the Legislature in efforts to balance the state's looming deficit.

Many city and county officials responded by proposing increases in local and county property taxes and by cutting services in hopes of regaining what the Legislature cut.

On Thursday, Entenza, State Rep. Lyle Koenen (DFL-May-



Entenza



Johnson

nard) and former DFL Rep. Ruth Johnson of St. Peter, blamed the Republican majority in the Legislature and Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 'no-new-taxes' pledge for making Minnesota into a 'two-tier' state, where some suburbs receive modest tax cuts while many other see tax increases.

He said Republicans have a philosophy that is "almost Darwin in that (some cities) were picked by the Republican majority."

Entenza said an example is in the fact that homeowners in Roseville are seeing increases in property taxes, while property taxes nearby Woodbury have actually seen modest decreases. He said taxes are increasing by over 10 percent in southwestern and southcentral Minnesota.

Johnson said the cuts made by the Legislature last year forced city and county officials to either raise taxes or cut services.

"That's not the kind of quality-of-life we want to see in the future," Johnson said.

Koenen said the cuts were based upon Pawlenty's "no-new-taxes" pledge. He said the cuts effectively made a cost shift to cities and counties. He credited city and county officials for "doing a good job with what they were given."

The Department of Finance released its latest state budget forecast on Dec. 3. That report said that the state's deficit is predicted to be at \$185 million at the end of the 2004-05 biennium. The amount of income the state expects to see over those two years is expected to drop by \$407 million from the estimates that were made at the end of the 2003 legislative session.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue released a report on Nov. 26 saying that it expects property taxes to increase by an average of 6.6 percent if proposed local tax levies are adopted this month.

The rate of growth for property taxes is 25 percent slower than it was in 2002. The report said property taxes in Greater Minnesota were supposed to increase by 11.6 percent while cities in the seven-county metro area would see an average increase of 7.7 percent.

Entenza said DFLers plan to introduce a series of proposals for the start of the legislative session in February to deal with the state's budget. He said the Minnesota Department of Finance is expected to have a newer, more up-to-date budget forecast in February, which will give DFLers ideas about what to do. He said legislators are going to work on forming a coalition that will try to redirect some of the state funding that went to wealthy suburbs towards cities that saw cuts in aid.

Entenza and other DFL representatives held similar talks in Duluth, the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, Rochester, Winona and Moorhead. Entenza said the DFL has two goals in mind: "To show that the governor's tax pledge was phony and to talk about tax increases and spending cuts."

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Farmer friendly

As one who lives off the land, Koenen looks to improve the livelihood for many rural Minnesotans

By JEFF JONES

A string of Christmas lights lines the window ledge of Rep. Lyle Koenen's (DFL-Maynard) new office. They are yellow



Rep. Lyle Koenen

and green and in the shape of John Deere tractors. Regarding them with an expert eye, Koenen says, "That's a model 4020. I've actually got one of those."

A life-long farmer, Koenen has spent years keeping an eye on legislative policies that affect agricultural Minnesota. Koenen started making trips to St. Paul when he became active in farm organizations such as the Minnesota Farmer's Union. "I started coming down here to lobby legislators on proposed bills that were being written and trying to influence those decision-makers on what they would do because of the direct effect it would have on farmers and working people," he said.

That interaction with lawmakers led him towards political action. "I came to the realization that it was impossible to outwork poor policy decisions," Koenen says. "That led to the next step — helping the candidates that I felt best represented the ideals that I was looking for." He would soon become a candidate himself. After an unsuccessful run for the Senate in 2000, Koenen won the House seat vacated by now-Sen. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls).

Like many Minnesota farmers, Koenen has been forced to take a second job to make up for sagging crop prices. Over the years he has driven school busses and hauled milk from dairy farms to processing plants to earn extra money, but he hopes his newest job will give him the chance to make life a bit easier for his fellow farmers.

"I would love to see that farmers could get their entire income from the farm," he said. "I'd like to see livestock on every farm, too, or almost

every farm. That would be ideal because then it would be full-time work. In the wintertime you'd have livestock to take care of."

Koenen owned livestock himself until earlier this year when he sold his herd of beef cows. For him the decision wasn't economic, but a necessity of his work at the Legislature. "There's no way I can be here and take care of livestock so they had to go," he said. "Otherwise I would have kept them, but I can't do both."

Other rural DFL legislators elected Koenen to chair the House DFL Rural Caucus, which meets weekly to discuss rural issues.

In that capacity, Koenen hopes to work with rural Republicans to deal with issues of common interest. "There's so many of the votes that

good roads are necessary for safe transportation of livestock, grain and fertilizer. "They don't need to necessarily be four-lane roads in those light population areas but they do need to carry heavy traffic," he said.

Maintaining school funding is another important issue in his district. Declining enrollments result in lost state dollars, he says. "Our school districts get clobbered. Every year they have budget issues to deal with."

Koenen has remained close to his roots. The farm where he and his wife, Sandy, live with their two children sits outside Maynard, where he went to high school. He has attended the same church all his life, the Reformed Church of Clara City. "The reformed church is socially pretty conservative, so I tend to be that way myself," Koenen said. "Being a Democrat, you wouldn't think of being to the right on that issue. I'm maybe not as far over as the church is, but it draws me to that side."

One thing he learned growing up was to always be evenhanded in the decisions he makes. "Fairness is the first thing," he said. "Other than

"I came to the realization that it was impossible to outwork poor policy decisions. That led to the next step — helping the candidates that I felt best represented the ideals that I was looking for."

— Rep. Lyle Koenen

really aren't partisan. I would say way over half aren't partisan," he said.

Bills to improve veterinary facilities at the University of Minnesota and to encourage rural economic development are among the issues receiving bipartisan support from rural lawmakers, he said.

Koenen has signed on to a bill that would provide tax incentives for job creation and retention in rural Minnesota. "We both represent rural Minnesota and we have common concerns," says Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), the bill's sponsor. "Lyle brings a sincerity and dedication to the job."

Koenen serves on both House agriculture and both environment committees.

Economic development is among the issues Koenen puts at the heart of his agenda.

One obstacle to development, he said, is the deterioration of roads in rural areas. He said

that, my own life experiences affect the way I look at things, and then I always, always, think back to the district and what is best for the district or what the majority would like to see. And so you roll all that together and that's where my positions come from."

DISTRICT 20B

2002 population: 36,953

Largest city: Montevideo

Counties: Chippewa, Renville, Yellow Medicine

Location: west-central Minnesota

Top concern: "When all budget considerations are made, they'll be done fairly."

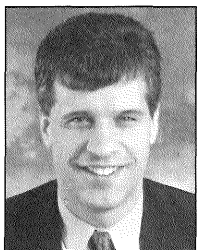
— Rep. Lyle Koenen

Right at home

After years as a prosecutor, referee, and school board member, Meslow's career brings him to St. Paul

By TOM LONERGAN

One might say Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake) has a pretty close relationship with rules.



Rep. Doug Meslow

As a high school football referee, he enforces them. As a prosecutor, he attempts to prove others have broken them. And as a freshman legislator, he's involved in making, changing, or repealing them.

One set of rules Meslow is quite familiar with is the state's criminal statutes. "I don't think we need to create more (definitions of) crimes," he said. However, he added, some laws already on the books can be improved.

Meslow has sponsored a bill (HF499) that would increase the penalty (from misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor) for a person who refuses to take a chemical test and is convicted of driving while intoxicated. "The penalty for someone who cooperated shouldn't be higher than for the person who refused," Meslow said. A gross misdemeanor carries a possible 30-day jail sentence.

He's also co-sponsoring a bill to reduce the state definition of driving while intoxicated from the current 0.10 percent blood-alcohol concentration to 0.08 percent, the standard in 34 states. "Anything that reduces drinking and driving is a plus," Meslow said. There's also a practical side to changing the law, he added. "We need to do it to get more federal highway funding."

Federal highway safety grants to states under the 1998 Transportation Equity Act are tied to the 0.08 alcohol standard for drunken driving. If the level is not changed by Oct. 1, 2003 the state could lose federal transportation dollars.

For 12 years, Meslow has prosecuted adults accused of non-felony crimes like drunken driving, domestic assault, and theft. "Some were bad people and deserved to be locked up,"

he said. "Most were good people who did something they shouldn't have done. My role is not to condemn them."

Former Rep. Harry Mares, who co-chaired Meslow's campaign, approached Meslow about running for the House after the four-term legislator decided not to seek re-election last year. Meslow said he wasn't actively looking at getting involved in politics. "I was involved in my community. Politics found me."

Meslow's committee assignments include the House Education Policy, Higher Education Finance, and Judiciary Policy and Finance committees.

Examining the state's complicated K-12 funding formula for public schools will be among his long-term legislative priorities, said

education, resulting in tuition increases. "My guess is there's not much chance to avoid a tuition hike," Meslow added. Century College, a two-year community and technical college with 10,300 students, is in his district.

Meslow has been a high school football referee for 21 years, continuing a family tradition of sports officiating that's included his parents, brothers, and wife, Jenny. His dad, Bob Meslow, is director of football officials for the Minnesota State High School League.

"Apples don't fall very far from the tree," said Bob, noting that his son became a high school official while he played football at St. Olaf College. "Now he's an umpire and gets right behind those big hulks on the defensive line," he added. "He's learned how to step in and bring peace to opposing factions."

Rep. Meslow, who has been part of the officiating team for several high school championship games, said, "I like to be in the middle of the action. I like the energy and excitement high school students have."

