

Incoming legislator **Cy Thao** is an artist who paints Hmong-related themes. Richard Tsong-Taatarii/Star Tribune



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NEW WAVE at the Capitol

1-7

2003 could be dubbed the year of the freshmen at the Legislature, given the number of first-termers in the House and Senate. Here's a look at six who are making the transition to political life.

STAR TRIBUNE JAN 5 '03
By Dane Smith
Star Tribune Staff Writer

A tidal wave of new legislators — the largest number of rookies in the Minnesota Legislature since 1970 — and also the most Republican members since 1970 — washes into St. Paul this week.

Their numbers are historic and so is the scale of their main task: balancing the biggest budget shortfall in recent history, a \$4.56 billion projected gap, which amounts to 15 percent of the budget total.

Out of this class of 64 are likely to emerge leaders who will influence state government for decades. Similar big waves of freshmen have given

the state such mainstays as Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe and longtime Senate Tax Committee Chairman Doug Johnson (1970), House Speaker Steve Sviggum (1978), and both Gov. Tim Pawlenty and Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau (1992).

To help tell the story of this new era in state government and those who will shape it, the Star Tribune today begins a series of articles that will follow six state House members through their first term in office.

Like the other 58 new members, the Star Tribune Half-Dozen form a cross-section.

LEGISLATURE continues on A13
► Profiles of the Half-Dozen: 1-15

(over)

▲ THE STAR TRIBUNE HALF-DOZEN: From top, Reps.-elect Cy Thao, Dan Severson, Karen Klinzing, Michael Beard, Doug Lindgren and Michael Nelson.

COMING MONDAY: The new legislators face a \$4.56 billion budget deficit.

Number of new legislators is state's largest since 1972

Most of the Half-Dozen are Minnesota-born and bred, but one is from Pennsylvania and another was born in southeast Asia. They live now in Bagley, Brooklyn Park, Shakopee, Woodbury, St. Paul and Sauk Rapids. Reflecting the new suburban ascendancy, half of the six are from Twin Cities suburbs; two are from outstate, and one from the inner city. And four of the six are Republicans, reflecting the large new House GOP majority and the Republican takeover of the governor's office.

They ran for different and sometimes opposing reasons: fatigue with high taxes, concern about deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods, fears about erosion of workers' rights, anger over the state's new high school graduation standards and worries that schools are being underfunded.

But several say they will arrive with no overarching holy mission, that they simply want to do the best they can for the folks back home.

Some admit that they essentially were drafted for the relatively low-paying, high-pressure job by legislative caucus chiefs looking for popular local leaders who could win an election, or promoted by partisan types.

The wave

A whopping 64 members out of 201 (43 out of 134 in the House; 21 out of 67 in the Senate), or almost one out of three members, will be new to their respective chambers when they take their seats Tuesday.

That's more fresh blood than at any time since 1972, when members for the first time had to run under a party label; that year saw a huge influx of DFLers and 80 new members.

By comparison, in 2000, a typical year, only 31 new members arrived.

What happened?

Leaders and political experts were predicting a big surge this year, and they have cited three major factors: the once-a-decade redrawing of political maps that occurred earlier this year, an unusually large number of retirements in both parties but especially by key DFLers, and a Republican sweep nationally and in the state that was larger than even GOP leaders expected.

Republicans have been arguing that the redistricting plans of 1970, 1980 and 1990 were unduly influenced by DFL control of legislatures and courts and that a more neutral map would help them make great gains. Other post-redistricting years also have shown a spike in rookies (1982 produced 63 members), but this year's influx is distinctive for its Republicanness.

Over the past decade, population has grown fastest by far in the Twin Cities suburbs and exurbs, and Republicans whipped DFLers more soundly than ever in those regions.

Simultaneously, a generation of DFL legislative leaders who rose to power in the 1970s decided to leave the Capitol. One of them, Senate Majority Leader Moe, ran for governor and lost. The House now has its largest Republican majority, 82-52, since party designation in 1972. And DFLers, although still in control of the Senate, have their narrowest majority, at 35-32.

The learning curve

Obvious problems arise from having a third of the Legislature starting on page one of the legislative manual, while a brand-new governor pushes for the most far-reaching government constriction in decades.

There already is speculation that the inexperience of the Legislature (the Senate also has its first new majority leader in 20 years), combined with the severity of the budget problem, will keep the Legislature in confusion and gridlock well past the scheduled adjournment in late May.

DFLers, whose goals clearly will not be served by larger numbers of the opposition, say they are fearful that too many of the new class are simply uninformed dreamers, that they are unrealistically convinced that the state's high-quality public institutions can be miraculously sustained despite dramatic cuts.

But most observers say the rejuvenated membership presents both problems and opportunities.

"All these new faces will be asking fundamental questions

Freshman facts

House

- 43 of 134 House members are freshman
- 30 are Republicans
- 13 are DFLers
- 35 are men
- 8 are women

Senate

- 21 of 67 senators are freshman (five are former House members)
- 13 are Republicans
- 8 are DFLers
- 16 are men
- 5 are women

Source: Minnesota House and Senate

about why does it have to work that way, why does the circle have to be round, or the box square?" said Sarah Janecek, co-editor of "Politics In Minnesota: The Directory," a guidebook to the Legislature.

"The learning curve will be steep," said Charlie Weaver,

himself a former legislator and now chief of staff to Pawlenty. "But on balance you'd rather have excited new people, fresh and eager to learn, rather than a group with a long record of debts to interest groups."

The new class' basic conservatism, on both fiscal and social issues, is largely unquestioned, but one statistic might be telling.

Of the 30 new Republican members in the House, only four signed pledges put out by the Taxpayers League of Minnesota not to vote for tax increases. That's a smaller percentage than among sitting House GOP members.

David Strom, legislative director for the League, said that a higher percentage of Senate GOP freshmen, eight of 13, signed the no-increase pledge and that only the strong and very public advice of House Speaker Sviggum not to sign any pledges prevented more House members from doing so.

"Pledge signers and non-pledge-signers both won elections," Strom said, "but almost all [Republicans] ran on a platform of fiscal responsibility and belt-tightening. Clearly, that's the message that resonated with the voters . . . and the governor will not sign a tax increase."

Janecek theorizes that the rookie legislators might start out from an ideological rigidity about downsizing government, but that they will learn fast that flexibility and accommodating all sides is crucial to survival.

New legislators often are more vulnerable politically than entrenched veterans, Janecek said, and new members in swing districts actually might be more responsive than incumbents to interest groups and angry constituents who protest budget cuts.

Seniority rules

And in fairness, the incoming class' freshness should not be overstated. Although a cou-

ple of new members are in their 20s, most are in their 40s and 50s and have long years of service in local government, in law, in business or in community leadership positions.

Morrie Lanning, R-Moorhead, for instance, 58 years old and the longtime mayor of his city, probably knows more about local and state government finance than many sitting legislators. For years he also was the head of an association of outstate cities that lobbied the Legislature. Fourteen of the 30 new House members are in their 50s or older.

And, finally, although their impact will be felt, the newcomers definitely will not be in charge.

As in all other legislatures throughout the country, seniority rules. Committee chairs and caucus leaders will have an inordinate say in what gets done.

—Dane Smith is at rdsmith@startribune.com.

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Hmong begin preparations for new arrivals

By Lucy Y. Her

Star Tribune Staff Writer 21
STAR TRIBUNE DEC 17 03

U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum's office will work with leaders in the Hmong community and social service agencies next year to help prepare for the resettlement of the thousands of Hmong who will begin arriving in Minnesota in summer 2004.

"We have a very large task ahead of us," McCollum said. "We want to make sure everyone is using definitions and words clearly. Disinformation can be extraordinarily harmful."

McCollum, D-Minn., met Friday at the Lao Family Community in St. Paul with about 20 people in the Hmong community and social service agencies. They decided to conduct monthly meetings to plan for the arrivals.

The State Department announced last week that the United States will open a refugee resettlement program for any Lao or Hmong registered with the Thai government by August 2003, and who are living in the Wat Tham Krabok camp in Thailand. Up to 14,400 refugees could be eligible to come to the United States. Registration will start in February.

Chao Lee, a district representative for McCollum's office, said these Hmong refugees are not going to have the same services that were avail-

able in the 1970s and '80s. Family members will have to tap into community resources to help their relatives, he said. "We're at a downturn in the economy," he said. "The ultimate burden is going to be on the Hmong community."

McCollum clarified that tens of thousands of Hmong refugees are not going to flood Minnesota next summer. She estimates that the state may see a handful arrive beginning in June.

Though members of the Hmong community are excited about the news, they're also worried about relatives in Laos and in Thailand who left the camp to find work.

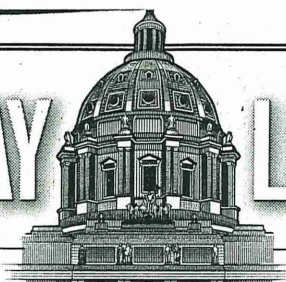
State Sen. Mee Moua and Rep. Cy Thao, both DFL-St. Paul, said they'd like the State Department to allow these Hmong to seek asylum, too.

McCollum said that she understands their concerns, but that the more immediate issue is the Hmong who are in the camp.

Ly Teng of Blaine, a former soldier who fought for the CIA during the Vietnam War, said he wants the State Department to consider first the Hmong living in Laos. Their lives are in danger, he said. "The refugees are not only in Wat Tham Krabok," Ly said. "Soldiers die every day" in Laos.

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SUNDAY LEGISLATIVE REPORT



STAR TRIBUNE JAN 12 '03

THE STAR TRIBUNE HALF-DOZEN

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For six freshman legislators, the first week in office was filled with wonder, work, mail and surprises. Our State Capitol team, which is following them through their evolution from private citizens into policymakers, asked them about their impressions of their new jobs.

First on newbies' agenda: job training



Rep. Dan Severson
R-Sauk Rapids

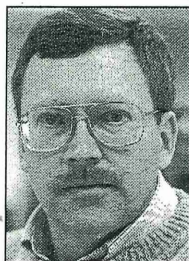
First impression: "It's kind of like drinking through a fire hose. It's pretty intense."

Highlights of the week: "The quality of the inaugural ceremony — the traditions. It was rich. To me it meant a lot. There's a

lot of getting organized, taking in the whole process, getting situated with a new legislative assistant, and just formulating relationships with the legislators, getting to know some of the chairs of the committees and getting more background on where we're at in terms of budget initiatives — where we need to go."

Can't believe: All the mail. "I was there [at work] about 15-16 hours [Thursday] just trying to get it knocked down and respond to the letters and e-mails."

Heartened by: The quality of the people. "It was encouraging, as a whole. There are just a lot of good people who want to do the right thing. It's definitely... a lot of work, but it's so enjoyable. We are poised to make a difference in how Minnesota gets through this thing [the projected budget shortfall]."

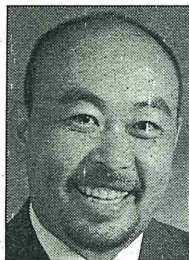


Rep. Michael Nelson
DFL-Brooklyn Park

First impression: "I'm learning the process of walking and talking and doing something as I move from place to place... I think they call that multitasking."

The learning curve: "A lot of the things you thought you knew are totally wrong. I'm also learning about legislative time versus real time. If something is supposed to start at 8 o'clock, people wander in 15 minutes later. That seems to be perfectly natural over here. I'm tired. It's been a long week."

Highlights of the week: The swearing-in ceremony. All three of his sons, one of them a Marine stationed in the Mediterranean, were able to attend along with his wife and mother. Also, "meeting faces you've seen on TV." Getting to know high-profile, and rank-and-file, legislators as "human beings." And slowly understanding that he is part of that legislative fraternity. "I still have to pinch myself sometimes."



Rep. Cy Thao
DFL-St. Paul

First impression: "I couldn't believe the stacks of paperwork, the amount of groups that want to be part of the process, from small organiza-

tions and big corporations to professional paid lobbyists. So many people want to meet with you... I was surprised at the jockeying between our caucus and the Republican caucus. Instead of communicating with each other, they do it through press conferences. That seems a little unusual to me."

Highlights of the week: "The night before [the session opens], all the legislators get together to talk about who will win the lottery — who will get their picture in the papers the next day. I won the lottery."

Committee assignments: Health and Human Services [finance and policy committees] and Judiciary. "They tell me I'll be very busy."



Rep. Karen Klinzing
R-Woodbury

First impression: "There's no time for lunch."

How to deal with interest groups, lobbyists and people wanting your attention: Fig-

ure out who you have time for: constituents, people who have an interest in issues you are dealing with. Said she received more inquiries in the weeks after her election than during her first week in office.

First bills authored: Impressed that veteran legislators already have several bills in the hopper, while freshmen are still trying to figure out who their legislative assistants are. She is coauthor of a bill repealing the Profile of Learning and a bill that would authorize transportation bonding, two issues on which she campaigned.

Impressions of the pomp and circumstance of being sworn in: Thought that it was over very quickly and that a get-down-to-business atmosphere emerged the first day.



Rep. Michael Beard
R-Shakopee

First impression: "Is there a rock group called 'Dazed and Confused'?"

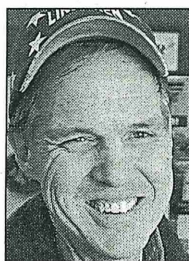
Highlights: "The inaugural ceremony was touching and emotional. The sense of those who have gone before looking on was very real."

Office politics: "I'm getting used to my legislative assistant. She's brand-spanking new, as I am. It's a little bit of an awkward dance. [Wednesday], for example, I grabbed my mail on the

way in. There's tons of it — from the leukemia people, the kidney people, the mining association, the environmental folks. My assistant said, 'May I respectfully request that you *not* pick up your mail? You're messing up my system.'"

First encounter with protesters: "I was intrigued by them [welfare rights protesters], and wanted to have them up for a cup of coffee. Then one of the veteran legislators said, 'You know that same woman has been there waving that same placard for 12 years?'"

"It destroyed a little credibility in my mind — if they are professional agitators. But I'll still have them up for coffee. One of my DFL friends (I'm on regulated industries) said you haven't lived until the antinuclear people have camped out in your office. There's a lot to learn from veterans on both sides of the aisle, so I'm trying to keep my ears open and my mouth shut, and listen and learn."



Rep. Doug Lindgren
R-Bagley

First impression: "I'm kept running all the time... I don't even know what I'm supposed to do tomorrow... There's a lot more to deal with than I figured. But very interesting, also more than I ever figured."

Highlights of the week: "I got my computer today [Wednesday], so I'm trying to catch up with 133 e-mails." Some were congratulatory, some were from staff members, some from lobbyists.

Nice view: From the fifth floor of the State Office Building, to the west, he's got the Sears store and Kelly Inn [where he'll be rooming] in the foreground, and the Minneapolis skyline in the background.

A lifelong resident of Bagley (population 1,235), he's a little overwhelmed by the Twin Cities metro area (population 2,968,806). He has moved into his office a couple of his finest sculptures, made from welded car parts.

Committee assignments: Committees dealing with agricultural policy, environmental policy and environmental finance. He wishes he could have had economic development or education committees, but he understands that many first-termers had to be accommodated.

What's next: He high-tailed it back to Bagley (250 miles to the northwest) on Friday, where he has a full week-end of meetings with constituent groups scheduled.

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TWIN CITIES

Pawlenty talks education on tour of minority-owned businesses

BY BILL SALISBURY

Pioneer Press JAN 11 '03

During an informal gathering with Asian-American business leaders at Jasmine's Coffee and Tea House in St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood Friday, owner Jasmine Dinh presented a lucky bamboo plant to Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

After thanking Dinh, Pawlenty said, "We're going to need a lot of luck fighting this budget deficit."

That was the gloomy part of a message the new Republican governor delivered to entrepreneurs and community leaders during an inaugural tour of four minority-owned businesses in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

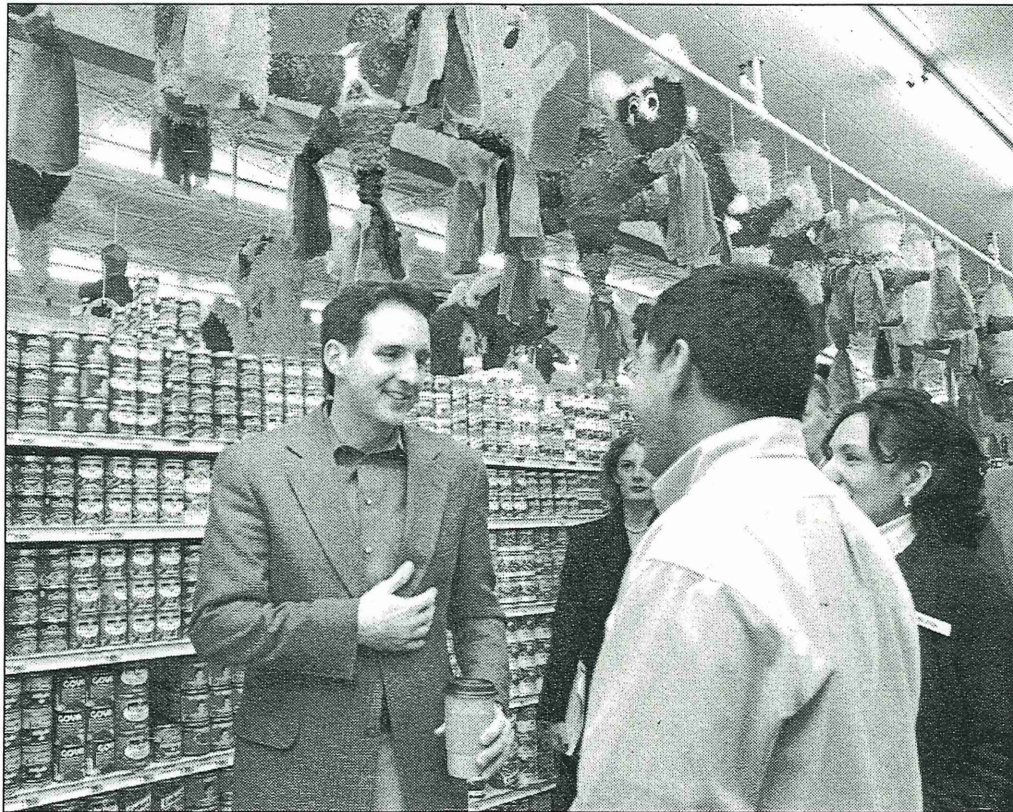
He warned audiences at each stop that he must make painful budget cuts to overcome the state's projected \$4.56 billion budget shortfall over the next 2½ years.

"The next few years are going to be tough. I'm not going to mislead you," he told about 50 members of the Latino community who met with him at El Burrito Mercado on St. Paul's West Side.

But Pawlenty also had an upbeat message for his minority audiences: He vowed to improve educational experiences for students of color, and he promised to try to make Minnesota's tax and regulatory climate better for minority and other businesses.

In addition to Jasmine's and El Burrito Mercado, he visited Siyeza, an African-American frozen food processing plant in North Minneapolis, and Ancient Traders Market, a small retail mall in Minneapolis' American Indian community.

Concordia University economics professor Bruce Corrie organized the tour to introduce Pawlenty to what he called "the entrepreneurship that is transforming Minnesota." Minority business development is one of the fastest-growing seg-



JOE ODEN, PIONEER PRESS

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty visits with El Burrito Mercado manager Tomas Silva and Silva's sister, Milissa Diaz, on Friday in the Latino grocery on St. Paul's West Side. Pawlenty, who also visited a coffeehouse owned by an Asian-American woman, an African-American-owned food processing plant and a retail market in Minneapolis' American Indian community, promised to improve educational experiences for students of color and said he would try to improve the climate for minority-owned businesses in the state.

ments of the Minnesota economy.

"I hope that he learned about the richness and unique spirit of the different communities," Corrie said. "And I hope this was the beginning of some very fruitful relationships. I think he's serious about that."

At Siyeza, Pawlenty told about 60 African-American business and community leaders that the Minneapolis Public Schools' 48 percent graduation rate is unacceptable. "We can't have (economic) opportunity without a good educational system for everybody," he said.

Minneapolis now spends \$11,000 per pupil, the highest amount in the state, and it still isn't getting the job done, he said. He offered to spend \$12,000, \$13,000 or \$15,000 if

that's what it takes to get acceptable results. "We are going to raise the bar in terms of educational accountability," he said.

Reiterating a message he delivered during recent tours of northern and southern Minnesota, he said the state is hemorrhaging well-paying manufacturing jobs, and he wants to stop that by improving the job climate. While the deficit prevents him from cutting taxes, he promised again not to make it worse by increasing taxes.

At each stop, Pawlenty got a warm reception and plenty of gifts, including wild rice from American Indian leaders, a hand-painted Mexican platter from Latino leaders and the lucky bamboo plant from Jasmine's owner Dinh.

"It was an honor to me to

have the governor come here because it shows that he wants to work with all Minnesotans, including the Asian community," she said.

Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, also appreciated Pawlenty's visit, but he said, "this is the professional class in this room, and I would like him to come back and see people like my father, who worked two minimum wage jobs with no Medicare. That community is larger than what we see here today, and those people will be impacted by a lot of the proposals for cuts this coming year. If you're going to cut these people, I'd at least like you to see them and put a face on the cuts."

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Change through participation

Former Senate intern and House candidate, Thao brings a lifetime of experience to his new position

By DAVID MAEDA

While Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul) recently gave a tour of an upstairs bedroom turned into a small art studio in his house in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul, his wife Lee Vang quietly got their 1-year-old daughter, Cyanne, ready for the day ahead.



