



"These images are very appropriate to what is going on today"

— State Representative
Cy Thao (DFL 65A)

COEXISTENCE



AAP Photos by Tom LaVenture

The children of Northern Lights School for Strings, of the Jewish Community Center's "Suzuki Violin School, directed by Ellen Kim, performed Bach, and Jewish melodies Hava Nashira and Freilach.



Howard Orenstein, senior policy adviser to Mayor Randy Kelly, said Coexistence gives voice to the silence, fears and hopes that we all feel and express in different ways.

By Tom LaVenture
Asian American Press

ST. PAUL (June 14, 2004) — Residents of our increasingly diversifying community are urged to visit the acclaimed international exhibition "Coexistence", a 38-image exhibit of inspirational work for peace, equality, and coexistence from June 14 through July 6, 2004 in downtown St. Paul's Rice Park. An opening ceremony and reception was held Monday

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Coexistence

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evening at the Landmark Center with entertainment to accompany the outdoor mounted 9 x 15 ft. panel exhibit.

The free, outdoor, 24-hour exhibit is designed to initiate reflection and discussion about why we do, or don't get along with each other. The selected work of 42 artists from 19 countries is an international tour from the Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem, Israel (Raphie Etgar, curator), and brought to Minnesota by Dr. Stephen Feinstein, director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the U of M. It completed its month-and-half showing at the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis last week.

The event opened with a Hmong Peace Dance by Mai Ya-Vu and Pachoua Yang. The two are with the St. Croix Valley Girl Scouts in St. Paul and were accompanied by Ly Yang, artistic director, who manages 35 girls altogether, ages 3 to 18.

The two dancers were wearing a combination of traditional Pa Ndaou flower design clothing, with silver and gold coins attached, and modern additions of silk pants and shirt, and wearing their hair in a Lao bun style.

State Representative Cy Thao (DFL-65A), said he looked slowly and reflectively at the coexistence photos, and said images helped him reach memories long since buried in his memories.

Rep. Thao said the art helped him realize the prejudices from his boyhood in the Thai refugee camps and how large groups of one ethnic group would exercise their power over a smaller group, "because they could." He remembered coming to America in the early 1980s and found himself the minority, and hopes that the exhibit will help kids see that picking on others is wrong.

"These images are very appropriate to what is going on

today," said Thao.

St. Paul City Attorney Manual Cervantes served as event emcee and said the Coexistence project was something to celebrate and appreciate. He praised the City's progressive history on race-relations, and for setting a national standard for intolerance of hate-crimes and attitudes. He said that the project would inspire dialogue and projects that build on what we have in common, rather than concentrate on our differences.

Rabbi Esther Adler-Rephan of Mt. Zion Temple in St. Paul provided a challenging invocation. She parted from a tradition of invocations that she felt were watered down in their attempt to be both inclusive and inoffensive.

In the spirit of Coexistence, Rabbi Adler-Rephan asked guests to formulate a personal prayer on race relations, and then say it aloud at the same time. She expected the mumbled good intent rather than a spiritual exclamation she asked for, but non-the-less followed with collective prayer for the community to visit and learn from the exhibit.

University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts Dean Steven J. Rosentone delivered the keynote address. He called the Coexistence exhibit a model for collaboration, and said the U of M project transcends geographic and cultural boundaries with a meaningful, publicly accessible idea to promote probing dialogue.

With globalization and an increasingly diversifying community, Rosentone said that educational institutions "are asking the hard questions, challenging old ways of thinking, and changing our world."

"This exhibit has the power to move all people," he said.

The all volunteer City Songs children's choir performed three songs, including the "Cherokee Morning Song", "Black, White, Tan." The spiritually charged renditions revealed the innocence of youth and the absence of socially learned prejudices.



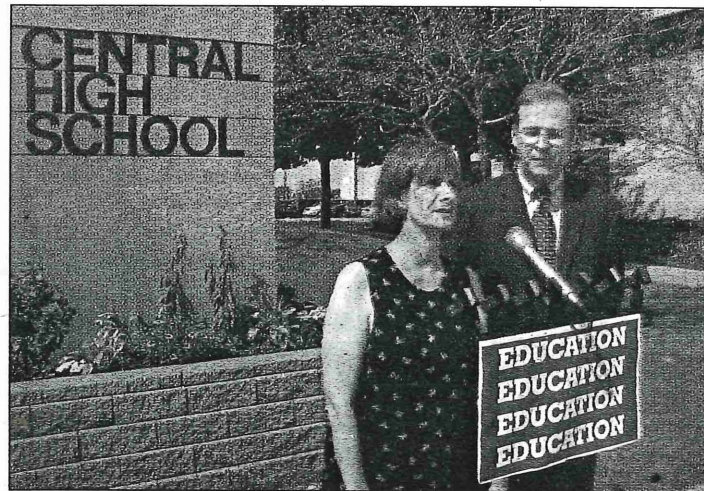
Mai Ya-Vue, 15, Central High School, and Pachoua Yang, 17, Community Peace Academy, performed the Hmong Peace Dance to open the Coexistence exhibit ceremony at Landmark Center on Monday.

Youth performers from the Suzuki Violin Program of the Jewish Community Center and Northern Lights School for Strings performed Bach, and Jewish melodies Hava Nashira and Freilach.

Howard Orenstein, senior policy adviser to Mayor Randy Kelly, read a proclamation from the city declaring Coexistence week. He



Rabbi Esther Adler-Rephan of Mt. Zion Temple in St. Paul provided a challenging invocation.



State Reps. Mindy Greiling, DFL-Roseville, and Matt Entenza, DFL-St. Paul, criticized the federal No Child Left Behind law during a press conference on the first day of the school year on Tuesday at St. Paul Central High School. The two lawmakers said the bill takes away local control and should be eliminated in Minnesota unless the federal government allows a number of waivers. (Photo by Charley Shaw)

Debate continues over the No Child Left Behind rules

Minnesota Education Commissioner Alice Seagren says recent test scores in the state show that No Child Left Behind is working, but some lawmakers want the state to get out of the program.

BY CHARLEY SHAW
Legal Ledger Staff Writer

Two DFL state representatives railed against federal education requirements on Tuesday as "unfunded and often-contradictory mandates."

State Reps. Matt Entenza of St. Paul and Mindy Greiling of Roseville called for reform of the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) at a press conference outside Central High School in St. Paul.

Their event marked the first day back to school.

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No Child Debate: Added flexibility in NCLB is one of nine waivers sought by Legislature.

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"Today the message needs to be clear. Minnesota schools are a success. They are doing better. But we need to junk No Child Left Behind," said Entenza, the House minority leader.

"The core value must be local control," he added.

The Bush administration's education reform initiative was passed by Congress in 2001. The act requires public school students to be tested in reading and math in order to determine if adequate yearly progress (AYP) has been made.

Last week, state education officials announced test results for 2005 showed that 247 schools had not made adequate progress, an improvement from the previous year when 464 failed to clear the bar.

Minnesota Education Commissioner Alice Seagren defended NCLB.

"I think No Child Left Behind is working. It was very obvious from our test scores ... that we are really making progress with our students who have had an achievement gap in the past," Seagren said.

Seagren said the NCLB law sets targets for "subgroups," which include groups of minority students and students on free or reduced-price lunch. The law also requires accountability through open reporting of children's progress, she said.

"I think it would be just tragic if we decided not to do this," Seagren said.

Minnesota education officials have sought, and in some cases have received, waivers to the law.

Seagren said 2005 was the first time under NCLB that schools and districts could indicate their progress based on two-to-three-year average scores. That change benefited 78 schools and 75 districts that wouldn't have otherwise fulfilled their annual progress requirements.

The added flexibility in NCLB is but one of nine waivers that the Legislature asked Education Department officials to seek from the federal government.

Entenza said "the state should be ready to opt out of No Child Left Behind if the federal bureaucracy is unwilling to approve the proposed waivers."

The waivers, which were directed by the Legislature during the recent special session, include:

- Determining adequate yearly progress based on "multiple measures of student achievement" rather than relying on standardized test scores.
- Excluding from sanctions those schools that don't make AYP because subgroups tested below proficient levels for at least two consecutive schools years. Another waiver would also exclude sanctions against a school in cases where students with disabilities don't test at a proficient level.
- Using NCLB money to provide "supplemental education services" only in the academic subject area that causes a school to miss AYP.
- Identifying a school as not making AYP only after missing its targets in the same subject and subgroup for two consecutive years.

- Limiting the score of a student within multiple subgroups to the smallest subgroup when calculating AYP instead of counting the student under each subgroup.

- Determining when to hold schools accountable for including a student with limited English proficiency in AYP calculations.

- Using a fully computer-adoptive test to comply with NCLB.

Greiling, the ranking DFLer on the House Education Finance Committee and a former elementary school teacher, said the federal requirements interfered with pre-established accountability standards established in Minnesota.

"It's not that we're against accountability. We just don't want the federal government telling us (how to do it)," Greiling said.

Greiling sponsored a few bills last legislative session relating to NCLB, including a measure to nullify the state's participation in the act by July 1, 2006.

The education omnibus bill approved by state lawmakers stopped short of nullification. But the measure asks the Education Department to report to the House and Senate education committees on the status of the federal waivers by Jan. 15, 2007. The legislation also asks the agency to recommend whether the state should opt out of NCLB if the waivers are not obtained. ■

Mirroring Minnesota

House makeup comes up short in reflecting gender, race

By Ruth Dunn

If the House had the same racial and gender composition as the state, more women and minorities would be serving as representatives.

Minnesota's racial composition is becoming more diverse with 13 percent of residents being of a race or ethnicity other than white. Yet the House remains overwhelmingly white, with just four of the 134 members coming from communities of color. In the Senate, 65 of the 67 members are white.

If the House had the same ethnicity ratio as the state, 117 members would be white but, based on the proportion of communities of color in Minnesota as of July 2003, five members would be black, four would be Hispanic, four would be Asian, two would be Native-American and another two would identify themselves as being of two or more races.

As for gender balance, the state's population was 50.4 percent female as of July 2004, according to State Demographer Tom Gillaspay. Thirty-seven women now serve in the House, about 28 percent of the total membership.

Would discussion in committees and on the floor be different if legislators more closely reflected the racial ethnicity and gender composition of the state?

"It is a completely different debate on gaming without one Native American in the House," said Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls), one of two black members. With more black legislators, Ellison believes his racial profiling bill would have done better. It didn't even get a hearing this session.

"If I was not there, some issues might not be brought up," said Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul), who is of Hmong descent. "We are missing a lot of information unique to populations."

"We give a totally different perspective on

issues and process," said Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover). Discussion on K-12 education and early childhood would be different if the House had more women who "are in the trenches and know what's happening in the schools," she said. Other issues would not even come up, she added, like the recent proposal to eliminate the Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women.

She believes women tend to be more bipartisan and build camaraderie across party lines. Women are also better at multi-tasking, she said.

"If women ran the House, we'd be done at 5 p.m. every day, run home and make supper," she said.

Reaching out

"I'd like to see a broader composition of minorities, especially if they're Republican," said House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon).

He's worked to recruit minorities for the House. "I've been successful in getting candidates to run but not as successful in getting them elected."

All the current representatives of color are DFLers, but Republican leaders say that has more to do with demographics than anything else. Part of the challenge is that most minorities live in the urban core cities and those areas are solidly DFL, according to Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), majority whip.

"There is the feeling that inner cities are just Democratic territory with no chance to break in," he said.

Yet Seifert eyes potential Republican voters when he drives along University Avenue near the Capitol with its entrepreneurs and small business owners who have a strong work ethic and traditional family values — all issues that tap right into the Republican platform planks,

Civics lesson

Ninth- and tenth-grade students in a civics class at Arlington High School, one of St. Paul's most racially diverse high schools, received a grant from the National Geographic Society to explore whether culture affects people's attitude toward government and/or participation in the political process.

They wanted to begin their research by determining if there is proportional representation on different levels in the House. But when they went to the Legislature's Web site, they could not find the information they needed.

There was demographic information about representatives' occupations, education, gender and age, but nothing about their race or ethnicity. "We were surprised the information was not there," said teacher Diana Morton. "We thought it was a reasonable request."

This prompted students to write to 16 representatives and state officials requesting that information on race and ethnicity be included on the Web site.

They had impact.

Beginning next year, biographical information sought from representatives will include the question of race/ethnicity and the data will be included on the Web site, according to Lee Ann Schutz, assistant director of nonpartisan House Public Information Services.

he said.

State organizations of both political parties say they're working to increase the number of minority candidates.

Outreach to minorities is a priority for the Republican Party of Minnesota, according to Michael Brodkorb, communications director. "We're interested in all candidates who support Republican platform ideas." He predicts the next election will see more Republican candidates of color in certain districts across Minnesota.

"The Legislature needs to reflect the community," said Peggy Flannagan, director of community outreach for the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party.

"It starts with finding emerging leaders and helping them gain skills to run for office," she said. Because the traditional caucus and convention process can be intimidating to potential candidates of color, the party has to meet people halfway by going to their communities and their gathering places, she adds.

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First Reading continued from page 3

Racial makeup as of July 1, 2003, according to the Census Bureau estimate for Minnesota (most recent)

87.2%	White
3.8%	Black
3.3%	Hispanic or Latino (equivalent terms)
3.3%	Asian
1.3%	2 or more races
1.1%	American Indian
0.04%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

From the office of the state demographer

Ellison is among members of the Black Democrats, formed not only to encourage candidates of color, but to impact other areas such as increasing diversity in the now predominately white House staff in the House.

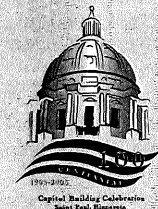
A woman’s place

There were no women in the House until 1922 when four women were elected following passage of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920, giving women the right to vote. The number of female representatives remained in single digits for more than 50 years until three women were elected to the Senate and 10 to the House in 1977. When Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Herman-town) was elected that year, it was still a

rarity for rural Minnesota to have female representatives. She’s happy those numbers have increased. “We’ve never had so many rural women as we have now, representing a wide spectrum of women’s views,” she said. “I get lots of ‘nos,’” said Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) who works to recruit women to run for office. She understands that a negative response may turn to a positive with patient coaxing. “Women tend to think they’re not ready or prepared to run.” “Women ask more questions; they take a long time to recruit,” she said. “But once women make the decision to run, they become solid, committed candidates.” “The biggest obstacle is that women think

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Centennial Rose
Perennial blooms commemorate milestone



With names like Pink Gnome, Firecracker and Golden Eye, the 11 rose varieties in a newly planted Centennial Rose Garden promise to commemorate the Capitol milestone in a splendor of shades.

The flower-shaped bed of roses will feature a creamy white specially hybridized rose that mirrors the building’s Georgia marble.

Bailey Nurseries of Newport, another centenarian in business since 1905, is donating the rose garden to celebrate the Capitol Centennial as well its own birthday.

Peggy Anne Montgomery, the nursery’s media relations representative, designed

and planted the flower-shaped garden. Approximately 30-feet square, it is located on the south mall of the Capitol, between Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and the Veterans Service Building.