An avid runner, Meslow has a statue of his political hero in his office. It's Popeye, the

The state's Profile of Learning academic standards "did not do the job they were created to do. Success or failure was defined by very subjective, very vague standards. We need high standards."

— Rep. Doug Meslow

Meslow, who served for seven years on his local school board, and has two teenage sons. "During the last 35 years, there have been so many extras added to the basic formula," he said. "State funding no longer aligns with basic fundamental fairness. It's so complicated, no one can understand who the winners and losers are and why."

The state's Profile of Learning academic standards "did not do the job they were created to do," said Meslow, who voted for the House bill to repeal the profile. "Success or failure was defined by very subjective, very vague standards," he said. "We need high standards." Meslow said he "liked the idea that (the profile) was performance based."

Meslow said taxes and the state budget are district residents' top concerns.

"Given the size of the budget deficit and the problems we have to tackle, we're going to have to do things we don't want to do," Meslow said. That could include state aid cuts to higher

cartoon sailor. "Popeye always said 'I am what I am and that's all that I am,'" Meslow said. "He's there to remind me that I'm here to be myself, not to let ego get in the way and be real."

DISTRICT 53B

2002 population: 36,699

Largest city: White Bear Lake

County: Ramsey

Location: northeast Twin Cities metropolitan area

Top concern: "The deficit is so big, we're not going to reduce it just by being more efficient. It's a challenge to maximize what the state does best and limit the amount of pain that will come from the cuts we have to make."

— Rep. Doug Meslow

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In the house

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FRONT PAGE

Legislators — experienced and green alike — settle into new positions, surroundings at Capitol

BY RAE KRUGER
Independent Staff Writer

MARSHALL — Lyle Koenen said on Wednesday that it hadn't quite sunk in yet. Koenen, the District 20B Representative and a DFLer from Maynard, started a new job in the state Legislature this week along with District 22A Rep. Doug Magnus, R-Slayton, and District 20A Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison.

Shortly after being sworn in on Tuesday, the work started.

"Yesterday was the first day we got to sit down (in House chambers)," Koenen said. "We made a few votes and it was so busy. I don't know if it has sunk in yet. One thing I can definitely say is that I'm glad to be here."

The new legislators start their first terms in a historic session, as the Legislature begins work on an estimated \$356 million deficit for this session and an estimated \$4.56 billion deficit the next several years.

"We're in the same boat as all the citizens of Minnesota have been since Dec. 4 when they announced the budget deficit. We were shocked and we're all trying to sort through it," Magnus said.

The deficit will be the guide by which most legislative decisions will be made this year, the legislators said.

"It is the subject that will dictate everything," Koenen said. "I can tell you that right now."

Cuts in various programs and agencies are inevitable, legislators said, but those cuts won't be made without thought, some consensus and even a few battles. The goal is to represent their districts well while solving the deficit problem and doing other work, the legislators said.

"The first thing for me is to represent my district to the best of my ability," Koenen said.



INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN
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"There is no way around it, there will be cuts."

Koenen said part of his job will be to help make sure those cuts are divided evenly and that one group or one part of the state is not unfairly harmed.

They will have an eye on issues particular to their districts and rural Minnesota, they said.

"One issue where rural legislators agree, hopefully, is local government aid," Peterson said.

Cuts in LGA would harm many rural cities, Peterson said. Regardless of the political party, rural legislators need to work to not have LGA cut, Peterson said.

Magnus expects to work on a bill on tax free zones for rural communities soon. Gov. Pawlenty has touted the idea of tax free zones to help rural economies. Magnus has also worked on the issue through his positions on state and national agriculture boards.

"I will be doing a lot of work on tax free zones," Magnus said. "I may author the bill. This bill will come on real quickly."

He expects tax free zones to be one of the top issues address by his caucus and the House.

Transportation, Profile of Learning and subsidies for ethanol and biodiesel will be other major issues this session.

"Number one, the deficit is bigger than we thought, so we have to scale back our thinking," Magnus said. "How much can we do with transportation...?"

The deficit creates a burden for legislators and taxpayers, Magnus said. And particularly, for the Republican Party, Magnus said.

"Our House has to address it and our caucus has to lead the battle," Magnus said. "We're the majority party, we're going to have to lead."

All three were pleased with their committee assignments.

Each is on the agriculture policy and agriculture finance committees. Koenen and Peterson are on an environment and natural resource committee. Magnus and Peterson are on a transportation finance committee.

Koenen said he's been meeting senior members of his party to learn about how to best get bills passed and ideas discussed.

"I'm asking how the best way to approach a person to get things done," Koenen said.

"The key is to figure out the resources and how to use those resources to be effective," Magnus said.

Koenen said senior members have advised him to not talk too much in the beginning until you know what's going on. And don't make too many promises, particularly in a year with such a big deficit, Koenen said.

The legislators know they need to look to veteran legislators for advice. They will also likely have to trust them when various budget issues come up.

"I think the whole concept is, that there will be thousands of bills introduced and you can't be expected to know all those bills," Magnus said. "You are going to have to rely on the judgment of other folks. You rely on committee members."

Peterson said department heads should also "provide good, sound analysis of where there are needs and where there are not needs."

It's also important that the legislators make sure others know who they are.

Peterson replaces his dad, Doug Peterson, who was a long-time representative.

"Right now, it's beneficial because people know who I am," Peterson said. "It's beneficial to build relationships, but on the flip side I'm sitting in dad's seat. I've been told by senior members that during your first term, you are known 'as the guy who replaced so and so.' So I'm replacing my dad. Some folks will assume I will be just like him."

To assume he'd be a carbon copy of his dad is wrong, Peterson said.

He's not, Peterson said. But like his dad, he will do his best to represent the district's needs.

No hiding from the budget burden

FRONT PAGE

Unallotment will
cost organizations like
Prairie 5 nutrition a
big chunk of funding

BY **BETHANY NORGAARD**
Independent Staff Writer

IVANHOE — Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget proposal not only hurts cities and counties, its effects are being felt in local organizations.

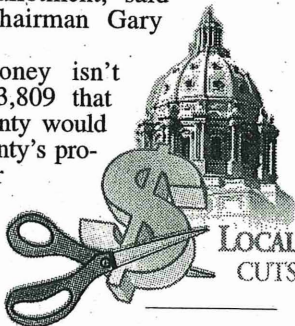
Prairie 5 nutrition, an organization that serves Yellow Medicine County, lost more than \$80,000 through unallotment, said Yellow Medicine Chairman Gary Johnson.

The unallotted money isn't included in the \$213,809 that Yellow Medicine County would lose this year if Pawlenty's proposal is approved. Nor is it included in the \$355,326 the county is slated to lose in 2004.

"We could make this swing (just the loss to the county) without raising real estate taxes," Johnson said. "But take one or the other. We can't absorb both (the cuts to the county and to the organizations)."

The nutrition board will not be able to come back to the county and ask for help, because the county doesn't have any money to help.

Johnson said he has spoken with state representatives Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, and Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, about the cuts.



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He encourages local residents to do the same. "Hopefully legislators can do something," Johnson said. "I don't think the general public fully realizes what could happen."

All areas were affected in one way or another. Public health received cuts, along with wetland funding and transportation.

"Everyone is affected," Johnson said.

Counties realize the state needs to make cuts, but they don't want to shoulder the burden, Johnson said. "Cuts needed to be made, I agree, and we're willing to do what we can," he said.

Unfunded state mandates are also receiving criticism as counties attempt to find solutions to deal with possible budget cuts.

The state mandates that counties provide certain services to residents and follow certain procedures in running those services. Mandates can range from providing recycling to residents to the way a county is audited every year.

According to the Association of Minnesota Counties, between 70 and 85 percent of what counties do is driven by state and federal mandates.

In Yellow Medicine County, commissioners asked all department heads to put together a list of all the state mandates in their department. The information will be compiled for discussion at Tuesday's board meeting.

The problem isn't just that the state requires certain things, but that funding is being cut to provide those mandates or the state is requiring more money be spent to fulfill them.

Counties don't want the state putting the burden on them, or else they could end up in as bad as shape as the state is in now.

— Gary Johnson

Recycling is partially funded by the state through score funding — the money raised from a state-wide solid waste tax. But Pawlenty unallotted a lot of that money in January, and counties are now scrambling to figure out ways to make up the difference.

Pawlenty's proposal also calls for a 17-percent increase in the fees for counties to hire a state auditor every year.

The state tells counties they should have an eight-to nine-month reserve fund in place.

Johnson said if the budget cuts are made, counties may not have that available.

"We're running at that now, but we may have to take some out and then we'll be short again," he said. "Counties don't want the state putting the burden on them, or else they could end up in as bad as shape as the state is in now."

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WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN
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TUESDAY
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MINNESOTA CLIPPING SERVICE

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MEETING PREVIEW

Legislative forum set for Friday

WILLMAR — Heartland Community Action Agency will sponsor a community meeting with local legislators from 1:30 to 4 p.m. Friday at the Willmar Education and Arts Center.

The meeting will focus on the impact of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget proposal for the next biennium.

Area residents are invited to share their ideas and concerns about how the proposed budget cuts will affect quality of life in Minnesota. Residents of Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod and Renville counties, the area served by Heartland, are encouraged to attend.

Legislators who have committed to attend the meeting are Sen. Dean Johnson, DFL-Willmar; Sen. Steve Dille, R-Dassel; Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard; Rep. Bud Heidgerken, R-Freeport; Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar; Rep. Tony Kielkucki, R-Lester Prairie; and Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City.

For more information, contact Rhonda Otteson at 320-235-0850, 1-800-992-1710 or TDD 320-235-8570.