Rep. Cy Thao

Examples of Thao's award winning artwork adorn the walls throughout the century old house-many of the paintings depicting the experiences of Hmong people as well as personal memories of the artist. The oil paintings are rich in color and visuals-using every bit of the canvas to help tell their stories.

And much of the work may never have come to be if Thao had experienced something different while a college intern with the Minnesota Senate 10 years ago.

Thao left his internship feeling disillusioned with the wheeling and dealing lawmaking process. He said that seeing the behind the scenes compromises necessary in building consensus squelched any further interest in a possible political career at the Capitol.

Instead he turned his energy to his art. Two years ago he was awarded a \$40,000 Bush Artist Fellowship, and he has spent much time since working on a 50-piece collection depicting the migration of the Hmong people. The collection was recently displayed at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

But the desire to help the community at large never left him. He has remained active as a community organizer and ran for a House seat in 2000 as a member of the Independence Party. The University of Minnesota-Morris graduate said his life experience helped teach him the best way to affect change is to be a participant in the process.

"I'm at an age where I'm comfortable enough to say I'm willing to work within the system to change the system," Thao said. "That wasn't the case 10 years ago. I just wanted to

change the system without knowing what I wanted to change. I just wanted change."

Thus a decade after his first exposure to the lawmaking process Thao finds himself a newly elected member anxious to work with others to improve the state. He said being an immigrant helped him learn firsthand how state government works — and sometimes doesn't — for poorer people.

Thao was born in Laos in 1972. His family left the war-torn country for a refugee camp in Thailand when he was 2. They came to the

ways became the head of the household as both of his parents took on multiple jobs. His father now owns a clothing store in St. Paul.

"Another piece of why I'm so interested in being a part of the state Legislature is to be in a position to help decide what direction we want to take those (welfare) programs in," Thao said.

He said one of the priorities for his district is economic development and renovating run-down homes and businesses. He said such a renovation not only helps spur the neighborhood economy but also helps reduce crime.

"For anything to change, you have to be at the forefront and be in a position to be able to make decisions," he said. "So I want to be in a position to maybe help make other peoples' lives better."

Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul) said Thao's

"For anything to change, you have to be at the forefront and be in a position to be able to make decisions. So I want to be in a position to maybe help make other peoples' lives better."

— Rep. Cy Thao

United States six years later. Thao said his father was reluctant to come to America at first, preferring instead to see if the situation in Laos would stabilize enough for the family to return home.

Like many newcomers to the Twin Cities, Thao's first impressions included shock at the cold weather. When his family arrived in March fresh from the tropical Thailand climate he was dressed in a T-shirt, shorts and sandals.

Thao said his parents struggled to make it in their new country having to find the time to learn English in addition to working long hours at minimum wage jobs just to make ends meet. He said without the state's welfare programs his family would have had a difficult time surviving.

But he said his father decided after a few years in the new country that the only way his family could succeed was to become self-supporting.

"I remember we had a meeting and my father sat us down and said, 'OK we're going to lose our benefits, our health benefits, everything. We're going to get off welfare.'"

A teenager at the time, Thao said he in many

background as a community activist will serve him well in the Legislature.

"Cy is very outspoken and assertive. He doesn't hesitate to stand up and speak his mind," Moua said. "He has a very likable personality and the ability to defuse animosity, particularly face to face."

DISTRICT 65A

2002 population: 36,610

Largest city: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Location: Twin Cities

Top concern: "I know a lot of poor people who want to work but are sort of stuck in a trap. If we are going to cut benefits I want to see more programs to help them find jobs — adult education programs — making sure they learn enough English to get jobs. I want to see more of that versus just cutting."

— Rep. Cy Thao

2002 state fair poll results

More than 7,200 fairgoers sound off

The House Public Information Services office again conducted an unofficial poll of state fairgoers at the House of Representatives booth in the Education Building at the Minnesota State Fair. A total of 7,201 fairgoers participated in the poll, which is an informal, unscientific survey on a number of issues that have been discussed in prior legislative sessions and may be topics of discussion again.

Here's a look at the questions and the results.

1. Should the state require public and charter school students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at least once per week?

Yes	49.3%	(3,554)
No	42.9%	(3,088)
Undecided/No Opinion	7.0%	(505)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(54)

2. Should the state invest in commuter rail systems (different from local, light-rail transit) such as the Northstar Corridor line and others?

Yes	64.1%	(4,615)
No	25.2%	(1,814)
Undecided/ No Opinion	9.9%	(713)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(59)

3. A proposal during the 2002 session would have proposed an amendment to the state constitution to dedicate three-sixteenths of 1 percent of sales tax receipts to the environment. Do you support a constitutionally dedicated funding source for the environment?

Yes	61.3%	(4,418)
No	29.8%	(2,147)
Undecided/No Opinion	8.1%	(583)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(53)

4. Should the state's tobacco endowment funds be used to help balance the state's budget during times when officials are projecting a deficit?

Yes	35.1%	(2,529)
No	55.8%	(4,020)
Undecided/No opinion	8.3%	(597)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(55)

5. During the 2002 session, legislators passed a new law allowing the sale and use of novelty fireworks, such as sparklers, snakes, and glowworms. The law specifies that only people older than 18 may purchase fireworks. Do you support making fireworks legal in Minnesota?

Yes	50.1%	(3,610)
No	43.9%	(3,158)
Undecided/No Opinion	5.5%	(398)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(35)



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

A group of citizens takes the 2002 state fair poll at the House of Representatives booth.

5a. Would you support legalizing additional kinds of fireworks in the state?

Yes	37.2%	(2,677)
No	55.5%	(3,999)
Undecided/No Opinion	5.7%	(411)
Left blank/vote not tallied	1.6%	(114)

6. Should Minnesota adopt an initiative and referendum process whereby voters adopt laws or amend the constitution directly on the general election ballot, without first getting legislative approval?

Yes	40.0%	(2,880)
No	45.5%	(3,280)
Undecided/No Opinion	13.1%	(943)
Left blank/vote not tallied	1.4%	(98)

7. A bill was heard in 2002 to create a task force to study the form, style, and design of the state flag. Do you think the state flag needs to be changed?

Yes	7.7%	(554)
No	82.8%	(5,966)
Undecided/ No Opinion	8.4%	(611)
Left blank/vote not tallied	1.0%	(70)

8. Legislators proposed an increase in the state's gas tax for transportation and transit during the 2002 session, but they were unable to reach an agreement on transportation funding. Do you support increasing the gas tax to fund road and transit projects?

Yes	54.2%	(3,903)
No	40.0%	(2,880)
Undecided/ No Opinion	4.8%	(348)
Left blank/vote not tallied	1.0%	(70)

9. Do you support tax breaks or other funding assistance for individuals (contractors, property owners, etc.) to encourage the construction of affordable housing?

Yes	57.6%	(4,159)
No	31.6%	(2,273)
Undecided/ No Opinion	9.9%	(710)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(59)

10. Should auto glass replacement companies be allowed to offer free gifts and other incentives for using their services?

Yes	42.5%	(3,060)
No	45.5%	(3,278)
Undecided/ No Opinion	11.1%	(796)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(67)

11. Should Minnesota's constitutional officers (considered full-time positions) be required to disclose their outside income?

Yes	67.7%	(4,877)
No	23.1%	(1,669)
Undecided/ No Opinion	7.9%	(569)
Left blank/vote not tallied	1.2%	(86)

11a. Should legislators (considered part-time positions) be required to disclose their outside income?

Yes	57.7%	(4,154)
No	33.4%	(2,407)
Undecided/ No Opinion	8.1%	(584)
Left blank/vote not tallied	—	(56)

(All percentages are rounded off to the nearest one-tenth. Percent total votes left blank or not tallied are included for those above 1 percent.)

65A

Civic groups want to involve people

BY JANE BRISSETT
NEWS TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Cher Pao Xiong, his wife and two sons want to learn how to become more active in the community.

The family, which lives in Duluth and immigrated from Thailand 11 years ago, found the opportunity they were looking for Saturday morning at the Citizens in Action workshop, "How to Make a Difference." The event took place at the University of Minnesota Duluth library and was sponsored by the League of Women Voters and 21 other organizations.

The family wanted to learn about voting and about the various organizations represented at the event. "The reason we're here is to listen," said Vong Xiong, Cher Pao's son. "We've never been to anything like this before."

The Xiong family was among 125 participants at the workshop, attending sessions on coalition-building, how to become involved in the political process, what elected officials do, and how to recruit and be an effective board member.

ical process, what elected officials do, and how to recruit and be an effective board member.

• State Sen. Becky Lourey, DFL-Kerrick, and Rep. Cy Thao DFL-St. Paul, spoke to the group and participants were invited at the end of the day to chat one-on-one with elected officials from the Legislature, St. Louis County Board of Commissioners, Duluth School Board and superintendent and the Duluth City Council and mayor.

A recent study by the League of Women Voters showed that Americans are connected to and involved with their communities, but the form of that involvement has changed. Much of it is informal — helping a neighbor, for example.

"The more people feel like they can make a difference in solving problems, the more likely they are to be in-

See CIVICS, Page 3C

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CIVICS | Groups want more community involvement

From Page 1C

involved in community activities and issues," the study called "Working Together: Community Involvement in America," said.

That's how the Minnesota Senior Federation's Coalition to Lower Drug Prices was able to work with groups such as the Duluth YWCA, Steelworkers Local 1028 and the Catholic Diocese of Duluth. By refram-

ing the issue, making it clear that drug prices affect the cost of health insurance and people of all ages, it became a broader issue. "Suddenly everyone has a self-interest," Buddy Robinson of the federation said in the coalition-building workshop.

Lobbying with a group at the state Capitol has an effect on lawmakers, Rosie Loeffler-Kemp of Clean Water Action told the workshop on citizen

involvement. "Legislators will tell you over and over again, when people from Duluth take a day off work, travel for five hours, go their office and get in their face, it's very, very effective," she said.

This is the fifth year the Citizens in Action workshop has been held in Duluth. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in

government, said Joyce Benson, the organization's president.

"This (workshop) fits perfectly with our mission," she said.

JANE BRISSETT covers St. Louis County and nonprofits. She can be reached weekdays at (218) 720-4161, (800) 456-8282 or by e-mail at jbrissett@duluthnews.com.

Mixed reviews for State of the State address

St. Paul Legal Ledger

BY DAVID KNUTSON

News Editor

2-10-03

Freshman lawmakers gave mixed reviews to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's first State of the State address last week, with Republicans hailing it as a "home run" and DFLers saying they wanted more details.

In his speech from the House chamber Thursday, Pawlenty presented a sobering picture of the state's current \$4.56 billion revenue shortfall, which he referred to as "the Incredible Hulk of budget deficits."

• See Primary Source on page 8 for the complete transcript of Gov. Pawlenty's State of the State speech.

He also evoked historical examples of Minnesotans' courage — such as the First Minnesota Regiment's stand at Gettysburg and those who were part of the Bataan Death March in World War II. "This crisis will be only the most recent chapter in

Minnesota's history of courage," Pawlenty said.

The governor laid out a series of initiatives — including reforming education, establishing a task force to address growing health-care costs, creating an office to coordinate crime victim and anti-violence programs, and improving the state's business climate — that he said not only meet today's challenges but go about "rebuilding Minnesota's future."

Pawlenty also reiterated his pledge not to raise taxes, saying the state has a spending problem rather than a revenue problem.

Mixed Reviews continued on page 10

Mixed Reviews: 'I've heard State of the State messages in the past that were really kind of in your face. ... [Gov. Pawlenty] didn't pander to that. He tried to stay above it and cast a vision.'

Continued from page 1

He noted that Democratic governors in Michigan and Wisconsin have made similar pledges as they seek to meet their states' fiscal problems.

• Rep. Michael Beard, R-Shakopee, an acquaintance of the governor from Beard's days in municipal politics, said he noticed how Pawlenty has grown to meet the challenges of his office.

"I've known Tim for 12 years," Beard said. "Here's my friend, my guy, standing there as the governor giving a speech, a great speech."

The tone of the governor's speech also was significant, Beard said, compared with the rhetoric former Gov. Jesse Ventura often used.

"I've heard State of the State messages in the past that were really kind of in your face," he said. "Especially in the past four years. It was kind of a 'Take that, Legislature' message. (Gov. Pawlenty) didn't pander to that. He tried to stay above it and cast a vision."

Beard also noted that Pawlenty's speech was an example of his plain-spoken communication style.

"He still hasn't lost that ability to connect with regular Joes," he said.

• But Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, said he thought the governor's talk about no new taxes was disingenuous.

He noted that if the state makes cuts to local government aid programs, cities and counties likely will be forced to raise local taxes.

"In reality, it's still a tax increase," said Thao, who noted that his own property taxes have increased since the 2001 property tax reforms. "The reality is taxes are going up."

He also questioned Pawlenty's call for changing the name of the Department of Children, Families and Learning to the Department of Education.

"Right away you can see the cost right there in just changing the name," Thao said. "How do you justify that in a budget crisis?"

• Rep. Paul Thissen, DFL-Minneapolis, said that while

Gov. Pawlenty addressed those people facing economic difficulties, he wanted to know more about how they would be impacted by the governor's proposals.

"I think he was short on a lot of details about how we're going to accomplish a lot of the things he talked about," Thissen said. "I hope the budget solution he is going to propose doesn't undermine the foundation of opportunity we've created in this state."

Pawlenty also mentioned he planned to create a bipartisan task force to be headed by former U.S. Sen. Dave Durenberger to look at the state's rising health-care costs, which are eating up an increasing portion of the state's budget.

Thissen said he supported the idea.

"It makes sense to put a lot of folks to work on that," he said. "There are a lot of areas in terms of long-term care that we need to look at," he said.

• Sen. Brian LeClair, R-Woodbury, said Pawlenty's efforts to build bipartisanship might not prove fruitful in the Senate.

"It served to highlight what an obstructionist Sen. (John) Hottinger is being," said LeClair, referring to talks aimed at balancing the remaining 2003 budget, which broke down Thursday night. "I came here a month ago with high expectations we could work together and get things done. We can't even get this little job done."

As a result of the failure to reach a compromise on cuts of \$356 million and a reserve of between \$129 million and \$136 million, Gov. Pawlenty will use an unallotted procedure that allows him to make cuts in state government himself.

LeClair called Pawlenty's address a "home run," noting that the more people hear from the new governor the more his stature grows. And he agreed with Thissen that the governor's mention of health-care costs was significant.

"I'm sure people are looking for some progress from us here in the Legislature on that issue," LeClair said. ■

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ST. PAUL

Protesters denounce plan for normalizing trade with Laos

Local immigrants cite human rights

PIONEER PRESS MAY 7 03

BY AETNA SMITH
Pioneer Press

About 50 protesters chanted their opposition to normalized trade relations with the communist nation of Laos on Tuesday while the U.S. ambassador to the country met with officials and Hmong businesspeople in St. Paul.

Demonstrators shouted, "No NTR to Laos ... what do we want? Human rights!" while the meeting was taking place at Metropolitan State University.

The protesters, most of them Hmong Americans, were spurred to action by a visit from U.S. Ambassador Douglas Hartwick, who was promoting the Bush administration's support for normalized trade relations with Laos. Hartwick was joined by U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., about 20 Hmong businesspeople and other officials.

Before the meeting, McCollum and Hartwick stopped at several Hmong businesses along University Avenue in St. Paul to talk with owners and

customers.

Hartwick has been traveling to parts of the country with large Hmong and Laotian communities in an effort to build support for the administration's trade plans. Minnesota and Wisconsin are home to 76,000 Hmong, more than any other region in the nation.

Supporters of normalized trade with Laos contend that such a move would open up Laotian society and lead to human rights reforms. They note that Laos is one of the few countries without normalized trade relations with the United States, meaning Laos' products face prohibitively high tariffs.

But protesters Tuesday said most Laotian and Hmong in the Twin Cities believe the Lao People's Democratic Republic must first put an end to human rights abuses and other atrocities before it is granted normalized trade relations.

State Rep. Cy Thao, who joined the protesters and later attended the meeting with Hartwick, said the Laos government has never stopped target-

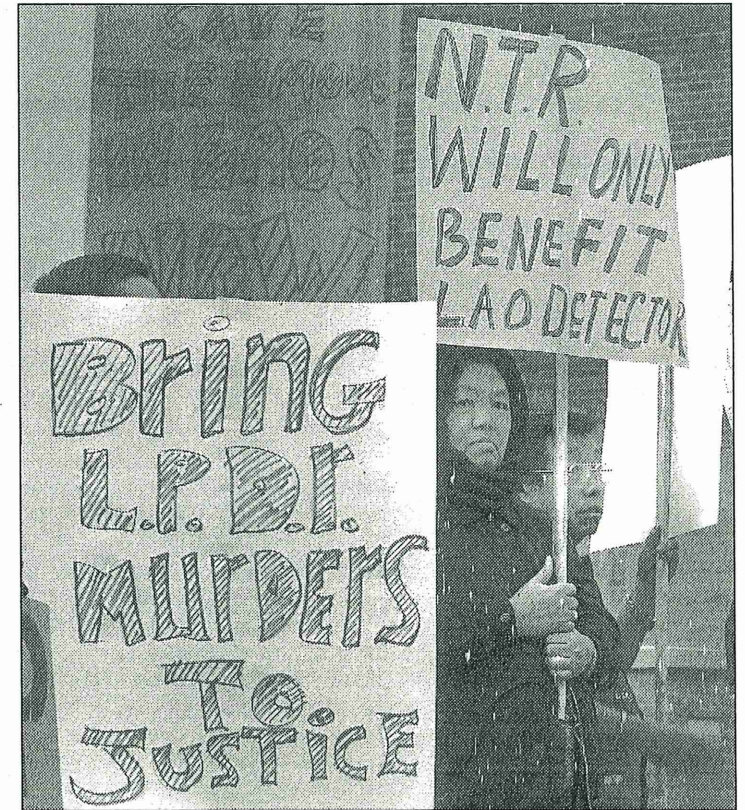
"I do not see cases of genocide, of poisonings, but what I do see is a very poor country."

DOUGLAS HARTWICK
U.S. ambassador

ing members of the Hmong ethnic minority because they fought with CIA-backed forces during the Vietnam War.

Some protesters said normalized trade will enable Laos to beef up its military and increase its assaults against the Hmong.

"NTR to Laos will give the Lao elite more power to suppress our people that are Hmong and Laotian," said Stephen Vang, leader of the United Lao-Hmong Congress for Democracy group. "In the remote provinces, the people are under heavy attack, and according to the State Department's Human Rights Practices report, the government has one of the most human rights oppressive regimes in the



SHERRI LAROSE, PIONEER PRESS

Kao Lor, left, and Value Vang protest outside Metropolitan State University in St. Paul on Tuesday as Douglas Hartwick, the U.S. ambassador to Laos, appeared inside to tout normalizing trade relations with the communist country.

world."

In the meeting with McCollum and the business people, Hartwick acknowledged that human rights abuses continue, but he said more trade could improve the situation.

"I do not see cases of genocide, of poisonings, but what I

do see is a very poor country," Hartwick said. "They need more opportunities to promote trade. The picture is not as dire as some would have you to believe."

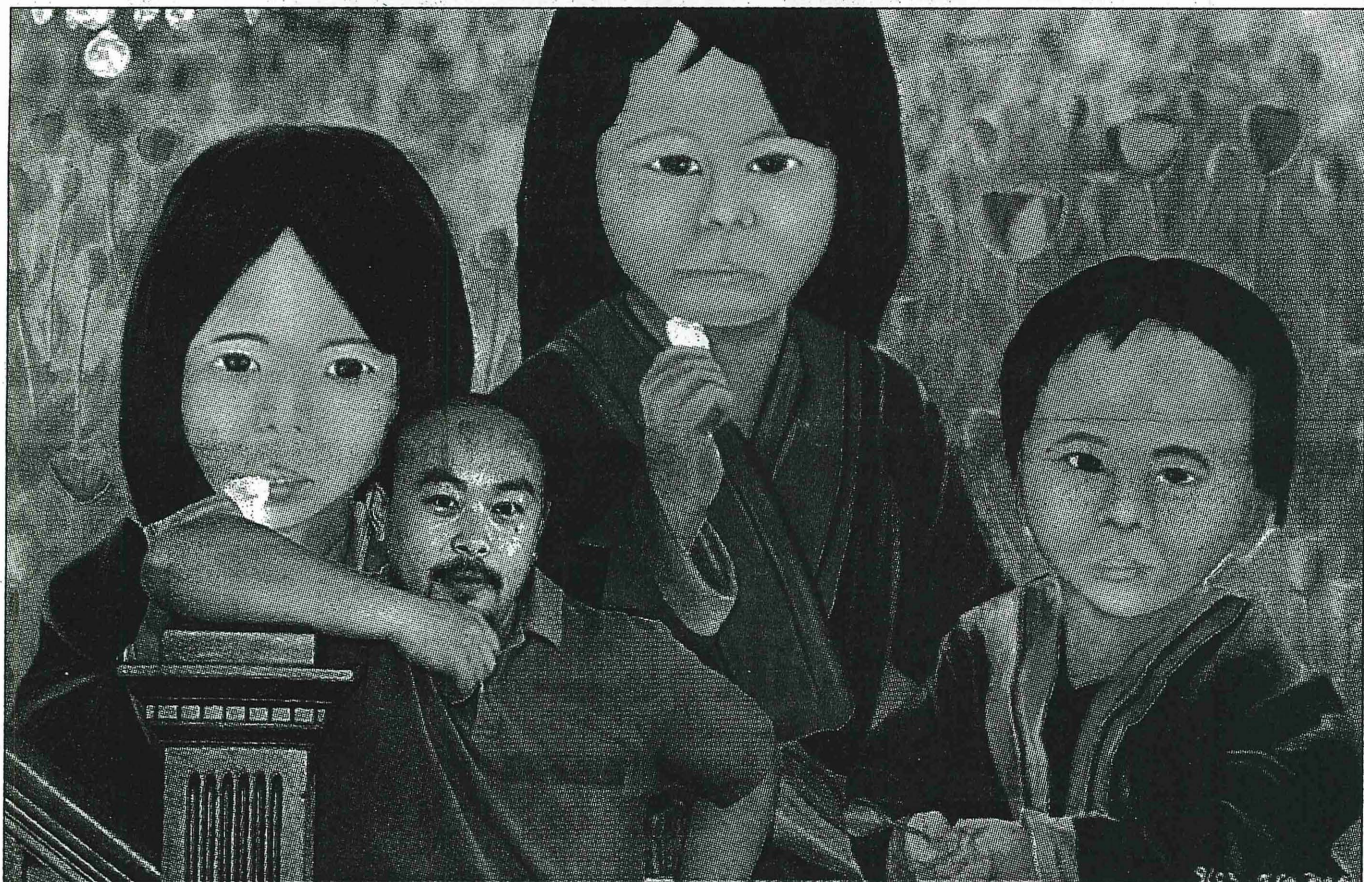
Aetna Smith can be reached at asmith@pioneerpress.com or

654

'New day' for exiled Hmong

PP 12-19-03
A U.S. decision to accept 15,000 refugees from a Thailand camp could lead to many of them settling in the Twin Cities.