Montgomery, who is also a landscape architect, selected one perennial plant, purple salvia, as an accent and divider.

“That wonderful purple color is really nice to weave colors with,” she said.

The garden was planted April 20. “It looks like little thorny sticks right now,” she said, laughing, but explained that if the weather cooperates – warm and sunny days, please – the roses will bloom in time for the June 23 dedication ceremony.

Some 12 years in the making, the Centennial Rose was created by Bailey’s rose breeder Ping Lim.

Hybridizing new roses requires crossing one preferable plant with another, the abridged version of which entails: take pollen from one plant and place it on the stigma of the other, wait for the rose hip to swell and ripen, open the hip and take the seeds, plant the seeds and see what happens.

Lim makes approximately 30,000 crossings per year resulting in about 300,000 seeds, Montgomery said. It’s a fascinating process, she said, one that requires foresight, love and hard work.

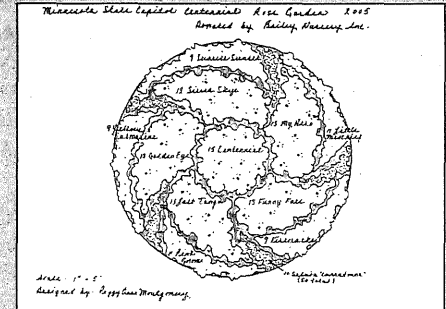
It takes 10 to 12 years to bring a rose to market, she said.



The Centennial Rose, created by rose breeder Ping Lim, is the garden’s centerpiece.

The roses in the garden, all Easy Elegance varieties, were developed without pesticides or herbicides, Montgomery said. “Being an organic gardener myself, I don’t believe we have to pollute the Earth to make something beautiful.”

(N. Wood)



The Centennial Garden, shown here in the original design drawn Peggy Anne Montgomery, landscape architect and Bailey Nurseries media relations representative, features 11 varieties of roses.

Come to the Capitol for the Centennial Garden Dedication Ceremony Thursday, June 23, 4 p.m. Featuring First Lady Mary Pawlenty, Bailey Nurseries rose breeder Ping Lim and the unveiling of the Centennial Rose All 87 counties will receive five Centennial Rose bushes

Photo courtesy of Michelle Meyer/Bailey Nurseries.

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

MAY 6 - 12, 2005
HOUSE FILES 2504 - 2514

Friday, May 6

HF2504—Erhardt (R) Transportation

Motor vehicle fuel and registration tax rates increased, county state-aid fund distribution formula modified, wheelage taxes authorized, revenue deposits specified, bonds issued, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2505—Lenczewski (DFL) Taxes

Twins; Minnesota Twins renamed the Hennepin County Twins if local Hennepin County sales taxes are approved for financing a new baseball stadium.

Monday, May 9

HF2506—Peterson, A. (DFL) Commerce & Financial Institutions

Country of origin labeling act adopted providing requirements and prescribing penalties relating to meat sales and labeling.

HF2507—Lenczewski (DFL) Regulated Industries

Bloomington Art Center on-sale liquor license authorized.

Tuesday, May 10

HF2508—Thissen (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Minneapolis Police Relief Association and Minneapolis Firefighters Relief Association pension benefits reductions limited.

HF2509—Peterson, A. (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

State vehicle purchase bidding preference granted to small businesses.

HF2510—Severson (R) Taxes

Military pension income tax deduction provided.

Wednesday, May 11

HF2511—Kahn (DFL) State Government Finance

Casino operated by the state lottery authorized in the main terminal of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and money appropriated.

Thursday, May 12

HF2512—DeLaForest (R) Environment & Natural Resources

Natural resources programs worker displacement prohibition repealed.

HF2513—Hansen (DFL) Transportation Finance

St. Paul and Inver Grove Heights; Robert Street corridor transitway study and design funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2514—Atkins (DFL) Commerce & Financial Institutions

Uniform Securities Act of 2002 adopted and modified and criminal penalties prescribed.

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they have to be super-qualified and have a perfect resume,” said Tingelstad, who works to recruit female Republican candidates. Whereas men don’t give it a second thought, she adds.

Greiling believes that her goal of a House with at least 53 percent women won’t happen while she’s a member, but it will happen someday.

“It used to be that school boards were all men, now they’re mostly women. We’re not there yet with city councils, county boards and the Legislature, but we will be,” she predicts.

One of the challenges is that rural women don’t want to leave their families for several months to serve in the House, said Tingelstad. “There’s a group we don’t hear from, a whole missing generation of women in their 20s and 30s who have no voice here, no seat at the table.”

That can also be a problem for male legislators, said Seifert, a father of young children. Several young, energetic legislators who are fathers have left office in recent years, primarily because of the strain it placed on their families, he said.

Swiggum understands it can be a hardship for both mothers and fathers to serve, especially those who live far from St. Paul. As a father of three, he’s tried to make the House more family friendly in recent years. For example, committees don’t meet Monday mornings or Friday afternoons for most of the session to give parents more weekend time with their families.

“I want to help members feel they can serve in the Legislature without consequences to their family in a negative way,” he said.



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provide that the team and league will transfer to the state of Minnesota the Minnesota Twins’ heritage and records, including the name, logo, colors, history, playing records, trophies and memorabilia in the event of any dissolution or relocation of the Twins franchise.”

• Rep. Neil W. Peterson (R-Bloomington) successfully offered an amendment that removed provisions dedicating \$4 million in county sales tax monies, if left over after paying off the stadium bonds, to youth activities, amateur sports, county libraries and

Minneapolis public libraries.

“I would suggest that if they really want the goodwill and cooperation of the communities, especially my community, that you do not make that specific,” Peterson added.



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“I think it’s a great way to use state dollars in a way that will be used over and over again,” Juhnke said.

The participants’ attitudes and outlooks on life change dramatically once they are back on the water, Juhnke said. “They have a zest for life when they return.”

Larmon and her fishing buddies eagerly

await another angling season.

“I am just one of the happy stories,” Larmon said. “In the senior citizen’s (center) we talk about it all winter long, but come the first of February, that is when we really get fish fever.”

Larmon is straightforward when asked about her secret to catching the big one: “We just use worms.

“Like I say, if my husband had known there were so many walleyes out here, we would have moved out here a long time ago.”



For more information:
Let’s Go Fishing of Minnesota
1025 19th Ave. SW
Willmar, MN 56201
Phone: (320) 235-8448
Email: info@letsfishingofmn.com

65A

Raising wages

Minimum wage increase awaits gubernatorial action

By Brett Martin

Pay raises for minimum wage earners might be just a couple of pen strokes away.

Awaiting action by Gov. Tim Pawlenty is a bill that would increase the state's minimum wage by \$1 an hour for large employers and 35 cents an hour for smaller employers.

The House passed the bill 84-50 May 2, but not before debating amendments that would change the amount of the increase and which companies would be impacted.

The Senate approved the amended bill 44-22 the following day.

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) and Sen. Ellen R. Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), HF48/SF3* would impact approximately 50,000 Minnesotans who currently earn minimum wage.

"The win today is for some of the lowest paid people," Rukavina said.

As approved, the bill would require employers with annual gross sales of at least \$625,000 to increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$6.15 an hour beginning Aug. 1, 2005. Current definition defines a large employer as one with at least \$500,000 in annual sales. The \$5.15 hourly rate has been in place since Sept. 1, 1997.

Minimum wage for employers with annual gross sales of less than \$500,000 has been \$4.90 an hour since Jan. 1, 1998. That would increase to \$5.25 an hour, beginning Aug. 1, 2005, for companies with less than \$625,000 in annual sales.

Employers would be able to pay an employee under 20 years of age \$4.90 an hour for the first 90 consecutive days of employment. The hourly amount is now \$4.25.

The federal minimum wage for covered, nonexempt employees is \$5.15 an hour, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

"This would have a huge economic boost to the state," Rukavina said.

Some Republicans argued that the minimum wage increase would force pay increases in other income brackets, which Rukavina welcomes.

"What's wrong with someone making \$7 an hour making \$7.50?" he asked. "It does have an effect, but I think that's a good thing."

• Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake) worried that increasing the minimum wage would hurt businesses, which would result in job losses and lead to more jobs being outsourced.

"I have grave concerns over what you're proposing," he said. "We cannot be short-sighted."

• Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids) agreed, saying it would make Minnesota a less business-friendly state and would drive some small businesses, such as family-run restaurants, out of business.

"This is about denying jobs to our people," he said.

DFL members offered a different perspective. Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls) said a wide gap exists between basic necessities and what minimum wage earners can afford, and

the bill would help close that gap.

"You want to make sure kids are fed and the mortgage is paid," said Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul). Both of his parents worked minimum wage jobs.

• Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) said the increase would provide more financial freedom to workers.

"This minimum wage bill will attract more people to Minnesota who want to work," she said.

• Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) offered an unsuccessful amendment to make it a "livable" wage by increasing the minimum pay to \$9.73 an hour.

"Let's do the whole enchilada," Seifert said. "You're only giving us half a taco."

He offered an amendment to change the \$500,000 gross sales limit that determines minimum wage pay rates to \$2 million. When that was defeated, he unsuccessfully offered another amendment to change it to \$1 million. A third amendment to change it to \$750,000 was orally amended to \$625,000 and approved.

• An amendment by Rep. Tom Emmer

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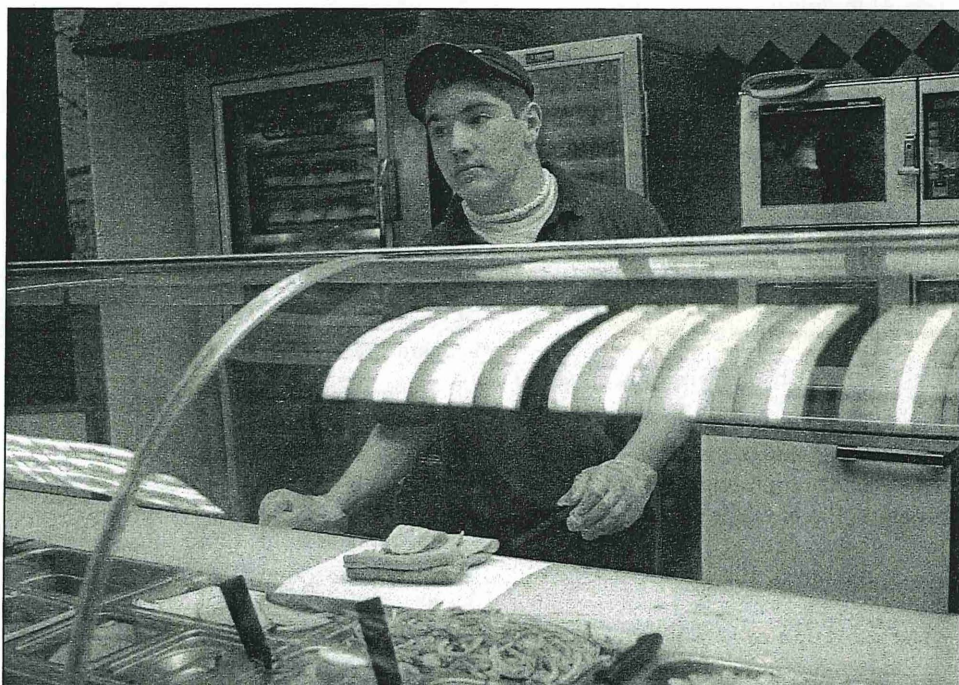


PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Tony Gomez prepares a sandwich at the Subway in Hugo. A bill that would raise the state's minimum wage for the first time since Jan. 1, 1998, would affect entry-level positions in fast food and other establishments.

Environment continued from page 14

and grant-in-aid trails in order to defray trail grooming and maintenance costs.

Under the bill, municipalities, golf courses and landscape irrigators would pay a surcharge on water used during the summer months, if the amount is greater than January consumption levels. The surcharge would not apply to agricultural users. The increased fee could promote conservation, proponents said.

Also under the bill, a fee would be established to cover the department's costs for managing state-owned minerals. The minerals management fee would be set at 20 percent of mineral revenues generated. Currently, the money comes from the General Fund.

Plan B

If the House fails to pass a gaming measure, Article 2 would become a reality in order to meet the General Fund spending target of \$274.48 million. "Uff Da, if we get Option A," said Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar).

"These cuts are pretty ironic or tragic when all we hear is the talk about cleaning up our polluted waters," said Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls).

Under that scenario, funding would be reduced for the following agencies:

- Department of Natural Resources (-\$8.31 million); however, reductions to the Reinvest in Minnesota program forwarded in the Article 1 funding plan would be canceled out by \$691,000;
- Board of Water and Soil Resources (-\$1.41 million);
- Department of Environmental Protection (-\$1 million);
- Minnesota Conservation Corps (-\$700,000);
- Metropolitan Council parks (-\$600,000); and
- Science Museum of Minnesota (-\$70,000). 🐾

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(R-Delano), which was withdrawn, would have repealed the state's minimum wage altogether.

Seven states don't have a minimum wage requirement, and the 14 states with a minimum wage standard higher than Minnesota also have higher unemployment, Emmer said.

"It's proven that it does not work," he said.

• Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) unsuccessfully offered an amendment to hold the minimum wage at \$5.25 an hour for waiters and waitresses, and \$6.15 an hour for

employees at companies with annual sales of more than \$1 million.

"This is fair," he said. "I want to see the minimum wage raised to \$6.15 an hour."

Gunther argued that tipped employees don't need the raise because they average more than \$17 an hour. 🐾

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a shared structure for the management of property and the use of shared technology for managing real estate. The system would include details such as rent, repair, maintenance and ownership.

Fourteen "custodial" agencies now manage more than 5,000 buildings on nearly 6 million acres, 880 leases totaling more than 4 million square feet and the budgeting and legislative processes are based on incomplete data, according to the report.

The governor's reorganizational order involves making uniform "programs and services related to the construction and building code licenses and regulation are being consolidated in the Department of Labor and Industry." Currently, multiple agencies oversee the building codes causing staff time to be spent on similar data collecting functions rather than enforcement activity.

The result would be, according to the report, "more efficient, effective, and less costly regulation of the construction industry," which accounts for nearly 20 percent of the state's economy.

Additional areas expected to be addressed later include: customer service innovation projects, such as consolidated contact centers, improvements on how the state handles financial transactions and combining human resource functions into a shared service.

Staff positions are expected to be reduced by about 1,300 with most of the reduction coming from attrition, rather than the "restructuring, relocations or layoff," which would happen over a five-year period, Badgerow said. 🐾

Barber continued from page 18

and Kevin will be graduating from cosmetology school this year.

Kirkpatrick's other shops, including one in the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and one opening in Stillwater, keep him busy. When he gets a chance, though, he enjoys getting outdoors.

"I do all kinds of fishing, and I do a lot of hunting trips." From Minnesota to Colorado and Wyoming, you'll find Kirkpatrick fishing for walleye and hunting elk, deer and antelope.