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House OKs
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broadens
foreign
ownership
of farms

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF
AND THE ASSOCIATED
PRESS

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ST. PAUL — The House voted to overturn a decades-old law that prohibits temporary foreign visitors from owning farms.

As part of an agriculture spending bill, the measure by Rep. Greg Blaine, a Republican and dairy farmer from Little Falls, loosens a part of Minnesota's farm law that now bars most foreigners from owning more than 20 percent of a farm enterprise or agricultural land.

The amendment was approved Friday 70-58.

Later Friday, the full agriculture spending bill was passed by the House on a vote of 79-52.

All four local members of the House voted against the amendment: Rep. Marty Seifert, Rep. Lyle Koenen, Rep. Aaron Peterson and Rep. Doug Magnus.

"My main concern is we're talking about trying to keep farms in the family," said Seifert, R-Marshall, who voted against the amendment.

"We're going to have foreign investors come in and bid up land prices, which are already high. That's my reason

for voting no."

Peterson was worried that foreign governments could be in charge of Minnesota farmland.

"Nothing would stop a foreign corporation or government — and in some countries, those are the same thing — from subsidizing a person to come to Minnesota and buy and run a dairy farm on behalf of the corporation," Peterson said. "We certainly should welcome families who want to become part of our rural communities. But we want investment in our communities, not foreign entities that will take wealth out of our communities."

Peterson said another loophole is a loose definition of "dairy farm."

"Two cows does it," Peterson said. "That means just about any farm can be a 'dairy farm' and up to 1,500 acres could be purchased by foreign interests."

Supporters say the state's struggling dairy economy needs all the money it can attract, but some opponents said foreign buyers will represent unwanted competition.

"The reason why Minnesota's farmers are afraid is they think this will open up the door to corporate farming," said Rep. Mary Otremba, DFL-Long Prairie, a farmer and opponent.

"I think it's an opportunity for people to get a piece of the action as far as the American dream," said Rep. Jim Rhodes, R-St. Louis Park, who supported it.

There is a similar measure in the Senate.

A foreign buyer would have to hold a specific type of visa, the "E2," and live in Minnesota for at least 10 months out of the year. Their farms would be limited to 1,500 acres.

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WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN
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SUNDAY
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Lawmakers listened to voters on gun bill

By Linda Vanderwerf
Staff Writer

Calls from constituents apparently led area legislators to cast their votes either for or against the state's new handgun law.

Beginning May 28, law-abiding Minnesota adults will be able to apply for a permit to carry a concealed handgun in the state. It removes much of the discretion sheriffs and police chiefs have now to decide who is allowed to carry a concealed weapon.

The measure was supported by the National Rifle Association and the Republican Party. Opposing it were statewide peace officer associations and numerous church organizations.

It passed last week in the House and Monday in the Senate.

A desire for consistency is something supporters of the measure cite as a reason for supporting the new law.

"I heard a fair amount from regular citizens, and they are pretty overwhelmingly for it," said Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City.

The sponsors of the bill wanted uniformity across the state in the criteria for issuing permits.

"I respect the concerns of law enforcement, but I think once they get into this, it's not going to be as bad as they fear," he said. "It probably won't change things that much, except allow people to feel safer."

Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar, said he heard from people on both sides of the issue, but once the House passed the bill, people sought him out to thank him for voting for it.

It still won't be easy to get a permit, because of the training required, he said, and sheriffs still have the ability to refuse permits to people who "just shouldn't" have them.

Many people seem concerned about possible accidents with handguns, Juhnke said. His idea to head that off would be to provide basic gun safety training for all seventh-graders in the state.

The new law makes Minnesota one of

How they voted

These area legislators voted against the concealed carry handgun law in the Legislature:

Sen. Dean Johnson, DFL-Willmar
Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls
Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison

These legislators voted for the law:

Sen. Steve Dille, R-Dassel
Rep. Bud Heidgerken, R-Freeport
Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar
Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard
Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City

the most permissive states in the nation, more permissive than Texas, when it comes to handguns, said Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls.

Many states with similar laws prevent handguns from being carried into banks, bars and churches as well as schools, he said.

"Churches and bars shouldn't have to post signs to keep guns out," said Kubly, a Lutheran minister.

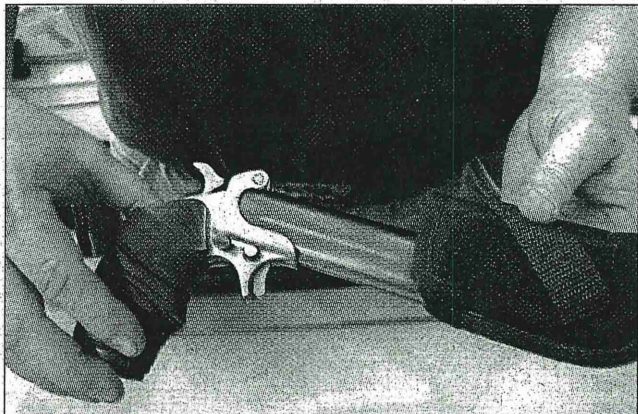
Kubly heard from a few people on each side of the issue. "I told people that I'm not willing to vote for a bill where you can carry a gun to church," he said.

Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison, voted against the bill after hearing from people in his district.

"I heard from principals and people around schools," he said. "Concealed weapons are not allowed in schools, but a permit holder may bring a gun onto a school parking lot."

Peterson expects the NRA will attack him for his vote when he runs for re-election next year. "I'm not going to be kicked around on this. ... I felt strongly it was the wrong direction for us to go," he said.

"I listened to the entire debate, and I was not convinced that they made a strong enough case," Peterson said. "I don't want to take away people's long guns or short guns. ... I think our gun laws are working fine."



Tribune photo by Bill Zimmer

Permit applications

Applications for concealed carry permits under current law varied widely among area counties in 2002, from a low of zero in Yellow Medicine County to a high of 62 in Kandiyohi County.

Chippewa County

The county sheriff and the Montevideo Police Department received a total of 27 applications. All were approved. Most of the applicants wanted to carry a gun for personal safety.

Kandiyohi County

A total of 62 permit applications were received by the Sheriff's Department and the Willmar Police Department. Of those, 45 permits were granted. Most of the applicants sought the permit because of occupational hazards. Sixteen permits were denied because authorities decided there was no hazard.

Lac qui Parle County

Just one application was received, by a person who sought a permit because of an occupational hazard. The permit was denied because the sheriff said there was no hazard.

Meeker County

The Sheriff's Department and the Litchfield Police received a total of 51 applications for concealed carry permits, and all of them were granted. Nearly all of those applications were to the sheriff, and a majority of them, 31, were sought by people who cited an occupational hazard.

Pope County

A total of 14 applications were received by the Sheriff's Department and police in Glenwood and Starbuck. Each department denied one application.

Renville County

Twenty-three applications were filed with the Sheriff's Department and police departments in Hector, Olivia, Renville and Franklin. Nine applications were approved. Of the denials, all 13 applications received in Franklin were denied. Most people sought the permits for personal safety.

Swift County

The Sheriff's Department and the Appleton Police Department received a total of 24 applications. All were approved. Most of the applications sought a permit because of an occupational hazard.

The Yellow Medicine County Sheriff's Department and police departments in Atwater, Boyd, Clarkfield, Cosmos, Grove City, Lake Lillian and Madison did not issue permits in 2002.

Police departments in Belgrade, Benson, Bird Island, Buffalo Lake, Clara City, Danube, Dawson, Echo and Granite Falls reported no permit applications in 2002.

1200DU Lawmakers warn cuts hardest on rural area

By Tom Cherveny FRONT PAGE
Staff Writer

GRANITE FALLS — Two area lawmakers warned that state budget cuts are falling disproportionately on rural areas, and that their wounds will be far greater than people realize.

"The proposed cuts will change Minnesota more than many of us can imagine, I think," said District 20B State Rep. **Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard**, during a Saturday morning eggs and issues forum in Granite Falls.



Koenen

"There needs to be an awakening or realization of what is actually going on," said Koenen.

He was joined by District 20 State Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, who said many people do not understand how the cuts will harm rural counties and cities. "I think people are in denial," said Kubly. "They don't believe that property taxes will be going up by one-third or more if these cuts go through."

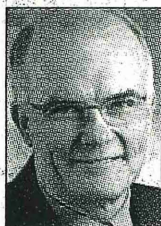


Kubly

If the governor's budget goes through, the reduction in Local Government Aid to Granite Falls will be far greater than the 5 percent "share of the pain" that the governor is asking communities to shoulder, according to Mayor Dave Smiglewski. He said his community would see a \$142,254 cut this year,

equivalent to 9.3 percent of city spending.

Next year, Granite Falls will be cut \$458,200 under the governor's plan. That represents 29.9 percent of the city \$1,559 million budget. Smiglewski said State Auditor Pat Awada used the city's revenues in 2000 and the governor's budget proposal to project the cuts. More than \$2 million in Federal Emergency Management Agency funds and \$573,000 in private donations for tornado relief are counted as city revenues. The city has had no response to its pleas that one-time revenues not be considered, according to the mayor.



Smiglewski

The city could eliminate its police and fire departments, stop funding building inspections and even flood-control measures and still not cover the total, he said. The governor's budget will force the city to consider options ranging from closing the library to ending support for the senior meal program.

"I don't know if anybody has figured out how really serious this is," Smiglewski said. "It looks awfully anti-rural."

It is, according to Kubly and Koenen, who added that rural counties will be facing difficult situations too.