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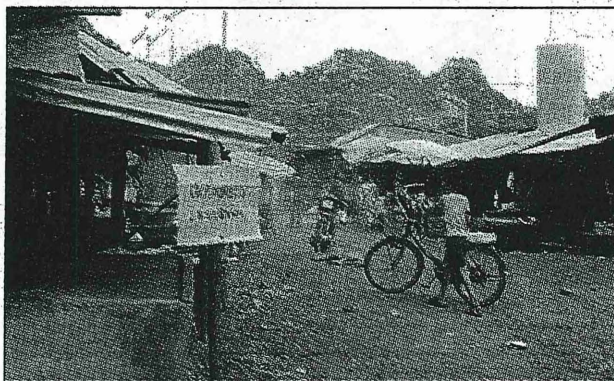
JOE ODEN, PIONEER PRESS

"This is a real opportunity for them to live out the American dream," Cy Thao says of the U.S. decision to accept Hmong refugees living in a Thailand settlement. The state representative from St. Paul poses with his painting inspired by a visit to see relatives there.

BY TODD NELSON
Pioneer Press

The next and perhaps last wave of Hmong and Lao refugees — more than 15,000 who fled Laos after the Vietnam War — will reach the United States next year, and many likely will end up in the Twin Cities.

They will come for jobs and educational opportunities, both lacking in the steel-shack refugee compound outside a Buddhist temple where many have struggled to survive for decades, Hmong community leaders said. They also will want to rejoin relatives in St. Paul, home to more than 24,000 Hmong, the most of any city in the country, according to the 2000 census. Thousands of Hmong moved to Minnesota from California and other states for



TIM MONTGOMERY, SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
The Wat Tham Krabok refugee settlement, shown here in 1998, is now home to some 15,000 Hmong and Lao refugees in Thailand.

similar reasons in the past decade.

"A lot of them will end up here because the community has such good opportunities in the Twin Cities area," said Ilean Her, executive director of the Council of Asian Pacific Minnesotans.

"Even now, the message to families in California and other places is, 'Come to Minnesota.' This community is more responsive to our needs and it will be easier for them to adjust and to thrive and prosper here."

The State Department announced the resettlement program Wednesday night. Refugees who had registered with the Thai government and were living at the Wat Tham Krabok camp as of August will be eligible to apply. Registration will begin in February and continue for a limited time.

Refugees will not have to pay to register or be considered for resettlement, contrary to some rumors.

Gus Avenido, state refugee coordinator,

'NEW DAY' FOR HMONG, 14A

(over)

'New day' for Hmong

(continued)

said news of the impending influx came as a surprise to him and representatives of volunteer resettlement agencies such as Lutheran Social Services, who met Thursday about the potential impact. He is waiting for more information from the State Department to find out the housing, employment and other needs of the newcomers.

The new arrivals likely would mark the end of an era of Hmong immigration to Minnesota dating to the mid-1970s, when their homeland fell to communists, that has helped to reshape St. Paul neighborhoods and brought a number of Hmong businesses to St. Paul's Rice Street, University Avenue and elsewhere.

The CIA had recruited thousands of Hmong, an ethnic minority living in the mountain jungles of northern Laos, to serve in a secret army battling communists in Laos and in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Those at Wat Tham Krabok temple in central Thailand, about 60 miles north of Bangkok, essentially have been left stranded, though not forgotten.

Lee Pao Xiong, a longtime Hmong activist who has advocated for a resolution to the plight of the refugees, said he estimated that 60 percent — some 9,000 — eventually would settle in Minnesota.

"It's a new day," said Lee Pao Xiong, who visited the temple compound in 1987 and whose mother visited family there this week. "Some have been in the camps for over 30 years. Some of them pretty much grew up there. Now that most of the older folks who wanted to stay have died off, a lot of the younger people are saying, 'I want out of this.'"

✓ Cy Thao, a state representative from St. Paul, said community members are elated that long-lost relatives will have the chance to join them here. He recalled visiting many cousins at the temple compound in 1999, some of them born there.

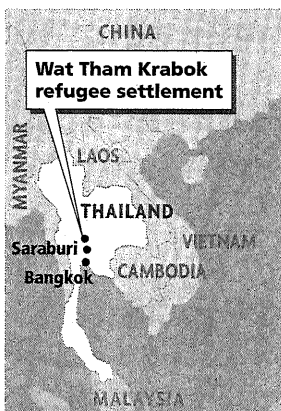
"I have a lot of cousins there who are my age who don't know anything other than the refugee camp," said Cy Thao, 31. "I hope this is an opportunity for them to come to this country and start their lives. Probably not for themselves but for their kids. ... This is a real opportunity for them to live out the American dream."

Life in the chaotic compound has been anything but that, Cy Thao said. Living quarters have dirt floors; sewage and livestock are nearby. Some earn \$2 a day doing manual labor, but many depend on money from relatives.

When he last visited, only one family could afford an electrical connection. Others used



TIM MONTGOMERY, SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Girls gathered at a vendor's stall at the Wat Tham Krabok refugee settlement in Thailand in this 1998 photo.



PIONEER PRESS

candles after night fell. Cy Thao said he spent \$20 to buy one of his cousins a car battery and light bulb to illuminate his family's living quarters.

"It's a pretty desperate situation," Cy Thao said. "Imagine camping forever."

For all the optimism the news brings, settling thousands of newcomers also would present a challenge to volunteer resettlement agencies, Hmong assistance organizations, and state and local governments. They will need houses, job training and English language classes.

The potential for new arrivals has the attention of the St. Paul public schools, where Hmong students account for almost a

third of total enrollment.

"It will definitely have some impact on our system," said Steve Schellenberg, the district's director of compliance. "But that will be restricted by availability of housing."

The school district, which now has about 40 percent of its students in English Language Learner programs, is better positioned now to deal with an influx of new immigrants than it was with the first wave of Hmong in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Schellenberg said.

✓ State Sen. Mee Moua of St. Paul, who also was lobbying for a solution to the temple compound stalemate, said Minnesota is much better equipped to receive these refugees today than when the first Hmong arrives. She said she expected the federal government, as it has done when past waves of immigrants moved here, would help cover the cost. A number of Hmong-operated assistance organizations are ready to help meet the refugees' needs.

"We have the infrastructure today, that's why I think it would be a pretty smooth and seamless transition, since we're already providing the services," Mee Moua said.

John Welbes contributed to this report. Todd Nelson can be reached at toddnelson@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5575. +

65A

Officials plan bill to thwart 'equity stripping'

STARTING IN DEC 03

By Dane Smith
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Legislative proposals aimed at thwarting "equity stripping" — schemes that deprive foreclosure-threatened homeowners of their equity — were announced Tuesday by Minnesota Attorney General Mike Hatch and two DFL legislators.

Joined by three former homeowners who said they lost their homes and their equity to agents posing as rescuers, Hatch said that the state's role has been limited to acting after the fact and that "proactive legislation" is needed.

Sen. Ellen Anderson and Rep. Cy Thao, both of St. Paul, said they will introduce bills that require "foreclosure purchasers" to be licensed and subject to regulation. Purchasers also would be subject to at least a half-dozen new requirements, including more complete disclosure and use of independent closing agents.

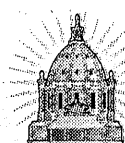
As described by Hatch's office, equity-stripping typically works like this:

Equity strippers comb public records to find homes threatened with foreclosure. They contact the homeowner, claiming to be mortgage specialists who can rescue the homeowner and find lenders willing to lend money based on equity in the home. Sometimes a "closing" on a new loan is scheduled, and the process is strung out so that other options, such as selling the house to recoup at least some equity, cannot be pursued.

Then the agent says that the new mortgage deal fell through, and the homeowner is talked into deeding the home to the agent, often in return for a lease-back arrangement and an option to buy the home back. But the homeowner typically finds that the payments are higher than they were under the original mortgage. When owners default on those payments, they are evicted and find that their equity is gone too.

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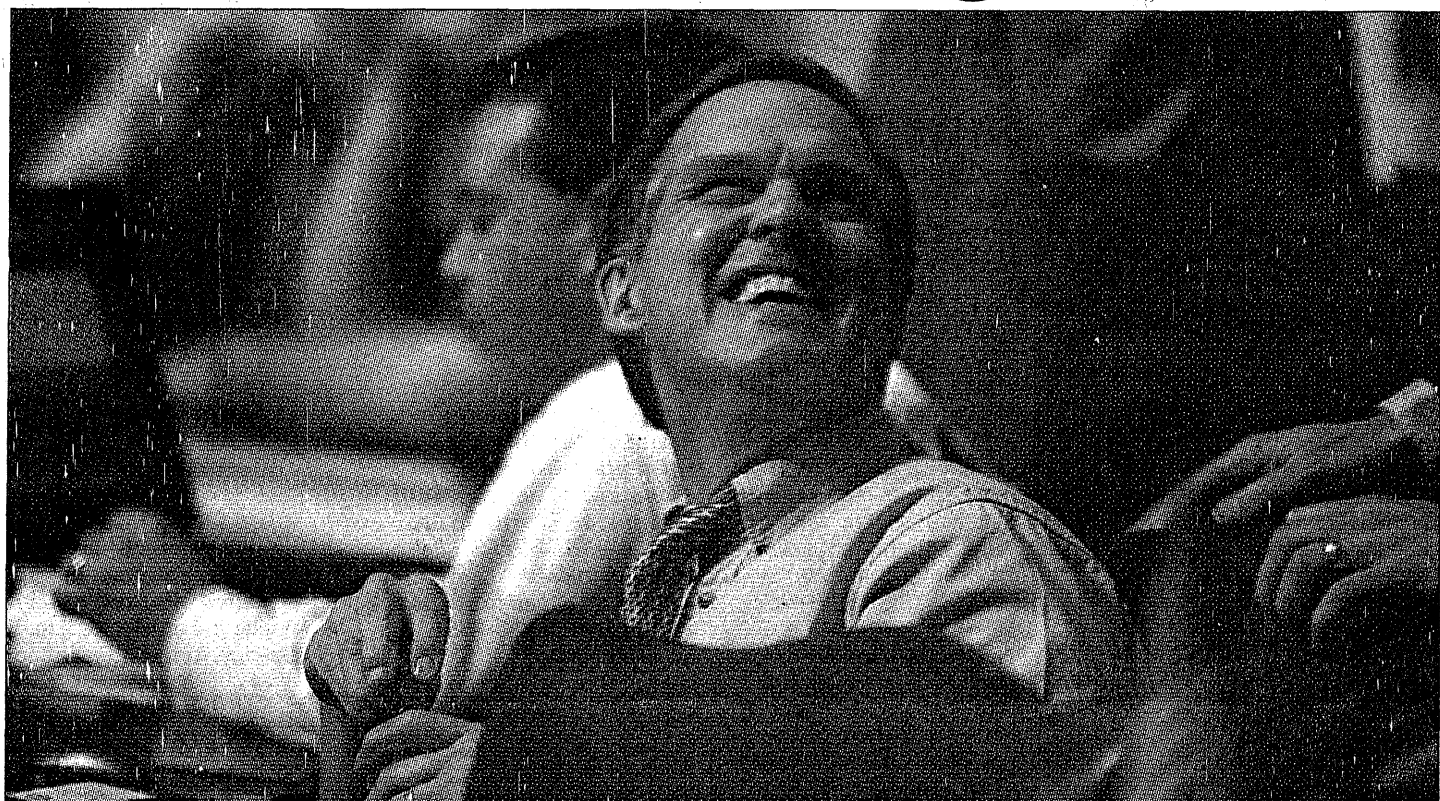
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2003
Legislature

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New kids in a tough town



Photographs by Bruce Bisping/Star Tribune

Even amid the gravity of the state's financial situation, there's still time for laughs on the House floor. Freshman legislator Doug Lindgren, R-Bagley, joked with colleagues recently during an afternoon session. Lindgren has taken some heat from residents of his largely rural district for supporting the Republican budget-cutting plan. But he said he has worked to allay a number of constituent concerns.

Freshmen analyze bruising session

STAR TRIBUNE APR 27 '03

By Dane Smith

Star Tribune Staff Writer

The darkest days of the legislative session for rookie Republican Rep. Doug Lindgren came in February, as he faced neighbors and friends back home, some of them tearfully asking him how he could vote for cuts to Meals on Wheels for seniors, for laying off nursing-home workers or for slashing their foster grandparent programs.

Lindgren, a gas station owner in Bagley, figures he's gotten 40 calls and e-mails a day from his constituents in rural northwestern Minnesota, many of them seeking relief from the Republican budget plan. But he has convinced himself and many of the folks in his district that it's not that bad, that the Republican-controlled House is restoring some funding for the least popular cuts and that many reports of budget cuts were exaggerated.

Despite his suspicions that rural Minnesota took too much of the burden

of budget cuts, and despite living in a district that could easily return to the DFL column in 2004, Lindgren said he's standing by Gov. Tim Pawlenty and the basic Republican budget plan and opposing state tax increases.

"We've worked through a lot of constituent concerns, and it's going to come out all right," Lindgren said.

"There may be a lot of us [freshman Republicans] who won't be back, but the state will be out of its problems, and it will be because of us."

With four months down and three weeks to go, the experiences of the Legislature's largest freshman class since the early 1970s (about one-third of the 201 legislators are first-termers) provides illuminating insight into a potentially historic session.

FRESHMEN continues on B4

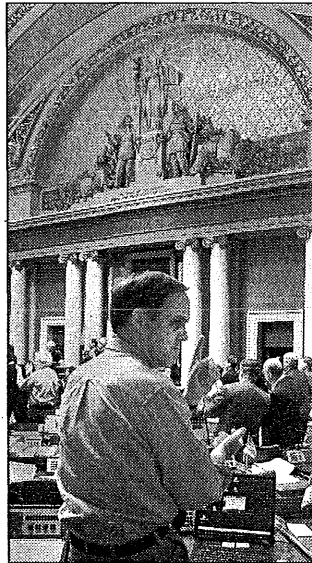
ALSO INSIDE:

► What's happening at the Legislature B5



A pair of sodas occupied Doug Lindgren's desk on a busy day. Long session hours have given him a lot of fodder for study and growth. One lesson, he said, is that of being a small piece of a big machine.

COVER



Bruce Bisping/Star Tribune
Chats on the House floor help keep Doug Lindgren in the loop.

FRESHMEN FROM B1 *Bagley legislator has faith in state and the GOP class*

The Star Tribune last week interviewed all six of the House rookies it profiled for readers in January — four Republicans and two DFLers — for their latest impressions of a bruising, watershed session.

Those in less affluent districts tended to say that budget angst outweighed all else. Others, in higher-income suburban districts, said that their constituents were not so upset and that they are not wavering in opposition to tax increases.

Several reported that the political game in St. Paul was much rougher and meaner than they expected, expressing

surprise at the personal attacks and criticisms they received in the news media and elsewhere. And several also reported unexpected satisfaction and joys in their new jobs.

Little cog, big wheel

Lindgren's wife, Colleen, clerk-treasurer of their hometown of Bagley, has passed on plenty of complaints and questions to her husband about the potential effects of budget cuts on city services and government.

Sometimes, it gets to where they just don't talk about budget matters, he said, chuckling.

Despite his continued sup-

port of Pawlenty, Lindgren said he thinks suburbanites just don't understand the strains of living in a district of small towns and farms struggling to survive, with little or no job growth.

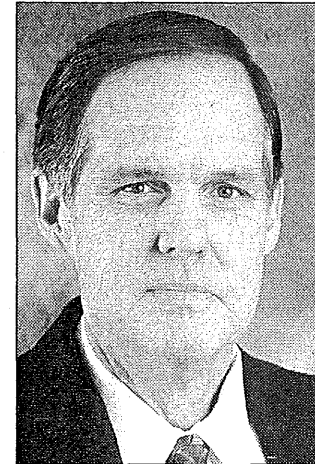
"You hear people say, 'Well, you can cut one policeman.' That's 25 percent of our police force in Bagley. You cut 25 percent of the force in Eden Prairie, and tell me there wouldn't be anything said."

Another rough moment for Lindgren came two weeks ago, when veteran DFL legislators from northern Minnesota cut him to ribbons in a House floor debate over a logging bill he had introduced.

"They got a rookie freshman in their crosshairs, and when I said I wasn't sure on some details, it was Katie bar the door," Lindgren said.

The best part of the job, he

Doug Lindgren, R-Bagley



Age: 52

Home and family: Bagley; married, three children.

Education: B.S., elementary education, Bemidji State University.

Occupation: Owns full-service gas station in Bagley.

2002 campaign themes and top priorities entering session:

Holding down taxes, tax-free zones for distressed areas, abortion restrictions, "concealed-carry" for handguns.

um and Como Park.

"The learning is what it's all about. You also learn in a hurry that you're a little cog in a great big wheel."

said, has been the learning, particularly the first-class field trips to such places as the Minnesota Zoo, the Science Muse-

Dane Smith is at
 rdsmith@startribune.com.

THE STAR TRIBUNE HALF-DOZEN

Our State Capitol team has been following six freshman legislators this session as they evolve from private citizens to seasoned policymakers. With three weeks to go before the May 19 adjournment deadline, we check on how it's been going.

Michael Beard, R-Shakopee

He'd like more of that old collegial try

In the beginning, Rep. Michael Beard, R-Shakopee, was impressed by the courtliness of the legislative duel.

"Yes, we disagreed," he said. "We'd argue about philosophical things — the budget and policy. But then we'd all go down to Lendways or the Kelly Inn, and we were friends. There at least was a sense of camaraderie."

All that changed, he said, when DFLers pressed an ethics complaint against Rep. Arlon Lindner, R-Corcoran, and "extreme partisanship" took over.

Beard blamed "scab-pickers" who wouldn't let go of the issue. "They're not about dealing; they're not about building bridges," he said. "They're about finding chinks or scratches or nicks, and picking at them."

To be fair, Beard said, Republicans also have offended their opponents. Some trust was lost, he said, when House leaders attached the "Woman's Right to Know" abortion bill to a bill on circus- es to get it to the Senate floor.

"When we tried to slip it by them, I think we . . . scuffed up some of the cooperation," he said.

But he's forging ahead on his agenda of "laying some blacktop, guarding every life, upholding Second Amendment rights and protecting taxpayers' hard-earned dollars."

As a freshman, he's had to wait his turn. A bill he pushed to dedicate motor vehicle sales taxes to transportation and raise license tab fees by about \$180 million a year to pay for



Age: 49

Home and family:

Shakopee; married, four children.

Education: Bible missions, Bethany College of Missions; entrepreneurial classes, University of St. Thomas.

Occupation: Owner of Beard Communications, publisher of Minnesota Christian Chronicle.

2002 campaign themes and top priorities entering session: Road construction, waiting period for abortions, a ban on "partial-birth" abortions, upholding right to bear arms.

road projects was benched.

And as the "Christian Chronicle guy" — his company publishes the newspaper — there are some things he'd rather his mother didn't know: for example, his sponsorship of the liquor omnibus bill (he got "snookered" into doing it, he says) and his support for a "racino" (one way of spreading the budget pain).

"Lord willing, and the voters willing, I'll have a long and distinguished career here," he said.

Sarah T. Williams

Karen Klinzing, R-Woodbury

She's lined up solidly behind the governor

Rep. Karen Klinzing is toeing the line — and so are her constituents.

The Republican from Woodbury entered office fully supporting the idea that Minnesota has a spending problem that has caused its \$4.23 billion deficit. Like Gov. Tim Pawlenty, she has pledged not to raise taxes, to pursue the concept of contracting out some government services and to enact a wage freeze for state government workers.

"I'm more resolved than ever about keeping with the Pawlenty plan," she said.

The process of debating the deficit and proposed cuts has been disappointing to Klinzing, who has found the complaints about the impact of cuts one-sided.

"Most of the people who testify are used to government, used to working with government, because they work with it every day," she said. "There's no one on the other side, here to say, 'Here's what it is for those of us who never come down to the Capitol, never work down there and don't know where everything is.' It makes for a very lopsided perspective for legislators."