Kirkpatrick is a reservoir not only of skill and experience, but political secrets as well. "I know most everything that's going to happen before it happens," he said, but he'll never tell.

Then again, there is one thing Kirkpatrick thinks people should know: "This job is the best-kept secret in the world!" 🐾

War continued from page 19

combination of street smarts and luck, said Hornstein. Both his parents spent time in forced labor camps — much like those that Lieder helped liberate — where the able-bodied tended to be sent first. His parents met after the war while on a train to a camp for displaced persons.

Hornstein's mother died in 1998, and his father, Stephen, now lives in St. Louis Park. Last year, Hornstein invited Lieder to his family's Passover Seder meal where the two older men immediately began talking about their war experiences.

"The vets who defeated Germany and liberated the camps are heroes," said Hornstein.

A soldier's view

When he was young, Cybart knew a concentration camp survivor who lived down the street from his aunt in Michigan. The woman, who had a camp number tattooed on her arm, would talk about her experiences. "That made it real," said Cybart.

During a seven-year stint in Germany with the Air Force military police in the 1980s, he visited Dachau, a concentration camp near Munich. "It was a somber place and a horrifying part of history," he said.

Cybart has tremendous respect for the "Greatest Generation" of World War II and the sacrifices they made. Through his wife, who is from Zell, Germany, he's talked with many Germans and heard their war experiences.

Retired a few years ago after 20 years of active duty, Cybart first met Lieder when he was seeking sponsors for a bill involving veteran's benefits.

"I have the utmost respect for what he went through," said Cybart.

Cybart feels strongly about honoring veterans and the sacrifices they made for the country. He's organizing the Memorial Day commemoration in Apple Valley this year.

"If we don't honor these people we forget their sacrifices and I don't want that to be forgotten." 🐾

If you have Internet access, visit the House's Web page at:
<http://www.house.mn>

65B

DULUTH NEWS-TRIBUNE

DULUTH, MN
MONDAY 45,444
MAR 14 2005



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Students now pay \$2 to tour the Capitol

BY SCOTT THISTLE
NEWS TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

ST. PAUL — For a year and a half, school groups visiting the state Capitol have had to pay a \$2 fee to tour the building. The tour used to be free.

The extra charge for the Minnesota Historical Society tour has raised the cost of the annual field trip Hermantown sixth-graders from \$16 to \$18. Sixth-grade teacher Craig Peterson, organizer of the annual outing, said the fee is affordable and worth it for what students get from the guided tour.

But Peterson said it's ironic that tour guides previously mentioned how the building belongs to all Minnesotans and access to it has always been open and free.

About 164 Hermantown students plus 10 to 15 chaperones will go to the Capitol this year.

"Last year, I jokingly told my students that instead of touring the Capitol, we should stage a protest on the steps of the Capitol with signs ... showing our opposition to the \$2 fee," Peterson said. "However, the sixth-graders were more interested in going inside."

Carolyn Kompeline, the society's site manager at the Capitol, said state budget cuts to the society made the fee necessary to keep the 45-minute tours alive. The society also charges admission to the Minnesota History Center, another facility that had been free to the public.

Kompeline said students still get a good message about government during the tours.

"What we do when we have them on tour is let them know that their role as a citizen is to participate, and this is how they can do it," Kompeline said. "We tell them their participation as a citizen as they grow up is really vital to our democracy."

So far, most teachers have reacted like Peterson, and there haven't been complaints from visiting school groups about the fee, Kompeline said.

"The reverse side was actually true. Our reservation person was always asked what the fee for the tour was and people were surprised there wasn't one," Kompeline said.

Rep. Carlos Mariani, DFL-St. Paul, agrees the \$2 fee for school children isn't a budget-breaker for Capitol field trips but it adds insult to the injury of the ongoing shortage of state funding for public education.

More than that, Mariana said, the fee sends a message to students that government buildings and even government itself may be accessible only to those able to pay for it.

"I think that's the bigger point," Mariana said. "At what point do we have people just dropping off and losing interest completely because they don't have the money to gain access?"

65A

April 1, 2005

HMONG TIMES

COMMUN

REP. CY THAO PROPOSES FUNDING FOR ASIAN-PACIFIC CULTURAL CENTER

Representative Cy Thao has proposed funding for an Asian-Pacific Cultural Center, to be included in the Minnesota bonding bill for next year.

"The Asian-American community in Minnesota is extremely diverse," Rep. Thao said. "This will help to bring all of us

together in order to learn from each other. It will also help us to provide services for our communities and continue to educate other Minne-sotans about Asian cultures."

The Asian-Pacific Cultural Center will offer a range of services. It

will include an art space, including a theater. It will also have community rooms that local civic organizations could use for meeting space. Finally, there will be office space that will be available to those organizations that serve the Asian-American communities in Minnesota.

"This Center would be an extremely important asset," Rep. Thao said. "There is substantial support for it already, and I'm optimistic that it will be included in the bonding bill next year."

Asian American Press 5/6/05

65A

Cy Thao supports minimum wage increase

SAINT PAUL (May 2, 2005) State Representative Cy Thao (DFL-65A) voted Tuesday to significantly increase the state's minimum wage, a measure that passed the House with strong bipartisan support by a vote of 84-50.

The minimum wage has not increased since 1997. In that time, the dollar has lost 20 percent of its purchasing power, due to the increase in housing and inflationary costs.

The bill would increase the minimum wage in Minnesota for large employers from a rate of \$5.15 per hour to a rate of \$6.15 per hour beginning August 1, 2005.

"This is a long overdue and reasonable increase," said Rep. Cy Thao. "It is unfair that so many people who work full-time are still forced to live in poverty. This increase will be a big help to the majority of low-wage workers in the state. They will see a

much needed increase in their earnings and in what they take home to their families."

Rep. Cy Thao went on to explain that this increase in earnings would also serve as an economic stimulus, as workers spent this new money at local businesses. "This bill will bring new disposable income into our community," he said. "That's a winning proposition for all of us."

The bill passed by the House is a compromise that balanced the concerns of business with the need of low-wage workers, and was designed to ensure the Governor's support. Businesses with annual gross sales of less than \$625,000 can pay a lower minimum wage of \$5.25 an hour. There are also provisions in the bill for a training wage payable to employees under 20 years old.

WAGE — Continued on page 6

Wage

Continued from page 1

during the first 90 consecutive days of employment.

That is raised from its current \$4.25 an hour to \$4.90 an hour.

"This will help many of the small businesses in our community, while ensuring that those businesses that can afford to pay more to their employees do so," Rep. Thao said.

The bill will now go back to the Senate where it will either be passed as amended or sent to Conference Committee to address differences between the two bodies. □



"This is a long overdue and reasonable increase," said Rep. Cy Thao. "It is unfair that so many people who work full-time are still forced to live in poverty. This increase will be a big help to the majority of low-wage workers in the state. They will see a much needed increase in their earnings and in what they take home to their families."

65A

Ballpark bill gains fans

Amid much debate, second committee backs Twins-Hennepin stadium

PIONEER PRESS MAY 18 '05

BY ARON KAHN
Pioneer Press

A contentious Minnesota Twins ballpark bill won support Tuesday in a second House committee, where long, often redundant speeches by opponents frustrated even those on the same side.

Rep. Tony Cornish, a Republican from Good Thunder and retired game warden, said the protracted orations were a "pain in my backside."

"We're starting to look bad here," Cornish said, in recognition of the Local Government Committee's audience in the hearing room and on cable television. "We're floundering."

Over the 10½ hours of debate and testimony, covering two days, committee Chairman Mark Olson, R-Big Lake, allowed witnesses to go far beyond a four-minute rule Olson established at the opening gavel, saying later that the issue was too important to strictly limit discussion. Many spoke for 10 to 15 minutes.

Then, on Tuesday, Cornish and Rep. Mike Charron, a Republican from Woodbury, expressed irritation at their own colleagues' lengthy debates

over what they considered minor points in the ballpark deliberations — or "red herrings," as Charron put it.

"Oh, how we love to play the game," Charron said, pointing out he was talking about politics rather than baseball. Charron voted for the bill, which was approved on a 12-7 vote and sent to the tax committee. Cornish voted against it.

Rep. Ann Lenczewski, a ballpark bill opponent who was among those who raised many issues the others considered insignificant, defended the lengthy process as necessary to restrict the powers of a new public ballpark authority that would build and own the stadium.

Lenczewski, a Bloomington DFLer, was joined in her effort by Reps. Frank Hornstein, DFL-Minneapolis, and Mary Liz Holberg, R-Lakeville. They said the ballpark authority was being given too much jurisdiction over development and public services around the stadium. Holberg called that "ludicrous." The three voted against the bill.

Though also a "no" vote, Cornish, in an interview later, gave an example of what he said was overblown rhetoric: Opponents

criticized a certain phrase in the bill that ballpark backers had agreed to take out almost an hour earlier.

Lenczewski, in whose district the Mall of America sits, said restrictive time limitations should not be placed on such an important, "emotional" bill. It also amazed her, she said, that the Hennepin County Board would come to the Legislature for sales-tax authorization when those revenues might be better assigned to the financially strapped Hennepin County Medical Center.

The county should not have to pay for a statewide asset like a ballpark, she added.

But Rep. Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm and one of the bill's sponsors, said the bill represents the best ballpark proposal in nine years, that it was clear the state wouldn't put any money into it and that it was time to act.

"As a state government, we were going to strike out on this," he said. "Hennepin County stepped up to the plate."

Which was fine with Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul. "If the Twins and Hennepin want it, take it," he said.

Based on an agreement

between the Twins and the county, the bill calls for an expenditure of \$478 million for an open-air ballpark and its infrastructure. The team would put up \$125 million by the 2009 opening of the 42,000-seat stadium in the Warehouse District of downtown Minneapolis, with the county raising \$353 million through a long-term 0.15 percent sales tax, or 3 cents on a \$20 purchase.

A state bill is required because the Legislature and the governor must allow the Hennepin County Board to levy the tax and bypass a public vote on the deal. Opponents at the Capitol will attempt to require that referendum after such an effort failed Monday in the Local Government Committee.

But the committee did amend the bill to include a community ownership option in which the Twins must discuss selling a percentage of ownership to the public in the form of stock.

However, it does not require that the Twins must actually sell those shares.

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ST. PAUL MAYORAL RACE

65A

Mondale gives DFL nod to Coleman

Former VP joins
Latimer, Finney
in endorsement

BY TIM NELSON
PIONEER PRESS APR 19 '05

Walter Mondale on Monday endorsed former City Council Member Chris Coleman's bid for the DFL endorsement in the race to unseat St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly.

"I know Chris Coleman. He shares our DFL values and priorities," Mondale said in a statement issued by the Coleman campaign. "Chris is a proven leader on progressive issues. As mayor, we can count on him to fight for social and economic justice. He has the experience, judgment and compassion to be the mayor the people of St. Paul deserve."

Mondale, a former vice president and U.S. senator, ran against former St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman, a Kelly ally, in 2002, taking up the DFL banner after a plane crash killed U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone.

Mondale joins former Mayor George Latimer and former St. Paul Police Chief William Finney in endorsing Chris Coleman. Former Attorney General Skip Humphrey and former Gov. Wendell Anderson also have endorsed Coleman.

"As a progressive, I think he's an example for all of us," Coleman campaign manager Kris Fredson said of the Monday nod. "I think he's one of the most respected and trusted DFLers out there."

It's the first public sign of movement in the hard-fought endorsement race in a week. Coleman picked up the endorsement of the St. Paul firefighters last Monday and had dozens of them dropping literature and door-knocking over the weekend.

Rafael Ortega, a Ramsey County commissioner, had a slight lead over Coleman in committed delegates at the end of ward conventions last month, but most delegates are going into the April 30 city convention uncommitted.

The Ortega campaign downplayed the Mondale endorsement.

"This is a sign that a significant portion of Chris Coleman's support is based on the



Chris Coleman



Walter Mondale



Randy Kelly



Rafael Ortega

Mondale, a former vice president and U.S. senator, ran against former St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman, a Kelly ally, in 2002.

political inheritance of his father," said Ortega campaign spokesman Dennis Hill, referring to the late Senate DFL leader Nick Coleman Sr. "It might be of interest of delegates, but we think they will be basing their decision to endorse based on each candidate's record on the issues."

Ortega already has earned an endorsement from the Teamsters, which represent the county's sheriff's deputies, dispatchers and corrections officers. He's also been endorsed by state Reps. Cy Thao and Carlos Mariani, state Sen. Sandy Pappas and school board members John Brodrick, Kazoua Kong-Thao and Elona Street-Stewart.

Kelly, meanwhile, has the endorsement of the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce and the police unions in both St. Paul and Minneapolis. He is not seeking the DFL Party's nod for his re-election.

Both Ortega and Coleman have agreed to abide by their party's endorsement.

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ST. PAUL

65A

Theories abound in Hmong violence

Trial of police officer is approaching

BY TODD NELSON
PIONEER PRESS FEB 5 '05

The startling outburst of violence that culminated last year in firebombings and drive-by shootings aimed at Hmong leaders coincided with rising tensions over a host of issues, from long-running political feuds to U.S. trade policy with the communist government of Laos.

Internal wrangling may or may not explain the rash of violent incidents that appeared to target former Hmong military commander Gen. Vang Pao and some of his closest associates. But the flames and gunshots touched off no end of theories about who was behind the violence.

As the Feb. 14 trial approaches of the only person charged in connection with the outbreak — a Hmong-American St. Paul police officer — the mystery surrounding the violence has only deepened.

Some Vang Pao supporters quickly pointed to his longtime communist rivals, while others questioned whether conflicts among the general's followers had played a role. Vang Pao, who led the secret CIA army that battled communists in Laos during the Vietnam War, rankled some supporters in November 2003 when he announced a plan to reconcile with former enemies in the communist Lao and Vietnamese governments.

The violent outbreak added

to confusion and fear in a community where heated debates over trade relations with Laos had led to fisticuffs during a demonstration outside U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum's office last April in St. Paul and where emotions run high over alleged human rights abuses against Hmong resistance fighters and civilians still inside Laos.

State Rep. Cy Thao said he believe the violence was separate from the trade issue and concern about human rights issues in Laos.

"It's a reflection of how diverse the community is," Cy Thao said of Minnesota's estimated 60,000 Hmong, including at least 24,000 who live in St. Paul, giving it the largest Hmong population of any U.S. city. "All kinds of issues exist. We're not monolithic anymore. We're not concerned about one issue."

Tou Mo Cha, the St. Paul officer whose service weapon was used in the shootings, says he twice loaned his gun to a cousin pressuring him to join a political group affiliated with Vang Pao. The officer faces charges in connection with a shooting at the Maplewood home of Xang Vang, the general's longtime interpreter. Days later, fire destroyed the home of prominent community leader Cha Vang, Vang Pao's son.

"A lot of people are confused and wonder what's really happening here," said Lee Pao Xiong, a longtime community

activist and director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University.