Gary Johnson, chairman of the Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners, said the loss of Homestead and Agricultural Credit Aid, or HACA, will cost his county \$215,000 this year and \$450,000 the next. That's only \$50,000 less than is being lost in neighboring Lyon County, which has a much larger population and far more diversified tax base, he noted.

"It's a double-edged sword and it is going really deep," said Johnson.

Kubly said he would like to lessen the blow to rural areas and "allow the suburbs to share the pain in ways they don't under the proposed budget." The senator would cut market value credits enjoyed by suburban homeowners, and raise \$170 million by doing so.

Cuts/ Page A2

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Cuts

Continued from A1

He also argued for reconsidering the property and income tax reforms made during the last several years; they have reduced state tax collections by more than \$7 billion in that time. He said the tax cuts largely benefited the suburban areas and the state's most affluent residents. "The majority of the tax cut falls to the people who need it the least," said Kubly.

The state senator said the bottom 10 percent of wage

earners in the state pay a total tax incidence rate of 11.2 percent. Those on the top 10 percent — with incomes over \$777,000 annually — pay a 7.6 percent rate. Making the top 10 percent pay at the same rate as the bottom 10 percent would raise an additional \$1.15 billion over the biennium, he said.

The senator said he believes it is time rural residents spoke out. "I'm not going to stand still and not say anything about it," he said. "The rural areas are just getting hammered."

Koenen said he is not optimistic that anything can be

done in the Legislature to spare rural areas unless people can convince rural Republican lawmakers to buck their leadership.

Koenen suggested that it would be hard to convince them, but not impossible. The freshman representative said the Republican leadership keeps tight control over its members in the House, in which they hold a majority.

But he noted that in private conversations with rural Republicans, most have expressed their own "uneasiness" about how the cuts will affect their rural constituents.

WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN
DAILY 16,917

MONDAY
APR 7 2003

MINNESOTA CLIPPING SERVICE

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A Saturday full of issues

FRONT PAGE

From overregulation
to wind power,
weekend public
meeting covered a
wide array of topics

BY RAE KRUGER
Independent Staff Writer

CLARKFIELD — Gambling, energy and cumbersome governmental mandates were on the minds of those who attended a public meeting with Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, and Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, in Clarkfield on Saturday morning.

Leo Kuehl of Clarkfield said while Koenen and Kubly didn't support the storage of more nuclear waste, in Kuehl's opinion, atomic energy is the energy of the future.

"What do we do when the wind doesn't blow?" Kuehl asked.

Kubly has proposed generators that run on soy oil to power wind turbines when there is no wind to power them. But a federal study shows the wind doesn't blow only 2 percent of the time, Kubly said.

"Renewables are the way to go," Kubly said.

The U.S. had started two plants which reprocessed the waste from atomic power, but those plants were halted in the 1970s, Kuehl said. The knowledge is available to take care of the waste, Kuehl said.

"I think we are looking at a couple of generations away on that technology," Koenen said.

Clarkfield businesswoman Lori Lynner said she's frustrated with governmental regulations on small businesses.

As an example, Lynner said her business has several different inspectors, from those who inspect the roof, to those who inspect the elevator to other parts of her building and business.

INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN

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MINNESOTA CLIPPING SERVICE

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ISSUES FROM PAGE 1A A

"I pay a fee for each inspector. It's ridiculous," Lynner said.

The state government says it wants to help small business owners and small farmers, but instead, "they are beating us to death," Lynner said.

The fees may not go away because of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed budget, which increases fees to generate \$540 million, Kubly said.

"He says he won't raise taxes, but the governor's budget includes \$540 million in fees," Kubly said.

Vonnie Severson of the Clarkfield Care Center said mandates force the care center to throw away thousands of dollars worth of medications.

"We are absurdly overregulated," Severson said. "We're second only to the nuclear power industry."

Kubly said many of the regulations are federal regulations which the state has no control over.

Proposed budget cuts will also affect residents of nursing homes, Severson said. The care center has four residents under age 65, and several weeks ago, the care center was told one of those residents need to find other living arrangements, Severson said.

It will cost more to have that resident living outside of the care center than in the care center, Severson said.

Koenen and Kubly also said the proposed cuts to senior nutrition site programs would likely be restored.

George Rysdahl said the program was the reason his uncle was able to remain at home and not in the nursing home. It would cost the state more to have his uncle living in the nursing home, Rysdahl said.

Gambling was addressed from two different angles. Leo Flattum suggested the state use more of the revenue from the Minnesota Lottery to help with the budget deficit.

Several years ago, the Minnesota public voted to keep the revenue split the way it was, which included dedicating 40 percent of the revenue to an environmental trust fund. The formula is place until 2025.

Flattum's question has been raised many times, Koenen said.



Koenen

In general, Koenen said, "the money spent on environmental things has been drawn back."

Audience members also had questions about the status of a proposal to expand gambling at Canterbury Park in Shakopee.

An amendment which allows American Indian tribal councils to operate the gambling at Canterbury in exchange for returning 6 percent of gambling proceeds to the state has support, Koenen said.

Mark Long said since the Legislature and the public seem to have dealt with the moral issue of gambling and appear to support expansion, this may be a good time for the state to earn money through gambling.

Other issues raised Saturday:

- Jeff Randall said school funding needs to be addressed because districts are increasingly closing campuses or considering it. Randall said Yellow Medicine County East has considered moving students from the Clarkfield campus for several years.

- Koenen and Kubly said the Profile of Learning would be repealed, but the state needs to make sure standards are in place to meet a federal requirement.

- Koenen and Kubly said the ethics issue about Rep. Arlon Lindner, R-Cocoran, was an issue that was overdramatized. The House ethics committee recently voted 2-2 on complaints about Lindner's comments on AIDS, Africa and homosexuals and the Holocaust.

Koenen said Lindner didn't think through his comments, but the discussion in the House continued too long. Kubly has told Lindner he doesn't always agree with what he says but he respects his right to say it.

In their opening comments, Koenen and Kubly said both the House and Senate are increasingly divided on rural versus suburban/metro issues. Koenen has been encouraged by discussion with Republican members of the House who disagree with some of their party's stances. "When I talk with members of the House's majority (Republican) party, the subject almost always comes up," Koenen said.

Both legislators said they'd continue to make sure they'd speak for rural residents in the Legislature.

"If we don't do it, the rural area is going to get hammered even more than we do," Kubly said.

EDITORIAL

Area's lawmakers should get behind bipartisan bill

Now that the Legislature is beginning to zero in more closely on the budget debate, we are entering a pivotal moment for Minnesota — and rural Minnesota specifically.

As we've written before, the budget plans proposed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty and the Republican-led House both would harm our part of the state: Local governments and many local social service agencies will see steep cuts in funding from the state, putting vital services and quality-of-life issues very much on the line.

We won't dwell on those issues, because we hope that, by now, most of our readers have a good understanding of where proposed cuts would strike this area. Today, though, we do challenge our area's state lawmakers to step forcefully up and make their fellow legislators aware of the budget-cutting impact.

This may mean that some lawmakers will have to speak or vote against their party leaders, but this should not be a partisan issue anyway: It's about the region they serve, a region that can't afford to have its representatives bowing to the party line on such a vital issue.

The full roster of area lawmakers — senators Dennis Frederickson, Gary Kubly and Jim Vickerman, and representatives Lyle Koenen, Doug Magnus, Aaron Peterson and Marty Seifert — should speak in unison on this issue.

Certainly, all seven care about the area and the people who live here; they all want to see southwest Minnesota's economy improve and its future turn brighter. Given that, we strongly urge the group to vocally support a budget bill that has bi-partisan sponsorship in the Senate and House. The Langseth-Dorman bill will reduce the amount of cuts in local government aid proposed by Pawlenty, but will not change the amount of overall budget-cutting done by the governor. His pie still is the same size; it's just sliced differently and more fairly.

The bill will restore much of LGA and other forms of local aid, and pay for it by cutting the state's transit subsidy — 90 percent of which goes to metro cities. That subsidy, the bill's authors say, could be restored by having the suburbs raise local property taxes or fees.

All along, local city leaders have said Pawlenty's approach to cutting city aid is mightily unfair — hammering much more heavily at rural cities than it does the suburbs. The new bill is a way to even things out.

It has the support of local leaders like Marshall City Administrator Mike Johnson. Now is the time for legislators to publicly get behind the bill, too. It's the most-fair plan on the table for rural Minnesota, the place that they, too, ultimately call home.

INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN
DAILY 7,862

TUESDAY
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INDEPENDENT
MARSHALL, MN
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Rep. Westrom's bill is wrong for state's energy future

✓ BY REP. JEAN WAGENIUS •
AND REP. LYLE KOENEN •

The following column by Rep. Wagenius, DFL-Minneapolis, and Rep. Koenen, DFL-Maynard, was published in the Minneapolis Star Tribune on Tuesday, April 22.

In 1994 the Legislature decided to phase out nuclear power and replace it with as much Minnesota-produced energy as practical. Xcel Energy agreed to the legislation in return for permission to have 17 nuclear waste storage casks in Minnesota. This 1994 decision was good for Minnesota's rural economy and its pocketbook.

Today the Minnesota House is considering reversing course. At the request of Xcel, a bill is being pushed through the Legislature to establish a new nuclear waste storage facility at Monticello and permit storage of 86 new casks of nuclear waste to be split between Prairie Island and Monticello. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Torrey Westrom, R-Elbow Lake, lets Xcel renege on its promise not to return to the Legislature for more casks and cheats outstate Minnesota out of expected wind and biomass development.

We are offering a better alternative, a bill that stays true to the 1994 decision. It phases out nuclear power, increases our commitment to wind and bioenergy, and balances the system

with natural gas.