A teacher in Bloomington, Klinzing also remains resolute about repealing the Profile of Learning state graduation standard and on requiring more accountability for school districts.

The chief author of several education bills, she's also sponsoring levy limits for some Metropolitan Council funding, and a measure that would authorize \$40 million in bonds to



Age: 32

Home and family: Woodbury; married, two children.

Education: B.S., University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Occupation: High school social studies teacher.

2002 campaign themes and top priorities entering session: Better transportation system, no new taxes, replacement of Profile of Learning, more flexibility in school choice, tax credits in education for more "market-driven" influence in schools.

improve the interchange on Interstate Hwy. 94 at Century Av. and McKnight Rd. near the 3M headquarters.

But it has been the rather innocuous duty of sponsoring legislation to expand liquor licenses that has drawn the most ire, much of it coming via e-mail and in letters to the editor, calling her immoral for supporting alcohol use.

"I was really ready for rational, maybe even heated, debates on issues, but I wasn't ready for personal attacks on my character and personality," she said.

Mark Brunswick

Mike Nelson, DFL-Brooklyn Park

Turns out, partisanship is no party

Mike Nelson leaned back in his leather chair in the House chamber recently and scanned a manual on House rules.

An abortion bill had just been attached to a circus bill. And Nelson, a labor organizer well-versed in union meeting rules, was baffled by this parliamentary maneuver.

"I wish they would bring the bills forward and take an up or down vote on them, instead of trying to play these games," said Nelson, a DFLer from Brooklyn Park.

"I didn't think it would be so partisan here," he added. "Everyone had said there was a lot of give and take across the aisles, a lot of regional votes instead of straight up and down the party line."

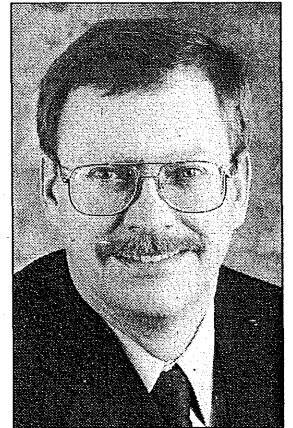
"The partisanship is what has surprised me most."

It's been a session of mixed blessings for Nelson, who considers himself a political moderate. He says he's met people on both sides of the aisle whom he respects and enjoys. But when it comes to committees and floor votes, legislators generally part ways.

Nelson enjoyed bipartisan support on a bill he sponsored to lower hunting license fees for archers younger than 18.

But his bill that would label the hiring practices of some independent contractors as unfair trade practices has not gotten two-party support.

Nelson said he had anticipated the long hours and detail work of his new job. But he didn't expect to become an



Age: 48

Home and family: Brooklyn Park; married, three children.

Education: Graduate, Hennepin Technical College.

Occupation: Carpenter; field agent for Lakes and Plains Regional Carpenters and Joiners.

Campaign themes and top priorities entering session: Equitable education funding, crime prevention, good jobs and wages, affordable health care and prescription drugs.

expert on obscure subjects.

"One day we heard a grass seed bill in committee," he recalled. "I spent 2½ hours learning more about grass seed than I ever wanted to know."

Nelson said the high point of the session has been watching his first bill pass committees.

The low point?

"I don't think I've had a real low point," he said. "I don't think I've done anything totally stupid yet — or at least that someone has pointed out to me."

Jean Hopfensperger

(over)

Dan Severson, R-Sauk Rapids

He's learning lessons while on the (busy) job

For Rep. Dan Severson, R-Sauk Rapids, the state budget hasn't been a scorching political potato.

"What I'm hearing from my constituents is support for where we're going," he said. "We've got good leadership. I think there's still creative ways we can cut government."

But Severson, a retired fighter pilot who has worked as a substitute teacher, said he has been disappointed by lack of support from education leaders for what he considers generous school funding in Republican budget proposals.

Meanwhile, he has been preoccupied with a controversial proposal from Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis to build a 95-bed facility in Sartell, in his district. Although planners envision creating 300 jobs, Severson declined to sponsor a bill to move the project forward. Instead, he is pushing for a study of the 1984 statewide moratorium on hospital construction that landed the Sartell issue in the Legislature.

After getting more than 750 letters, cards, e-mails and phone calls on the subject, he



said he has doubts about the economic impact of the project. And the experience has made him more careful about promising his support to anyone.

"Unless it's a moral issue that goes to the heart of my being, there aren't a lot of easy answers," he said. "Very often things aren't black and white. I've learned to keep noncommittal until I've had a chance to weigh all the options."

He's found that the moral issues can be troubling, too. As a co-sponsor of Rep. Arlon

Age: 48
Home and family: Sauk Rapids; married, two children.
Education: B.S., St. Cloud State University.
Occupation: Substitute teacher, business consultant, retired military fighter pilot.
2002 campaign themes and top priorities entering session: Education, economic development, initiatives against abortion, school accountability, economic development, transportation improvements, including the proposed Northstar commuter rail line between Rice and Minneapolis.

Lindner's bill to repeal civil rights protections for gays and lesbians, he's been attacked in an editorial in the St. Cloud Times ("an extremely liberal newspaper," Severson says) and hounded by critics.

"I'm a firm believer that it's a behavioral issue that doesn't belong in the civil rights arena," he said. "I've been called a bigot, a racist, uneducated, 'shame on you.' I'd hope for more tolerance from people who profess to be tolerant."

Conrad deFiebre

Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul

He wears worry behind the ever-present smile

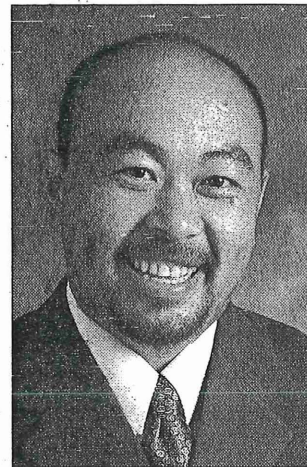
Few districts would be rocked as hard by proposed budget cuts as DFL Rep. Cy Thao's St. Paul neighborhoods, home to many low-income households and Asian immigrants, just west of the State Capitol.

Thao is an always-smiling presence and one of the more popular freshmen, but his grin fades as he ticks off all the ways his people would be affected.

"The LGA [Local Government Aid] cuts reduce police coverage, so you worry about the safety to start with. Then we could be closing a rec center, reducing library hours, summer schools, and we'll have fewer summer jobs." Too many kids would be left alone this summer with nothing to do while both parents work, he said.

And that could be a big problem. The Asian communities in both Minneapolis and St. Paul already are plagued by violence and drive-by shootings lately, Thao said.

As a DFLer, he said, "I worry a lot, but being in such a small minority [Republicans have solid control of the House],



there's not a lot I can do. ... This is the biggest frustration."

He takes comfort in working on little things where he can make a difference:

He has gotten some publicity from sponsoring a bill that would give legal recognition to marriages performed by Hmong religious leaders. One of his biggest surprises is that DFL colleagues have put up more obstacles to the bill than Republicans, he said.

He's also going to get a bill passed to authorize a war me-

Age: 31
Home and family: St. Paul; married, one child.
Education: B.A., political science and B.A., studio art, University of Minnesota, Morris.
Occupation: Artist, actor, teacher, cofounder of Center for Hmong Arts and Talent.
2002 campaign themes and top priorities entering session: Affordable housing, safe neighborhoods, education funding, small-business development.

morial for Hmong veterans. He got a flash of notoriety for sponsoring a bill to legalize marriages between first cousins, but he dropped that one. And he's proudest of work he did behind the scenes to prevent welfare benefits from being taken away from noncitizens who are permanent residents.

"But the hardest part is people come to you thinking you really can do something [on major programs]," he said, mischievously adding, "so I always give them the names, and numbers and e-mails of Republican members."

Dane Smith

1054

Cy Thao updating marriage bill

By Tom LaVenture
Asian American Press

ST PAUL (February 25, 2003) — State Representative Cy Thao (DFL-65A), in his first term, is gaining more support for the Hmong Marriage Bill among his fellow legislators. He has also removed his name as coauthor of a separate bill supporting the repeal of the prohibition on first cousin marriages, because, he said too many



State Rep.
Cy Thao,
DFL, 65A.

people were linking it with the Hmong Marriage Bill.

The Hmong Marriage Bill, H.F.119, as introduced to the 83rd Legislative Session on Jan 21, 2003, is the third such legislation to amend marriage statutes and allow

the Mej koob, or a member of the extended family that serves as a marriage broker or negotiator in the traditional Hmong wedding, to solemnize a union legally, and prevent traditional Hmong from having to go to the Justice of the Peace, or to a faith they do or do not practice in addition to their cultural traditions to have the marriage performed.

Senator Mee Moua entered legislation in 2002 only to withdraw it to assess community response and to build consensus. Rep. Thao is the author of the 2003 House legislation, with coauthor Representatives' Mullery, Lesch, Atkins, Mahoney, Ellison, Wardlow, and Walker. As of this week the bill is still in the Civil Law Committee.

"Senator Moua and I are still in discussion," said Thao. "I am going to reintroduce a new version and she waiting before submitting hers."

The Hmong community participated in several informational meetings over the summer regarding the marriage bill. These meetings may reflect changes in the earlier versions. "Nothing is set in stone," he said.

Rep. Thao said the new version might have more detail, or changes in "who can solemnize a Hmong marriage." The responsibilities of the Mej koob may change with the bill, altering both the traditional system, and they want to ensure the impact will be for the better.

Thao says the idea of allowing Hmong solemnized unions is getting

Marriage Bill

Continued from page 1

more popular. He feels the concerns over the bill are more philosophical in nature, and tough to get a grip on when dealing with the specific task of the bill's language.

Opponents of the bill in the Hmong community site the lack of input of girls and young women in the process of negotiating marriages between families. They feel the bill is not progressive, and that concerns over the legality of existing marriages and potential trouble with taxes, insurances, and dissolution marriages, can be solved in ways other than the marriage bill.

Thao feels that existing laws protect people from the types of marriages that would still be illegal under the proposed legislation.

"Without this law, none of those statutes will benefit the Hmong women," said Thao. "If passed, Hmong men, women, and the community benefit from existing statutes."

"FIRST COUSINS BILL"

On Feb. 10, 2003, Rep. Thao moved to have his name be stricken as an author on H.F. No.107, a bill to eliminate the prohibition on marriage between first cousins; amending Minnesota Statutes 2002, section 517.03, prohibiting marriages that are entered into between first cousins, whether by the half or the whole blood, except as to marriages permitted by the established customs of aboriginal

cultures. The bill was authored by Minneapolis District 59B Representative Phyllis Kahn (DFL).

"I took my name out because people confusing it with the Hmong Marriage Bill," said Thao.

Rep. Thao supported the repeal for several reasons. He saw that nearly half of the U.S. States honored first cousin marriages, and could not find a country in Asia or Africa that banned them, and few in Europe as well. He also cited scientific studies that observed first cousin marriages over a 20-year period, and dispelled conventional beliefs that the unions produced medical and psychological problems in offspring.

Thao said that there was not a specific group within his constituency, including the Hmong community that came to him with concern for the bill either way. He was thinking of the general population and was supporting the arguments of other legislators in favor of the repeal. He will still stand by the bill and recommends that the state lift the ban and allow first cousin unions in Minnesota. However, he will no longer be on record as a co-author.

Rep. Thao took office in his first term this past January, after winning the 2002 District 65A election of the open seat that was vacated by Representative Andy Dawkins. He serves on three House Committees: Health and Human Services Finance; Health and Human Services Policy; and Judiciary Policy and Finance. To contact Rep. Cy Thao call 651-296-5158, 651-296-5526, or email: rep.cy.thao@house.mn.

Asian American Press

2-28-2003

Prison privatization proposals shown to be bad ideas for all concerned

By Sen. Tony Lourey
and Rep. Bill Hilty

Last week, a bill was discussed that would transfer the 800 prisoners housed at the Moose Lake Correctional Facility to the private, for-profit prison in Appleton, Minnesota. The proposal would then turn the Moose Lake prison over to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to operate the Minnesota Sex Offender Program (MSOP).

While we can understand

why the proponents of this bill would wish to enhance the economic climate in their area of the state by bringing more revenue into this private business entity, increasing Minnesota's participation in prison privatization is a colossally bad idea on many fronts.

Because this initiative does not save the purported costs and actually diminishes public safety, we do not feel that the bill will make it very far in the legislative process. This is evi-

dent in the fact that the bill's supporters have only held a press conference on the proposal, but have not even introduced a real bill. Exposing the state to greater prison privatization is something Minnesota has previously explored and rejected. Other states have attempted, and failed, in this endeavor. Prison privatization has never been proven to save money in the long run.

The bill's proponents claim that "millions of dollars" could be saved if the Moose Lake population was moved to the Prairie Correctional Facility in Appleton. Facts show that this is simply not the case. First, Minnesota has the second-lowest percentage of corrections costs in the nation at 2.8 percent of our General Fund spending. The national average is 6.8 percent. Clearly, we're doing things very well in our state. The notion that there are substantial cost savings to be had is ludicrous.

The authors claim the daily per diem (cost of housing a prisoner) is \$122. The Department of Corrections (DOC) reports that the statewide average per diem is \$89.77 per day. Moose Lake's numbers are slightly higher because they must account for the 210 beds that are currently rented out to DHS for the sex offender treatment program. Without those beds, the DOC says Moose Lake's per diem would be \$73.62, well below the state average.

The authors then state that the daily per diem at Appleton

is \$62.90, so the state could "save millions" by transferring the prisoners. However, this figure doesn't include the \$14.21/day in additional department expenses the DOC estimates would be incurred by this transfer. Even if Minnesota did want to move prisoners away from Moose Lake, this would not be the most cost-effective option. The bill's proponents neglect to share the fact that transferring these prisoners to a different prison within Minnesota's correctional system would cost only \$55.38/day.

The supporters also claim Minnesota could save \$90 million in bonding costs if the Moose Lake prisoners were transferred, as they would not have to complete Phase II of the sex offender treatment facility. This is not the case. Housing these patients in a facility designed as a prison will not save costs. Operational costs increase when facilities are used for a purpose other than their design. The Phase II conversion would pay for itself in operational cost savings. Further, housing patients receiving treatment in a prison is arguably unconstitutional and weakens Minnesota's position that the MSOP

is a state hospital.

We also believe there are moral implications of privatizing a core government function. Introducing profit into this system has led to terrible consequences in many cases. For example, just last week in Pennsylvania, judges plead guilty for accepting bribes to house juvenile offenders in a private facility. This troubles us greatly.

In addition, this proposal could decrease public safety. Private prisons have a much worse track record for prisoner escapes. Also, one of the major reasons Minnesota has not participated in greater use of the Appleton facility are the increased costs and danger associated with transporting the prisoners to this remote area. The state felt uneasy about transporting prisoners such a long distance on rural back roads.

Yes, Minnesota is facing a serious budget deficit and cost-savings measures must be found. However, greater exposure to private prisons is not the answer.

A DAY WITH REP. CY THAO

By Amy Kruger

On Thursday, January 23, 2003 **HMONQ TIMES** spent the afternoon with Rep. Cy Thao. After one hectic afternoon **HMONQ TIMES** was surprised to discover that this was actually a calm day in the life of a state representative. His days normally begin around 8:00 am when he comes to his office and checks his e-mail, then at 8:15 his committee meetings begin. During this session, he is assigned to the Health and Human Services committee in both the Finance and Policy branch, as well as the Judiciary committee. In the afternoons, he is normally ready to return to his office to begin the other side of his job, working hard for his constituents and going to more sessions.

However, on this particular day, he hosted the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotan's open house from 12:00-1:00, then was followed back to his office by **HMONQ TIMES** and Cha Lee, who was interested in how the Hmong marriage bill was going. The Hmong marriage bill is the first only bill that Rep. Cy Thao has authored, though he has joined committees on nine other bills.



Cheu Lee / **HMONQ TIMES**

State Representative Cy Thao responding to a telephone call.

Promptly at 1:00 Channel Five News took over Rep. Cy Thao's office with lights, camera and action. Though the interview was scheduled to discuss the Hmong marriage bill, the reporter also wanted information on the 'First Cousins Bill' which Rep. Cy Thao joined Phyllis Kahn on. This bill would allow first cousins to marry. However, Rep. Cy Thao stuck to his guns and refused to discuss both at one meeting fearing that the two issues might be confused as one. Rep. Cy Thao spoke eloquently about the Hmong marriage bill and why it is important

stating that "The Hmong community will be very proud that Minnesota recognizes their law." He later stated that "I am getting more press than I needed. It's not good to get this much press when you are a freshman." Currently, though, Rep. Cy Thao seems to be holding up well under the media stress.

During the interview he received a call from a constituent, which he returned when Channel Five had left. The call took probably ten minutes. This he said is the other side of his job and takes up most of

his time. The constituent was looking for housing. Of his office work he commented, "I can decide to do nothing or decide to do everything. There is no one watching you except your opponents."

At 2:30 pm the DFL Caucus had a meeting to inform the members what issues would come up in the Session that afternoon, which began at 3:00 pm. "When you are a freshman you don't get a chance to talk," Rep. Cy Thao said of both the Caucus and the Session. On the way to the Caucus, **HMONQ TIMES** had an opportunity to meet Sheldon Johnson of District 67B who we reportedly should thank for encouraging Rep. Cy Thao to run. "Sheldon is my role model" Rep. Cy Thao stated. A normal day for Rep. Cy Thao ends at 6:00 pm or later, often later.

Rep. Cy Thao knew what a hectic life he was in for. In college he majored in Political Science and Studio Art and conducted a three month internship in 1993.

The legislature can only run for 120 days. At which point he wants to paint. To all young people he encourages them to stay in school, then get involved with the community.

Hmong Times 2-1-2003

Gagne faces no charges in death

C152.3 N68 016.1

• The county attorney said the former pro wrestler lacked the capacity to know what he was doing when he attacked a fellow dementia patient.

By ROCHELLE OLSON
raolson@startribune.com

STAR TRIBUNE MAR 13 '09

The dementia that drove Verne Gagne to attack a fellow patient also absolves the wrestling legend of criminal responsibility in the 97-year-old man's death, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman said Thursday.

"Mr. Gagne simply lacks the capacity to intend the consequences of his action," Freeman said during a news conference called to announce the findings of a police investigation into the attack in January at the Bloomington care facility where the two men lived. "These

kind of incidences are not unusual among dementia patients."

Freeman said that in his 10 years as county attorney, this is the fourth time he has seen a patient die at the hands of another in a care facility.

Helmut Gutmann, 97, died Feb. 14 of complications from injuries inflicted by Gagne, 82, during the incident Jan. 26 at the memory-loss unit of Friendship Village.

A police report said Gutmann died after an "unprovoked attack" during which he was "grabbed, shaken and

thrown to the ground" by Gagne.

Bloomington Police Chief Jeff Potts said Thursday that Gagne's attack amounted to "a push and a shove," not any wrestling maneuvers for which Gagne was renowned. He also said he wouldn't classify what Gagne did as a "strike" to Gutmann.

Potts said that it was unclear what led to the incident and that Friendship Village had followed all proper reporting protocol.

County Chief Medical Examiner

Gagne continues on B7 ▶

Famed wrestler faces no charges

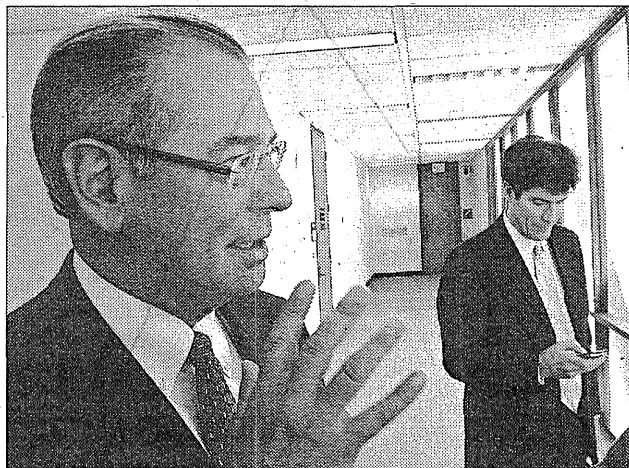
◀ GAGNE FROM B1

er Andrew Baker, who certified the cause and manner of death, said it was a homicide because Gutmann died as a result of the actions of another. Gutmann's hip broke in the fall, and he then developed pneumonia and complications from which he died while in the hospital, Baker said.

Gagne's family relieved

But to be guilty of a crime, a person must intend to commit the act that causes harm, Freeman said, adding that, "Mr. Gagne simply didn't know what he was doing." He said that reports from witnesses and doctors back up that finding, and that Gagne, who has no memory of the incident, wouldn't be competent to stand trial.

Gagne is no longer at Friendship Village, Freeman



MARLIN LEVISON • mlevison@startribune.com

HOMICIDE, YES, BUT NOT A CRIME: Medical Examiner Andrew Baker, right, ruled the death was a homicide. Nevertheless, County Attorney Mike Freeman, left, said Gagne could not be held guilty of a crime. He "simply didn't know what he was doing."

said. He did not say where Gagne is living. Freeman called the Gutmanns extraordinary and said they have a deep understanding of de-

mentia. Gagne's family members, he said, are relieved.

Police records have indicated that Gagne had assaulted fellow Friendship Village

residents at least twice in five months before the altercation with Gutmann.

Freeman said no criminal charges will be filed against the facility, but civil investigations by licensing boards are likely. Gutmann, a widely respected scientist and musician, fled to the United States from Nazi Germany in 1936. His widow, Betty Gutmann, still lives at Friendship Village.