Adding to the uncertainty are allegations Tou Mo Cha made to police, accusing Cha Vang of seeking payment to influence city officials to resolve issues concerning the liquor license of a nightclub the officer's wife operated.

The officer also alleged that Cha Vang was the person who met him at the RiverCentre to return his gun the day after the officer first loaned out his gun in November 2003. Police later matched casings from the shootings in April 2004 at Xang Vang's home and in November 2003 at Dara Thai, a Hmong-owned restaurant in St. Paul.

Tou Mo Cha, who last year traveled to Thailand to visit Hmong refugees awaiting resettlement as part of a delegation led by Mayor Randy Kelly, also alleged that Cha Vang — who also was in Thailand at the same time as the mayor's group — pressured the officer to discourage refugees to refuse to leave.

Cha Vang declined to comment Friday on the officer's allegations.

"You don't really know whether it's their enemy trying to discredit (Vang Pao) or whether it's another group doing it," Lee Pao Xiong said. "It's very difficult to decipher what is real and what is not out there, what is fabricated and what is not. That's where a lot of people, we're just confused."

TIMELINE

Nov. 29, 2003 — Windows are shot out at three unoccupied businesses, including the Hmong-owned Dara Thai restaurant, in the 700 block of Milton Street in St. Paul.

April 20, 2004 — Shots are fired into the Maplewood residence of Xang Vang, translator for retired Hmong military commander Gen. Vang Pao. No one inside is injured.

April 24 — A fire is ignited at the Lao Family Community of Minnesota offices on the 300 block of University Avenue in St. Paul.

April 25 — A firebomb destroys the Maplewood home

of Vang Pao's son, Cha Vang.

April 26 — Arson is attempted at the Lao Veterans of America on the 700 block of Milton Street in St. Paul.

May 5 — A reward of up to \$12,500 is offered for information pertaining to the crimes.

May 10 — St. Paul police officer Tou Mo Cha, 35, an 11-year veteran, is arrested for his alleged involvement in the drive-by shooting of Xang Vang's home. In a statement to investigators, Tou Mo Cha says he lent his .40-caliber Glock semiautomatic service handgun on two occasions to a cousin who threatened Tou Mo Cha's

family if the officer did not align himself with supporters of Vang Pao. Shell casings found at Xang Vang's home and the North Milton Street businesses match Tou Mo Cha's gun.

June 11 — Tou Mo Cha pleads not guilty to one felony count of drive-by discharge of a firearm. That charge later is dismissed and replaced with a charge of second-degree assault involving a firearm.

July 15 — Prosecutors amend the complaint against Tou Mo Cha, adding charges of terrorist threats and first-degree criminal damage to property.

Sept. 20 — In a hearing in

Ramsey County District Court, Tou Mo Cha's attorney, Earl Gray, argues Tou Mo Cha's confession to police should be suppressed because it was obtained after he had asked to speak to his attorney. The confession later is ruled inadmissible.

Dec. 23 — Tou Mo Cha's Little Canada home is destroyed by an arson fire.

Feb. 14, 2005 — Tou Mo Cha is scheduled to stand trial for his alleged involvement in the April 20 drive-by shooting.

— Compiled by Erin Pfeiffer, Pioneer Press

THE 2005 LEGISLATURE

Class of '02 has advice for rookies

STAR TRIBUNE JAN 10 '05
By Dane Smith and Patricia Lopez
Star Tribune Staff Writers

L60.38



Attention was focused last week on the 26 new members of the Minnesota House. Largely out of the spotlight was the much larger, battle-hardened freshman class of 2002, whose 43 members have been seasoned by two sessions of extraordinary pain and futility.

The heavily Republican class of 2002 helped impose record budget cuts in 2003 and sputtered through the historic gridlock of 2004, which generally is considered one of the least productive sessions in history. Republican rookies paid a price: Six out of 30 newcomers lost their bids for reelection.

The Star Tribune has been following six of those 2002 newcomers for the past two years. As they crossed the threshold from rookie to veteran status, they offered these observations about what went wrong and right, along with advice to the next class.



Doug Lindgren

R-Bagley

An easygoing gas station owner known for his car-parts sculptures, Lindgren narrowly lost his reelection bid last fall — the only one of the Star Tribune six to lose.

He attributes his loss to a huge presidential election turnout in a rural northwestern district that has tended to vote DFL. He also might have suffered from Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty's clashes with Indian tribes; precincts in the Red Lake Reservation voted against Lindgren by about a 9-1 margin despite what Lindgren describes as his good ties with the community. It also didn't help, Lindgren said, that Pawlenty tended to blame the entire Legislature for the 2004 disaster instead of focusing on DFLers.

ADVICE continues on B5

(over)

ADVICE from B1

All 6 see the need to work with or get to know members on the other side of the aisle

Still, Lindgren has no regrets and is already considering a comeback in 2006. "It was the biggest learning experience of my life ... And by far the best thing that happened was the relationships I made with people down there. All this talk about the family of legislators, well, when you get in that family, it's unbelievable. ... And I made some very close Democratic friends."

Lindgren said he is proudest of the role he played in moderating legislation regulating all-terrain vehicles and ownership of exotic animals. He was least happy with late campaign ads that suggested he was sleeping or inactive because he didn't give many floor speeches. "Most people should know that it all happens in caucus and committee," he said.



Cy Thao
DFL-St. Paul

Coming into the minority as a freshman legislator, Thao didn't expect to wield great power. But his biggest surprise, he said, was learning that "whoever is in control is in total control." The last DFL budget proposal, he said, "never even got a hearing. That shocked me. Maybe I was just naive. I figured, we were elected, the same as them [Republicans]."

This year, Thao said, with House Republicans leading DFLers by a mere two votes, "I hoped they'd be willing to work with us more, but things are still stacked against us. It's very discourag-

ing for me."

Thao represents the heavily Hmong Frogtown district of St. Paul, and his seat is considered safe. His advice for the incoming rookie class is twofold. To DFLers, "Learn the process well." For the new Republicans? "Be more inclusive of the minority. Who knows? They might have good ideas."



Karen Klinzing
R-Woodbury

The worst coincided with the best for this high school social studies teacher. A problem pregnancy in 2003 left her bedridden for months. She delivered a son, William Gregory, in the fall of her first year, but he died a month later. During this time, almost every day for three months, fellow legislators or staff members delivered meals to her home and helped her with shopping or in caring for her two other children, Klinzing said. "Our lowest point coincided with our highest point ... I was writing thank-you notes every day."

Klinzing happened to serve on one of the few committees that got its work done in 2004. Her education policy conference committee produced a compromise on the state's graduation standards that revamped science and social studies standards.

The only one of the six to have signed a pledge not to vote for tax increases, Klinzing faced a strong challenge from DFLer Len Price, a former state senator. Several suburban Re-

publicans in similar circumstances lost. Klinzing said she prevailed in part because she "was never anything but honest with her constituents. I never tried to mask where I stood."

Another factor, she said, is that she wasn't targeted with the blizzard of negative mailings that other Republicans received. Price ran a positive and clean campaign, Klinzing said.



Michael Nelson
DFL-Brooklyn Park

A former carpenter, Nelson said he viewed legislative work as "somewhat mysterious." What he found was that "it's not a lot different from any job. You just get in and do the work." Nelson is proud of the fact that amid last year's gridlock, he managed to get a bill passed that prevented insurance companies from canceling the policies of homeowners offering day care in their homes. "It went into effect Jan. 1," he said. "That felt pretty good."

Nelson's biggest complaint is the same as Thao's: "The partisanship was definitely the worst," he said. "We got treated like we were insignificant, like we didn't even count. They could pass what they wanted without a single Democratic vote, so the attitude came across as 'we don't need you.'" Among his disappointments, Nelson said, was the seeming inability to get to know opposing legislators. As he starts his second term, Nelson said he is telling

incoming freshmen to "get to know people from the other side. Know them as people. Talk to each other. See what you can work on together."



Michael Beard
R-Shakopee

When DFL legislators began going after Rep. Arlon Lindner (defeated in November) over comments that gays and lesbians found offensive, Beard said, "it wasn't so much genuine indignation by DFLers as it was seeing an opening and leveraging for all it was worth. The blinders came off and I realized this isn't a Sunday school, it's the roughest legal game in town."

Beard, publisher of the Minnesota Christian Chronicle, admits that his own GOP caucus plays the same games on some occasions. Nevertheless, he said he is "proud of this institution because what we do here is a high-minded and normal thing."

His best moments were being able to co-sponsor (unsuccessfully so far) legislation providing for a constitutional ban on gay marriage and establishing himself as a member who does things with a "philosophical underpinning." But he also feels he left a mark on less ideological fronts, including the advocacy for a coal gasification plant on the Iron Range. "It's good for the state and good for the Range, and I got to play with some DFLers, cross-aisle bipartisan stuff."

Beard broke with his caucus and

supported an increase in license tab fees, but learned a lesson when he eventually was forced to "fall on my own sword and vote against my own outstanding bill."



Dan Severson
R-Sauk Rapids

This retired Navy pilot and substitute teacher, a decidedly conservative voice on social issues, says he never accepted the idea that 2004 was a bipartisan failure, so he fought hard against that charge with editorials and campaign literature that put the blame squarely on Senate DFLers. He expanded his 2002 margin of victory in his St. Cloud district from about 315 votes to about 5,000.

Severson says he thinks he was re-elected in part because he was able to balance his personal convictions with constant "working to try and find out what peoples' concerns were." He broke with his caucus on no new taxes and supported a cigarette tax increase.

The acme for Severson was advancing a bill that relaxes a state moratorium on new hospital beds, a crucial issue in his growing district. His nadir was in the 2004 breakdown, "the frustration of working hundreds of hours in hearings about bonding requests and then seeing it not happen."

The writers are at
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Asian American Press

11.25.05

Cy Thao receives alumnus award

By Judy Korn

UMM News Service

State Representative **Cy Thao** (DFL-65A) is the 2005 recipient of the University of Minnesota, Morris Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award. The honor recognizes UMM alumni who have made noteworthy contributions in their professional lives, in public service, or in service to the University of Minnesota.

Jenny Nellis, professor of studio art, nominated Thao for the award. She noted Thao's dedication to serving others as exemplary - as a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, as a member of the Hmong community, and as a member of the UMM community.

Thao graduated from UMM in 1995, receiving a bachelor of arts in political science and studio art. He helped found the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent in St. Paul and served as its first director. In 2000 he received a Bush Artist Fellowship that allowed him to complete a series of 50 oil paintings that he had begun as a student in 1993. The exhibition, "The Hmong Migration: Fifty Paintings," chronicles 5,000 years of Hmong history beginning with

creation stories and ending with a world map showing the many countries where Hmong people now make their homes. The powerful and moving exhibition was featured at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in 2004.

Nellis described Thao's efforts on behalf of the Hmong living in Minnesota and studying at UMM as "uplifting and inspirational." In 2002 Thao launched a successful bid as a representative for District 65A, the Frogtown neighbor in St. Paul which is home to a large Hmong population. In his service to UMM, the multi-ethnic student population, including the Asian Student Organization, has particularly appreciated Thao's support and guidance. He received the UMM Multi-Ethnic Distinguished Alumni Award in 2004.

During his recent visit to campus, Thao reflected on his UMM career: "It was good for an inner city kid to be in this sort of environment. It was very enjoyable. I got to know the minority students really well, and others, too. We became like a small family. We made sure each other got through our classes."

Thao stated that his UMM experience, the learning and the relationships, shaped his life's



Jenny Nellis and Rep. Cy Thao, recipients of the U of M Morris Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award.

path. "When I graduated from UMM, I was committed to being involved in community."

Thao was one of two recipients receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award for 2005. Also honored was Paulette Molin '66, noted author and educator. Molin and Thao were presented their awards during the Alumni Association Banquet and Annual Meeting held in October.

65A

Cy Thao get's *perfect score*

ST. PAUL (November 30, 2005) —In its recently released legislative scorecard, the Minnesota League of Conservation Voters (MNL CV) gave State Representative Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul) a 100 percent score for his votes on conservation issues. The league designated 8 key votes to determine the scores.

The votes included legislation such as a comprehensive bipartisan bill investing in Minnesota's transit and 20 percent renewable energy standard for our state. The League agreed with Rep. Thao's votes on all 8 issues they deemed important.

"Minnesota's natural resources provide billions of dollars in revenue for our state, safe drinking water for our families, and a treasured outdoor



Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-65A)

way of life for us all," said MNL CV Public Affairs Director Molly Schultz. "We rely on our legislators

to protect these valuable assets. Representative Thao's perfect voting record shows that he understands the need to make smart investments and adopt sound policies that preserve our water, air and open spaces."

"Creating a sustainable future for Minnesota includes a clean environment and quality mass-transit. I'm proud to stand with the Minnesota League of Conservation Voters on these issues," Thao said.

The MLCV educates voters on conservation and environmental issues that are important to Minnesotans, cultivate legislative leadership and hold elected officials accountable.

Asian American Press

12-16-2005

65A

ST. PAUL
PIONEER PRESS OCT 25 '05
**University Avenue
is forum topic today**

A flurry of redevelopment opportunities along University Avenue in the state Capitol area of St. Paul is prompting a town hall meeting on the issue tonight at Christ Lutheran Church.

✓ State Sen. Sandy Pappas, DFL-St. Paul, and state Rep. Cy ✓ Thao, DFL-St. Paul, will join business and community leaders to discuss how a proposed light-rail transit system along the avenue would affect nearby businesses and residents; the future of the historic Ford building, which was rescued last year from demolition; redevelopment ideas for the soon-to-be-closed Saxon Ford car

dealership; and the concept of requiring area businesses to pay their employees a living wage.

The meeting will be at 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the church, 105 W. University Ave.

— Laura Yuen

X-12
(65A)

Every office tells a story

Personalities on display inside members' quarters

By RUTH DUNN

House members practically live at the State Office Building 24/7 during session each year, so it's not surprising that some have feathered their office nests in ways that reflect their interests, personalities, histories and districts.

"When people come to your office they want a sense of what it's like to be here and who you are," according to Rep. Ruth Johnson (DFL-St.

environment," she said. Others feel the same way and have replicated the idea. Ruud says the art inspires her and prompts her to reflect on why she's serving in the House. "It's all about the kids, our future."

His own artwork is sometimes displayed in the office of Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul). Right now on display in his office are hand-sewn Hmong wall hangings along with paintings by other artists.

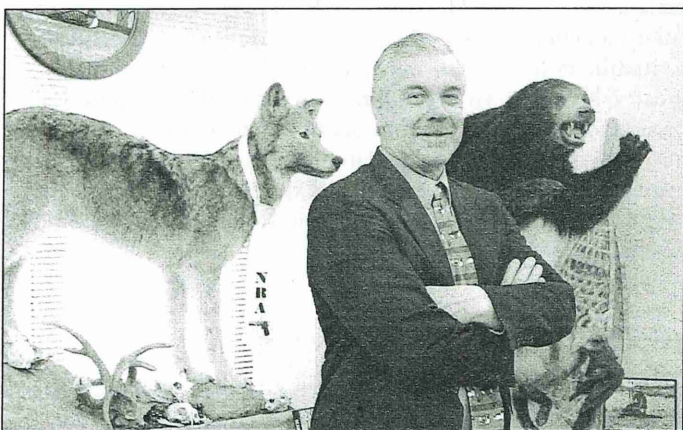


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Tony Cornish, a former DNR conservation officer, brings a bit of the outdoors inside his office.

Peter). How legislators set up their offices is a "way of telling people what you value."

Johnson's enjoyment of the arts is evident in her office, but what catches the most attention are panels of white lace hung on the walls. She loves lace and liked the idea of white on white in her office décor so she turned former curtains into wall hangings. In sharp contrast is a painting of a hog shed that was done by an artist from her district.

If you've got a kink in your neck or an ache in your back, stop by the office of Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka), a chiropractor in his "other" life. He keeps the chiropractic table handy and offers free adjustments to bring others back into alignment.

A rotating exhibit of artwork from school children in her district brightens the office walls of Rep. Maria Ruud (DFL-Minnetonka). "I love it. It's uplifting and makes a cheerful

only helps him feel comfortable and at ease, it's also a great ice breaker for people coming to talk with him about subjects that may be tense.

Sometimes pictures of family members or their handiwork help enliven offices.

"My office sends a daily message to others of what my priorities are," said Rep. Denise Ditrach (DFL-Champlin). Her space is filled with family photos including eye-catching close-ups of her three sons. "They are the primary force for everything I've done in

the past 10 years," she said.

There's an artificial pine tree in the corner of Rep. Larry Howes' (R-Walker) office that is decorated with strands of lights made from shotgun shells by his crafty daughter.

• When Rep. Lloyd Cybart (R-Apple Valley) retired from a 20-year military career in the Air Force, his wife, Heike, had a glass case filled with his medals, ribbons and other memorabilia that is now proudly displayed in his office.

The districts they represent are never far from the minds of representatives who often have items in their offices that remind them of where they come from.

Historic photos of eight of the 12 cities in her district line the walls of Rep. Laura Brod's (R-New Prague) office. The photos feature the city's main streets, which fascinate Brod so much she wrote her master's thesis on the topic.

• Rep. Judy Soderstrom (R-Mora) has gathered items that tell the story of every community in her district.

"It reminds me, as I look around, of those I represent," said Soderstrom, who describes her district as "a rural area with a lot of history." Ancient wooden skis and other souvenirs of the Mora Vasaloppet cross-country annual ski race decorate the walls of the office. She's also got a pie pan from Braham, the so-called Pie Capital of Minnesota, and fur-trapping artifacts from the North West Company Fur Post, a living history museum

Offices continued on page 54



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

A rotating exhibit of art from school children in her district adorn the walls of Rep. Maria Ruud's office.

Health & Human continued from page 34

Teen Challenge, which Bradley called “the most effective treatment program in Minnesota,” will receive \$1.8 million, the amount originally proposed by the House.

Dentists and rural pharmacists will be added to the health professional loan forgiveness program.

A 5 percent reduction in hospital rates should save \$58 million, and the elimination of suicide prevention grants should result in savings of nearly \$2 million.

At no cost

The working group approved some items without designating any accompanying money, including a requirement to collect residency information on applicants of certain

human services programs and nursing facility rate changes for long term care facilities located in Renville, Otter Tail, Anoka and Aitkin counties.

A Senate discharge plan for offenders with serious and persistent mental illness was not funded, nor was a collaborative services study between schools and mental health providers.

A compulsive gambling grant program was established, but the money will come from lottery funds.

Several proposals by both sides were dropped during negotiations as the parties focused their efforts, and money, on other priorities. The House had sought a study by the human services commissioner on access to dental services by people with disabilities. In return, the Senate wanted a study on childhood obesity. Neither was included in the law.

Other House proposals that were dropped include requiring the human services commissioner to report to the Legislature on criteria and rate negotiations for nursing facilities that provide specialized care, and to develop a report on health care financing and a proposed report on the number of applicants to specified programs who had not lived in Minnesota for the previous 12 months.

Senate proposals that didn’t make the final cut include modifying the definition of gross individual or gross family income for self-employed farmers under the MinnesotaCare program and modifying the MinnesotaCare option for small employers.

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Taxes continued from page 35

2006 and 2007, the increase in value is limited to 15 percent or 25 percent of the difference between the current value and the previous year’s limited value. The last year that limited market value will be available is in the assessment year 2008 for taxes payable in 2009.

Also under the new law, owners of property that has been contaminated by mold or lead could see a property tax reduction to help with mitigation costs.

Homeowners will be allowed a one-year valuation

reduction equal to the cost of repairing damage due to mold contamination. The cost of repairing the damage must be at least \$20,000 to qualify for the valuation reduction.

If a city has authorized a valuation reduction in property because of lead contamination, the owner may receive a one-year valuation reduction equal to the cost of mitigating the lead hazards. This would apply only to projects with at least \$3,000 in costs beginning after July 1, 2005 and completed before July 1, 2010.

While more restrictive than before, the new law also reinstitutes class 4d property for

qualifying low-income rental housing.

Money for municipalities

The state will be distributing about \$48 million in local government aid to cities.

The new law also provides an additional \$6 per capital to cities with a population of less than 5,000. When a city reaches the 5,000-population threshold, that aid would be eliminated and the city would then begin to receive a portion of municipal street aid instead.

Transportation continued from page 36

medal and bear certain inscriptions. Medal of Honor recipients and former prisoners of war will also be able to receive special plates with designated markings.

Firefighters will be able to receive special license plates for motorcycles that indicate they

are firefighters. Previously, the special plates were only available for cars and trucks.

The law also changes the names of a highway and a bridge to honor certain veterans.

A portion of Trunk Highway 371 from Little Falls to Cass Lake, except for the Brainerd bypass, will be designated the “Purple Heart Memorial Highway.” The bridge over the St.

Louis River that is marked Trunk Highway 23 will be named the “Biauswah Bridge in Honor of Native American Veterans.”

The transportation commissioner is charged with adopting suitable highway markings and signs to mark the highway and bridge.

Offices continued from page 42

near Pine City.

“I think you feel at home in your office when you decorate it,” said Soderstrom.

A warm-colored quilt with farm scenes dominates the office of Rep. Mary Ellen

Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie) to reflect her rural district.

Still others have more unique things that reflect who they are or were.

An archeological dig in the office of Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr. (DFL-Winona), a history

teacher, would reveal many interesting artifacts. There’s an inflatable sarcophagus, lots of memorabilia from his golf pro days and several license plates with college insignias that resulted from a law he sponsored in the 1990s.

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Lawmakers get \$136,000 in overtime payments

102 of 201 in Legislature paid
so far for 2005 special session

BY PATRICK SWEENEY
Pioneer Press

9-9-05

Minnesota lawmakers have so far claimed about \$136,000 in daily salary and expense payments for their eight-week special legislative session this summer, according to House and Senate records.

A number of lawmakers — Democrats and Republicans, and members of both the House and Senate — refused to accept the \$66-a-day payments they are allowed to collect in addition to their \$2,595-a-month base salary. Others claimed the pay for only part of the special session.

OVERTIME PAYMENTS, 10A



AT A GLANCE

During the special session, the \$66 per diem was only for days a legislator attended floor sessions or committee hearings, or took part in budget negotiations. Outstate legislators could claim per diems for travel days.

Online: For a complete list of special session per diem payments as of the Sept. 1 payroll, go to www.twincities.com and click on the Politics page.

(Over)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Overtime payments

(continued)

Many of those who refused to claim the money did so either in a show of contrition for failing to get their work done by a May 23 constitutional deadline, or in a demonstration of solidarity with state workers who lost pay during a partial government shutdown, or in anticipation of retribution next year from voters angry about the overtime session.

All payment totals are still incomplete because separate deadlines for senators and state representatives to claim the funds have not passed.

But, through a Sept. 1 pay-roll, 39 of 67 senators had asked for and received the so-called "per diem" payments, according to legislative pay records reviewed by the Pioneer Press. Sixty-three of 134 House members received the per diem payments. The average payment total was \$1,589 for senators who took the per diem pay, and \$1,171 for House members.

And, while the two bodies are nearly evenly divided between Republicans and members of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, DFLers so far have claimed two-thirds of the per diem money that has been paid out.

The highest per diem total in each body went to committee chairmen deeply involved in budget negotiations. LeRoy Stumpf, DFL-Plummer, Senate education budget committee chairman, claimed \$2,970, and Fran Bradley, R-Rochester, House health policy and finance committee chairman, claimed \$2,112.

The per diems are an odd combination of expense payments and a salary supplement for legislators who got their last increase in base pay in 1999. During regular sessions, legislators receive per diems for weekends and holidays, as well as days they work.

It is likely the number of legislators claiming the per diems for this special session, especially in the House, will grow and the total cost will increase. That's because House members have 90 days to claim per diems. Senators are allowed 60 days. The special session ended July 13.

The per diem payments have been part of the legislative pay system for years. But the per diems, especially during special sessions called to finish unfinished business, have long been controversial.

In 2001, during a special session budget battle that was a lot like this year's deadlock,

Special session per diems

Here is a list of East Metro lawmakers who collected per diem payments for this year's special session. Lawmakers have several more weeks to submit a claim.

House member	Party	Amount	Senate member	Party	Amount
Joe Atkins	DFL	\$896	Ellen Anderson	DFL	\$1,386
Chris DeLaForest	R	1,320	Bill Belanger	R	2,442
Pat Garofalo	R	1,120	Don Betzold	DFL	2,046
Barbara Goodwin	DFL	1,122	Mike McGinn	R	462
Tom Hackbarth	R	660	Mee Moua	DFL	2,376
Alice Hausman	DFL	1,320	Sandra Pappas	DFL	924
Mary Liz Holberg	R	132	Pat Pariseau	R	924
Sheldon Johnson	DFL	726	Chuck Wiger	DFL	1,254
Karen Klinzing	R	792			
John Lesch	DFL	1,122			
Tim Mahoney	DFL	264			
Carlos Mariani	DFL	462			
Doug Meslow	R	840			
Duke Powell	R	1,254			
Char Samuelson	R	1,122			
Cy Thao	DFL	594			
Andy Westerberg	R	1,254			

Source: Minnesota House and Senate



PIONEER PRESS

OPTING OUT

These state senators notified the Senate Fiscal Services staff they would not claim per diems during the special session (the House did not maintain a similar list):

- Michele Bachmann, R;
- Richard Cohen, DFL; Dick Day, R; Michelle Fischbach, R; Dean Johnson, DFL; Debbie Johnson, R; Bob Kierlin, R; Sheila Kiscaden, IP; Dave Kleis, R; Brian LeClair, R; Becky Lourey, DFL; Sharon Marko, DFL; John Marty, DFL; Jim Metzen, DFL; Geoff Michel, R; Mady Reiter, R; Julie Rosen, R; Dan Sparks, DFL; and Betsy Wergin, R.

then-Gov. Jesse Ventura challenged lawmakers to "come in on their own dollar" and forgo the daily payments.

Early this year, a group of freshman Democrats in the House, led by Rep. Larry Hosch of St. Joseph, and two Republican senators, Dave Kleis of St. Cloud and Mady Reiter of Shoreview, introduced bills to bar per diem payments during special sessions resulting from lawmakers' failure to complete their work. Both bills died in committees.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty who accepted per diem payments as a state representative during the 2001 special session, called this summer for legislation that would leave per diem policies as they are, but take away a month's base pay from legislators and the governor if they failed to enact a budget by the May deadline.

"Ordinary Minnesotans would not expect to be paid for running past a work deadline, and elected officials should not

expect it either," he said.

Visitors to the Minnesota Republican Party's State Fair booth last week were invited to sign a petition endorsing Pawlenty's plan.

One person eagerly signing was Evelyn Schwartz, a pull-tab clerk from New Brighton who called herself a liberal and a political independent.

"I just think that if they're doing their job properly, we shouldn't have to pay them extra," said Schwartz.

"I think the public was irritated that the work wasn't done," said Rep. Sandra Peterson, a freshman Democrat from New Hope who did not claim per diems. "And I think it does something to soothe those irritated feelings to know that we weren't collecting per diems, we were there on our own time."

But Rep. Tom Emmer, a freshman Republican from Delano, said he and the other legislators who claimed per diems have no apologies to make. Emmer, an attorney, said the \$1,320 he earned in special session per diems was far less than he would have made in his law practice.

"You're talking to a guy who at 44 years old made a significant personal and financial sacrifice to serve my constituents," Emmer said.

A few legislators routinely refuse to claim per diem payments during either regular or special sessions, a few claim less than the \$66 a day and some do not claim the payments on weekends or holidays.

For the special session, senators and representatives were supposed to claim per diems only for days they were attending floor sessions and committee hearings or taking part in the budget negotiations between the House, the Senate

and Pawlenty. Outstate legislators also were allowed to claim per diems for travel days.

Three of the Legislature's top four leaders did not claim per diems.

"We had not concluded our work on the budget in the regular session, and to some people it was the fault of the leadership," said Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson, DFL-Willmar. "And if it's the fault of the leadership, then you shouldn't be collecting per diems."

Sen. Dick Day of Owatonna, leader of the Senate Republican minority, took no per diem payments and wrote letters to three newspapers in his district to announce his decision. He urged fellow Republicans to weigh their political futures against the expense payments. House Minority Leader Matt Entenza, DFL-St. Paul, never claims per diems. House Speaker Steve Sviggum, R-Kenyon, claimed \$1,584.

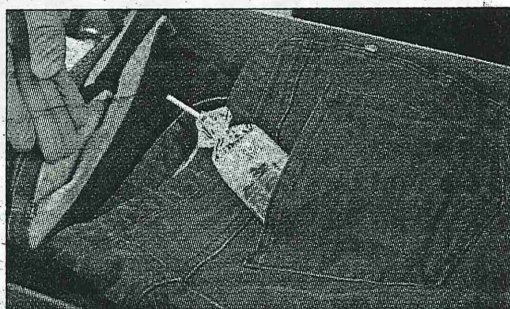
Although the per diem totals are incomplete, Democrats so far significantly outnumber Republicans — 36 to 27 — among House members claiming per diems. House Democrats received \$41,990 vs. \$31,816 for Republicans. In the Senate, 27 Democrats claimed \$48,510 in per diems; 12 Republicans claimed \$13,464.

Will legislators who accepted the per diem payments face consequences when they run for re-election next year? Probably not, predicted Don Ostrom, a visiting professor of political science at St. Olaf College who served as a DFL state representative from 1989 through 1996.

"For the most part, voters are more concerned about education or health care or taxes than they are about the particular salary a legislator gets," Ostrom said.

In this world, there are no easy cases

Getting Hmong rape victims to tell their story is the first hurdle for investigators and prosecutors who seek to convict the perpetrators.



Judy Griesedieck/Star Tribune

These blood-soaked pants — with candy still in the pocket — were evidence in a rape trial.

Editor's note: This story contains graphic descriptions that may not be suitable for children and might be disturbing for some readers.

STAR TRIBUNE OCT 10 '05
By Dan Browning and Pam Louwagie
Star Tribune Staff Writers

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Lynnette Hedblom was packing the car for a late-summer trip to the cabin when she saw a stocky Asian girl sitting on the curb at the foot of her Roseville driveway. It was after midnight, and the girl was disoriented, talking to herself. She stood to leave, but staggered.

Hedblom watched, worried that the girl would stumble into traffic on Lexington Avenue. The girl took a few steps, then slumped back to the curb.

Hedblom, a reserve officer with the Roseville Police Department, assumed she was drunk. In the dim light, she couldn't see the blood matted on the girl's burgundy jeans.

Hedblom asked her if she needed to call someone for a ride. "And that's when she told me she had actually run away," Hedblom said later. "I wanted to know why she was having a hard time walking. ... And that's when she told me that after she had run away, she had encountered these people the night before ... that had gang-raped her."

When Hedblom started to call the police, the girl objected. She believed that once word of the assaults got out in her community, she would be considered unworthy of marriage.

The story illustrates the enormous hurdles facing investigators and prosecutors trying to prosecute the rapes of young Hmong girls.

Even when rape victims cooperate, as this girl eventually did, it can be hard to win a conviction.

Many delay reporting the crime until it's too late to gather good evidence. Victims who drank alcohol or used illegal drugs before the attacks undermine their credibility with some jurors.

LAW continues on A10

SUNDAY A subculture of gang rape and prostitution of young Hmong girls thrives.

TODAY Rape cases involving Hmong girls can be especially difficult to prosecute.

TUESDAY Will new efforts to combat the Hmong rape problem succeed where others have failed?

ONLINE Previous stories are at www.startribune.com.

SHAMED INTO SILENCE

In traditional Hmong society, which is highly patriarchal, girls who lose their virginity outside of marriage are devalued. The broader community is likely to scorn them and their families unless the girl marries the rapist. Families and clans will often rally to protect the males accused of rape or paying for child prostitutes, experts say.

WITNESSES often change stories

LAW from A1

Investigators and prosecutors say those issues, common to many rape cases, are magnified when the victims are Hmong. They tend to be younger than most other rape victims. They often fall prey to gang members who get them high or drunk and threaten them with weapons. They seldom know the attackers' real names. And, like this girl, they sometimes are attacked by so many men that they become confused and can't clearly remember faces.

If the 12-year-old hadn't gotten lost as she tried to make her way home from St. Paul, the crime might have gone undetected altogether.

Cultural hurdles

Hedblom called the police over the girl's objections.

It's not surprising to those who work on Hmong rape cases that the girl would be reluctant to bring charges. Federal studies show that most rape victims — more than six out of 10 — don't report the crime. Hmong victims are even less likely to do so because of the culture's strong clan system and stigmatization of rape victims, according to a 2000 study commissioned by the Minnesota Legislature.

One reason is fear. "If there isn't a conviction, these gang members are going to be after her, and who's going to protect her? Not the county attorney. Not the police," said Tru Thao, a Ramsey County social worker who works with truants and runaways.

And girls can't count on the Hmong community to take their side.

Hmong have a highly patriarchal society. Girls who lose their virginity outside of marriage are devalued; the community scorns them and their families unless the girl marries the rapist. By contrast, some families and clans will rally to protect the males accused of rape or paying for child prostitutes.

"That's one of the main problems," said Richard Dusterhoft, an assistant Ramsey County attorney who has prosecuted these cases for several years. "My experience has been that support, from family, the community, friends, etc., has been one-sided in favor of defendants."

Witnesses, fearing retaliation and pressure from clans, sometimes change their stories when it's time to testify, Dusterhoft said.

Hmong enclaves exist around the country, but in the 1990s, Ramsey County became the ethnic group's leading population center. It is home to nearly 60 percent of the state's Hmong population.

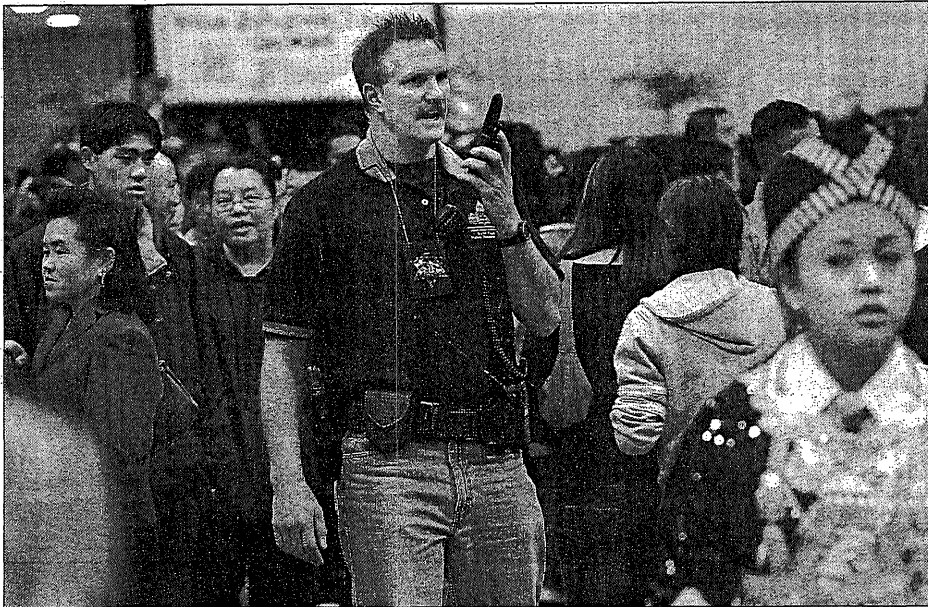
Kevin Navara, a Hmong gang expert with the Minnesota Gang Strike Force, said witnesses and defendants alike sometimes disappear into California, Wisconsin, Michigan or the Carolinas. And victims often will deny that an attack took place or refuse to cooperate with investigators, he said.

That can spoil any chance of trying a suspect, said Chris Wilton, a former Ramsey County prosecutor who has handled a number of Hmong gang-rape cases.

"If the girl simply says, 'It didn't happen and I'm not going to talk about it,' then you're essentially all done with that," said Wilton, now an assistant U.S. attorney.

Gathering evidence

In the case of the 12-year-old girl found in Roseville, her physical condition was evidence of the abuse. She told a Roseville



Tom Sweeney/Star Tribune

Becoming well-known in the Hmong community is one way law enforcement officials can help encourage rape victims to step forward. St. Paul police Sgt. Richard Straka, shown here at last year's Hmong New Year's festival, was approached at an earlier festival by a girl who told him about being gang-raped.

RAPE VICTIM'S PARENTS MAKE A HEARTFELT PLEA

This letter was written by the parents of a 12-year-old Hmong girl who was gang-raped to explain how it had changed her life. It was read into the record at the sentencing of a defendant. It has been edited for length and names have been removed.

Sept. 10, 2004

Dear Judge Flynn:

We are writing to you about what has happened to our family since [name deleted] was brutally gang raped by these evil gang members.

[Name] was an A+ student. ... She wanted a career and had recently thought of becoming a police officer because of all the opportunities to help people. She also talked of finding the right man to marry and raise children of her own.

All of this changed a year ago when she was picked up from our home by people she trusted and thought were her friends. They took her to Saint Paul to what she thought was going to be a party. They drugged her and then forced themselves on her.

... When [name] came home from the hospital, she said she hates herself. She feels she is no longer worthy of her family. One of the first things she did was to go through our family album and cut out the pictures of herself. ... She knows that Hmong culture dictates that she is damaged goods and not worthy of any man for marriage. ...

She has become introverted. ... Her grades have turned to D's and F's. ...

[Name] can no longer sleep alone because of the nightmares about the rapes. ...

We try to give [name] extra protection now. We ask her not to go out alone at all and we ask her where she will be, with whom and when she will return. She thinks we are invasive and that we are blaming her for what has happened. But really, we just are praying that no more harm will come to her and that some day she will be whole again as she was before the attack by these depraved men.

... We feel that young Hmong gang members feel that they can get away with these predatory rapes because the victims will be too ashamed to report the crime. ...

Please, your honor, sentence Blong Xiong in a manner that will set an example to let other Hmong gang members [know] that there is a price to pay for stealing a life. ... He has not killed [name], but he has stolen her spirit and destroyed her life.

Sincerely,

[The letter is signed by her parents.]

police officer that when her attackers held her down during the rapes, it felt like they were breaking her bones.

She was taken to Regions Hospital in St. Paul, then to Midwest Children's Resource Center, a division of Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota.

Pediatric nurse practitioner Laurel Edinburgh interviewed her and photographed the bruises on her arms, wrists and legs.

Edinburgh swabbed for semen because it could provide the DNA needed to identify the attackers, but the cotton swab filled with blood, she said. More than 40 hours after the assault, the girl was still bleeding.

Edinburgh found no semen on the girl, possibly because it had washed out, but the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension found some in her pants. An expert said it came from more than one person.

For the DNA to mean anything, though, investigators would need to match it to a suspect. Like many young Hmong

rape victims, the girl didn't know the names of her attackers and was uncertain where the assaults happened.

She told police she thought it was somewhere in St. Paul, because she remembered seeing the city's name on a manhole cover after she finally broke away and began walking home.

St. Paul police officer Michael Barabas tried to interview her. The girl described three attackers but said there were more. Barabas said she was incoherent. "She couldn't explain what happened to her in a sequence of events," he said. "She had real difficulty."

Eventually, the girl offered one clue: a phone number for a teen who had helped her run away. She knew him only by his nickname, "Johnny." Police traced the number to Yaug Haag Thao, now 19.

Unreliable witnesses

Thao told police that he had taken the girl to a party in St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood where members of at least two



Lee Teng
Lor: Pleaded guilty.



Blong Xiong:
Convicted of rape.

Hmong gangs were drinking.

His assistance eventually helped police track down other witnesses and defendants. But over time, his story became filled with contradictions and lapses that later helped the defense. Dusterhoft said such discrepancies are common in Hmong rape cases when the cooperating witness must face the accused in court.

The girl had barely turned 13 when she testified against two men in the first trial. She entered the courtroom with her arms folded across her chest and hurried past the defendants, her eyes cast downward to avoid their hard stares.

At times, she spoke so softly the judge had to remind her to speak up.

She admitted to getting drunk at the party. Authorities say gang members often get girls drunk or give them drugs before raping them.

The party grew loud and the host, Bee Yang, known as Billy, kicked everyone out. He asked a gang member named Lee Teng Lor, now 22, to take the girl home.

Lor said the girl didn't want to go home, so he followed the party to a vacant house near Battle Creek Park that belonged to the family of Blong Xiong, 22. The girl said she felt sick and needed to sleep, so Lor led her to a bedroom. There was no furniture, so she lay down on the floor.

Thao also had followed the party that night. He told police he heard noises coming from the room and went to investigate. He said he watched Lor and several other men have sex with the girl, who was struggling and begging them to stop. Thao said he asked if he could join in, but they refused.

Without Thao, police might have been stymied. The girl didn't know Lor's name. She only remembered that it began with S, that he was short, and that he drove a white pickup.

Lor's name doesn't begin with S, but gang members usually have nicknames. When police questioned Lor, he initially denied knowing about the rapes. But when asked his nickname, Lor held up his hand. Stubby, he said, because

he has short fingers.

Two days before his trial was to begin in April 2004, Lor cut a deal. He pleaded guilty to rape and to committing a crime for the benefit of a gang. In exchange for testifying truthfully against other defendants, prosecutors agreed to cap his potential prison sentence.

At trial, Dusterhoft leaned heavily on Lor's testimony. Without informants, he said, it's hard to bring charges in such cases. But jurors may discount an informant who has something to gain by testifying. "No one likes a snitch," Dusterhoft said.

Conflicting stories

Blong Xiong and a co-defendant, Bee Chue Chang, now 21, of St. Paul, were the first to go on trial.

In many ways, it typified Hmong rape trials, Dusterhoft said. A prosecution witness refused to testify when he was called. On the witness stand, Thao continually contradicted his own testimony about who and what he had seen. He said he saw Chang in the bedroom when the girl was being raped. But when Chang's lawyer, Gary Bryant-Wolf, asked Thao if Chang looked the same then as he did that day in court, Thao said he didn't know; he couldn't remember.

Pressed harder, Thao said he didn't really see Chang in the bedroom that night.

Bryant-Wolf, seeking to drive home the point, asked him again. "You didn't see him, did you?"

"Yes," Thao responded.

"OK. So far, we've heard yes, no and I don't know," Bryant-Wolf said. He asked the question once again.

Thao responded that he had forgotten much of what happened that night. Jurors in Minnesota courts can't consider a witness' statements to police as evidence. The statements can only be used to impeach the credibility of witnesses.

Dusterhoft said later that such twists are common when Hmong witnesses face defendants in court. "Some of the perpetrators can be related to some of the victims or to the witnesses, and so there's some pressure ... when it comes to testifying," Dusterhoft said.

Thao's memory hadn't improved by April, when a third defendant, Cha Xiong, now 22, went on trial for aiding and abetting the rape. Cha Xiong's lawyer, Mark Todd, prepared the jurors for Thao in his opening statement by asking rhetorically what he would say about his client. Then he answered his own question: "That is going to be hard to predict because he has said so many things already."

Bee Yang, another gang member, also flip-flopped. Sensing the lawyers' growing frustration, Yang volunteered: "For some reason, I always say yes. I don't know why."

Dusterhoft threw up his hands in exasperation and briefly slumped over a table. Moments later, after District Judge Edward Cleary released the jurors for the afternoon recess, Cha Xiong's attorney said sympathetically to Dusterhoft: "He just says yes to everything. What the heck!"

Vulnerable victims

The victim is potentially the best witness in a rape case. But in these cases, the victims are so young and fragile that prosecutors try to avoid having them testify. In this case, Dusterhoft noted, the victim was just 12, had been drinking, and faded in and out of consciousness as strangers raped her in

LAW continues on A11

Uncertainties sometimes undermine cases

LAW from A10

the dark.

After the assaults, the girl picked out a picture of Bee Chue Chang and said he had assaulted her. But in the picture he had longer hair, dyed reddish-orange. About a year later, at the trial, he had black hair cropped military style. She failed to identify him in person.

She did recognize co-defendant Blong Xiong, known as "Biggie," as someone who had been at the house where she was raped. In court, though, she didn't accuse him of assaulting her.

The girl's testimony highlighted uncertainties in the case. It's not unusual for young victims to make mistakes or to forget details of a crime, especially when they were intoxicated and when they fear being disowned by their families, Dusterhoft said.

In this case, the girl said the attacks started after she had gone to sleep and awoke naked in the dark, with Lor on top of her. She said she struggled, "then I somehow went unconscious."

Some other men and teens at the party piled into the room to rape her. When she came around and resisted, someone would cover her face so she would gasp for air, Lor testified.

"She was screaming," Lor said. "You could say she was trying to get away."

At the first trial, the girl said about five men had intercourse with her and 10 to 15 forced her to perform oral sex. She acknowledged that she wasn't certain of the total.

Making sense of it

"She was not the best reporter of that assault because people were coming in as the assault commences," Dusterhoft told jurors at the first trial.

"She wasn't paying attention to their faces."

Jurors had to decide that case with little more than DNA evidence implicating Blong Xiong, the testimony of Lor — who had cut a deal — and the girl's confused testimony.

The girl, now 15, appeared more confident in the second trial. She entered the room with her head up, wearing a green and white Michigan sweatshirt and dramatic hoop earrings. She spoke clearly and looked jurors in the eye. But jurors in the trial of Cha Xiong had no DNA evidence to rely on. "There is no physical evidence linking Mr. Xiong to this assault," his attorney said flatly.

In the end, Blong Xiong was the only one of the three defendants to be convicted. Jurors found him guilty of rape and of committing the crime for the benefit of a gang. He insisted he was innocent. Judge Paulette Flynn sentenced him

to 13 years in prison.

Lor's plea bargain netted him a sentence of eight years and two months, but it was suspended for his 20 years of probation; he was credited for the year he had already served in jail, fined \$1,000, must register as a sex offender and have no contact with gang members.

After Cha Xiong's acquittal in April, Dusterhoft, exasperated, dropped charges against the two remaining defendants, Que Lee, 23, known as "Dracky," and Sia Vang, 20, known as "Tiny."

Asked why, Dusterhoft wrote in an e-mail: "Cha Xiong got acquitted and he admitted being in the room. Bee Chue Chang got acquitted."

Lee, he said, pleaded guilty in a separate case to perjury for the benefit of a gang by falsifying his visa application. In exchange, Dusterhoft dismissed the sex assault charge. Under a plea agreement, he was given five years' probation and could

be sent to prison for 2½ years if he messes up. If he stays clean, the case will later appear as a misdemeanor rather than a felony.

Dusterhoft took solace in the fact that Vang faced charges in an unrelated sexual assault, along with two other defendants. He pleaded guilty in that case in a deal that calls for the dismissal of the assault charges in this one. The deal calls for a sentence of just over eight years in prison.

"I don't dismiss any felony lightly," Dusterhoft said. "In light of the jury verdicts, I can't justify putting the victim on the stand again to talk about the terrible things that happened to her when the chances of success are marginal."

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(over)

SHAMED INTO SILENCE

While Hmong refugees are struggling to survive in a culture foreign to them, their children are adapting more quickly and disobeying what they see as their parents' antiquated rules. Like many other parents, Hmong are confounded by the trials of raising teenagers here.

Culture clash can stymie help

Warring values often leave Hmong parents bewildered about raising children here.

By Pam Louwagie and Dan Browning
Star Tribune Staff Writers

Chue Lee hung up the phone and wept. Her eldest daughter had run away again, and Lee couldn't get the police to find her and bring her home.

She worried about her daughter, then 17, getting into gangs and drugs — problems Lee said her parents never had to worry about in Thailand. At times like these, she wondered if living in the United States was worth it.

"I wish I could take all my kids back home," she remembers thinking.

Adapting any non-Western culture to the United States is a formidable task. For the Hmong community, which hails from isolated mountain villages in Laos and refugee camps in Thailand, settling in urban areas such as St. Paul has meant a bigger change.

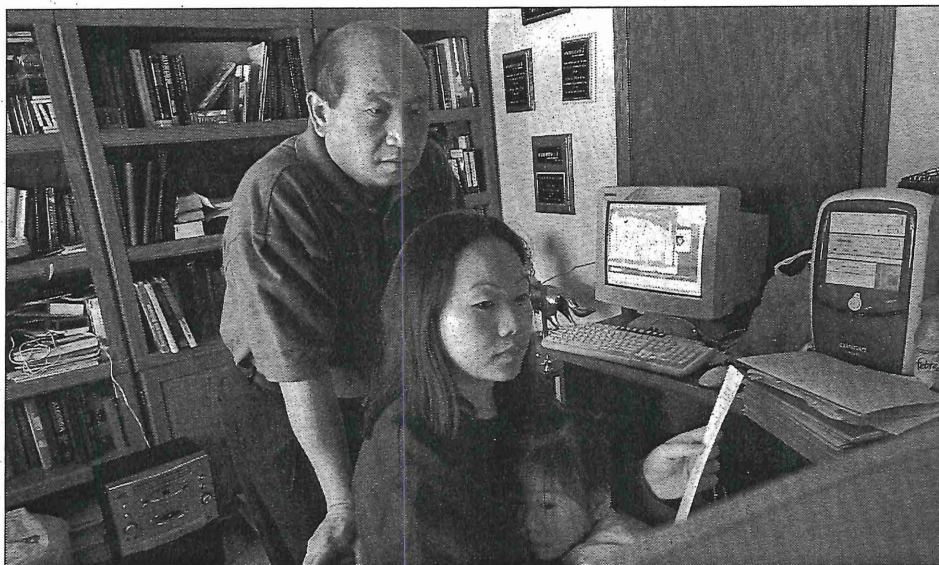
Gang rape and prostitution of young Hmong girls — often runaways — is one problem that has emerged and has been hard to stop.

In Laos and Thailand, several Hmong parents said, parents didn't have to worry about their children falling prey to pimps or into the arms of gangs. They disciplined their kids with physical punishment. Parents worked in fields and often left little ones at home, trusting their village neighbors to be watchful.

Marriage was negotiated between clans and came young — in the mid-teens for many. Rapes were tolerated if marriage followed. Without marriage, rape generally was handled quietly by family or clan leaders, with a payment made to help restore the honor of the victim's family.

By all accounts, Hmong culture does not tolerate gang rape. But some scholars say that in the United States, aspects of the Hmong culture have allowed the problem to flourish here.

"There is ... community denial of sexual abuse, lack of punishment for perpetrators, and learned behavior from watching male family members and friends," says a 2002 Ford Foundation report. "Victims are re-victimized: blamed for the rape, forced to marry the perpetrator, shunned by the community, stigmatized instead of provided with counseling, and



Kyndell Harkness/Star Tribune

Traditional Hmong disciplinary practices on occasion run up against the law. Ser Lee, of the Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul, said he spent eight hours in jail in 1998 after arguing with a judge about why he had hit his daughter May. Lee and May, who held her daughter, Jana, now work together.

held responsible for the ruined reputations of themselves and their families."

The problem comes in mixing Hmong traditions with American culture, many agree. While Hmong refugees are struggling to survive in a culture foreign to them, their children are adapting more quickly and disobeying what they see as their parents' antiquated rules.

"For sure there is a cultural aspect to it, a clash of culture," said Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul. "I think if you could overcome some of those issues, I don't think it's just teen prostitution. I think a lot of other social issues within the Hmong community as well will disappear."

Cultural priorities

Hmong and U.S. cultures conflict on a fundamental level, said Lee Pao Xiong, director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University in St. Paul.

In Hmong culture, helping the community is paramount, followed by helping family and then the individual, he said. In the United States, people are taught not to rely on others — they're responsible for themselves first.

"It's totally reversed," he said.

One researcher found that Hmong teens who come from homes where the parents lack formal education, don't speak English well or resist American traditions were most likely to

have problems with delinquency. The researcher, Shanie Xiong, interviewed 52 Wisconsin and Minnesota Hmong teens in 2002 for her master's degree work at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Many Hmong parents make no secret of their frustrations.

"The most complaints I get when I go to community meetings is, 'What can you do to help the parents control the kids?'" Thao said.

Like many parents, they are confounded by the trials of raising teens. But language and cultural differences worsen the problem. Determined to succeed, immigrant parents go to work, leaving their children connected by television and the Internet to outside influences. No villagers watch over them.

"In the village environment, everybody knows everybody. And so you have an element of safety there," Lee Pao Xiong said. "But now in America, it's totally different. I mean, it's very easy for the other kids to come and drive and pick [them] up."

Parents want help in solving their problems with their teenagers.

Discipline quandary

Hmong parents have learned that the rules for disciplining children are different here. Hitting a child can land a parent in jail, and that makes parents afraid to impose such discipline.

Ser Lee, chairman of the Cultural Advisory Group of the

Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul, went to jail in 1998 after hitting his daughter May. He said he was sent there for arguing with a judge about why he did it.

His daughter had been skipping school, staying out late and using his credit card, and he couldn't make her listen.

Standing in her bedroom and lecturing her, he said, he was going to fake a hit to scare her. He grabbed something and swung it at her. He recalls that it was a broom; she said it was a curtain rod.

A teacher reported bruises on her arm and leg, and Lee was eventually charged with malicious punishment of a child.

Lee said he told a judge that he didn't want his daughter to get hurt or hurt someone else if she ran with the wrong crowd.

"It's a family matter," he recalled saying defiantly. And he was trying to make her be good, not to abuse her, he said.

He spent eight hours in jail before his wife bailed him out, he said. After he performed community service and stayed out of legal trouble for two years, the court dismissed the charge.

May Lee said seeing her father go to jail was a turning point; she decided then to change her friends and change her ways.

The gang problem

Ser Lee had been afraid that his daughter would fall into a gang, a problem many immigrant parents have had to guard

against. Hmong gangs were born out of the same forces that led to gangs in early Italian, Jewish and Irish immigrant communities, according to Donald Kodlubov, a Minneapolis public schools psychologist.

"Many Hmong, Laotian and Cambodian gang members tell of forming self-defense groups following assaults or intimidation by other ethnic gang members," he wrote in a 1996 article for the National School Safety Center.

Young Hmong girls make easy targets for gangs because the girls are afraid to report the crime.

The culture also shames females for having sex before marriage — even if they're raped. Their male counterparts aren't shamed, said Der Her, volunteer coordinator at Ramsey County Sexual Offense Services.

In traditional Hmong culture, daughters are kept closer to home as they mature, said Zha Blong Xiong, assistant professor of social sciences at the University of Minnesota. Sons have more freedom to roam so they can find a wife, he said.

In Laos, there was good reason to keep girls in. It wasn't uncommon for young men to take brides by kidnapping them.

Traditionally, serious offenses within the Hmong culture have been handled between clans.

"We have a saying in our community that if it's Chinese medicine, let the Chinese boil the medicine. If it's Hmong medicine, let the Hmong boil the medicine. Don't let the Chinese boil the Hmong medicines," Lee Pao Xiong said. "So, in other words ... solve it within the community."

But those traditions keep the community from talking about the problem, some contend.

People in the Hmong community who want to protect the girls are afraid to speak out, said Tru Thao, a Ramsey County social worker. They worry that others might think one of their daughters was raped and that will hurt the family's reputation, she said.

As more Hmong children are brought up in the United States, attitudes will change, people grappling with the problem say. But it may take some effort.

"We can go through 10 generations and if we don't make the effort at changing some of those attitudes, it's going to stay the same," Tru Thao said.

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Lawmakers address rural Minnesota needs
FRONT PAGE

By Jennifer Rogers
Tribune staff writer

Whether it be an omnibus bill or committee hearing legislators are working through issues and paying attention to the needs of Greater Minnesota. This week at the capitol: omnibus game and fish bill, renewable fuels, electoral college votes, and alcohol costs.

House approves omnibus game and fish bill

The House voted Wednesday to restrict just how fancy hunters can make deer stands that sit on public lands.

The change came as the House approved its the so-called omnibus game and fish bill, which includes a series of tweaks and changes to state law governing hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities. The final bill, passed 117-16, does not include any fee increases for hunting and fishing licenses.

But the change to statute governing the construction of deer stands proved the most controversial measure in the bill. It requires any permanent deer stand on public lands can't have a permanent roof or permanent walls.

Supporters of the change said concerns are being raised around the state that hunters are essentially taking ownership of public stands that should be community property.



"As deer stands look more and more permanent, I think the ownership of that deer stand will become more and more permanent," said Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul. "On public lands, deer stands are public."

Opponents said the ability to put up walls and roofs are important, especially for older hunters who aren't able to withstand harsh weather for hours at a time.

"We've got hunters out there who are getting up there in years but still enjoy the great outdoors," said Rep. Mark Buesgens, R-Jordan. "I haven't seen any indication out there that this is a real problem."

Senate to agencies: Use less gasoline

The Minnesota Senate unanimously approved legislation Wednesday to make state agencies use less gasoline and more renewable fuels such as ethanol, biodiesel and hydrogen made from crops.

The state would have to cut gas use in half by 2015, while boosting its consumption of diesel fuel and renewable fuels, if the bill from Sen. Jim Vickerman, DFL-Tracy, succeeds.

See Needs, Page 2

ALBERT LEA TRIBUNE

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Needs

From Page 1A

Vickerman also would require more fuel efficiency from new state vehicles: They would have to get at least 30 miles per gallon on city streets and 35 mpg on highways.

The Senate approved the bill on a 55-0 vote.

Motorized scooter drivers should be able to zoom around without displaying license plates or paying vehicle registration fees or taxes, the Senate decided Wednesday.

Scooters would follow the same rules as bicycles under a bill that passed the Senate 55-1.

The legislation, sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy, DFL-Red Wing, also requires scooter drivers to wear helmets, use headlights, stay off sidewalks, ride close to the right curb, and dismount and cross on foot when making a left turn. It would be illegal for children under age 12 to use the scooters.

Changes to Minnesota's electoral college votes

Minnesota's Electoral College votes would go to the presidential candidate who won the state's popular vote if legislation passed by the Senate Wednesday becomes law.

That's after an unnamed Democrat cast one of the state's 10 electoral votes for Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards - not presidential candidate John Kerry - back in December, giving the state its first so-called "faithless elector" and cutting Kerry's electoral tally by a vote. Kerry won Minnesota's popular vote last year, but lost overall.

None of the state's electors claimed the Edwards ballot, and ballots weren't signed.

"This bill corrects the problems that we had with Electoral College election last December," said Sen. Wes Skoglund, DFL-Minneapolis, who sponsored the bill.

Under the legislation, an elector would have to vote ver-

bally and on a written public ballot. Failure to vote for the party's candidate would result in an invalidated ballot and an alternate elector stepping in to cast the vote.

Skoglund's bill passed the Senate on a 52-8 vote.

Penny-a-drink rise in alcohol dies in Senate committee

A penny-a-drink rise in wholesale liquor, wine and beer taxes died Thursday when the Senate Taxes Committee voted to strip the provision from a public safety spending bill.

"I don't think this is the right time and the right way to do it," said Sen. David Tomassoni, DFL-Chisholm, who proposed removing the tax. His move passed on a divided voice vote.

Beer industry representatives, including a wholesaler, a brewer and a bar owner, said the tax hike would burden their businesses and could send customers to Wisconsin in search of lower prices. Minnesota imposes a 2.5 percent retail tax on alcohol, plus wholesale taxes, they noted.

The drink tax increase would have raised about \$50 million over two years for stepped-up supervision of offenders released from state prisons, alcohol and drug treatment and crime victim services. All are underfunded, said DFL Sen. Jane Ranum of Minneapolis, the bill's sponsor.

The public safety package now heads back to the Senate Finance Committee, which will decide whether to take those provisions out of the bill.

After the hearing, Taxes Committee Chairman Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, said he would consider raising aid to counties to pay for parole and other public safety items.

Most crimes involve alcohol and one in 10 state residents have been convicted of driving drunk, so linking the items to a liquor tax was fair, Ranum said. Wholesale alcohol taxes haven't gone up since 1987.

Information gathered from Associated Press news reports. For more information on happenings at the capitol go to www.house.mn and www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/.

'REALLY DISGUSTED'

DAY 1: Leaders apologize for the stalemate, but no progress is made, **10A**

IMPACT: With few reports of disruptions, the shutdown feels more like a slimdown, **10A**

SCHOOLS: Late mandate says classes can't start until Fair ends, **11A**

TRAFFIC: Rush hour moves smoothly on first day, **9A**

VETO: Pawlenty slashes funding for several recommended projects, **11A**

EDUCATION: Summer school, Basic Skills Test go on, **11A**

BUSINESS: Dave Beal says the shutdown's sting could be far-reaching, **1C**

Online: Whom do you hold responsible for the shutdown? Vote at www.twincities.com.



CRAIG BORCK, PIONEER PRESS

The partial government shutdown sent ripples of discontent through Minnesotans on Friday, with some vowing to unleash their frustration at the polls. Jon Kvasnik of St. Paul wasn't one of them. "I really don't care," he said.

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Citizens express a revulsion that

crosses party lines

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BY ROBERT INGRASSIA, MEGGEN LINDSAY and EMILY GURNON

Pioneer Press

PIONEER PRESS JUL 2 - '05

As the Fourth of July approaches, St. Paulites and other Twin Cities residents aren't expressing much pride in their state government. They're calling the behavior of their elected leaders disgusting, insulting and embarrassing.

And many disgruntled citizens are vowing to bottle their frustration over the budget impasse and uncork it at the polls next year.

Discontent was easy to find Friday, the first day of a partial government shutdown. From a lunch counter in Highland Park to a medical clinic on the West Side to a bread shop in Eagan, plenty of people were mad about what's happening — and not happening — at the Capitol.

At Arcade Hardware and Paint on St. Paul's East Side,

owner Kongmeng Thao said he was appalled that legislators and Gov. Tim Pawlenty would waste time bickering while working-class families struggle to make ends meet.

"Almost every day I have people coming in here desperate, looking for work," said Kongmeng Thao, who has owned the store on Arcade Street for four years. "And the politicians, they're not seriously concerned about people. They're just playing politics."

Disgust crossed party lines. While a blame game raged between DFLers and Republicans at the Capitol, several Minnesotans said both parties were equally at fault. The disdain wasn't limited to people directly affected by the shutdown.

"I'm disappointed in both sides," said Bianka Pineda, a stay-at-home mom and DFLer who was having lunch at the Highland Grill in Highland

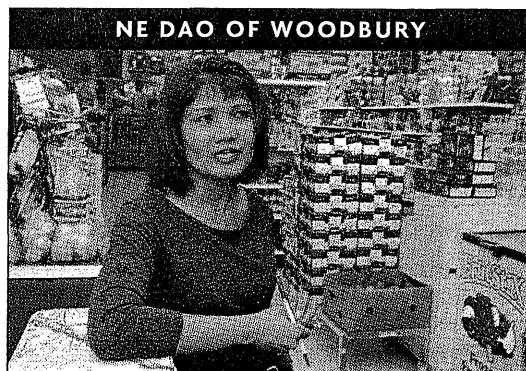
CIERA MOORE OF ST. PAUL



JOE ODEN, PIONEER PRESS

"We are poor, and we need help — so try to help us. Don't cut us off."

NE DAO OF WOODBURY



JOE ODEN, PIONEER PRESS

"How can they run out of money? What happened?"

CITIZEN REACTION, 8A

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Citizen reaction

(continued)

Park. "I don't understand why they can't get anything done," she said. "It makes everyone look bad."

Jeff Prairie, a U.S. Postal Service worker from Woodbury, said the negative political discourse has him on the verge of tuning out.

"It's too partisan, and it's not working for the people," Prairie said. "I'm sick of this garbage — the bickering, the whining and complaining. I blame them all for this nonsense."

Prairie urged other upset Minnesotans to vent their dissatisfaction in the voting booth.

"People should take it to the polls," Prairie said. "I think it's terrible that taxpayers pay all this money (and) have something like this happen with it. It's an insult to the people of this state."

Republican voter Andrea Walkosz, who works at a display-manufacturing center, blamed the leaders of her own party and those of the DFL.

"If they don't figure it out today, I'll be really mad," said Walkosz, taking a lunch break at Panera Bread in Eagan. "It's time for them to get it together and start acting like a business. They need to come together for the good of the Minnesota people."

Whether the throw-the-bums-out fervor lasts won't be known until November 2006, when the next state legislative and gubernatorial elections take place. The anger and emo-

tion over the shutdown could fade if the axiom that voters have short memories holds true. Plus, as some upset citizens noted Friday, you can't vote against a lawmaker who doesn't represent you.

"I want to vote 'em out," said Rae Cornelius, a St. Paul elementary school teacher who lives in the Summit-University neighborhood. "But (Rep.) Cy Thao is my person and I like what he's doing. I don't like the leadership of either party, but they're not my people."

Cornelius, taking a break from landscaping at her home on Selby Avenue, gripped the handle of a pointed hoe as she spoke. While she wasn't ready to start waving the tool outside the Capitol, she said she was angry at the governor and lawmakers.

"I'm really disgusted," she said. "It's really embarrassing for Minnesota."

Andrea Tharaldson, a public health nurse from Roseville, laid the blame on Pawlenty.

"It's just typical of the administration, and I think people are being held hostage," she said. "This is just the tip of the iceberg. There's been so many cuts — I think that's why we're so polarized right now, and I think Pawlenty knows that. He's using this just to pass more cuts through."

The impact of the shutdown can be frightening.

"They're just crazy," said 16-year-old Ciera Moore, of St. Paul, who was afraid of not being able to get health care for her 18-month-old daughter, Tanayah Lollie.

"We are poor, and we need help — so try to help us," she said. "Don't cut us off."

Despite having received a

letter from Ramsey County warning that their medical care might be affected by the shutdown, Moore may not have to worry. A judge ruled Thursday that the state must pay health plans and hospitals during the budget impasse.

Despite the stalemate, Janie Lopez of West St. Paul maintained trust that the governor and legislators would do the right thing and restore the government.

"I have faith in Minnesota," Lopez said after visiting the West Side Health Center La Clinica on Cesar Chavez Street. "They'll get it together for the people."

Others were still wondering how Minnesota got in such a mess. Ne Dao, of Woodbury, owner of the Ha Tien grocery on University Avenue in St. Paul, said she was surprised at the shutdown — having not seen such a thing in the 24 years she's lived in the United States.

"How can they run out of money?" asked Dao, 39. "What happened?"

But not all were concerned. On lunch from his banking job, Jon Kvasnik, 39, of St. Paul, said he doesn't really care about the shutdown. "Is it going to impact me? No, not really."

"It's just more vacation time for employees who will get the back pay anyway," he said.

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Events exposing Hmong community's internal politics

Long-standing conflicts play out in America

PIONEER PRESS FEB 20 '05

BY TODD NELSON

Pioneer Press

To some members of St. Paul's Hmong community, allegations of death threats, political infighting and influence peddling leveled against some leaders have a familiar ring.

As one community figure put

it, everyone in the Hmong community knows its politics is ugly.

Recent statements by a former Hmong-American police officer provided a rare glimpse into an underworld of drive-by shootings, fire bombings, alleged hit lists and influence peddling. He admitted playing a supporting role in the violence

but said he was intimidated by threats against his family.

Now, members of the community suspect unresolved internal political conflicts are behind the accusations shaking City Hall, said Ilean Her, executive director of the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans.

The FBI is investigating bribery allegations centering on Sia Lo, a senior aide to Mayor Randy Kelly, and on Cha Vang,

the son of Gen. Vang Pao, who commanded the CIA-backed secret army of ethnic minority Hmong that battled communist insurgents in Laos during the Vietnam War.

Sia Lo's role and the involvement of his sister in efforts to build a third Hmong funeral home in St. Paul, possibly with city aid, have come under scrutiny. And city officials have raised concerns about Vang Pao's

move to involve his nonprofit foundation in the project and to exclude a broader coalition of the Hmong community.

"It may not be bribery, it may just be a lot of Hmong politics and animosity," Ilean Her said.

State Sen. Mee Moua, comparing the attention-grabbing power of recent events to a soap opera, said, "It constantly comes back to the same players."

Personal rivalries likely account for last year's violence and recent bribery allegations, said state Rep. Cy Thao and Hmong scholar Yang Dao of the University of Minnesota.

"Some people have been

HMONG POLITICS, 11A

Get to know the local players in Hmong politics, **Page 11A**

(over)

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PLAYERS IN HMONG POLITICS

Recent accusations of bribery around St. Paul City Hall have focused public attention on some politically active members of the Hmong community:

Gen. Vang

Pao, 75, leader of CIA's secret Hmong army that fought communist insurgents in Laos during the Vietnam War. Still a revered figure to many. Lives in California but frequently visits the Twin Cities. Founded Lao Family Community of Minnesota, a nonprofit community service agency, and similar agencies in California.



Cha Vang, 39, Gen. Vang Pao's son and a real estate developer in St. Paul. FBI is investigating former St. Paul police officer Tou Mo Cha's allegation that Cha Vang suggested that for \$10,000 to \$20,000 he could get city officials to help resolve problems with the liquor license of a nightclub Tou Mo Cha and others owned. Represents Vang Pao Foundation in plans to build a Hmong funeral home in St. Paul. Maplewood house fire-bombed April 25, 2004. He has denied Tou Mo Cha's allegation.



Sia Lo, 39, a senior aide to Mayor Randy Kelly. Placed on paid leave as FBI investigates allegation that he sought a bribe from funeral home developer J. Kou Vang that involved aiding his sister, attorney Song Lo Fawcett. Former deputy city attorney. He has denied the bribery allegation.



Tou Mo Cha, 36, resigned from St. Paul Police Department after pleading guilty to lending his department-issued pistol for use in drive-by shootings. Investigators matched bullets fired from his gun to drive-by shootings at

Hmong-owned businesses in St. Paul in November 2003 and at the Maplewood home of Xang Vang, translator and close associate of Vang Pao, in April 2004. The former officer said that he had lent his gun to a relative and that the shootings took place while the firearm was out of his possession.



Vang Pao Foundation, formed in 2000, is under investigation for allegedly failing to register as a fund-raising organization or provide annual reports, as state law requires.

Hmong politics

(continued)

very frustrated over the past 30 years, and because of those frustrations they show their anger in some of the American violence," said Yang Dao, a former ally and now opponent of Vang Pao.

Cy Thao added: "I think it's personal stuff between all the actors in this whole episode."

The political infighting has its roots in the circumstances that brought waves of refugees to the United States, said Jeremy Hein, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, who likens the situation here to the polarized politics of Cuban exiles in Miami.

The Hmong were politicized when they were in Laos, he said, and remain so because the Laotian government has shown few signs of reform.

St. Paul has the largest Hmong population of any U.S. city, with more than 24,000 counted in the 2000 census. A state estimate last summer placed Minnesota's Hmong population at 60,000.

The galvanizing force for many who fled Southeast Asia has been Vang Pao's staunch anti-communism and his dream of returning to liberate and lead Laos. Through the years, Hmong veterans have contributed money to groups associated with the general, who has said the money has gone to humanitarian aid.

Some in the community believe the payments helped support resistance forces operating inside Laos. Others question whether some of the donations instead supported Vang Pao and his relatives in this country.

Vang Pao shocked some of his closest supporters when he announced his so-called "peace doctrine" in a November 2003 speech in the Twin Cities. The general said he would seek to reconcile with his former enemies, the communist governments in Laos and Vietnam, and would support normalized trade relations with Laos if the secretive Stalinist regime improved its human rights record.

The reversal came just days before a rash of violence targeting close associates of Vang Pao began with the drive-by shoot-

ings in St. Paul. Last April, five bullets hit the Maplewood home of Xang Vang, the general's longtime translator. The same month an arson fire destroyed the Maplewood home of Cha Vang, the general's son.

Bullets fired during drive-by shootings at Hmong-owned businesses in November 2003 in St. Paul and at Xang Vang's home were traced to the department-issued weapon of former St. Paul police officer Tou Mo Cha, who admitted lending it to one of his relatives.

Tou Mo Cha said the relative had pressured him to join one Hmong political faction. When he resisted, the relative threatened him and his family, claimed Tou Mo Cha, who resigned from the police department after pleading guilty two weeks ago to assault for lending the gun used in the shootings.

One police sergeant considered such tactics suggestive of "a mafia thing," according to an interrogation transcript.

Minneapolis lawyer Blong Yang, 28, said he could identify with the pressure Tou Mo Cha told police he faced. He said he grew angry watching his father struggle for years to make monthly payments to a political faction.

"I'm not surprised that it's happened the way it has," Blong Yang said. "I'm only surprised that it didn't happen sooner."

Corruption, bribes, nepotism and factional rivalries were commonplace in Laos and have accompanied some groups to the United States, said Lee Pao Xiong, director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University.

"Over there, sometimes for one political faction to dominate another, they resorted to threats and intimidation," Lee Pao Xiong said. "Certainly there have been a lot of threats and intimidation in the community here. It was common back home and certainly people do that here in America."

The Hmong likely are the most politicized of the Southeast Asian groups in this country, said Michael Cullinane of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Like the Vietnamese, they arrived with strong anti-communist feelings. The closest comparison to another group with internal political disputes leading to death threats and gunfire likely would be Cuban exiles in Miami, who also had lost everything to communist insurgents.

The intensity of Hmong internal politics appears to be rising as Vang Pao, 74, ages. His sons, some longtime followers and rivals are scrambling to succeed him and claim his national leadership role, Cullinane said.

"He's getting older and he's got to have a successor," Culli-

nane said. "What makes it get more violent, more conflict-ridden, is he doesn't have the sway he once had. People are willing to stand up and say, 'We'll do it our own way.'"

Vang Pao has less influence with growing numbers of younger Hmong educated in this country who are trying to establish themselves independent of the old political order.

Younger members of the community respect Vang Pao's historical role but do not identify with his agenda.

The "warrior" and those who fought with him deserve respect, said Mee Moua, the first Hmong-American elected to a state legislature.

The question being raised now is whether the honor due the old-guard leaders "is somehow transformed into a mechanism that exploits us," she said. "At the end of the day, that may not be the case. If at the end of the day it is the case, it would be very sad."

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