In 1994 legislators believed that electricity from wind and agricultural waste had great potential. Today we know that wind energy is more efficient and cheaper than 1994 legislators dreamed possible. We also know that for every new nuclear cask Xcel buys, a huge number of windmills will not be built in Minnesota.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty says he recognizes the need for outstate development. But a decision by the Legislature and governor to rely on nuclear energy for another 30 years would severely undercut Minnesota's commitment to renewable energy and deny rural Minnesota the economic benefits from investments in wind and biomass.

Newly-authorized nuclear casks will be stored in Minnesota indefinitely if not permanently. The legal limit of waste that can be placed in Nevada's Yucca Mountain storage facility is 70,000 tons. Given the amount of nuclear waste that is being created across the United States, the nuclear waste created in Minnesota after 2009 will not be eligible to go to Yucca Mountain. The waste will stay at Monticello and at Prairie Island, both on the Mississippi.

Some argue that we should continue to rely on nuclear energy because it's cheaper. Setting aside the huge public subsidies the nuclear industry has already been given, electricity from Minnesota's nuclear plants is not

really cheaper because we're passing the storage costs on to our children. Our rate structure is designed to have future electricity users pay the costs of managing the waste that is generated today.

The Westrom bill exacerbates this problem. It ignores the costs of waste storage in Minnesota. Legislators have no idea what the cost will be to keep new waste in Minnesota or how the costs will affect ratepayers. If you don't buy your electricity from Xcel, you should be even more wary. When a user doesn't pay for costs of waste management, taxpayers often get stuck with the bill. For example, younger Minnesotans are now paying taxes to the state and on their garbage bills to clean up landfills that were created before they were born.

Because wind is strong and constant over so much of Minnesota, our state is among the small group of states where wind is a major energy resource. Minnesota also has untapped potential for electricity from other renewable resources like agricultural waste.

We recognized these opportunities back in 1994. If we reverse course now, we will be telling the developers of new energy technologies that Minnesota is not the place to visit. If we reverse course now, the governor and the Legislature will be telling outstate Minnesota that politicians tell a good story. They just don't act on it.

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Aid

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Almost a third of the \$587 million annual local government aid — known as LGA — goes to Minneapolis and St. Paul. Most of the rest goes to cities, counties, townships and other governmental bodies outside the metropolitan area. Some suburbs, such as Edina, receive no LGA.



Pawlenty

On Thursday, Pawlenty said that he has not decided whether LGA payments overall will be reduced, but said he wants the program to return to its

original concept — helping cities with low tax bases, and thus less opportunity to fund services by property taxes.

"If the state is paying over 50 percent of your (government's) general fund, that is going to cause us to look," he said.

"There are reasons that some communities get 70 percent of their money from LGA — they're poor," Detroit Lakes Mayor Larry Buboltz said. "LGA has worked. It has helped to provide basic service for cities like Detroit Lakes and Moorhead."

Moorhead, for instance, gets 74 percent of its state aid and tax revenue from LGA.

Pawlenty said some governments have a solid enough tax base that they don't need such a high percentage of state aid.

"The era of sending out money to communities where the state pays most of their general fund budget, when the community is prospering

... is going to be reviewed," Pawlenty said last month.

"The governor might say he's saving tax money, but it's really a tax shift if that local government aid is

Koenen

cut," said Rep.-elect Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard. "Just about everybody's worried, that's for sure."

Senate Majority Leader John Hottinger, DFL-St. Peter, said DFLers will wait until Pawlenty releases his budget plan before developing one of their own.

Buboltz, Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities president, said he wants any examination of LGA to go beyond across-the-board cuts. He called for real reform.

Messelt agreed that changes would be good as long as communities with low tax bases get the most help. That philosophy would help cities like Moorhead, where homeowners pay far less property tax on a similar home than they would in the metro area,

Cities' local government aid

Here is a list of some Minnesota cities, their 2002 revenue base — taxes and payments from the state — and the percentage of the revenue that comes from the state's local government aid program:

Bemidji: \$5 million revenue base, 77 percent from LGA
Bloomington: \$31 million, 0.3 percent
Detroit Lakes: \$3 million, 51 percent
Edina: \$18 million, 0 percent
Moorhead: \$11 million, 74 percent
Red Wing: \$12 million, 6 percent
Willmar: \$6 million, 69 percent
Worthington: \$5 million, 65 percent
Source: Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities

though the city's expenses are still much the same, Messelt said.

• Sen. LeRoy Stumpf, DFL-Thief River Falls, said Minneapolis, St. Paul and some regional retail centers could be given authority to levy a sales tax to make up for LGA losses.

However, he said, towns like Crookston, Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks would not have enough business for that to work.

Pawlenty has ruled out any tax increases in his budget proposal.

Flaherty and Sundvor said they see a change in Pawlenty's stance since he talked to their coalition during an August meeting.

"I'm not talking about replacing or reducing LGA in any manner," Pawlenty said at the time.

"We want him to stay true to his word," Flaherty said.

LGA makes up just 4 percent of the state budget, Flaherty said, but is vital to many cities he serves.

Earlier this year, Gov. Jesse Ventura called for LGA cuts, saying cities could become more efficient.

Cities already are efficient, Flaherty said.

It's too early for local governments to decide on what to do if LGA drops, but there has been plenty of discussion.

"The kinds of things I have been hearing about is they will close the library a day or two a week and they won't fill any vacant positions," Flaherty said.

— Tribune staff writer Linda Vanderwerf and Forum Communications writers Jeff Baird and Joy Anderson contributed to this story.

Local governments brace for aid cuts

By Don Davis FRONT PAGE
Capitol Correspondent

ST. PAUL — Many local government officials fear legislators and Minnesota's new governor will cut state payments that allow poor communities to provide services they otherwise could not afford.

"Sadly, it doesn't cost any less to keep firefighters and police officers on the street here than it does in higher property tax areas," Moorhead City Manager Bruce Messelt said.

Gov.-elect Tim Pawlenty is considering reducing funding for the local government aid program, but on Thursday said he hasn't made a decision. A nearly \$4.6 billion budget deficit over the next 2½ years means Pawlenty must look everywhere for places to cut.

"I don't think it is going to be a happy new year," said Tim Flaherty, a lobbyist for the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities.

Flaherty said cities and other local governments will have to take their share of cuts — and provide fewer services — but his concern is whether any aid cuts will be fair. And since Pawlenty lives in a Twin Cities suburb, some fear money will flow there from elsewhere in Minnesota.

If state aid falls, city officials say they probably would need to raise property taxes to compensate. Many west central Minnesota cities depend on state aid to provide half or more of their general fund budget. Without that funding, they'll be hard pressed to cut enough out of their budgets to get by without raising local property tax levies.

• Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar, said he was shocked when Pawlenty asked Gov. Jesse Ventura to withhold state aid payments that were due to be sent to local governments on Dec. 26.

"There's no way we can get around raising local taxes if that happens," Juhnke said. "Someone's taxes are going to go up," he added, a reference to Pawlenty's pledge to not raise taxes.

State aid helps cities and counties pay for basic services like roads, snowplowing and public safety, Juhnke said.

"The key to this session is fairness," Juhnke said, and rural legislators will be watching to see how Pawlenty's proposals affect outstate Minnesota.

Why should rural areas see property tax increases, when "the suburbs, who got the most from the 2001 property tax reforms, go unscathed?" asked John Sundvor, a colleague of Flaherty's.

State aid helps cities and counties pay for basic services like roads, snowplowing and public safety, Juhnke said.

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WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE
WILLMAR, MN
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FRIDAY
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Agriculture products are showing promise

BY DON DAVIS

Pioneer Capitol Reporter

ST. PAUL — Minnesota farmers could sell \$35 million to \$92 million of products to Cuba, a state House committee heard Tuesday.

That translates into 349 to 901 new jobs, according to Kurt Markham of the state Agriculture Department.

"Minnesota is very dependent upon exports," he told the House Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Committee.

The committee was gathering information for future budget decisions.

Cuba, with 11 million people, agreed to buy \$92 million worth of farm products last fall. Markham said more would be sold if federal law allowed unfettered trade.

Among the beneficiaries would be Earthwise Processors of Moorhead, which sold edible beans to Cuba.

"This would really open up if the sanctions were lifted," Markham said.

Mexico shows the most immediate prospect for exports, Markham said. China also is a good opportunity, he said.

Soybeans have been the focus so far, he said, but Minnesota wheat now is being targeted, Markham said. And this week, he talks to potato farmers to begin setting up a program to exporting spuds.

Mexico has expressed a desire to buy wheat and potatoes, he said.

"It doesn't matter what side of the Red River you are on," Markham said, so Minnesota is working with North Dakota on the ag export projects.

This is a particularly good time for wheat producers to increase exports, Markham said, because Canadian farmers experienced a drought and cannot supply Mexi-

co with as much wheat as they have in the past.

Exports of most farm products could increase, Markham said. Wheat exports to China, for instance, could go from 2001's \$700,000 to \$6 million in 2010, Markham said.

Southwest Minnesota farmer Donald Nickel said other countries want Minnesota products such as the soybeans he grows because of their quality.

"We must compete with quality and not our low prices," he said.

Minnesota beans are in demand because their high protein and oil content, Nickel added.

✉ ddavis@bemidjipioneer.com

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AT2 THE PIONEER, Bemidji, Minnesota



Pioneer Photo by Don Davis

Reps. Maxine Penas, R-Badger, right, and Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, watch television screens Tuesday during a Minnesota House committee presentation on farm exports.