Gagne, who was born in Corcoran, wrestled for the former Robbinsdale High School and the University of Minnesota, where he was an NCAA champion. In 1949, he began wrestling professionally and established the Twin Cities as the nation's hub for the sport. He wrestled in and oversaw the American Wrestling Association.

Gagne played football for the Gophers in 1943, enlisted in the Marines and then returned to the U, where he was an All-America wrestler.

Rochelle Olson • 612-673-1747

A HMONG DAY AT THE MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE

THE INAUGURATION OF CY THAO

By Amy Kruger

It was a fabulous day for Cy Thao, newly elected representative to the Minnesota State legislature.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, January 7 the state representatives, who were members of the DFL party, kicked off the day with a caucus meeting. At the caucus meeting they were briefed as to the goings on that would take place later in the day at the official ceremony.

HMONG TIMES was able to catch Cy Thao in his office, between the caucus meeting and the official swearing in ceremony. Asked what he was feeling at that moment, Cy Thao replied, "Kind of nervous and excited at the same time. Now it begins! It's hard campaigning but I think it will be harder



Cheu Lee/Hmong Times

Cy Thao with daughter Cyanne Thao.

governing." Among his biggest concerns is the state deficit as well as many smaller bills that he is working on including the Hmong marriage bill.

At this point Cy Thao's family arrived, wife, daughter

and parents-in-law. The underground tunnel was used to go to the House of Representatives chamber at the State capital building.

REP. THAO

continued on page 12



Cheu Lee/HMONG TIMES

State Representative Cy Thao, wife Lee Vang and daughter Cyanne at the inauguration.

REP. THAO

continued from page 1

Cy Thao's seat is at the very front of the chambers. Wife, daughter and other family members were able to join them on the House floor. The atmosphere was very loud with everyone congratulating each other and getting to know the other representatives.

A gavel called the session to order and all the people to

their seats. When the people did not respond quickly enough the gavel sounded again. The "Land of Lakes Boy's Choir" opened the session with two classics while the audience was totally silent. At the close of their brief performance they received a standing ovation.

Secretary of State Mary Kiffiney then entered the chambers as all present rose. She then called the 2003 session to order and called the clerk pro tem to the position

at the head of the chambers. Following the placement of the clerk, the session was opened with prayer, followed by the pledge of allegiance and the roll call.

And so it began - Cy Thao's first session in the House of Representatives.

Other orders of business included choosing a speaker, chief clerk and sergeant at arms, plus the official swearing in. In all the first session averaged about 3 hours.

Gagne faces no charges in death

C152.3 N68 016.1

- The county attorney said the former pro wrestler lacked the capacity to know what he was doing when he attacked a fellow dementia patient.

By ROCHELLE OLSON
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Gagne continues on B7 ▶

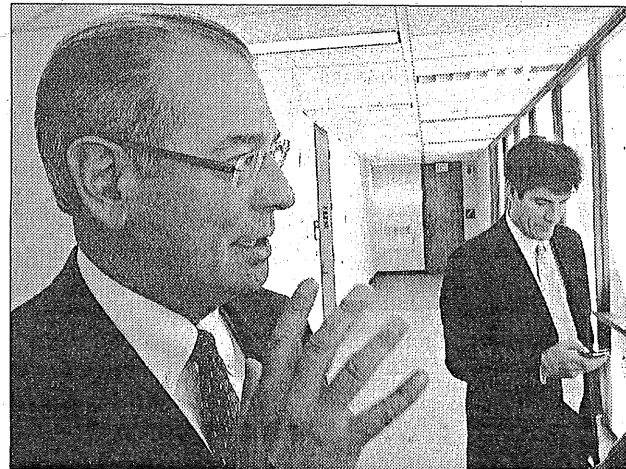
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HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES



'Essential' employees barred from striking

3,000 direct care
providers affected

BY RUBÉN ROSARIO

PIONEER PRESS APR 16 '03

About 3,000 Minnesota government employees would be barred from striking under an amendment attached to the House Human Services budget bill on Tuesday.

The no-strike provision, introduced by Rep. Tim Wilkin, R-Eagan, would declare workers who provide direct care at regional treatment centers, group homes and other state-run health facilities to be "essential" workers.

A similar bill was defeated last year.

Certain law enforcement and corrections officers who provide work affecting either public safety or health care are barred from walking off their jobs, although they do retain bargaining unit rights.

Wilkin said he introduced the measure because he is concerned about the safety and well being of vulnerable patients, and he would like to avoid a repeat of a two-week strike two years ago when the National Guard was called out to replace striking workers. He stressed it was not a union-busting tactic.

"This is not about union versus management," Wilkin told fellow members of the Health and Human Services Finance Committee. "It's about the safety and health of the disabled, the elderly and the infirmed."

But Mark McAfee, a lobbyist for Council 6 of the American Federation of State, Municipal and County Employees, said the bill would "handcuff" the ability of those workers to demand fair wages and compensation.

"These employees are mostly compassionate and caring people who didn't get into the business of caring for a check and benefits," said McAfee. "Our members don't capriciously or cavalierly strike, but from a bargaining standpoint, withholding services is the ultimate collective bargaining tool."

Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, said the proposal was un-American.

"This is America. People have lost their lives for the right to strike. I'm opposed to this bill," he said.

The measure, approved by a 7-4 vote, is part of a omnibus health and human services bill that was also passed Tuesday and referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Rubén Rosario can be reached at (651)222-5266 or rrosario@pioneerpress.com.

CLUB BACKS CALVEY IN OKLA.-5

The Club for Growth PAC has endorsed former state Rep. Kevin Calvey (R) in the open-seat race for Rep. Mary Fallin's (R-Okla.) seat. Fallin is running for governor.



MCCOTTER WON'T FACE DILLON

Michigan House Speaker Andy Dillon (D), a top DCCC recruit, will not challenge Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R-Mich.) in 2010, according to a Michigan political tipsheet.

CAMPAIGN

PAGE 12, WWW.THEHILL.COM

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2009

Dems, GOP take different approaches in Minnesota marathon battle for Senate

Republicans assume high-profile tack as foes remain low-key

By Reid Wilson

National party strategists are pursuing different tracks in handling the complex Minnesota Senate case.

Republicans argue their chances remain good, and the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) offers reporters continual updates on the race.

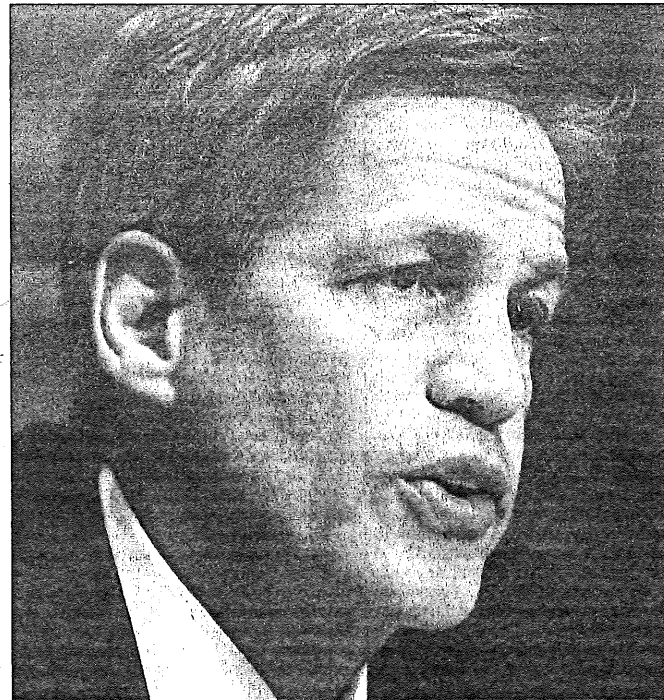
Democrats, meanwhile, have taken a more low-key approach.

NRSC Chairman John Cornyn (Texas) has repeatedly offered the national GOP's response to developments on the ground in Minnesota, while Sean Cairncross, the NRSC's legal counsel, has put out his own memoranda on legal issues brought up in the case.

Even as Norm Coleman trails the canvassing-board count by 225 votes and court rulings continue to break for Democrat Al Franken, Cornyn has sounded bullish on Coleman's prospects of surviving.

"The Democrats are up to their old tricks in Minnesota. The Land of 10,000 Lakes now has 10,000 lawyers trying to steal this election for Al Franken," Cornyn said at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) last Friday. "I believe that Norm has a real shot to pull this thing out. I'm still calling him 'No. 42.'"

Leaders at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, meanwhile, have been less publicly involved in the contest. New DSCC Chairman Robert Menendez (N.J.) has largely left it up to



Norm Coleman

es. A Coleman loss, fairly or unfairly, could be seen as the first defeat of what could be another rough cycle in 2010.

Then again, Republicans have found

blame," Jesmer said. "We're backing Coleman because we want him to sit in the seat we and [former NRSC Chairman John] Ensign's New team believe in."



LAUREN V. BURKE

Al Franken

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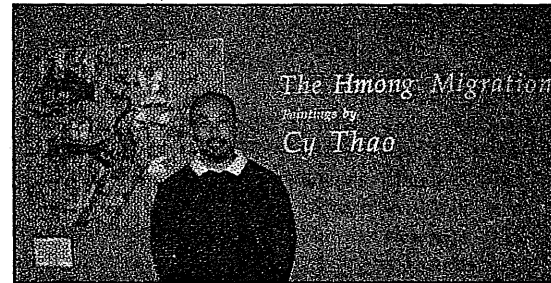
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"The evidence as it is coming out makes it, I think, much more true that even the Minnesota system, as it is one of the best in the nation, is not calibrated to determine the outcome of a race this close," Coleman attorney Ben Ginsberg told The Hill on Tuesday. "It is a fatal muddle what they've done to this case so far, and you can't really tell who won."

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COMMUNITY

CY THAO — ART EXHIBIT: “THE HMONG MIGRATION”



Amy Kruger/HMONG TIMES

Cy Thao stands in front of one of his many paintings.

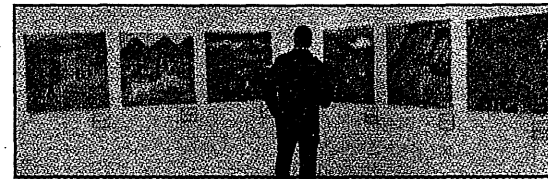
By Amy Kruger

Saturday, February 15, 2003, **HMONG TIMES** had an opportunity to see another side of Cy Thao, that of the artist. Cy Thao's fifty painting series, entitled "The Hmong Migration," has found a home at the Rochester Art Center until March 30. This series which was painted over the course of four years and which involved research trips to three countries (China, Laos and Thailand) depicts the Hmong people's history from the beginning of the world to present day. Painting #26 which portrays the massacre of villages by communist soldiers was the first painting completed. However Cy Thao then realized "there was a story before and after" - the result was the series.

HMONG TIMES talked with BJ Shigaki the director of the art center for the last 30 years. She stated that she saw Cy Thao's work at the University of La Crosse last

fall where John Reddy had arranged a showing. She then asked if it was possible for the series to tour. Reportedly she had to put up two walls in the gallery to accommodate the paintings.

The Center, which has been in existence since 1946, has a full-time staff of 5 and a part time staff of 2. It is the only art center of its kind in Rochester and normally tries to have some educational



Amy Kruger/HMONG TIMES

events to coincide with the works represented. This week there was a film about traditional Hmong textile art and also a lecture by 3 Hmong college students from Gustavus Adolphus who lectured on poetry, textile and dance. **HMONG TIMES** also talked with

Kris Douglas the education coordinator at the center. He stated that he felt this show was very important to "bring the story of the Hmong to a wider audience, to have this work available in outstate Minnesota so that the people can learn about a culture other than their own."

The gallery doors opened at 8:00 with the artist lecture beginning around 8:30. Refreshments were provided by Wong's restaurant throughout the evening as well as white and red wines and non-alcoholic options. During the lecture period Cy Thao opened up to a question and answer period, many of the questions revolved around social and political themes such as: What is an American? What is the situation like in Laos? and

"These paintings are not meant to be pretty to put on your wall to match your couch. These paintings are meant to help us question what it is to be human."

The first showing of this series was in a 30 by 80 foot tent in a parking lot in St. Paul. Through word of mouth 500 people came in one weekend. At the event adults were able



Amy Kruger/HMONG TIMES

to use the paintings to tell their children what their life was like in Laos. A written description by the author accompanies each painting. As the children read the English words to their parents the parents added their own experiences in Hmong.

There was no mention to the other side of Cy Thao — politician throughout the evening.

How are the Hmong women doing? Cy Thao commented that it was good that the paintings were producing these kinds of questions. Based on the paj ntaub style of textile art, these paintings are to tell a story, a story that required a lot of censoring according to the artist.

CLUB BACKS CALVEY IN OKLA.-5

The Club for Growth PAC has endorsed former state Rep. Kevin Calvey (R) in the open-seat race for Rep. Mary Fallin's (R-Okla.) seat. Fallin is running for governor.



MCCOTTER WON'T FACE DILLON

Michigan House Speaker Andy Dillon (D), a top DCCC recruit, will not challenge Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R-Mich.) in 2010, according to a Michigan political tipsheet.

CAMPAIGN

PAGE 12, WWW.THEHILL.COM

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2009

Dems, GOP take different approaches in Minnesota marathon battle for Senate

Republicans assume high-profile tack as foes remain low-key

By Reid Wilson

National party strategists are pursuing different tracks in handling the complex Minnesota Senate case.

Republicans argue their chances remain good, and the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) offers reporters continual updates on the race.

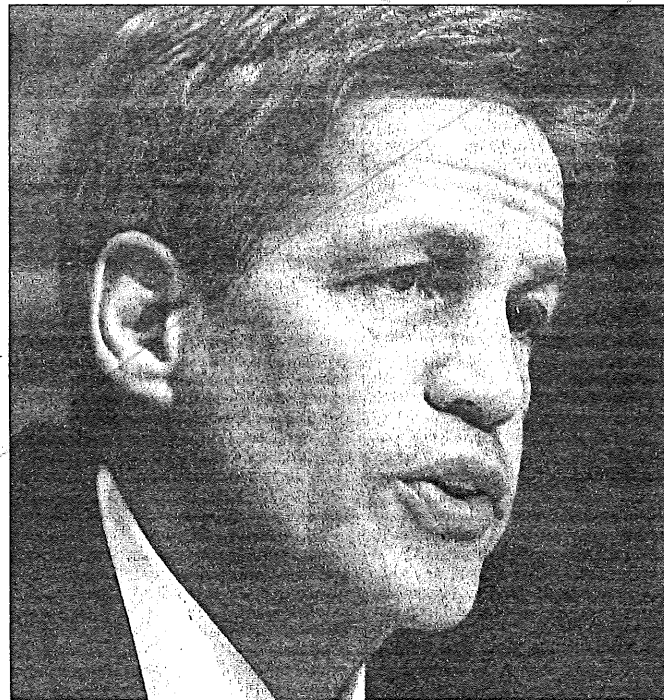
Democrats, meanwhile, have taken a more low-key approach.

NRSC Chairman John Cornyn (Texas) has repeatedly offered the national GOP's response to developments on the ground in Minnesota, while Sean Cairncross, the NRSC's legal counsel, has put out his own memoranda on legal issues brought up in the case.

Even as Norm Coleman trails the canvassing-board count by 225 votes and court rulings continue to break for Democrat Al Franken, Cornyn has sounded bullish on Coleman's prospects of surviving.

"The Democrats are up to their old tricks in Minnesota. The Land of 10,000 Lakes now has 10,000 lawyers trying to steal this election for Al Franken," Cornyn said at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) last Friday. "I believe that Norm has a real shot to pull this thing out. I'm still calling him 'No. 42.'"

Leaders at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, meanwhile, have been less publicly involved in the contest. New DSCC Chairman Robert Menendez (N.J.) has largely left it up to



Norm Coleman

es. A Coleman loss, fairly or unfairly, could be seen as the first defeat of what could be another rough cycle in 2010.

Then again, Republicans have found

blame," Jesmer said. "We're backing Coleman because we want him to sit in the seat we and [former NRSC Chairman John] Boehner's New Team believe in."



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Al Franken

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MP

Cy Thao selected as APAICS Official



MN State
Representative
Cy Thao

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 28, 2003) – The Asian Pacific Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS) announces the ten outstanding Asian Pacific American elected officials who will be participating in the Fifth Annual Leadership Academy for Elected Officials. Among this year's attending officials will be first-term Minnesota State Representative Cy Thao.

The Leadership Academy, a non-partisan

CY THAO

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Cy Thao

Continued from page 1

leadership-training program, co-sponsored with the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and funded by Verizon and Freddie Mac, will be held in Washington, D.C. on May 8-11, 2003.

Some of the program sessions include management, fundraising, media relations, online campaigning, coalition building, and meeting with the Democratic and Republican National Committees. The participants will be meeting with the Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) David Wu and CAPAC Vice Chair Mike Honda, Congressman Bob Matsui and former Congressman Robert Underwood.

The Leadership Academy participants include Democrats and Republicans of Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, and South Asian descent from California, Hawaii, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, and New York. Four out of the ten participants are under the age of 32 years old.

The Participants are: The Honorable Alice Lai-Bitker, member, Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Calif.; The Honorable Vinh Cam, representative, Town Meeting, District 10, Greenwich, Conn; The Honorable Franklin J. Chu, councilmember, City of Rye, New York; The Honorable Allen Co, councilmember, So. El Monte, Calif.; The Honorable Hoon-Yung Hopgood, representative, State House of Representatives, Mich; The

Honorable George K. James, councilmember, Borough of Westwood, New Jersey; The Honorable Barbara Marumoto, representative, State House of Representatives, Hawaii; The Honorable Scott Nishimoto, representative, State House of Representatives, Hawaii; The Honorable Andy Quach, councilmember, City of Westminster, Calif.; The Honorable Cy Thao (DFL), representative, State House of Representatives, Minn.

APACIS Chairman Clayton Fong stated, "Filling the political pipeline with Asian Pacific Americans at all political levels is the primary mission of APAICS. We are proud to be able to assist the up and coming APA political leaders. Having members of city councils and state legislatures who many are the 'First APA' elected to that body join us for the Academy is truly an honor. APAICS is most grateful for the partnership with Verizon and Freddie Mac for investing in our political future."

Patrick Gaston, Executive Director of Strategic Alliances at Verizon, stated, "For the fifth straight year, Verizon is proud to co-sponsor the Leadership Academy for Asian Pacific American Elected Officials. We are committed to supporting an expanded role for Asian Pacific Americans in public office, policymaking, and the political process."

"Freddie Mac is pleased to support once again the Leadership Academy and the development of Asian Pacific American political leadership," said Jim Park, Freddie Mac's Vice President of Industry Relations and Housing Outreach. "Our commitment and work to strengthen neighborhoods through homeownership and affordable housing depends on strong partnerships with local leaders who reflect the growing diversity of this great nation."

Don T. Nakanishi, Director and Professor of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, stated, "Asian Pacific Americans are striving to become more organized, more visible, and more effective as participants and leaders in order to advance - as well as to protect - their individual and group interests, and to contribute to our nation's democratic processes and institutions. We are pleased to be partnering with APAICS on this most worthwhile endeavor." □

Prison privatization proposals shown to be bad ideas for all concerned

By Sen. Tony Lourey
and Rep. Bill Hilty

Last week, a bill was discussed that would transfer the 800 prisoners housed at the Moose Lake Correctional Facility to the private, for-profit prison in Appleton, Minnesota. The proposal would then turn the Moose Lake prison over to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to operate the Minnesota Sex Offender Program (MSOP).

While we can understand

why the proponents of this bill would wish to enhance the economic climate in their area of the state by bringing more revenue into this private business entity, increasing Minnesota's participation in prison privatization is a colossally bad idea on many fronts.

Because this initiative does not save the purported costs and actually diminishes public safety, we do not feel that the bill will make it very far in the legislative process. This is evi-

dent in the fact that the bill's supporters have only held a press conference on the proposal, but have not even introduced a real bill. Exposing the state to greater prison privatization is something Minnesota has previously explored and rejected. Other states have attempted, and failed, in this endeavor. Prison privatization has never been proven to save money in the long run.

The bill's proponents claim that "millions of dollars" could be saved if the Moose Lake population was moved to the Prairie Correctional Facility in Appleton. Facts show that this is simply not the case. First, Minnesota has the second-lowest percentage of corrections costs in the nation at 2.8 percent of our General Fund spending. The national average is 6.8 percent. Clearly, we're doing things very well in our state. The notion that there are substantial cost savings to be had is ludicrous.

The authors claim the daily per diem (cost of housing a prisoner) is \$122. The Department of Corrections (DOC) reports that the statewide average per diem is \$89.77 per day. Moose Lake's numbers are slightly higher because they must account for the 210 beds that are currently rented out to DHS for the sex offender treatment program. Without those beds, the DOC says Moose Lake's per diem would be \$73.62, well below the state average.

The authors then state that the daily per diem at Appleton

is \$62.90, so the state could "save millions" by transferring the prisoners. However, this figure doesn't include the \$14.21/day in additional department expenses the DOC estimates would be incurred by this transfer. Even if Minnesota did want to move prisoners away from Moose Lake, this would not be the most cost-effective option. The bill's proponents neglect to share the fact that transferring these prisoners to a different prison within Minnesota's correctional system would cost only \$55.38/day.

The supporters also claim Minnesota could save \$90 million in bonding costs if the Moose Lake prisoners were transferred, as they would not have to complete Phase II of the sex offender treatment facility. This is not the case. Housing these patients in a facility designed as a prison will not save costs. Operational costs increase when facilities are used for a purpose other than their design. The Phase II conversion would pay for itself in operational cost savings. Further, housing patients receiving treatment in a prison is arguably unconstitutional and weakens Minnesota's position that the MSOP

is a state hospital.

We also believe there are moral implications of privatizing a core government function. Introducing profit into this system has led to terrible consequences in many cases. For example, just last week in Pennsylvania, judges plead guilty for accepting bribes to house juvenile offenders in a private facility. This troubles us greatly.

In addition, this proposal could decrease public safety. Private prisons have a much worse track record for prisoner escapes. Also, one of the major reasons Minnesota has not participated in greater use of the Appleton facility are the increased costs and danger associated with transporting the prisoners to this remote area. The state felt uneasy about transporting prisoners such a long distance on rural back roads.

Yes, Minnesota is facing a serious budget deficit and cost-savings measures must be found. However, greater exposure to private prisons is not the answer.

Asian American Press

10-10-2003

Cy Thao says Lao NTR requires plan

AAP News

ST PAUL (October 7, 2003) – Minnesota Fourth Congressional District Representative Betty McCollum (DFL) on Oct. 1, 2003 introduced legislation (HR 3195) to extend Normal Trade Relations (NTR) to Laos. Hmong and Lao organizations are just beginning to respond, both for and against the bill.

"I think this is the wrong time to give NTR to Laos," said Minnesota State Representative Cy Thao (D-65A). "Laos should eventually get NTR but not until they have a plan in place to eliminate human rights abuses."

"They can start by working with human rights groups and the United Nations to put together a plan to allow the Hmong in the jungle to come out safely and join the rest of



State Representative Cy Thao (DFL-65A) has long opposed NTR status for Laos. He said Congresswoman McCollum's proposed legislation should begin with a plan to address human rights issues in Laos.

the Lao society," Thao added. "The Lao Government and the U.S. Government can start that process by admitting that those problems do exist and they are serious enough for discussion while granting NTR to Laos is being discussed."

Rep. McCollum witnessed demonstrations against NTR to Laos last May when she hosted U.S. Ambassador to Laos, Douglas Hartwick on his visit to Minnesota to meet with members of the Lao and Hmong community and discuss normal trade relations. Despite the opposition, Ambassador Hartwick's discussion detailed the need for economic engagement that he felt would encourage reform and openness in Laos. The Lao Royal

NTR BILL

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

NTR Bill

Continued from page 1

family believes greater openness through trade will focus more attention to the human rights and religious freedom. The visit was preceded by Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement that the Bush Administration believes extending NTR to Laos will improve human rights, freedoms and the rule of law.

"My visits with families here in Minnesota, with the Lao Royal family and with Ambassador Hartwick provide hope that NTR is the next step towards reform in Laos. I am confident that further engagement with Laos, not isolation, will bring benefits to Hmong and Lao Minnesotans and their family members in Laos," McCollum said.

Among the ten poorest countries in the world, Laos is one of two nations in the world that has full diplomatic relations with the U.S., but not normal trade relations. In September, the U.S. government signed a Bilateral Trade Agreement with the government of Laos.

The Richmond, California-based U.S.-Lao NTR Coalition met a year ago at the May 2002 Lao-American Symposium. The Coalition, consisting mostly of Americans of



Congresswoman Betty McCollum

Laotian descent, Hmong and Lao veterans of the Vietnam War, and families of POW/MIAs and those lost during the conflict, convinced the 108th US Congress to pass the US NTR to Laos.

The Laos NTR was also in the interest of the Bush Administration's Trade Initiative, which was expressed during Ambassador Hartwick's visit to the Twin Cities last summer. He detailed what he said was fact from rumor, regarding the Hmong genocide issue, noting that American Hmong/Lao citizens are returning to Laos each year in the thousands. If the sentiment were so strong against

NTR these same people are literally bringing millions of dollars into the economy already.

To grant NTR would also allow American Hmong/Lao to have a distinct advantage with initiating business, according to the Ambassador Hartwick. Critics argued that there is a lot of shadow economy businesses, however, many Hmong/Lao Americans do not trust the government enough to do business citing the many treaty violations and that this former enemy communist regime is not remembered kindly, and is essentially the same regime.

Many veterans believe the Lao regime will fall as a result of the economy continuing to weaken and with foreign investment from the U.S. or with its neighbors, the regime will be allowed to survive and commit further atrocities against the people within its borders.

NTR supporters believe NTR will not solve all problems, however, the jobs it will create may help stop the tide of young unemployed refugees from traveling outside Lao borders, where they are neither granted refugee status, asylum, or safety.

"While we do not endorse nor support the authoritarian government of Laos nor its non-democratic policies, we believe that a stronger



REUTERS/Darren Whiteside

Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha (L) is greeted by Laos Foreign Minister Somsavat Lengsavad before signing ceremony on the accession of India to the treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia at the conclusion of the ninth ASEAN summit in Nusa Dua on the Indonesian resort island of Bali, October 8, 2003.

economy will improve living conditions of the Laotian people, who in turn, will then become real stakeholders and, eventually catalysts for change. Experience in Asia has amply demonstrated that the democratization process has been economically driven," stated the US NTR for Laos via their website (www.laotianlink.com).

ST. CLOUD TIMES

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Pawlenty's 1st session went just as he planned

By Patrick Howe
The Associated Press

ST. PAUL — Gov. Tim Pawlenty took office promising to drive change “in a hundred places and a thousand ways.” He may have underestimated his reach.

At session's end, the young governor finds himself with much — most — of an aggressive reform agenda becoming law.

Among his victories were wins on plans to change welfare, to establish tax-free industrial zones, to rewrite classroom graduation standards and to close a deficit without raising state taxes.

Analysis

Steven Schier, a political science professor at Carleton College, said he was amazed at Pawlenty's record.

“I have never seen a governor succeed so thoroughly,” he said. Unlike his predecessor, Jesse Ventura, Pawlenty knows how to work within the system, Schier said.

His reach stretched from southwestern Minnesota's wind-rich fields, which will see more energy-producing turbines, to the Iron Range, which has a good



Tim Pawlenty
Has few things on
list for next session

chance for seeing a new coal plant and new tax-free zones.

The question presents itself, though: With a reach so vast, did he overreach?

As Democrats adjourned Thursday, they were convinced he did.

“We're looking forward to the next election. We're going to make

sure Minnesotans know what happened here today,” said DFL freshman Rep. Cy Thao of St. Paul.

House Minority Leader Rep. Matt Entenza agreed. “I don't think the public voted to cut police and firefighters. I think the outrage will be felt at a local level.”

Sen. Dean Johnson, a former Republican from Willmar and one of the more conservative members of his caucus, said he's convinced from talk he hears in his district that Pawlenty went too far.

“He has a right to claim victory about this legislative session,” Johnson said. “The final judge is

going to be the people.”

Pawlenty hit the airwaves and the roadways after session's end to explain and to sell his budget plan. He did not gloat and avoided talk of social issues that for most of the legislative session overshadowed the budget work.

“I don't think it's fair to compare this budget to many others because I'm leading in an extraordinary time,” he said.

His list of things undone was so short that the morning after the session he met with advisers to form a list of proposals for the next session, beginning in February.

Asked of his regrets, he offered only that he didn't succeed with more changes in the state's health-care system and that a bill to require more scrutiny on the driver's licenses of foreigners on short-term visits didn't pass. But he's already implementing that change administratively.

Joe Kunkel, a political scientist at Minnesota State University-Mankato, said that while Pawlenty won 44 percent of the vote “he governed as if he had 90 percent.” Now, he said, Pawlenty will be judged based on how, or whether, his budget affects real people.

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Doug Hartwick, in St. Paul to promote normal trade relations, was met by demonstrators who want the southeast Asian nation to address human-rights issues.

Ambassador to Laos draws protesters

STAR TRIBUNE MAY 7 93
By Curt Brown
Star Tribune Staff Writer

The U.S. ambassador to Laos, in St. Paul Tuesday stumping for trade reform, drew about 75 protesters who don't want the United States to become an economic partner until Laos addresses human-rights issues.

Ambassador Doug Hartwick toured Hmong-owned businesses on University Avenue and attended a meeting with community leaders at Metro State University. As he slipped in one door at Metro State, a crowd carrying signs opposing normal trade relations (NTR) rallied at a different entrance.

"The Lao government has got to deal with human rights persecution before NTR is discussed," said Stephen Vang, who teaches Southeast Asian Studies at Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie.

State Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, joined the protest. He said he's concerned about the Communist government in Laos persecuting ethnic minorities, particularly the Hmong.

Hartwick, along with President George Bush and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, is trying to persuade Congress to normalize trade relations with Laos — the only nation with full U.S. diplomatic relations but no trade agreement. Hartwick said it's time to add Laos to a group of nations in the area, including Vietnam, Cambodia and China, that do business with the U.S.

"I appreciate their view," Hartwick said of the protesters. "But they see NTR as a reward and I don't. I think the issue here is: How do we move Laos in the direction of being a responsible citizen on the world stage?"

Vang, Thao and others say the ruling Lao government, which took power after the Vietnam War in the mid-1970s, has been ruthlessly using chemical weapons, land mines and bombs to quell resistance fighters in the jungle, many of whom fought alongside U.S. troops 30 years ago.

U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., who hosted Hartwick's visit, said the ambassador sold her on the benefits of normal trade relations.

"Engagement, not isolation, can bring benefits to Hmong and Lao Minnesotans and their family members in Laos," she said. "Establishing normalized trade relations provides the United States with a unique opportunity to promote human rights, religious freedom and economic opportunity."

The latest U.S. census figures say Minnesota's Hmong population more than doubled in the 1990s to 41,800. Hartwick said local businesses importing goods and crafts from Laos pay an average duty of 45 percent. That figure would drop to 3 percent, he said, if Congress approves normalized trade. He thinks that could happen by year's end.

"Normal trade relations would provide opportunities for American businessmen and women to conduct trade in Laos," Hartwick said in an interview. "And it would provide me an opportunity, in indirect ways, to build a broader relationship with the Lao government so we could make progress on the human rights issues we all care about."

"It is important to me that

the Hmong community of St. Paul and others understand why I see it's important to move forward and why it will strengthen the U.S. government's ability to interact with the Lao government across the

board," Hartwick said.

Houa Moua, 19, a student at St. Paul's Arlington High School, disagreed.

"Our people are living in the jungle," he said, holding a "No NTR" placard outside Metro

State. "A business relationship would give the Communist government more initiative to continue to hunt down our people."

Curt Brown is at curt.brown@startribune.com.

65A

Entenza donation to Hmong Cultural Center

ST. PAUL (April 11, 2003) – The Hmong Cultural Center of St. Paul is the latest recipient of Rep. Matt Entenza's monthly charitable donation.

The center will use the approximately \$1,000 donation to create a brochure in the Hmong language explaining Minnesota laws governing marriage ceremonies. Certain traditional forms of Hmong marriages are not technically recognized under current Minnesota law. State Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul) has introduced legislation to recognize traditional Hmong marriages.

"This is one way we can show the Hmong community that Minnesota is welcoming to immigrants," Entenza (DFL-St. Paul) said. "With recent passage of the bill requiring visa expirations on drivers licenses and the Governor's proposals to cut assistance to legal immigrants, Minnesota doesn't look all that friendly anymore."

Thao, the nation's first Hmong state representative, said many people are confused by the legal questions regarding traditional marriages. "Matt's donation will greatly assist efforts to

educate people about these issues," Thao said. "I thank him for his generosity."

As a St. Paul legislator, Entenza has also worked with Neal Thao of the St. Paul School Board on issues such as English as a Second Language programs.

Since January, Entenza has donated the pay supplement he receives as a legislative leader to various non-profit organizations facing a potential loss of state support in the current budget crisis.

Entenza, GOP Majority Leader Erik Paulsen and Speaker of the House Steve Sviggum all receive a 40% supplement to their regular legislative pay to reflect the full-time nature of legislative leadership posts. That amounts to \$1,038.03 a month or \$12,456.36 a year.

Entenza today made his first monthly donation to the Twin Cities' United Way in January. In February, he donated money to the "Dollars for Scholars" scholarship program at Worthington Senior High School, where he graduated in 1979. □

CY THAO

POLITICS DROVE THE MORRIS GRAD TO ART,
AND ART BROUGHT HIM BACK TO POLITICS

by Rick Moore

It's right there in the Green Book under Cy Thao's name, sticking out like a tropical fish in a pond full of eelpout—"Occupation: Artist."

The Green Book is the members directory of the Minnesota Legislature, and of all the 201 legislators listed there, first-term Representative Thao is the only one who classifies himself as an artist. There are farmers and teachers and attorneys aplenty, but just one artist—the 31-year-old graduate of the University of Minnesota, Morris.

So you'd think that the walls of his spacious office (the right half of it, anyway) would bear evidence of his creative side, perhaps even a few originals from his series of graphic paintings of the Hmong migration and the brutality of the Vietnam War.

Not the case. The walls are virtually bare, one of the many intriguing manifestations of Thao's life as both a legislator and an artist.

The overlapping of those two vocations developed in a roundabout way over the course of a decade, beginning with Thao majoring in political science at Morris and becoming an intern at the Capitol. "I saw what was needed to get things done, like swapping votes and—I hate to say it—back-room deals," he says of his experience. "And I didn't like that; I thought it should be a citizen government with citizen ideals."

Rather than changing his political science major, he tacked on a studio arts degree at Morris. Once into art, he discovered that his artist friends were far from apolitical. "Artists are activists because much of the art that they do is a reflection on society or a comment on society," says Thao. "A lot of the artists I know are involved with trying to make the community better."

So he and his friends decided one of them should run for office, and Thao stepped up to represent his Frogtown

neighborhood in St. Paul, home to a large Hmong population.

"Politics drove me away and into art, and art drove me back into politics—all in 10 years," Thao says, laughing.

In his first legislative session, Thao figured out it was "a tough year to be a Democrat," and he focused on getting to know people and building relationships. Thao did get legislation passed approving a memorial to be built for Hmong veterans who were allied with U.S. forces during the Vietnam War. He says affordable housing and community development are issues he plans to address. "I'm going to start planting those seeds this coming year," he says.

Public service is becoming a way of life for the warm and wry Thao, who follows in the footsteps of his father, a former provincial governor in Laos. They moved to the United States when Thao was eight years old, after five years in a refugee camp in Thailand.

While still in college, Thao decided to continue a Hmong tradition of "telling stories without words" and began to depict the history of the Hmong—including their multiple migrations—in his series of oil paintings. He received the

A painting from Cy Thao's series, *The Hmong Migration*, depicts the war in Laos.



University of Minnesota, Morris, alum Cy Thao at the state Capitol.

Bush Artist Fellowship in 2000 and completed the bulk of his work that next year. The "Hmong Migration" has been exhibited regionally in Rochester and La Crosse and will be on display in Morris in February.

"For me to get that series out—it was sort of like a burden lifted off my shoulder," Thao says. "And now I have free rein to go in any [artistic] direction."

But Thao's artistic freedom comes with strings attached. In politics, he says, individual words and their context are crucial, and everything you say has meaning. You can spur people to action or inhibit them with your words, and you must speak for your constituents. In his art, Thao struggles to communicate his own point of view without claiming to speak for anyone else.

He reflects a bit. "I'll figure that one out eventually. In the meantime," he jokes, "I'll just do really bland art." Surrounded by his bare walls, he grins and goes back to tackling issues for his people. ✱

M (Univ. of Minn.) Fall 2003

United we grandstand (65A)

Thank you for the Jan. 5 article "New wave at the Capitol." The profiles of the new legislators were fascinating.

I noticed Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, was the only legislator willing to propose limited cuts in spending and a "progressive" tax increase. The other five legislators profiled, most of them Republican, suggested we deal with our massive deficit by "cutting waste" and working to "minimize government." In fact, there has been a lot of talk like this lately, but no mention of how it can be done. **STAR TRIBUNE JAN 11 '03**

Doug Lindgren, R-Bagley, did offer up one detail. He suggested we enact a state employee wage freeze. "Wow," I thought. "Too bad for those people."

Then it occurred to me that this is how many want to deal with this deficit. Instead of all of us contributing a few more dollars to this great state, we will prevent a few unlucky ones from getting pay raises or — better yet — take their jobs away completely. So rather than work together, we will find a few scapegoats and turn their lives upside down.

I always believed that "United We Stand" was merely cheerleading and grandstanding. The evidence to prove me right seems to be surfacing.

— **Derek D. Johnson, Minneapolis.**

Asian American Press 12-5-2003

Cy Thao scores perfect on the environment

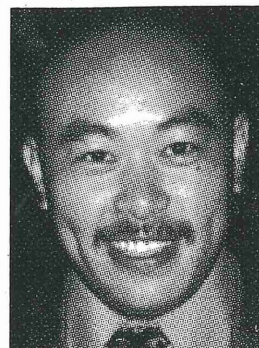
ST PAUL (December 3, 2003) — State Representative Cy Thao (DFL-65A) scored a perfect 100 on the 2003 Environmental Scorecard recently released by the Minnesota League of Conservation Voters (MNL CV).

As the only publicly distributed environmental scorecard in Minnesota, it covers votes on policies and budget legislation for water quality, conservation and public lands, human health and energy.

"Pure air and water are fundamental to the Minnesota way of life we value," said Lisa Doerr, MNL CV Executive Director. "In this year of massive budget cuts, Rep. Thao helped protect that way of life and provided the leadership voters value."

While Minnesota voters value our lakes and streams and the ability to enjoy the great outdoors, politicians often do not reflect this concern with their positions with votes. The Scorecard provides clear cut information that voters can easily access and use.

"Rep. Thao's solid support for conservation, human



Rep. Cy Thao voted with conservationists in 2003.

health and a sound energy policy demonstrates his commitment to Minnesota's water and air quality," said Doerr. "With leaders that share our values in the Legislature, like Rep. Thao, the environment will be a priority."

"I was just doing what I believed was the right thing to do," said Thao. "Being 100 percent was not a priority, but voting and acting on my beliefs are, and if the two match then great. I truly care about the environment, the quality of air we breathe and the clean water that Minnesota is able to boast. We have to preserve the earth and its natural resources for the next generation. I believe in leaving the earth in a better shape than I found it."

MNL CV works to elect candidates who believe that clean air and water and the protection of our land are a priority. We educate voters on the broad range of conservation and environmental issues that are important to Minnesotans, we cultivate legislative leadership and we hold elected officials accountable. www.mnlcv.org.

cooperate, and myself) all had the same message: "Give us more money."

I suggested it was sad to see articulate, young people be so inured with the idea that they were completely helpless without governmental guidance. I was heckled when I suggested we all are better and more capable than those who earn their living by perpetuating the cycle of poverty would have us believe.

I related the fact that while we had heard plenty of gloom and doom from our hosts — Sen. Sandy Pappas and Reps. Carlos Mariani and Cy Thao — not one of them had any concrete solutions to offer. Thao took personal issue with the very idea that there was waste anywhere to be found in government and sought to lecture me on the correct orthodoxy; I was not allowed to respond.

I was about to leave feeling a bit disconcerted, but the final speaker put it all in perspective when he informed me that I was intruding on a "DFL meeting."

Silly me! I had thought it was an opportunity for all of the citizens of Senate District 65 to speak with our elected representatives.

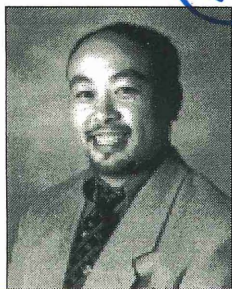
THOMAS SWIFT
St. Paul

PIONEER PRESS MAR 30 '03 'Forum' foundered

I attended the recent "town forum" hosted by my local elected representatives. With the exception of two others, and myself the speakers consisted of representatives of public employee unions, welfare rights activists, DFL office seekers and directors of social programs.

Not surprisingly, the speakers (save the unaffiliated two who spoke of the need for all sides to

MP



State Representative
Cy Thao

Cy Thao to speak at UMMorris

The Asian Student Association at the University of Minnesota, Morris will sponsor a presentation by Cy Thao, UMM alumnus and Minnesota legislator, at 7 p.m. Friday, April 18, in the Student Center Alumni Room. Thao's presentation will focus on his work as a Hmong politician. The public is invited to attend.

When Thao was elected to Minnesota's House of Representatives last fall, he became the state's first Hmong representative, and the second Hmong to be elected to the Minnesota Legislature.

Thao, who was born in Laos and lived in refugee camps in Thailand for five years before coming to the United States, graduated from UMM in 1995 with majors in political science and studio art. He went on to become an award-winning artist and actor. He also taught in the Minneapolis Public Schools and was the first executive director of the Center of Hmong Arts and Talent in St. Paul.

As a state representative, Thao says his priorities for his St. Paul district [65A] include economic development and renovation of run-down homes and businesses.

Thao is one of 13 freshman legislators who received a degree from the University. Overall, 55 members of the 201-member Minnesota Legislature hold University degrees.

An exhibit featuring Thao's paintings - "The Hmong Migration: Fifty Paintings" - will be included in the UMM Gallery's schedule, February 12-March 5, 2004. □

Adoption Spring Fling!

Hennepin County's "Adoption Spring Fling!" is a way to bring families and

65A April 11, 2003

ASIAN AMERICAN PRESS

2465

Mumin group to perform at Zen temple fu

By Tom LaVenture
Asian American Press

Last year a few Japanese American women, who were natives to Japan, thought it would be a good idea to put together a weekly singing group. This year, the singing women who formed Mumin (people dream) are enjoyed so much that they perform regularly, and have been invited as part of a Japanese cultural night, April 12, 7:30 p.m., at the Decorah, Iowa Middle School Auditorium (210 Vernon Street - 52101) to help fund the Decorah Zen Center.