PIONEER

BEMIDJI, MN
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Extension service cuts offices

FRONT PAGE

By Don Davis

Capitol Correspondent

ST. PAUL — The University of Minnesota Extension Service plans to replace offices in every county with about 20 regional offices.

"We will not be able to deliver the same level of programs and services with fewer dollars," extension Dean Charles Casey told employees during a Wednesday video conference.

County governments or other local organizations must pay if they want to retain a local presence for 4-H and other programs the extension service provides.

"One reason for going to regional centers is to reduce the cost of doing business," Casey said.

The service will experience a 10 percent budget cut next year, while the university as a whole anticipates a 15 percent smaller budget. Most state agency budgets face 14 percent cuts as the state grapples with a \$4.2 billion deficit.

Casey said decisions will be made this summer about locations of regional offices. How many of the service's 1,000 employees remain on the payroll will not be decided until late in the year, after county boards vote on budgets.

"Part of it is going to depend upon how successful we are over the next five or six months working with counties," he said.

About 26 percent of the extension service's \$62 million annual budget comes from counties, but they face falling state aid.

The 4-H program, with 27,000 members, is the most visible of extension's programs and one Casey said he expects to earn county funding.

"There has to be local funding in order to keep the current levels of quality local 4-H programs," Casey said. "Historically, counties have invested more money into 4-H programming than other extension programming."

The university now pays 40 percent of 4-H coordinators' pay. But to keep local coordinators, they must pay all local expenses starting next year.

Extension programs will be run out of the 18 to 22 regional offices. That means agricultural educators, the old county agents, will not be a common sight on Minnesota farms.

"I don't think it is as likely that you will be able to get farm visits," Casey said.

Rural legislators and farm leaders have complained for years that farm programs receive a lower priority in the extension service. Casey, however, said they remain important.

"It is going to be as big a part of extension as it has ever been," Casey said.

About 27 percent of the extension budget goes to agriculture and food programs.

"We are committed to bringing the university's research and resources to people in communities in all parts of the state," Casey said.

Change bothers rural lawmakers

By Don Davis and
Linda Vanderwerf

Staff writers

ST. PAUL — University of Minnesota Extension Service changes took rural legislators by surprise Wednesday.

Legislators began learning about the changes when reporters sought their reaction to the sweeping changes that include closing the 87 county extension offices in favor of 20 regional offices.

Especially troubling to many was an apparent requirement that local counties pay for 4-H services if there is to be a local program.

"The problem is, the counties don't have money," said Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar.

"It surprises me they would go that drastic," said Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard. "I would have thought they'd be a little more protective of (4-H)."

It's possible extension officials felt that 4-H would be popular enough that counties would continue funding it after it was cut, he said, and that cut could free up more funding for other extension programs.

Wednesday's news is another setback for rural areas, Juhnke said.

"For the most part, rural communities are kinda contracting, and it seems like extension has been contracting with them," Koenen said.

Juhnke predicted counties facing state aid cuts won't be able to provide enough money to maintain many local extension services. Many may continue supporting 4-H, but they might cut back in other areas, he said.

"My fear is the whole thing will start crumbling, and this wonderful extension service we've had, well, since statehood ... is going to become a historic relic," he said.

Rural lawmakers thought during the reorganization 15 months ago that the extension service was turning away from its rural roots. "I think our fears are coming true," Juhnke said.

"It's an example of the eroding impact of rural Min-

nesota," added Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City.

Juhnke said the extension service's decision was a bad political move, which could hurt it in future legislative votes. Legislators said they have heard little about the extension service during this legislative session, scheduled to end on Monday.

"If we cut the University of Minnesota 200 million bucks, they've got to do something to make ends meet," said Sen. Steve Dille, R-Dassel.

However, he said, he still was surprised when he heard that three-quarters of the state's extension offices would be closing.

"To solve this problem takes money," Dille said, "something we don't have a lot of."

Dille and Koenen are farmers who say they have used extension service advice and information.

"If I have a question about some technical issue, I call the local office," Dille said. He also uses extension bulletins and reads agents' newspaper columns when they apply to his farming operation.

Koenen said he used the extension service more when he first started farming in the 1970s. In recent years, private businesses have offered similar services to their seed or fertilizer customers, he said.



Juhnke



Urdahl

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WILLMAR, MN
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Lawmakers: Cuts appear inevitable in Pawlenty budget

By David Little
Staff Writer

WILLMAR — Four state lawmakers took 2½ hours of testimony Friday afternoon from advocates of the poor, the needy, the disabled, and senior citizens who will see services reduced under Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed two-year budget.

While the lawmakers sympathized with speakers who said the cuts will pose a hardship on those who receive those services, they acknowledged the cuts are probably inevitable because Pawlenty has pledged to not raise taxes to erase a projected \$4.2 billion budget deficit over the next two years.

"Any budget we're looking at that includes tax increases or revenue enhancements, we know the governor has said he's going to veto it," said Sen. Dean Johnson, DFL-Willmar, during a forum sponsored by Heartland Community Action Agency at the Willmar Education and Arts Center auditorium.

"He ran for office on the pledge of not going to raise taxes. He won on that platform. I just happen to think it's the wrong political decision at this time for the people of Minnesota for the greater good," said Johnson.

Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar, told the 125 audience members he could not believe he was debating the merits of funding for Early Childhood Family Education and the Kandiyohi Area Transit program, among other programs he listed.

"What has happened to us

as Minnesotans if that's where we're headed? It's not acceptable to me, and I won't be supporting these cuts in any way, shape or form," he said.

• Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, said he has heard people say saving a dollar on services now will result in paying more for services later. "Minnesota has always been a leader in the nation in taking care of people in need," he said.

• Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City, said the House Republican leadership is going along with Pawlenty. Urdahl said he did not sign the pledge against new taxes, but said the political reality is that raising taxes will be very difficult.

"Many of you have said raise your taxes," said Urdahl, referring to speakers who said they'd be willing to pay more taxes. "But polls are still coming out, and politicians look at polls. The governor told us yesterday his polling is still showing that 60 percent of the people in the state are telling him don't raise taxes. Fairness is important to me, and I hope that we can find more equitable ways to deal with this."

During testimony, Maria Schmidt of Willmar spoke tearfully from her wheelchair on how cuts in transportation, counseling, medication and other services for the disabled will hurt her quality of life.

Eileen Wallace, director of Heartland, which administers many of the programs discussed, said the governor will cut 53 percent from the Minnesota Economic Opportunity Grant program that pays for community action work. The budget also cuts the displaced homemaker program, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and housing rehabilitation programs.

"What I'm asking for as an advocate for low-income and vulnerable people is balance in our budget-balanc-

ing process," she said. "Slow spending, find other ways to do things, but also increase revenues and taxes."

Personally, said Wallace, "as a person who pays taxes, I'm willing to pay more."

Meeker County Commissioner Amy Wilde said most of what counties do is mandated by the state and federal governments. She said counties are willing to do their part, "but it won't be possible when mandates continue to arrive on our doorstep. We can do more with less rules."

Speaking against more taxation and against redistribution of wealth was Patrick Gregory of Hutchinson, who has a child in the Head Start program, which is slated for cuts. He said people should get more involved with helping others in their communities. "What I care about is the future of our country," he said.

Marietta Neuman of the McLeod County food shelf said volunteers are involved at the food shelf. "When all these cuts are made, they will come to us," she said.

Urdahl said he hopes the situation improves.

"It looks pretty bleak with a lot of the cuts right now, but I guarantee you it's going to be better; as good as many of you hope, probably not. But I'll do my best to make some improvements in where we are right now," he said.

Sen. Steve Dille, R-Dassel, Rep. Tony Kielkucki, R-Lester Prairie, and Rep. Bud Keidgerken, R-Freeport, were invited but were unable to attend.



Johnson



Juhnke



Koenen



Urdahl

Westrom bill is wrong for state's energy future

STAR TRIBUNE APR 22 03

By Jean Wagenius
and Lyle Koenen

In 1994 the Legislature decided to phase out nuclear power and replace it with as much Minnesota-produced energy as practical. Xcel Energy agreed to the legislation in return for permission to have 17 nuclear waste storage casks in Minnesota. This 1994 decision was good for Minnesota's rural economy and its pocket-book.

Today the Minnesota House is considering reversing course. At the request of Xcel, a bill is being pushed through the legislature to establish a new nuclear waste storage facility at Monticello and permit storage of 86 new casks of nuclear waste to be split between Prairie Island and Monticello. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Torrey Westrom, R-Elbow Lake, lets Xcel renege on its promise not to return to the Legislature for more casks and cheats outstate Minnesota out of expected wind and biomass development.

We are offering a better alternative, a bill that stays true to the 1994 decision. It phases out nuclear power, increases

our commitment to wind and bioenergy, and balances the system with natural gas.

In 1994 legislators believed that electricity from wind and agricultural waste had great potential. Today we know that wind energy is more efficient and cheaper than 1994 legislators dreamed possible. We also know that for every new nuclear cask Xcel buys, a huge number of windmills will not be built in Minnesota.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty says he recognizes the need for out-state development. But a decision by the Legislature and governor to rely on nuclear energy for another 30 years would severely undercut Minnesota's commitment to renewable energy and deny rural Minnesota the economic benefits from investments in wind and biomass.

Newly authorized nuclear casks will be stored in Minnesota indefinitely if not permanently. The legal limit of waste that can be placed in Nevada's Yucca Mountain storage facility is 70,000 tons. Given the amount of nuclear waste that is being created across the United States, the nuclear waste created in Minnesota after

2009 will not be eligible to go to Yucca Mountain. The waste will stay at Monticello and at Prairie Island, both on the Mississippi.

Some argue that we should continue to rely on nuclear energy because it's cheaper. Setting aside the huge public subsidies the nuclear industry has already been given, electricity from Minnesota's nuclear plants is not really cheaper because we're passing the storage costs on to our children. Our rate structure is

designed to have future electricity users pay the costs of managing the waste that is generated today.

The Westrom bill exacerbates this problem. It ignores the costs of waste storage in Minnesota. Legislators have no idea what the cost will be to keep new waste in Minnesota or how the costs will affect ratepayers. If you don't buy your electricity from Xcel, you should be even more wary. When a user doesn't pay for costs of waste management,

taxpayers often get stuck with the bill. For example, younger Minnesotans are now paying taxes to the state and on their garbage bills to clean up landfills that were created before they were born.

Because wind is strong and constant over so much of Minnesota, our state is among the small group of states where wind is a major energy resource. Minnesota also has untapped potential for electricity from other renewable resources like agricultural waste.

We recognized these opportunities back in 1994. If we reverse course now, we will be telling the developers of new energy technologies that Minnesota is not the place to invest. If we reverse course now, the governor and the Legislature will be telling outstate Minnesota that politicians tell a good story. They just don't act on it.

Jean Wagenius, DFL-Minneapolis, and Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, are members of the Minnesota House.



David Brewster/Star Tribune

Wind generators near Lake Benton, Minn.: Consider Minnesota's commitment to renewable energy.

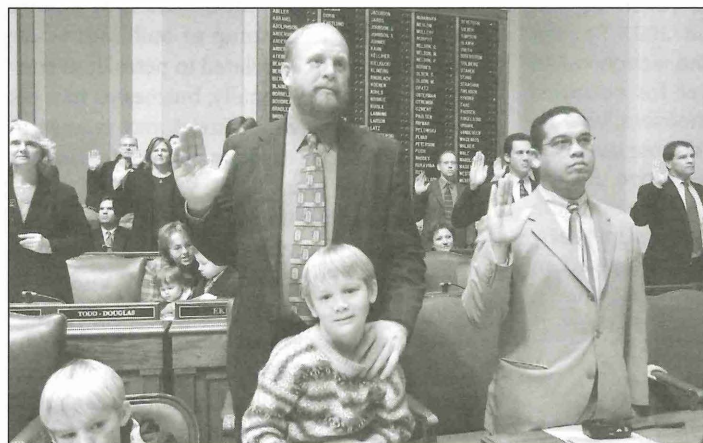


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Reps. Lyle Koenen, left, and Keith Ellison, right, are sworn into the House of Representatives by Minnesota State Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz Jan. 7. Koenen is joined by sons Levi, left, and Isaac.

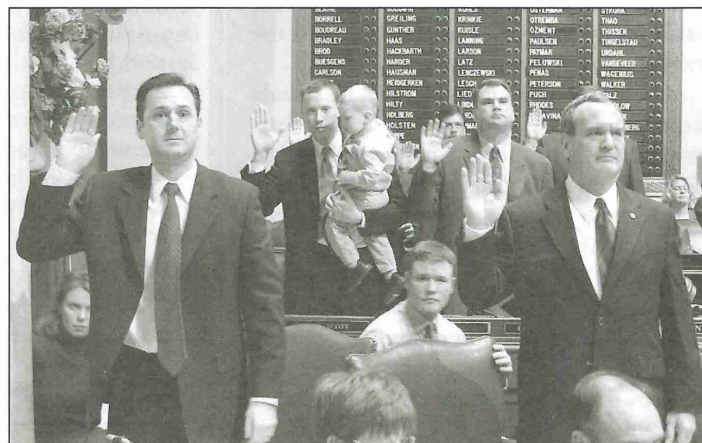


PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Reps., from left, Chris DeLaForest, Paul Kohls, Joe Hoppe, and Lynn Wardlow take the oath of office during the first day of the 2003 session on Jan. 7.

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Koenen named to ag, environment panels for 2003 session 20B

MARSHALL — Agricultural and environmental issues will be the focus for State Rep.-Elect Lyle Koenen in the 2003 session, as the first-term lawmaker has been named to four committees working in those subject areas.

"These are important issues for the district I will represent," Koenen, of rural Maynard, said. "This is a farming district with environmental issues important to farmers, economic development, tourism and quality of life."

Koenen, a family farmer, was named to the Agriculture Policy and Finance committees, and also to the Environmental and Natural Resources Policy and Finance committees. Agriculture Finance works on the budgets for state farm programs, including ethanol supports and biodiesel development. Environment Finance works on the structure and budget of the Department of Natural Resources, state parks, the Pollution Control

FROM PAGE 1A

Election reforms

(continued)

Party, the GOP and each party's House and Senate caucuses spent \$2.8 million on legislative races during the 2002 campaign — a record amount.

Outside party spending topped \$100,000 in four House races and one Senate race last fall — a vast amount compared to what the candidates themselves are allowed to spend.

Races topping the \$100,000 mark are common in states

Costly contests

Below are the five races that attracted the most outside money from political-party groups. All were close races, and all saw parties spending more on their candidates than the candidates were allowed to spend themselves.

Candidates*	District	DFL candidate spending	GOP candidate spending	Outside spending
Carla Nelson (R) vs. Tina Liebling (D)	30A	\$25,963	\$30,197	\$139,090
Dan Sparks (D) vs. Grace Schwab (R)	27	\$40,752	\$61,186	\$122,073
Lyle Koenen (D) vs. Colin Berg (R)	20B	\$9,107	\$31,428	\$120,833
Dan Severson (R) vs. Dennis Molitor (D)	14A	\$32,216	\$28,802	\$105,905
Anthony Cornish (R) vs. Sandy Lorenz (D)	24B	\$27,803	\$29,945	\$103,498

Source: Campaign Finance Board

* Winner is listed first.

Notes: An Independence Party candidate, Joe Duffy, spent \$27,700 and finished third in the District 30A House race.

Lyle Koenen's spending records are incomplete. He has not yet filed his final report, which was due Jan. 31.

PIONEER PRESS

without spending limits. But they're not supposed to happen in Minnesota. Given the small size of a House district — about 16,000 voters — costs are becom-

ing alarming.

In a Rochester-based House race, DFL candidate Tina Liebling and the party combined to spend \$29.58 for every vote she earned. She lost.

"Somebody's got to draw the line someplace and say, 'This has got to stop,'" said Rep. Bill Haas, a Republican from Champlin. "How do you, as an incumbent with a \$27,000 spending limit, compete against \$100,000? It's totally unfair."

State Sen. John Marty, a Roseville DFLer, was the chief author of the current election system, which originally barred parties from independent expenditures (a court case tossed that rule in 1999). Since then, Marty has watched his creation corrupted by outside money.

"This is blowing away the way our system worked in the past," Marty said. "It's just a gaping loophole in the law."

High-spending party committees — not to mention completely independent entities such as unions or Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life — can buy so much air time that they drown out the voices of the candidates themselves.

Candidates say they feel trapped: If they forgo public money, they leave themselves vulnerable to charges that they're trying to "buy the election" with their own money.

Many also say Minnesota's reputation for clean elections forces them to accept the limits and curtail their own ability to "talk" to the voters through mail, television and radio — even as their own party, their opponents' party and the outside groups carpet-bomb the district with ads.

"Nobody wants to be the first one to jump off the cliff," Marty said. Besides, he noted, anyone facing a candidate who ignores spending limits gets to ignore them, too.

But that would mean raising more money, something that House Speaker Steve Sviggum, who leads that chamber's Republican Caucus, says most candidates loathe. Sviggum said perhaps that reluctance to dial for dollars is cultural.

"But maybe that's a good Minnesota thing," Sviggum said.

That leaves the caucuses as a candidate's "support group," as Sviggum put it. Left alone, spending limits work. But when an outside group enters the fray, the party caucuses need money to fight back, he said.

Take the case of Liebling in the Rochester House race. The House DFL caucus started the money spiral with a radio and TV blitz in late September that cost \$36,500 — or \$10,000 more than Liebling would raise for the entire campaign.

Sviggum and the GOP heard about the ads and responded with radio and mail of their own. In the end, Republican candidate Carla Nelson won the three-way race, but not until the two parties had spent nearly \$140,000 on the contest. Third-place finisher Joe Duffy of the Independence Party added another \$27,700 on his own.

Sviggum and Nelson each noted that the party ads in the Rochester race were positive, a situation not always repeated in close races.

State records show the DFL and GOP combined to spend a total of \$109,000 on negative ads across the state during the legislative campaigns.

Marty and Senate Majority Leader John Hottinger say Minnesota should join Vermont, Maine and Arizona by running fully subsidized elections. Minnesota candidates receive only a few thousand dollars' worth of public money now.

But taxpayer-funded elections would require more public money, which is in short supply these days. Even with fully subsidized elections, outside groups are still free to wreak havoc on tight contests. "I'm not sure there are any good answers," Sviggum said.

Critics say candidates have little reason to change the way Minnesota elects its Legislature. The current system lets candidates drape themselves in the cloak of clean government and limited spending while still enjoying the benefits of attack ads and unlimited ad budgets, thanks to their friendly caucuses.

"It's the best of both worlds — you get all the private money you need and you still get public money," said Hamline University professor David Schultz, who studies Minnesota's campaign financing.

Marty and Schultz said another consequence of the system is that caucus leaders could control their rank-and-file members by stifling the flow of campaign dollars unless members toe the party line. Rock the boat and get thrown off.

"You have the four caucuses raking in the money, and that lets them exert enormous influence in the way campaigns are run," Schultz said. "It's a power issue."

Sviggum agrees that limiting candidates but not parties concentrates power in the leaders' hands. But Sviggum said he does not use his caucus' campaign spending as a weapon.

"That could really backfire against you later," he said.

Hank Shaw covers elections and money in politics. He can be reached at hshaw@pioneerpress.com or (651) 228-5257.

Outside cash undercuts election reforms

Legal loophole stains Minnesota's clean image

PIioneer Press MAR 3 103

BY HANK SHAW

Pioneer Press

Campaigns for the Minnesota Legislature are supposed to be neighborhood affairs, heavy on door knocking and light on dollars. Most candidates limit the money they spend wooing voters in return for a public subsidy. It's a clean elections system, intended to make small voices louder and to level the electoral playing field.

It's a shining example of Minnesota progressivism. And it's rapidly becoming fiction. Last autumn, a money-raising loophole first opened by the political parties three years ago widened so much that some candidates became bit players in their own campaigns. Everyone in state politics knows the system is broken. But no one has found an escape from the money morass that has essentially scuttled a series of reforms

enacted in the early 1990s. Legislative candidates are limited in what they can spend — roughly \$27,000 for House races, about \$34,000 for Senate. But tens of thousands more are being poured into those elections by other groups. That money does not count against the spending limits. In effect, it's an end-run around the campaign finance law. A Pioneer Press analysis of campaign spending shows that the Democratic-Farmer-Labor

ELECTION REFORMS, 4A

Big money

Political parties spent record money during the fall to help elect their candidates to the Minnesota Legislature. Republicans, DFLers and the four caucuses — partisan groups that concentrate on their party's members in the House or Senate — altogether spent more than \$400,000 more on legislative races this year than in 2000.

Committee total	
House DFL	\$1,004,644
House GOP	\$910,198
Republican Party of Minnesota	\$51,911
Senate DFL	\$588,828
Senate GOP	\$250,617
Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party	\$0
Grand total	\$2,806,198

Source: Campaign Finance Board

Notes: Totals also include direct contributions to candidates, which represent a small portion of overall spending. State DFL and GOP numbers are relatively small because those groups spent more money on federal campaigns.

PIONEER PRESS

Some avoid ethanol votes

Lawmakers worry
about perceived
conflict of interest

BY HANK SHAW,
CHARLES LASZEWSKI
and PATRICK SWEENEY
Pioneer Press

PIONEER PRESS JAN 24 '03
Several of Minnesota's
farmer-legislators say they have
taken deliberate steps to avoid a
possible conflict of interest
between their corn-growing
operations and their legislative
support for the ethanol industry.
A Republican senator was
the latest to make that decision
Thursday, when he chose not to
vote on a budget proposal that
would preserve a taxpayer-
funded ethanol subsidy because
he viewed it as a conflict.

That's in contrast to Republi-
can House Speaker Steve Svig-
gum, who earlier this week
denied there is a conflict
between his investments in an
ethanol plant and his strong

ETHANOL VOTE, 6A

8-17
Some
avoid
ethanol
votes
+
20B
(continued)

support to continue the subsidy.

At least 16 members of the
state Legislature either grow
corn themselves — corn is
ethanol's primary raw material
— or have brothers, parents or
other close relatives in the
business. Ethanol is a gasoline
substitute distilled from grains
and other agricultural prod-
ucts.

Most of those lawmakers
say they have no connection to
any of Minnesota's 13 state-sub-
sidized ethanol plants. The
farm owned by Sviggum and
his two brothers has \$45,000
worth of shares in a plant in
Claremont.

Sviggum said Thursday he
believes he is firmly in compli-
ance with House ethics rules,
adding "In my mind, and in the
statutes, there is no conflict of
interest."

But Sen. Paul Koering, a
freshman Republican from Fort
Ripley, and several of his col-
leagues view the matter differ-
ently.

Koering not only abstained
from Thursday's floor vote, he
also said he'll try to sell his
shares in a Little Falls ethanol
plant so he can continue to fight
for the industry without conflict.

Koering said he has a \$15,000
investment in the Central Min-
nesota Ethanol Co-op.

"I'm going to go to work here
and try to get rid of my ethanol
shares. ... I don't want to be
abstaining," he said.

Even though the Senate bill
made only a slight reference to
the ethanol issue — it cut \$2.25
million in subsidies for St. Paul's
Gopher State ethanol plant —
Koering said he felt obliged not
to vote. Gov. Tim Pawlenty pro-
posed cutting the entire ethanol
subsidy; the House and Senate
both restored portions of it in
their bills.

"I just feel that it would be a
conflict," Koering said.

Sviggum appears to be safe-
ly within the bounds of Min-
nesota law. The statute says
that public officials are not in
conflict unless the vote or
action would benefit them
more than it would "other
members of the official's busi-
ness classification, profession,
or occupation."

Peggy Kerns, director of the
National Conference of State
Legislatures' Ethics Center, said
Minnesota's law is not unusual
and called Sviggum's case a
"gray area."

"The appearance of a conflict
can take on a significant mean-
ing in the public's eye, even if it
is not a conflict," Kerns said. "It
is really something everyone
has to decide based on his or
her value system."

Kerns said states tend to
enact nebulous conflict-of-inter-
est laws because individual
cases vary so wildly they are
difficult to cover in legislation.

Still, Koering's decision mir-
rors similar ones taken by Reps.
Loren Solberg of Grand Rapids
and Pawlenty.

Solberg did not vote on a bio-
diesel bill last year because he
holds investments in a bio-
diesel company in South Dako-
ta. He also has shares in an
ethanol plant in South Dakota,

FARMER-LEGISLATORS AND ETHANOL

A number of lawmakers are either grain farmers or have family interests in ethanol. This is where they stand on whether they should be able to vote on legislation that preserves a taxpayer-funded subsidy on the ethanol industry:

HOUSE

Name	Home	Position on ethanol
Greg Blaine	R-Little Falls	Never invested; wanted to avoid appearances of conflict
Gregory Davids	R-Preston	Has no problem voting, wishes he had invested
Elaine Harder	R-Jackson	Brother invests in ethanol, has no problem voting
Lyle Koenen	DFL-Maynard	No investments; had been dairy and cattle farmer until recently
Bill Kuisle	R-Rochester	No investments; has no problem voting
Doug Magnus	R-Slayton	No investments; has no problem voting
Steve Sviggum	R-Kenyon	Owns shares with his brothers; has no problem voting
Torrey Westrom	R-Elbow Lake	Father once invested; has no problem voting
Howard Swenson	R-Nicollet	No investments; has no problem voting
Loren Solberg	DFL-Coleraine	Owns shares in South Dakota plant; votes on MN ethanol issues

SENATE

Name	Home	Position on ethanol
Steve Dille	R-Dassel	Wanted to avoid appearances of conflict
D. Frederickson	R-New Ulm	No investments; has no problem voting
Paul Koering	R-Fort Ripley	Owns shares; will not vote because of conflict; intends to sell shares
Keith Langseth	R-Glyndon	No investments; has no problem voting
Dallas Sams	R-Staples	No investments; has no problem voting
Jim Vickerman	R-Tracy	No investments; has no problem voting

which is unaffected by any Min-
nesota legislation.

Pawlenty chose not to vote
on any bill containing a pay
raise for judges because his
wife, Mary, is a judge.

On ethanol, Republican Sens.
Steve Dille of Dassel and Dennis
Frederickson of New Ulm said
they had thought about buying
shares in ethanol plants, but
neither did. Both are farmers,
although Frederickson's son
runs his farm now.

"I have avoided it over the
years because I didn't want to

have to answer questions about
it," said Dille, who said he feeds
most of his harvest to his live-
stock.

Frederickson called the situ-
ation "a fine line."

"If it directly affects a mem-
ber, they should excuse them-
selves," he said. "It might
depend on how many shares
you have in an ethanol plant. If
it's just one block or one share, I
don't think it would be [a prob-
lem]. But if it's 10 blocks or 10
shares and in a couple of plants
... the best thing would be to go

to the ethics subcommittee and
ask."

Frederickson sits on that
committee.

Republican Rep. Greg Blaine,
who represents Little Falls with
Koering, also chose not to invest.

Blaine said he didn't even
consider the possibility of a con-
flict of interest until about a
week ago, when a friend
brought it up. By not investing,
he said, he can continue to
argue for and vote for ethanol
subsidies without worrying
about a conflict.

Other farmer-lawmakers,
however, believe such concerns
are overblown.

Because there are about
8,900 investors in the state's
ethanol plants, they agree with
Sviggum that his potential gain
would be no greater than that of
the other investors, and he can
safely vote on the subsidy.

"That's a pretty diluted mix
to me," said Rep. Bill Kuisle, R-
Rochester, who grows corn on
his 160-acre farm. Kuisle said he
has no investments in ethanol
but would have no problem vot-
ing on issues involving the
industry if he did.

Several Minnesota lawmak-
ers shared that view.

"Where do you draw the
line?" asked Rep. Torrey
Westrom of Elbow Lake. He said
connections between lawmak-
ers' outside employment and
legislative duties are the price
of a part-time Legislature. "The
more critical people become of
that, the less diverse the Capitol
will be."

Westrom's district includes
the Morris ethanol plant, and
his father once invested in
ethanol in the 1980s, but lost
money. Westrom said he'd
recently thought about invest-
ing in the Morris plant but had
not yet gotten around to it.

"Well," Westrom said,
"maybe now I shouldn't, if it's
going to become an issue."

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