Also performing will be taiko, players from the Twin Cities, including Keiko Doi, a taiko student for more than a year, will get a chance to perform publicly.

Doi helped found the group with the intent of offering an opportunity for Japanese women, young and elder, to get together and sing the traditional songs of Japan. The singing became a labor of love with each practice session. Members began bringing tea and homemade Japanese desserts.

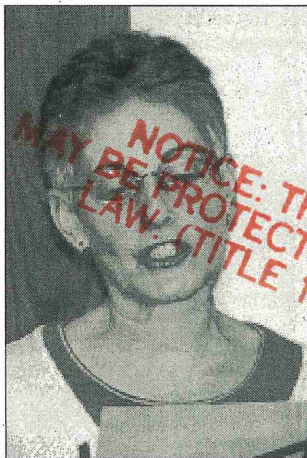
It was not long before the singers began performing at assisted care centers and nursing homes, where they soon found that Alzheimer patients had no problem recalling the lyrics of songs going back to their childhood.

There are two sets of mother-daughter singers, with Taka Milligan and daughter Kioko Katiyama, and Kozue Miwa (the eldest member at 92 and going strong) with daughter Yoko Metoki. The Mumin women enjoy each other's company so much that the enthusiasm is demonstrated in the performance, earning praise from all who have heard the group sing.

At practice last week the group warmed up with a song of Santa Lucia, and then went into a painstaking rehearsal of Toranse, a traditional Japanese song that proved a challenge for the groups complex harmonies. They mastered the tune under the scrutiny of Chiemi Bly, the musical director, as the only member with a degree in music, and professional experience singing and performing.

Originally from the Hukuoka area of Kyushu, Bly studied music in college and played for weddings, parties, church and temple functions in Japan,

"I love them, they're great. They have lots of energy."
- Chiemi Bly



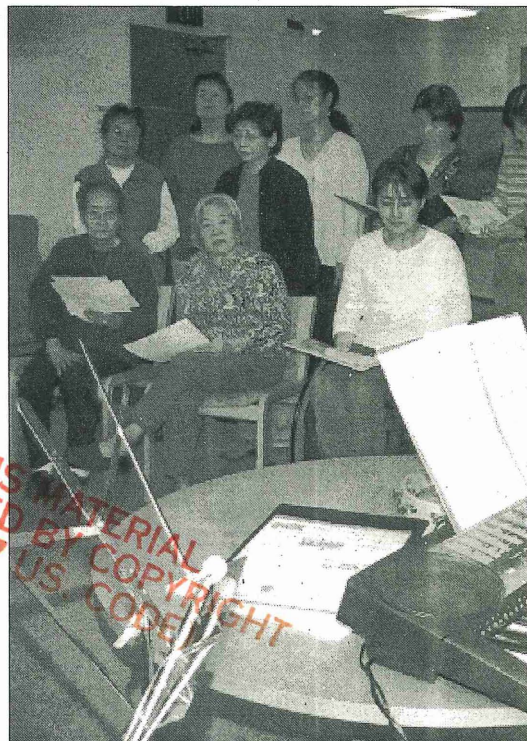
Marilyn Habermas-Scher, a Zen priest, is also a professional singer, and will join the Mumin group in Decorah, Iowa this Saturday.

and now freelances in Minnesota. She is also a tour guide for Minei International, and with her spouse in their translation/interpretation company.

Bly said she, like the other members of the group, were a bit shy early on, but have since become very open and friendly with one another. They work hard at singing, and don't forget to have fun.

"I love them, they're great," she said. "They have lots of energy."

In Decorah, the group will perform two songs from the early 20th century and exhibit a western influence. First, they sing Hana (flower song), and then Furu sato (home country/town). The group will then sing a more recent song, Shojojino Tanukibayashi (temple song for children). They will close with two songs of the early-modern era, Tsubasa o kudasai (let us have wings); Sakura (cherry blossom); Kojo no tsuki (moon



Seated: Kozue Miwa (age 92), Taka Milligan, and Mina Christians Metoki, Keiko Doi, Noriko Sone, Akiko Durbin, Junko Willett, and

on the old castle).

"This is really, really fun," said Junko Willett, a Radisson Hotel concierge and one of the original Mumin members. She looks forward wearing her yukata (summer kimono) to perform Toyoonda and six songs and dances in Iowa on Saturday.

Akiko Durbin, homemaker, is a new member of Mumin. Originally from Yokohama, Japan, she joined the group because of the nice people, and because she enjoys singing the old folk songs from her youth. She also enjoys meeting other Japanese people since coming to Minnesota six years ago and earning a biomedical science degree from St. Cloud State University.

The trip to Iowa is an especially meaningful one for Tomoe Katagiri. Her late husband Dainin Katagiri Roshi, who passed away in 1991, was a Zen priest based in San Francisco and came to Minneapolis in the 1970s and founded the Zen Center on Lake

Calhoun, where he taught many American priests started Zen centers all States, including the Winecoff who is leader of the new temple in Iowa.

"Shoken Winecoff is a friend of more than Tomoe Katagiri. He is Minneapolis."

"Tomoe played an important role in teaching students the art and of practicing Zen known to Roshi's form he was," said Keiko founding member, at taiko drumming.

Doi said that she li group because of association they have is reflected in their performing, and in the have from traveling around.

Joining the practice v singer Marilyn Habermas-Scher.

Girl Scouts Camp All Girls Welcome

The Girl Scouts will hold their 4th Annual Asian Family Camp on June 14, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Camp Lakamaga, Forest Lake, Minnesota. The fee is \$5 per family, and transportation will be available from St. Paul.

Bring your whole family! This one day camping program will give families a chance to see what Girl Scout camp is all about. Enjoy boating, swimming, volleyball, arts, and

fishing-or simply take a walk and relax. Lunch and snacks will be provided. Financial assistance is available. For more information, contact Maylee Vue at 651-251-1225. (Yog koj xav paub ntiv, hu ray Malis Vwj 651-251-1225.)

In partnership with more than 6,700 adult volunteers, the Girl Scout Council of St. Croix Valley helps 18,150+ girls grow strong in 11 counties of eastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Girl Scouts is the world's preeminent organization for girls, helping them develop values, social conscience, self-esteem, and

skills for success in the real world.

There is another Girl Scouts event to put some fun and excitement into your summer. Sign up for Camp Northwoods, Camp Lakamaga or Day Camp and explore everything from nature trails and horseback riding to arts, swimming and boating, and leadership development.

Girl Scout camps are in grades one and up assistance is available.

This multi-cultured introduce fun with a hiking, learning about archery and swimming will offer "64 Crayon girls in grades 1-7, at

NGUYEN
LAV

Gun-free zones debated

Concealed weapons in schools would be banned

PIONEER PRESS FEB 27 '03
BY JOHN WELSH
Pioneer Press

With an increased likelihood that Minnesota will greatly expand the right of residents to carry concealed weapons, the legislative debate turned Wednesday to which places should remain gun-free.

Right now the law allows permit holders to walk freely inside the hallways of public schools. But critics are questioning how wise that might be if the number of permit holders in the state grows from 13,000 to 100,000, which could happen under a bill that would expand access to permits.

The Minnesota House's Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee passed legislation Wednesday that includes a ban on concealed guns in schools. But it rejected a bid by a St. Paul lawmaker to ban them in the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Those on both sides of the issue expect such debates to increase as the bill — called the Minnesota Personal Protection Act — moves toward an expected clash between a more permissive bill likely to pass the Republican-controlled House and a more restrictive version to be considered by the Democratic-

Farmer-Labor-controlled Senate.

Critics of the bill say it will open the "floodgates" for concealed weapons, but proponents said it was needed protection of gun owners' constitutional rights and that proposed restrictions amounted to "zero-tolerance run amok."

Under the bill, applicants would get permits unless they were disqualified for a specific reason, such as a history of violent crime. Current law gives police chiefs and local sheriffs the authority to issue permits and require applicants to show they need to carry a weapon because of their jobs or to pro-

tect themselves.

The bill now goes before the House Ways and Means Committee and should arrive on the House floor in early March. In the Senate, the Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee will hold several days of hearings on the issue in the coming weeks, said the committee's chairman, Sen. Leo Foley, DFL-Coon Rapids.

On Wednesday, the House bill's sponsor, Rep. Lynda Boudreau, revealed changes to address concerns expressed by school and business groups. But she said she was reluctant to make any more accommodations.

GUN-FREE ZONES, 6B

Gun-free zones

(continued)

"The more changes or deviations from the intent and we start losing the intent or the effect (of the bill)," said Boudreau, R-Faribault.

The school changes would make it a petty misdemeanor for permit holders to carry a gun on school grounds or at day-care centers.

Permit holders would be allowed to take their weapons onto school property while they are in their cars, and they would be able to get out of their cars and secure their weapons in their trunks if they wanted to go inside the school or attend a football game.

Boudreau's earlier version left the current law largely intact in this area and would have allowed permit holders to carry

weapons in schools. The bill and current law allow police officers to carry concealed weapons.

Most states that do allow greater access to concealed weapons do not allow them in schools. But a proponent of Boudreau's bill criticized her efforts to limit guns in schools.

"This is zero-tolerance run amok," said Tim Grant, a leader of the Conceal Carry Reform Now. "We are essentially advertising to deranged criminals ... that Minnesota schools will be more vulnerable targets."

School groups have weighed in on the issue in recent weeks. Some want an outright ban on guns in schools, including

inside cars.

Others fear that making violation of the law a petty misdemeanor — which under state statutes is not considered a criminal offense — is not significant enough.

"The current legislation will create a greater risk in schools," said Spring Lake Park Superintendent Don Helmstetter. "No guns should be allowed on school property."

Boudreau also modified her bill regarding businesses or public establishments. It allows businesses to post their property as gun-free, but they must meet certain requirements including posting prominent signs, providing secured storage for guns and assuming liability for the guns and the safety of the patron.

The debate reflects a cultural divide in Minnesota. Lawmakers from urban areas for the most part oppose the bill, reflecting their constituents'

concerns about the use of guns in crimes.

But in rural areas where hunting is a popular rite of passage and gun violence is not a part of the daily news, support for the bill is strong.

Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, offered an amendment Wednesday that highlighted the divide. It left Boudreau's bill intact except that the gun permits would not be valid in St. Paul and Minneapolis.

"You can have your guns, but we don't want them in our backyard," Thao said.

The amendment failed.

John Welsh can be reached at jwelsh@pioneerpress.com or (651) 228-5432.

Online: Information about this bill, HF261, is available at www.leg.state.mn.us. Click on "Legislation and Bill Status" and type in the bill number.

Handgun bill picks up restrictions

House legislation to ease permit rules advanced but some places would be off-limits.

STAR TRIBUNE FEB 27 '03
By Conrad deFiebre
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Handguns would be barred from schools, school buses, day care centers and posted places of business under the latest version of a bill to make permits to carry them available to most Minnesotans, which was approved Wednesday by a House committee.

House sponsor Lynda Boudreau, R-Faribault, said she introduced the changes in response to the concerns of many people about firearms on their premises. Some advocates of the legislation, however, said she went too far in seeking to keep guns out of schools under penalty of a petty misdemeanor.

"This will put your and my children at a greater risk than they are now," said Tim Grant of Concealed Carry Reform Now Inc. "It advertises to criminals that there are no guns in schools to protect the law-abiding. The schools will not be safer from terrorists or psychotic students."

Under current law, Minnesota's approximately 12,000 handgun permit holders are allowed to take their guns practically anywhere, including schools. A legislative estimate has said Boudreau's bill would increase the number of permit holders to 90,000.

Statewide police organizations have opposed the bill, which would strip chiefs and sheriffs of discretion in issuing permits. Several retired police officers testified in favor of the bill Wednesday, but Coon Rapids Police Chief Steve Wells said: "Many, many street officers do not see more weapons on the street making for a safer Minnesota."

Shifting debate

But with majorities in both

houses of the Legislature and Gov. Tim Pawlenty in favor of making Minnesota the 35th state to liberalize handgun permitting, the debate has shifted largely to deciding what places should remain gun-free by law. Churches? Sports arenas? Shopping malls? Bars?

An amendment offered Wednesday by Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, to prohibit carrying handguns in public anywhere in Minneapolis and St. Paul was loudly voted down by the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee.

The overall bill advanced to the Ways and Means Committee on a vote of 12 to 8, with most Republicans in favor and most DFLers opposed. Reps. Jim Rhodes, R-St. Louis Park, and Mary Murphy, DFL-Hermantown, were the only Judiciary members to cross party lines. If it passes Ways and Means it will head to the floor.

The Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee is expected to hold initial hearings Monday on several variations of

Boudreau's initiative.

Boudreau said the changes she introduced Wednesday to allow owners to mark their property off-limits to guns were based on Arizona restrictions, which she described as the nation's strongest. Other states, however, bar handguns from many places by statute.

Under Boudreau's plan, property owners would have to post lime-green signs larger than 2 feet square to inform patrons of a no-gun policy, provide individual lockboxes to store guns and assume strict liability for loss of the guns and injury to disarmed patrons.

Anne Finn, a lobbyist for the League of Minnesota Cities, testified that cities have "significant concerns" about the liability provision. Grant said that business groups also oppose it.

"Can we satisfy everyone? No," Boudreau said. "The more we erode the bill, we start losing the effect."

— Conrad deFiebre is at cdefiebre@startribune.com.

House outlines fixes for '03 budget crisis x-14

The Republican plan resembles Pawlenty's but spares deep cuts to ethanol subsidies.

By **Patricia Lopez**, **JAN 22 '03**
Jean Hopfensperger
and Dane Smith
Star Tribune Staff Writers

The broad framework of a 2003 budget fix, mostly resembling the plan offered last week by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, passed the House 79 to 47 on Tuesday.

One key difference is emerging:



2003 Legislature

The Republican-controlled House is moving toward restoring about 80 percent of Pawlenty's proposed cuts in subsidies for farmers and ethanol producers, or cutting about \$5.3 million, rather than almost \$27 million.

To make up the difference, House Republicans have rudimentary plans to make deeper cuts in health and human services; dump the Highway Helper program,

which offers roadside assistance; trim some road projects, and cut funds for Driver and Vehicle Services.

House Republicans also would grab \$48 million from the 21st Century Minerals Fund, an economic development fund for northeastern Minnesota. That's \$9 million more than Pawlenty wants to take from the \$59 million fund.

Some of those provisions were approved by House committees Tuesday; others are expected to move in the next week.

BUDGET continues on 5B

— A complete plan is expected to reach the House floor next week.

BUDGET from B1

Pawlenty warns legislators not to miss their deadline

Like Pawlenty's plan, the House plan would make \$468 million in adjustments to the 2003 budget, cutting slightly more than the \$171 million he would cut. The GOP House would otherwise follow the Pawlenty plan by drawing down balances on various special-purpose funds, borrowing rather than spending general-fund money on highway projects, and using accounting shifts for the rest.

Both plans would leave a \$136 million cushion against further declines in 2003 revenues.

House Speaker Steve Sviggum, R-Kenyon, said that committees are still working out the details and that a complete plan is expected to reach the House floor Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Pawlenty warned legislators in a letter Tuesday that unless the House and DFL-controlled Senate can agree on a solution by the first week in February, he would be "left with no choice but to unalot," or use his authority to cut general-fund programs without legislative approval.

Under growing deadline pressure, several key House committees took action on their budget bills Tuesday, including Health and Human Services and Transportation.

Health-care cuts

A state health insurance plan for children from low-income families, as well as welfare and health care for people who aren't U.S. citizens, would be eliminated under a proposal approved by the Health and Human Services Finance Committee.

Likewise, fees and eligibility for subsidized child care, the TEFRA health care program for disabled children and Minnesota-Care would be tightened under the plan.

The proposed cuts to health and human services are expected to total \$7 million more than the \$29 million proposed by Pawlenty last week. House Republicans felt that the administration's proposed cuts were "too light," said Rep. Fran Bradley, R-Rochester, the chief

author of the plan.

"This may be controversial, but it's the kind of thing we have to do," he said.

The plan drew immediate opposition from family and children's advocates.

Jim Koppel, executive director of the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota, criticized the proposal to eliminate the Cover All Kids program. Approved by the Legislature in 2001, it was expected to make about 24,000 children in low-income families eligible for Medical Assistance, a state and federal health care program, by 2004.

Bradley said those children could get covered by MinnesotaCare, a subsidized program that requires sliding-fee premiums from members. That would allow the children to continue to receive coverage but still generate income for the state, he said.

But many parents may not meet MinnesotaCare's eligibility rules, Koppel said.

"You will lose kids," he told the committee. "And increasing the cost for child care at the same time means even less money for their families."

The plan to cut state Medical Assistance benefits for about 5,000 noncitizens, including about 3,000 pregnant women, sparked considerable debate.

Bradley said most states don't offer Medical Assistance to noncitizens. But DFL legislators questioned the wisdom of not giving prenatal care to the women, care that could keep their babies from getting preventable diseases. Besides, when the babies are born they will be U.S. citizens, eligible for state health services, they said.

"It seems like a really stupid approach to saving money," said Rep. Thomas Huntley, DFL-Duluth.

Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, said illegal immigrants typically are "taking minimum-wage jobs that no one else wants" — such as picking cucumbers. If Minnesota really wants to reduce health care costs for illegal — or even legal — immigrants, it should look at the employers who are hiring them for low-

wage jobs with no health insurance, Thao said.

Other proposed cuts would:

➤ Increase parent fees for subsidized child care by 10 percent and cut about 1,100 parents from the child care subsidy program by lowering the income eligibility for it.

➤ Increase TEFRA fees by 10 percent.

➤ Require people receiving Medical Assistance to make \$1 to \$3 co-pays for their prescription drugs.

The Pawlenty budget-cutting plan for the Human Services Department relied mainly on tapping some federal Medicaid reimbursements and lowering Medical Assistance reimbursement rates for hospitals and pharmacies.

A plan approved by a key Senate committee would save 2003 money primarily by delaying agency payments to fiscal year 2004.

Transportation cuts

In the Transportation Finance Committee, Republicans pushed through \$148 million in reductions — primarily by converting \$130 million in cash previously approved for road construction into bonds. The rest comes from reducing transit spending, taking \$15 million from a reserve of the Metropolitan Airports Commission and selling the state jet.

Committee Chairman Bill Kuisle, R-Rochester, also recommended several million dollars in cuts for 2004-05 to free money to repay the new road bonds. For example, the Highway Helper program for distressed motorists would be axed, and the Driver and Vehicle Services operating budget would be trimmed by \$2 million.

Ethanol debate

Rep. Tom Rukavina, DFL-Virginia, said the House Republican capture of additional money from the 21st Century Minerals Fund was "disheartening to say the least."

The budget resolution, which passed along mostly party lines, is the House's first attempt at a plan to eliminate the \$356 million deficit projected for the remainder of fiscal year 2003, which ends in June. Once that chore is finished, the Legislature must address a much larger \$4.2

billion projected deficit for the two-year budget period ending in mid-2005.

Senate DFLers proposed their own 2003 plan last week, which would cut \$99 million, shift another \$100 million of state spending into 2004 and tap some reserves, leaving a \$52 million cushion.

Pawlenty's one-page letter Tuesday was conciliatory in tone but left little doubt that he means to have a budget solution that leaves at least a \$136 million reserve, relies mostly on permanent cuts rather than shifts, and reflects "Minnesota values and priorities."

The House proposal sticks to the first two but may have already run afoul of the third principle, which Pawlenty describes as valuing "education, aid to vulnerable children and adults and public safety over protecting subsidies for profitable business ventures or funds that were set aside for projects that did not materialize."

Pawlenty has said he identified ethanol subsidies as a prime target for elimination because although ethanol is a valued home-grown industry, it also had become profitable on its own and is not in critical need of state subsidies.

Ethanol producers, however, have brought heavy pressure on legislators since Pawlenty's proposal came out, bringing busloads of those involved in the ethanol industry to the Capitol. As recently as late last week, House Republican leaders were estimating that half of Pawlenty's proposed cuts to ethanol subsidies would be restored. But the restoration in the House committee that dispenses funds for agriculture programs came in at 80 percent.

Pawlenty spokeswoman Leslie Kupchella said Tuesday that it would be "premature" to assess the House plan. "We're just going to see what comes out in the end," she said. "We're anxious to get to conference [committee] and hopeful that we can work it all out."

— Staff writer David Phelps and the Associated Press contributed to this report.

— The writers are at plopez@startribune.com, hopfen@startribune.com and rdsmith@startribune.com.

He had an early lesson in politics

STAR TRIBUNE JAN 5 '03
By Patricia Lopez
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Cy Thao's first lesson in politics came early: When he was 3, his family was forced to flee Laos because his father was a provincial governor and the Communists already had paid two "visits" to him in the small, 100-family village where they lived.

"We were afraid that on the third 'visit,' they would take him away, so we left," said Thao, 30, the newest state representative for St. Paul's Frogtown district and part of the next generation of Hmong political leadership.

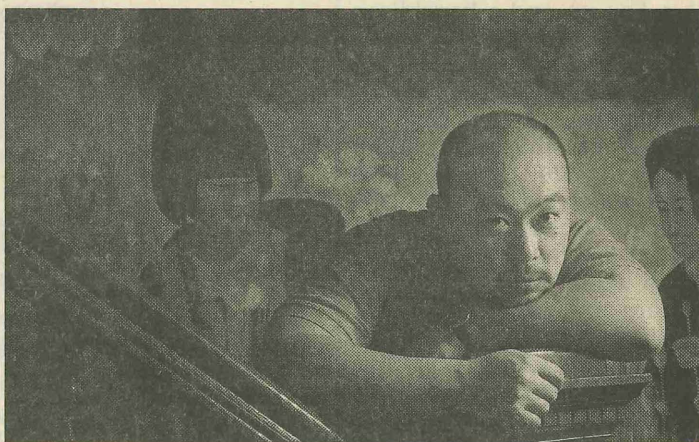
Dressed as field workers, Thao, his parents and five brothers and sisters crossed the Mekong River into Thailand, settling in a refugee camp where Thao would live until he turned 8. A Catholic agency sponsored the family and brought it to Minnesota.

Once they were here, life was a blur of work and school. Mom and Dad learned English, got their GEDs, worked assembly jobs by day and janitorial jobs by night. Eighth-grader Thao took over the raising of his six younger brothers and sisters.

"I didn't get to do a lot of childhood things, although I did do Boy Scouts, cross-country running and wrestling, and I had an after-school job bagging groceries at Lunds," said Thao, a perpetually cheery and seemingly inexhaustible man.

While still helping out at home, he worked his way through college — first the University of Minnesota at Morris, where he double-majored in political science and studio art, then at the University of St. Thomas, where he got a teaching degree.

In recent years he has studied the art of batik in China; helped found the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent; used a Bush fellowship to finish a 50-piece art series on the history of Hmong migration, which will be on display in Rochester in February; married Lee Vang — a former



Richard Tsong-Taatarii/Star Tribune

Cy Thao uses his painting to depict his life experiences.

PROFILE

Cy Thao
DFL-St. Paul

Biography: Born March 2, 1972. Family: wife, Lee Vang; one child. Education: B.A. from the University of Minnesota, Morris, in political science and studio art. Career: artist, actor, teacher, cofounder of the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent.

Campaign themes: affordable housing, education, safe neighborhoods.

Top legislative priorities: small-business development, affordable housing, increased education funding.

Chief Rx for deficit: "As few cuts as possible. A good progressive tax increase would be good for the state."

Election facts: Thao left the DFL briefly in 2000 to run as an Independence Party candidate but returned and won DFL endorsement for his 2002 run.

Hmong teen idol," he notes with unmistakable pride — and fathered Cyanne Thao, the 2-year-old center of his universe.

Home now is a 1903 two-story house in Frogtown, filled with lush bamboo plants and Thao's own artwork: vividly hued paintings of Hmong people and events, including his depiction of a refugee camp.

Politics has been in the mix, too. A longtime human rights organizer, Thao first came to the Capitol as a legislative intern 10 years ago. His first impression? Disillusionment. "I saw all the maneuvering you needed to get bills passed," he said.

So what's changed since then? "Nothing," Thao said,

"except that I'm at a stage of life now where I'm willing to use the process to pass my agenda, to make lives better for other people."

Guided by the belief that economic development and home ownership are the pillars that create strong communities and families, Thao said he had to decide whether to remain an activist who lobbied others "or did I want to be the guy at the forefront, making the decisions?"

Age and travel have had their effect, too. "I've been to other parts of the world," he said. "This is the best political system out there."

— Patricia Lopez is at plopez@startribune.com.

STAR TRIBUNE JAN 17 '03

First cousins could marry under new bill in the House

One of the more talked-about bill introductions Thursday was a proposal to eliminate Minnesota's law against marriages between first cousins.

The bill is sponsored by DFL Reps. Phyllis Kahn of Minneapolis and Cy Thao of St. Paul. They say recent scientific studies conclude that children of first cousins are at no greater risk of genetic defects than others. Thao, one of two Hmong legislators, said such unions are not uncommon in that culture. Kahn said the law also is a problem for Somali immigrants.

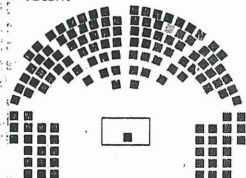
Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, joked that the bill would appear to conflict with Gov. Tim Pawlenty's oft-stated promise "not to turn us into another Arkansas."

— Dane Smith

The House

Even with one Republican gone — Rep. Dan McElroy has left to join the Pawlenty administration — the GOP commands a 61 percent majority the state House — 81 to 52.

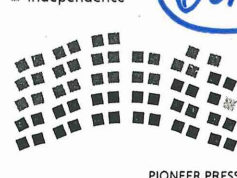
■ Republican
■ DFL
■ Vacant



The Senate

The Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party is hanging onto a three-vote majority in the Senate with 35 DFLers, 31 Republicans and an Independence Party senator who caucuses with the Republicans.

■ Republican
■ DFL
■ Independence



PIONEER PRESS

Capitol abuzz

(continued)

values against the GOP-dominated House and Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Sviggum must keep his massive caucus united, despite some strong differences within it.

The Senate, which has only a slim DFL majority, will strike out on its own path. Its first two bills would provide money for a community center to honor the late U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone and authorize borrowing \$320 million for state building projects vetoed by former Gov. Jesse Ventura last year.

Hottinger also plans to fight to protect — as much as possible — state aid to local governments, which helps pay for police and fire services, and funding for education. He said his 35-member caucus is pretty united when it comes to budget issues.

The Senate's first session started off with a roaring, and rather uncomfortable sounding, laugh. In a prayer to open the session, the Rev. Albert Gallmon Jr., of the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Minneapolis, asked the members to turn to those near them and say, "I love you and there's nothing you can do about it."

After some hesitation, the 67 members did as instructed.

In the House, Sviggum may have some similarly uncomfortable moments managing his own caucus.

House Republicans are nearly evenly split between Twin Cities suburbs and outstate areas. Forty represent suburbs; 41 come from rural districts. The suburbanites tend to be more conservative on tax and spending issues, less conservative on social issues such as abortion, guns and graduation standards.

As leader of the Republican caucus, Sviggum's toughest job will be keeping members united to cut spending for a deficit cure. "Holding them together, at that point, will be the biggest challenge," Sviggum said. He said he would have to tell them, "You can't have a dollar for this program unless you cut it from that family."

In the House on Tuesday,

AT A GLANCE

Leaders of the Minnesota House and Senate decided the following bills will be among the first introduced:

In the (GOP-controlled) House

Bill No. 1: Put visa expiration dates on driver's licenses of temporary residents.

Bill No. 2: Kill the state's Profile of Learning graduation standards and establish a task force to create new standards.

Bills Nos. 3, 4 and 5: Will likely deal with economic development issues and transportation.

In the (DFL-controlled) Senate

Bill No. 1: Authorize \$5 million for a community center to honor the late U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone and his wife, Sheila, on St. Paul's West Side. (The federal government has tentatively offered \$10 million for the center.)

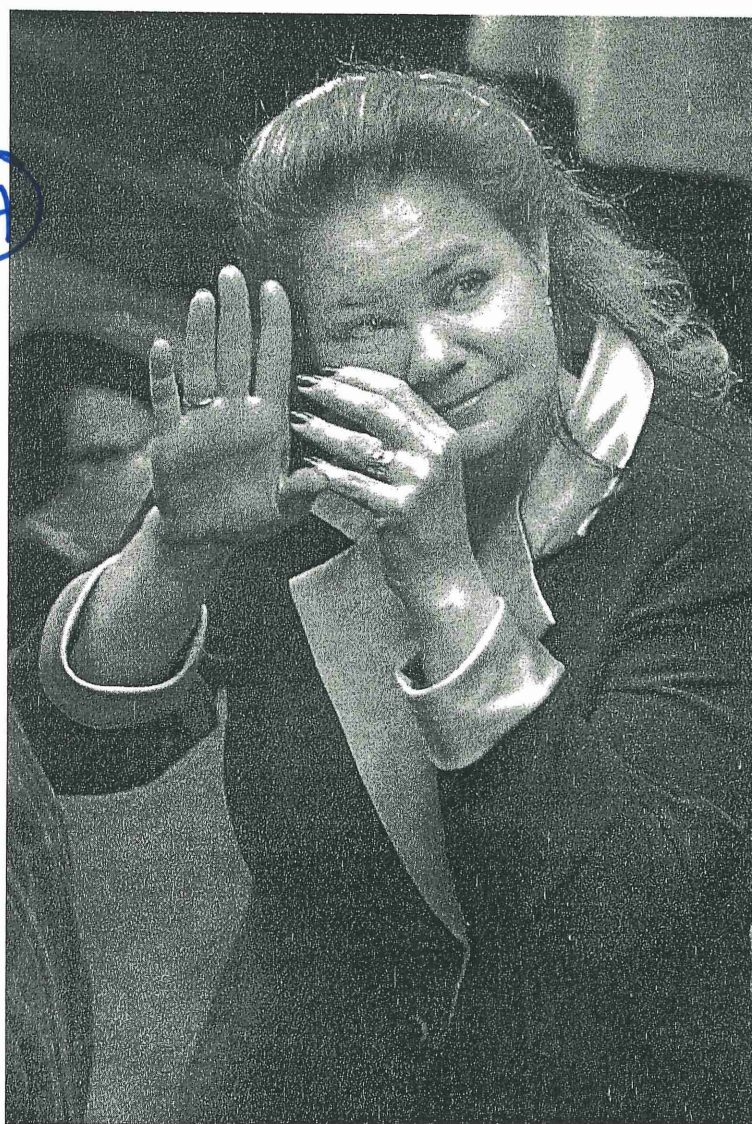
Bill No. 2: Borrow about \$320 million for state building projects that Gov. Jesse Ventura vetoed last year.

Bills Nos. 3 and 4: Will likely increase the Minnesota minimum wage and extend state unemployment insurance.

families seemed to dominate the proceedings. Scores of children, spouses and friends filled the galleries and House chamber for the swearing-in ceremony.

On the Republican side, Rep. Eric Lipman, R-Lake Elmo, balanced his 3-month-old son, Noah, on his desk. Across the room, 1-year-old Amber Eken drank milk from a baby bottle as she, a brother and sister sat with their father, Rep. Kent Eken, DFL-Twin Valley.

Eken's father, Willis, served



JOE ROSSI, PIONEER PRESS

First-term Republican Sen. Julianne Ortman of Chanhassen wipes away a tear as she waves to her parents, her husband and their four children. The family watched the swearing-in ceremony from the Senate gallery.

in the House from 1970 to 1984.

There are now 81 Republicans and 52 Democrats in the House. The seat vacated by new Finance Commissioner Dan McElroy, a Republican, will be filled in a special election on Feb. 3.

Sviggum said the Republicans would use their majority to pass — perhaps next week — bills abolishing the Profile of Learning graduation standards and requiring Minnesota driver's licenses to show visa expiration dates for foreign visitors. Pawlenty campaigned on both issues.

Sviggum said House Republicans will act quickly on a short-term budget fix that Pawlenty is scheduled to unveil soon. The plan will address the \$356 million deficit for the last six months of the fiscal year, which ends June 30.

Lawmakers have been eagerly waiting to see how much of the solution will come from permanent spending cuts.

Pawlenty's budget planners have discussed permanent cuts of about \$180 million, Sviggum said. That would translate into savings of about \$800 million for the next two-year budget, eliminating about one-fifth of the deficit projected for that period.

Sviggum predicted that Pawlenty will recommend cutting the general assistance medical care the state now provides to low-income and disabled people. Some of those people might be transferred to a state health insurance program paid for by fees.

Sviggum urged Pawlenty's staff to consider a cigarette tax increase to prop up the insurance program, but a Pawlenty spokesman said that won't happen. "Cigarette taxes are not on the table," said spokesman Dan Wolter. "That's a tax increase that we pledged not to do."

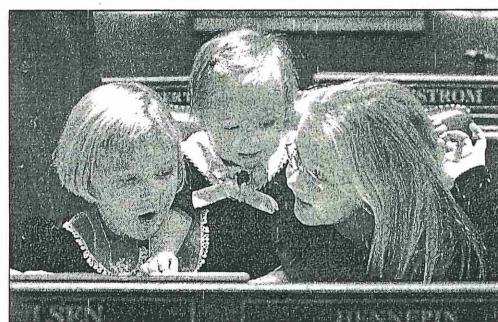
In addition to the budget deficit, there will also be social issues on the table this year. Two activist groups with reason to be concerned had large presences on opening day.

The Welfare Rights Committee brought several hundred people to the Capitol about noon to argue against cuts in programs aimed at low-income



JOHN DOMAN, PIONEER PRESS

Republicans Chris Gerlach of Apple Valley, left, and Mark Holsten of Stillwater confer while the perfunctory vote for speaker of the House drones on. As expected, Steve Sviggum, R-Kenyon, got the nod again.



JOHN DOMAN, PIONEER PRESS

Three daughters of new House Majority Leader Rep. Erik Paulsen, R-Eden Prairie, play at their father's desk in the House chamber prior to the opening of the session Tuesday morning.

Minnesotans. "Cuts for the rich! Not for the poor!" the group shouted on the steps before moving inside to the rotunda.

At the same time, the stairway leading to the doors of the Minnesota Senate was lined with pink-clad members of the state chapters of the Million Mom March, a gun-control organization. They oppose a bill granting wider access to concealed weapons permits, which has stalled in the Senate in the past. The bill is expected to pass easily in the House, and Pawlenty supports it.

Pawlenty and the majority of the House and Senate also support restricting access to abor-

tion through a waiting period bill, which would require women to receive information about risks and alternatives before having an abortion.

That bill seems nearly assured to pass, but that didn't stop longtime abortion rights lobbyist Sue Rockne from coming to the Capitol on opening day, as she has for more than 40 years.

"I am here because I am unwilling to be driven out," said Rockne. "I want to remind them that there are other points of view. ... They can't take that away from me. That's my right."

Staff writer Jim Ragsdale contributed to this report.

MINNESOTA'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

X-24 W V

2003 LEGISLATURE: OPENING SESSION

Capitol abuzz as legislators gear up

A day for ceremony before battles waged

BY RACHEL E. STASSEN-BERGER AND PATRICK SWEENEY

Pioneer Press

PIONEER PRESS JAN 8 '03

After months of quiet, the Minnesota Capitol burst with activity Tuesday as the state Legislature began a session rife with new members, new leaders and the biggest budget deficit in two decades.

In the Senate, newly minted Majority Leader John Hottinger, DFL-St. Peter, arrived before dawn to prepare for his first official day presiding over the Senate. In the House, returning Speaker Steve Sviggum, R-Kenyon, found the time to pose for numerous photos with new



JOHN DOMAN, PIONEER PRESS

Freshman Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, looks over a House of Representatives guide book with his 20-month-old daughter, Cyanne, during Speaker Steve Sviggum's speech at the Capitol on Tuesday morning.

representatives and their families, and for a six-mile run after the House's first session.

And both began to outline their contrasting challenges for 2003. Hottinger, who replaces longtime majority leader Roger Moe, must fight for Democratic

CAPITOL ABUZZ, 6A

Large number, little diversity

Most new legislators affluent, suburban

PIONEER PRESS JAN 6 03
BY HANK SHAW
Pioneer Press

The 64 newly elected members of the Minnesota House and Senate make up the largest incoming class since 1972, and their personalities and collective interests will help shape the way the Legislature conducts itself for years to come.

Who are they?

As a group, the newcomers tend to be rural or suburban lawyers, teachers and business owners. Most are Republicans.

They are also mostly middle-age, affluent and white. Many have held local office before. An equal number appear to have no other full-time job, and so may need the roughly \$40,000 a year a legislator earns in salary and incidental pay. A few are rich.

And most live in or within easy commute to the Twin Cities.

This disturbs many rural lawmakers, who say that outstate areas face a triple whammy: They've lost legislative lions like Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe of Erskine and Rep. George Cassell of Alexandria; six of their seats shifted to the suburbs; and of their remaining seats, more than half are now represented by first-year lawmakers.

+ "There's an anxiety level out

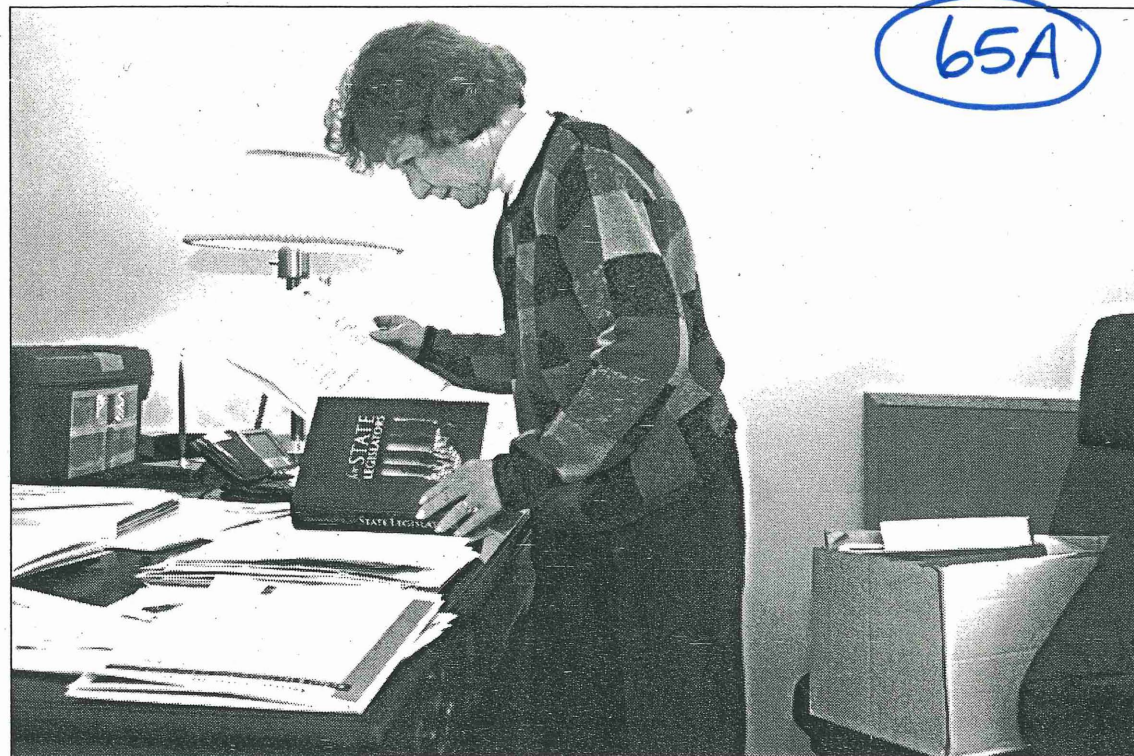
there about what's going to happen to the rural areas," said D.J. Leary, an editor of the newsletter Politics in Minnesota. "They worry about suburban power."

• Rural regions ought to worry. The suburban ring around the Twin Cities became stronger in the Legislature following the once-a-decade redrawing of districts. Many of the various committee chairs are suburbanites, and Gov.-elect Tim Pawlenty hails from Eagan.

Republican House Speaker Steve Sviggum, a beef farmer from Kenyon, stands as a bulwark against any erosion of rural influence, as does the rural wing of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party in the state Senate. But Sviggum and the clique of DFL farmers who chair Senate committees appear to be a fading: Only three of the 64 new members of the Legislature are farmers.

Incoming House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen, a Republican from suburban Eden Prairie, says he is well aware of the power shift. "But my role is making sure everyone has input," said Paulsen, who noted that rural lawmakers helped make him majority leader. "I am confident that I can be attentive to the needs of rural Minnesota."

Paulsen may have to contend



Freshman Rep. Charlotte Samuelson was one of the many new legislators unpacking boxes, cleaning and moving into their new offices last week in preparation for the beginning of the legislative session, which starts Tuesday. Sixty-four members of the House and Senate are newly elected, the largest incoming class since 1972. The state pays legislators about \$40,000 a year in salary and incidental pay.

with a gaggle of rowdy suburban newcomers who may not be so attentive to the farmers and small-town business owners outside of the metro area. He said he's prepared for that.

"I expect us to continue to go through those internal family discussions," Paulsen said. "But remember, the speaker is from rural Minnesota."

As speaker of the House, Sviggum can control the flow of legislation and debate more than any other member.

The skinny on the newcomers:

■ The average age of the newcomers is 45, but they vary wildly. Both the oldest and the youngest

newcomers are in the House. Newport DFLer Katie Sieben is 25, while Kanabec County Republican Judy Soderstrom is 60.

■ Because lawmakers are not required to reveal much about their livelihood, it is difficult to tell who is the richest. But Republican Sen. Julie Rosen of Martin County, may well take the prize as the wealthiest newcomer: She is the wife of multimillionaire Thomas Rosen, who runs one of Minnesota's largest meat-packing and fertilizer companies.

■ Minneapolis Rep. Keith Ellison, a Minneapolis DFLer, is the lone African-American among the new crew.

■ Fellow DFLer Cy Thao of St. Paul will be the Legislature's second Hmong member. Sen. Mee Moua, who represents the same area of Frogtown in St. Paul, was the first.

■ Small-town Republican retail reps: Peter Nelson of Lindstrom (population 3,015), is a butcher; Doug Lindgren of Bagley (population 1,235), owns a gas station, and Bud Heiderken of Freeport (population 454), can be found at his restaurant, Charlie's Cafe.

Hank Shaw can be reached at hshaw@pioneerpress.com or (651) 228-5257.

BY THE NUMBERS

New members of the House and Senate: 64

Additions to GOP Caucus: 43

Rural or mostly rural districts represented by first-year lawmakers: 21

Newcomers who own a business: 11

Newcomers who are teachers: 8, and 7 are GOP

Number of artists in new class: 1 (Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul)