

COMMENTARY

Minnesota shouldn't wait

U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of voter ID



Tom Emmer

The United States Supreme Court delivered a milestone ruling last week in preserving and maintaining the integrity and reliability of our elections.

The decision to confirm the validity of Indiana's photo ID law in elections is likely to spur action

in other states that have sought to pass stricter regulations.

Minnesota is one of those states.

In a world in which we have much turmoil and such contested elections, it is imperative to maintain the integrity of and public confidence in the electoral process. When elections are decided by a few hundred votes, we need to know the votes were cast by legally registered voters. Voters want to know their vote counts, and that their votes will not be canceled out by a fraudulent vote. We simply must have something in law that allows us to confirm that we are who we say we are when we cast our votes.

A photo identification requirement does exactly that. It prevents fraud, instills voter confidence in elections and ensures that your vote will not be discounted by an illegal ballot.

The American public agrees with this concept. National polling shows that almost 80 percent of American citizens agree that photo identification should be required to verify identity prior to voting.



Minnesota need not wait to suffer harm. We have the right to know that every election, no matter the margin of victory, is determined fairly with respect to the idea of one person, one vote.

The high support for this issue among people is only paralleled by very vocal opposition.

The concern most often expressed regarding this common sense legislation is that there is not a wide-spread fraud problem with our election process, and that a measure such as photo identification will prevent poor people and senior citizens from voting.

Neither is true.

Despite the apocalyptic assertions of wholesale voter disenfranchisement, there is not a single piece of evidence of a registered voter being prevented from voting. In reviewing voting in Indiana before and after photo identification laws were passed, the Institute of Public Policy at the University of Missouri found in a report published in December "no consistent evidence that counties that have higher percentages of minority, poor, elderly or less-educated populations suffer from any reduction in voter turnout relative to other counties."

Voter identification laws are designed to prevent fraud in our elections.

Congress has enacted numerous requirements including the Help America Vote Act of 2002 designed not just to increase the number of citizens who register to vote while simultaneously protecting the integrity of the election process. Photo identification is a logical extension of that goal.

We are not talking about a new or untested concept. Twenty-five states require identification at the polls for all voters. At least nine other states including New York, California and Missouri have considered photo ID measures.

Minnesota need not wait to suffer harm. We have the right to know that every election, no matter the margin of victory, is determined fairly with respect to the idea of one person, one vote. Photo identification preserves the integrity of the election process and the validity of the outcome.

State Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, an attorney, is deputy minority leader in the House and is in his second term.

A30.1 House panel passes rules for pet breeders

Bill would require state license, operating standards

BY DENNIS LIEN

PIONEER PRESS FEB 20 '08

Breeders of large dogs and cats would be licensed by the state and face minimum operating standards under a bill that narrowly passed a House panel Tuesday.

✓ The bill, sponsored by Rep. Frank Hornstein, DFL-Minneapolis, would require operators who have at least six breeding female animals to be state-licensed by 2010, to be inspected annually and to follow minimum care standards.

The measure is aimed at improving conditions for animals raised in so-called puppy mills, where they can receive widely varying care or training.

"It's really an attempt for the state to step in and not only address issues of humane treatment of animals, but consumer-protection measures," said Hornstein, who said those operations now fall under a patchwork of regulations.

But some veterinarians and care providers don't support the bill. In testimony, they said it would institutionalize lower standards, wouldn't affect the largest operators and would prompt more breeders to operate out of public view.

Later, Hornstein said he didn't understand some of those complaints.

"I don't think they are based on fact," he said. "What we are doing is quite the opposite."

Some legislators objected to specific elements of the bill, such as unannounced inspections, saying constituents don't want inspectors just showing up on their doorsteps.

✓ "They think this is an unfair, unconstitutional intrusion of government," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano.

With an estimated 500 breeders statewide, the Minnesota Board of Animal Health projected the licenses could cost \$900 apiece.

The House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee approved the bill 8-7 and sent it to the Agriculture and Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Dennis Lien can be reached at dlien@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5588.

19B

House OKs \$40 million for survivors

B28

• Representatives approved the bill by a 120-10 vote, but a dissenter said the state could ill afford the measure in tough economic times.

STAR TRIBUNE FEB 29 '08

By PAT DOYLE

pdoyle@startribune.com

Nearly \$40 million would be set aside for survivors of the Interstate 35W bridge collapse under legislation approved Thursday in an emotional session of the Minnesota House, amid concerns about its cost and the precedent it establishes.

The compensation plan was sponsored by Rep. Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley, who said it will help defray losses not covered by insurance or other sources of aid for bridge survivors.

"It's time for us to take action," said Winkler, calling the collapse "a failure of government" that justifies state remedies. "The survivors of this bridge collapse have been waiting since August 1st."

The measure passed 120 to 10, but not before Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, called it expensive "feel-good" legislation at a time when the state faces a budget shortfall.

"Your bill ... proposes to pull \$40 million out of the already-stressed general fund," Emmer said.

He unsuccessfully urged funding the compensation with revenue raised from a Twin Cities sales tax increase authorized this week by the DFL-led Legislature as part of a transportation package.

About 20 survivors or relatives of bridge victims attended Thursday's House session, wearing red in the visitors gallery above the floor.

"I see a lot of people who need help — the emotional damage, the physical," said Betsy Sathers, 32, of Blaine, her eyes welling up after the vote. Her husband, Scott, 29, died in the bridge collapse.

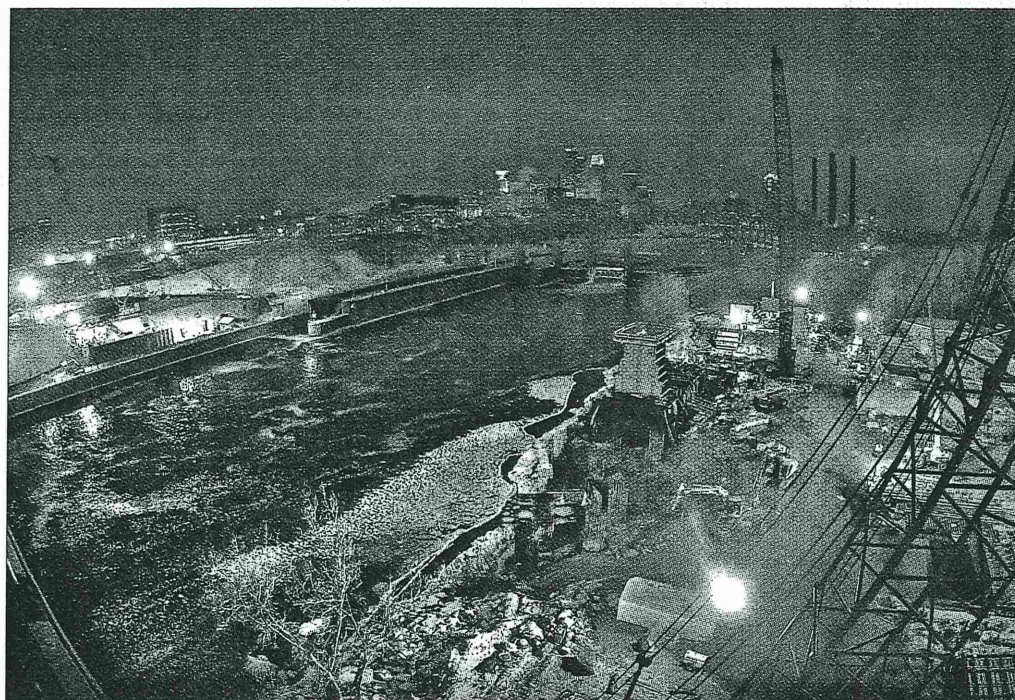
The legislation passed after Rep. Tom Tillberry, DFL-Fridley, delivered an impassioned speech about a friend, Patrick Holmes, 36, who also died in the collapse.

"His wife is up in the gallery right



« IT'S TIME FOR US TO TAKE ACTION. THE SURVIVORS OF THIS BRIDGE COLLAPSE HAVE BEEN WAITING SINCE AUGUST 1ST. »

Rep. Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley



JIM GEHRZ • Star Tribune file photo

Construction crews worked last month on the new I-35W bridge over the Mississippi River.

after the collapse

Extensive coverage of the I-35W bridge collapse, from August 1 to today, is at startribune.com/bridge.

now, listening to this," Tillberry said. "There is time in this body that we need to take emotion and we have to have passion. It's not just about the dollars and cents."

The legislation would compensate survivors of the bridge col-

lapse, including family members, for lost wages, medical expenses, burial costs, physical and emotional pain and suffering, and physical impairment. It also would cover damages attributed to "inconvenience" and "loss of enjoyment of life, and loss of

society and companionship."

It does not limit the amount of money available to each individual, but requires the compensation to be offset by any payout a person receives from health insurance or lawsuits against bridge contractors.

But insurance companies would be barred from reducing or eliminating payments to survivors compensated by the state.

The Senate has a companion measure that would cap the compensation for an individual survivor at \$400,000.

In both bills, bridge victims would need to waive their right to sue the state if they seek special compensation.

Exactly how many people might qualify for compensation under either measure isn't clear, but 13 people died and 145 people were injured in the Aug. 1 bridge collapse in Minneapolis.

Winkler said the bill provides an alternative to lawsuits for people seeking compensation and could save the state money. He stressed that attorneys could not recover money from the fund.

Republicans criticized a provision allowing the fund to be available to compensate victims of future catastrophes designated by the Legislature.

"Who gets to be the victim that's important enough for us here in the Legislature to deal with?" Emmer asked.

Winkler replied, "The question is not which victims are worthy ... [but] what catastrophes the state of Minnesota is solely responsible for. ... It was solely a state responsibility to prevent it, and it's solely a state responsibility to respond."

Emmer also questioned why \$680,000 was earmarked for Waite House, a Minneapolis nonprofit whose school bus was on the bridge when it collapsed, to provide social services for surviving children on the vehicle.

"Three-quarters of a million dollars for mental health counseling?" Emmer asked. "There should have been some insurance."

Pat Doyle • 651-222-1210

What it will do, by the numbers

\$6.6 billion over 10 years for Minnesota roads, bridges and transit**5.5** cent-a-gallon increase in gas tax by Oct. 1, and up to an additional 3 cents afterward**0.25** percentage-point increase in sales tax in the 7 metro counties to fund transit projects**40** state troopers added

DOWN A HISTORIC ROAD



JEFF WHEELER • jwheeler@startribune.com

✓ Rep. Bernie Lieder, DFL-Crookston, at left facing the camera, and Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, were congratulated after the House vote Monday.

With GOP help, the House and Senate override a Pawlenty veto for the first time.

The moves enact a \$6.6 billion package of taxes and fees to aid roads, bridges and transit.

STAR TRIBUNE FEB 26 '08

By MIKE KASZUBA and MARK BRUNSWICK
Star Tribune staff writers

Minnesotans will see their first state gas tax increase in 20 years as part of an ambitious \$6.6 billion transportation plan that promised better roads and bridges and was nudged into law after the historic override of a governor's veto.

With Monday's override, the first of Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the DFL-controlled Legislature passed a sweeping set of tax increases that



GOV. TIM PAWLENTY SAID THE LEGISLATION WAS "RIDICULOUS IN SCOPE AND IN MAGNITUDE. ... I AM MORE THAN HAPPY TO SAY THIS IS A DFL PRODUCT AND A DFL RESULT."

broke a longtime partisan logjam over transportation funding. After the vote was announced in the House, sign-waving construction workers outside the chamber cheered. Later, a politically jolted Pawlenty called the plan "ridiculous."

Six House Republicans joined the

DFL majority in the 91-41 vote, one vote more than the two-thirds majority needed and two more than the bill got Thursday. The action followed a weekend in which a small group of legislators, mostly Republican, were under intense pressure. Two DFLers who had voted against the bill last

week also supported the override Monday.

The Senate vote was 47-20, the same as when the bill passed on Thursday.

After the House vote, GOP lawmakers wrangled over whether those who voted for the bill would face political recriminations and outright attempts to oust them from office.

Override continues on A4 ▶

Who crossed over? Six House Republicans and two DFLers turned the tide. **A4**
Nick Coleman: Chamber role crucial. **B1**

Legislature goes down a historic road

◀ OVERRIDE FROM A1

"I'm assuming I'll have several people running against me for the Republican nomination," said Rep. Kathy Tangelstad, R-Andover, who voted for the bill Thursday and then for the override, two days after her Republican endorsement for reelection was postponed because of her support for the proposal. She said that despite facing what she called her toughest vote in her 12 years in the Legislature, she did "what's right" and that "I'll sleep good tonight."

Supporters of the bill said the vote was a far-reaching rebuff of the anti-tax lobbyists who had stifled progress in Minnesota on a host of spending issues as well as a particularly stinging setback for the governor, who is a staunch opponent of new taxes. Critics, however, denounced the bill's tax increases and talked of their coming at a time of economic difficulty.

Some observers were unsure how Monday's results would affect non-transportation issues, especially with a new, more somber state budget forecast expected Thursday. They also said Pawlenty's political standing might be dented only momentarily.

Throughout the day, DFLers and some Republicans tried to link the legislation to the August collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge, killing 13 and injuring more than 100.

"There is no relationship between the greatest tax increase in [modern] Minnesota history and the tragedy that occurred last summer," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano.

Rep. Shelley Madore, DFL-Apple Valley, disagreed. "The bridge went down on August 1, and a gentleman from my district died," she said. "If you're asking me, is his life worth a nickel a gallon [state gas tax increase, as the plan calls for], I'm telling you it is."

Pawlenty, who was at a governors conference in Washington on Monday, was clearly frustrated with the results as he spoke to reporters by telephone. He said the legislation was "ridiculous in scope and in magnitude," and added that "I am more than happy to say this is a DFL product and a DFL result."

THE VOTING

Monday's 91-41 House vote was one more than needed to override Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of the transportation bill. The override vote included six House Republicans who voted for the bill last week. They joined 85 DFLers, including two who had voted against the bill.

The six Republicans: Abeler, Anoka; Erhardt, Edina; Peterson, Bloomington; Hamilton, Mountain Lake; Heidgerken, Freeport; Tangelstad, Andover.

The two DFLers: Lesch, St. Paul; Otremba, Long Prairie.

The Senate's 47-20 vote to override included two Republicans who voted for the override: Dille, Dassel; Frederickson, New Ulm.

For the complete roll call of votes, go to startribune.com/politics/state.

VETO NUMBERS BY RECENT GOVERNORS

Tim Pawlenty, 2003-present, 37 vetoes, one successful override and one unsuccessful override attempt.

Jesse Ventura, 1999-2002, 54 vetoes, 12 successful overrides, 12 unsuccessful override attempts.

Arne Carlson, 1991-1998, 179 vetoes, 12 unsuccessful override attempts.

Source: Minnesota Legislative Reference Library

"It's a whole basket, a whole bucket of tax increases," he said.

A report by the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota showed that, over the past 70 years, only two governors have made as many vetoes as Pawlenty's 37. And since 1939, only 14 of 447 gubernatorial vetoes have been overridden, with 12 overrides coming against Independence Party Gov. Jesse Ventura, who had almost no party members in the Legislature.

"I think today we all knew we were making history," said Sen. Tarryl Clark, DFL-St. Cloud.

The legislation would increase the state gas tax 5½ cents by fall and then

by up to another 3 cents; 3½ cents of the 8½ cents would be in place until bonds authorized under the plan are retired. Under another provision, a quarter-cent sales tax increase would occur in the seven-county Twin Cities metro area without a referendum, with all proceeds going toward transit projects.

The sales tax would raise an estimated \$1.1 billion over 10 years. In Hennepin County, the state's most populous, it would generate more than half of that amount, or \$606 million. Last year, Hennepin County residents began paying a 0.15 percentage point sales tax, approved without a referendum, to help fund a stadium for the Minnesota Twins.

The legislation also will increase license tab fees on vehicles, particularly luxury cars; hire 40 state troopers, and help repair the Minnesota Department of Transportation's headquarters in St. Paul.

After the Senate voted to join the House in the override, Sen. Steve Murphy, DFL-Red Wing, the most vocal advocate for raising gasoline taxes, credited support from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, farm groups and those Republican legislators "who chose safety over party politics."

"Everything's wonderful," Dan Erhardt, an Anoka County commissioner and commuter rail advocate, said after the veto override. He said that while the override damaged Pawlenty, "I wouldn't want to be a Republican and not help relieve the [traffic] congestion problem this session."

Waiting for payback

Some Republicans who voted for the legislation said they were expecting to pay politically. One of them, Rep. Ron Erhardt, R-Edina, said GOP leaders threatened to take away media privileges, staff members and research resources should he oppose the governor. Erhardt called them "a bunch of bullies" and, after casting his vote Monday, voiced concern about his reelection. "I'm worried about it, but what can I do?" he said.

Before Monday's vote, state Republican Party chairman Ron Carey released a weekend poll conducted in three House districts represent-

ed by Republicans who supported the transportation bill. He said the survey showed voters did not want the legislation. He said the results showed that voters did not view transportation as a top priority and opposed the DFL plan by almost 2 to 1.

At least two of the dissenting Republicans will be leaving leadership posts on committees. Rep. Rod Hamilton, of Mountain Lake, said he voluntarily resigned as the lead Republican on the House Agriculture Committee. Rep. Bud Heidgerken, R-Freeport, said he was asked to step down as the lead Republican on the House K-12 Finance Committee.

"I was told that if I don't fall in line, this is what's going to happen," Heidgerken said. "I had to weigh it. Is this a good bill? Yes it is. We sat for 20 years and did nothing."

House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, said she would not permit punishing dissident Republican members with the loss of staff support and other resources. "If there gets to be a situation where minority members of the House are stripped of services to serve their constituents, I will not stand for that," she said.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, was cautious about saying whether the override would hurt Pawlenty and empower DFLers during the rest of the legislative session. "Does it hurt the governor? That's tough to tell right now," he said.

Seifert said the vote did not reflect a split within the caucus but acknowledged he is not going to actively support the dissenting members' reelection bids. "People are reading into an awful lot about this one bill. This has been a pressure-cooker issue," he said. "This is a one-time deal and an only-time deal."

The success of the transportation bill raised questions about when the DFL would take up another initiative — their threatened vote to reject Transportation Commissioner Carol Molnau, who also is Pawlenty's lieutenant governor. Asked when the Senate might schedule a vote, Clark replied "soon," but would not be more specific.

Staff writer Pat Doyle contributed to this article. mksazuba@startribune.com • 612-673-4388
mbrunswick@startribune.com • 651-222-1636

✓ 260.40

Legislator asks colleagues to give up higher payments

STAR TRIBUNE FEB 26 '08

A Minnesota lawmaker wants his colleagues to stop taking the increased daily expense payments they voted themselves last year, at least until a court can determine whether the increase violates the state Constitution.

✓ Rep. Mark Buesgens, R-Jordan, introduced on Monday a resolution that would reduce so-called per-diem payments — now \$77 in the House and \$96 in the Senate — to 2007 levels. The payments had been \$66 per day.

Buesgens, who did not accept the increase, said his actions come as a result of a citizens group's lawsuit, which contends legislators have unlawfully paid themselves by raising daily compensation payments and accepting daily living expenses with-

out being required to justify their expenses. The suit, filed in Ramsey County District Court, says the actions of the legislators violate the state Constitution and argues that legislators who have accepted the most recent per-diem raises should return the additional payments or be declared ineligible to run for re-election.

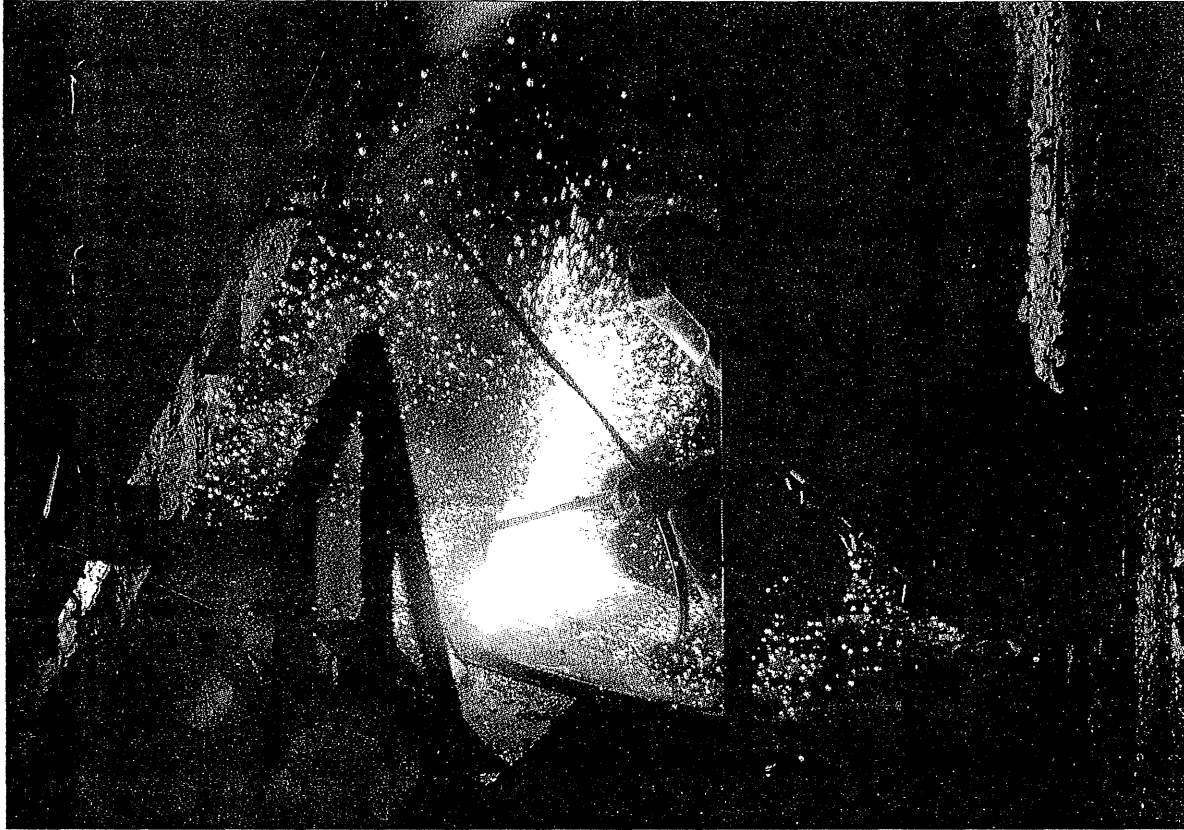
"With the lawsuit in front of us, things are in doubt," Buesgens said.

✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, who did accept the increase, supported Buesgens' measure and distributed photocopies of a check he wrote to the Ramsey County Court on Monday for \$1,400, the amount he calculated as his increase from the raise.

MARK BRUNSWICK

A dream IN THE BALANCE

Hopes for an Asian cultural center ride on whether state lawmakers can agree this week to \$7M in aid.



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: SHERRI LAROSE-CHIGLO

Welder Craig Clausen dismantles a grain hopper in St. Paul's old Hamm's Brewery, where supporters hope to create the Asian Pacific Cultural Center. Below, a library and resource center are planned for the upper level, as well as a theater and lobby on the lower floor.

PIONEER PRESS MAR 11 '08

By Jason Hoppin

jhoppin@pioneerpress.com

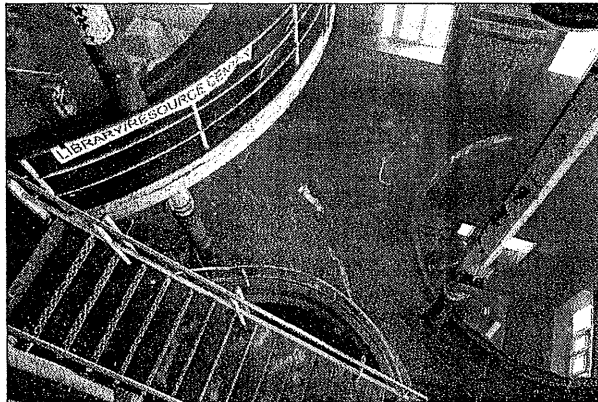
L60.6A

After a decade spent on the drawing board, this is a make-or-break week for the Asian Pacific Cultural Center, a proposed \$18 million home on St. Paul's East Side to honor Minnesota's Asian population and its history.

A critical piece of funding is included in the House and Senate versions of a bonding bill being hammered out this week. But with a looming state budget deficit, some are questioning the wisdom of spending money on arts instead of roads — and project supporters say they will abandon the proposal if the Legislature doesn't come up with the critical funding.

"If we get the \$7 million (bonding request) from the state, then we can go forward. If we don't, then we lose the project," said Naomi Chu, the center's executive director. "That's just the

CULTURAL CENTER, 3A >



Cultural center vision > A glance at the proposed \$18 million Asian Pacific Cultural Center in St. Paul:

Facilities: Theater, classrooms, banquet space, commercial kitchen, library/resource center, gallery, gift shop

Planned opening: Summer 2010

Size: 55,000 square feet

Visitors: More than 100,000 are projected in the first year.

> Cultural center

reality that ... we have to face."

Private donors and major Minnesota charitable foundations have committed funding for the project. So has the Minnesota Senate — \$7 million — and the House — \$5 million.

A conference committee is examining the difference, but the bill's final version has yet to be worked out. The money was the subject of debate last week as lawmakers tried to shrink spending in response to a state deficit projected at \$935 million.

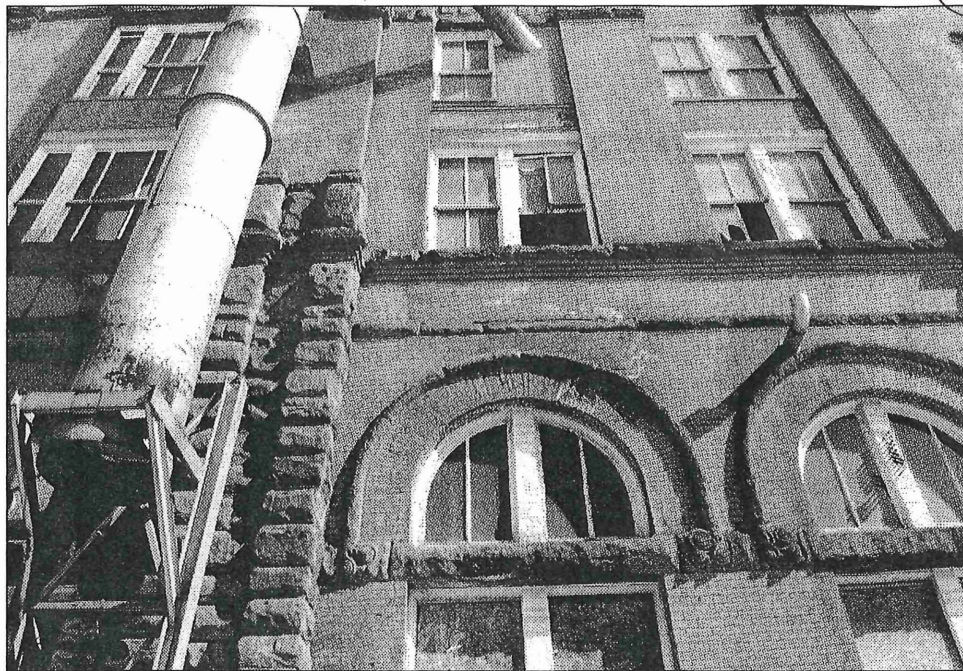
House Minority Leader Tom Emmer, R-Delano, unsuccessfully introduced amendments that would have stripped the center's funding and redirected it to public works projects. Emmer said the center is a worthy project but that he was trying to make a point about spending priorities during difficult financial times.

"It's about needs, not wants. The Asian Pacific Cultural Center — it does provide something to a certain community, no question. The question was, do you put this money to the Asian Pacific Cultural Center or to these fracture-critical bridges and roads?" Emmer said.

Plans include a large theater, classrooms, library, gallery and other amenities that are expected to draw more than 100,000 visitors a year. Chu said the center also would serve as an important recruitment and retention tool for Asian workers to come to Minnesota, and she believes Gov. Tim Pawlenty — who has led trade delegations to China and India — would support the funding.

"We have indications from the governor's office that if we make the House and Senate, we will not be vetoed," Chu said.

The project also has the support of the city of St. Paul. It would be in a portion of the old Hamm's Brewery, on the corner of Payne and Minnehaha avenues, where beer was



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: SHERRI LAROSE-CHIGLO

The old Hamm's Brewery in St. Paul, closed for a decade, presents asbestos, peeling paint and a specialized design intended for making beer as obstacles to any redevelopment project.



A banner inside a Hamm's building shows where a conference room would be built in the proposed Asian Pacific Cultural Center. The wall behind it shows the idled facility's wear and graffiti.

brewed from before the Civil War until the brewery closed in 1997.

The city owns the part of the Hamm's campus of buildings south of Minnehaha, and neighbors do not want to see it fall to the wrecking ball. But because the buildings were constructed for a specialized purpose — making beer — it has unique features such as an open floor plan with large holes where tanks once passed through that make redeveloping the site a challenge.

"Sure, it's difficult to redevelop," said City Council

President Kathy Lantry, an enthusiastic supporter of the project who remembers drawing spring water from the brewery's public wells as a child. "It's also a huge landmark on the East Side. It kind of defines Dayton's Bluff."

The idea for a pan-Asian cultural center was hatched about the same time the Hamm's Brewery produced its last bottle of beer, during a brief incarnation as a Stroh's Brewery. Since then, hopes for the center have grown just as the brewery's condition has declined. It is filled with

The Asian Pacific Cultural Center

The proposed center, an \$18 million project, would go into the Hamm's Brewery site.



PIONEER PRESS

asbestos, peeling paint and, lately, a caustic haze as welders break down grain hoppers, boilers and other equipment.

One thing not being demolished is an open staircase near the front of the main building that seems to float between floors. It is being incorporated into the new center's plans.

One small building not currently visible from the street will be torn down to create a courtyard. Another building, which once housed a carpenter's shop and was the oldest building on the site, was destroyed in a 2005 fire.

F22.4 H8.6E

The next big battle at the Legislature: stem cell research

By SHARON SCHMICKLE

The stem cell debate is flaring again at the state Capitol where the House is poised to cast votes that will set up a litmus test for incumbents in this election year.

The House narrowly defeated a Republican measure Thursday that would have shut down research in Minnesota on stem cells derived from human embryos, even under conditions approved by the White House and the National Institutes of Health.

Now the stage is set for final House action, as early as next week, on a DFL-sponsored bill that would allow state funding for research on the cells. The Senate passed a similar bill last April on a 36-26 vote with all Republicans and four DFLers opposing it.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty threatened to veto the bill last year. As it began moving through House committees this February, the Republican governor sent a letter to every member of the Legislature, restating his opposition.

In the letter dated Feb. 21, Pawlenty said stem cells taken from adults rather than embryos create "ample opportunity to work toward lifesaving cures without crossing moral and ethical boundaries."

✓ Rep. Phyllis Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis, threw those words back at the governor in her own letter telling him, "We will not be able to maximize the potential of adult stem cell science without the full utilization of embryonic stem cell science." Kahn is the chief sponsor of the bill awaiting House action, and Sen. Richard Cohen, DFL-St. Paul, sponsored the Senate version.

Cloning vs. curing

Meanwhile, outside government offices, the debate is ramping up. Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life called on its supporters this week to combat "the deadliest bill Minnesota has ever seen" by urging representatives to vote against "the Kahn cloning bill."

In its website alert, the MCCL said: "This legislation would specifically permit the University of Minnesota to destroy living human embryos for experimentation and to clone and kill human beings — and use taxpayer dollars to do so."

The bill would make it a felony to clone a human being. But it would allow so-called therapeutic cloning in which a patient's cells are coaxed to an embryonic state where they regain the potential to create all of the body's different tissue types. The hope is to steer

them toward making tissue for transplantation. In theory, rejection should not be a problem because the tissue would come from the patient's own cells.

The debate has pitted the MCCL and its allies against advocates for patients who have a stake in the research. People with Parkinson's disease, diabetes and other ailments testified for the bill in hearings last year. While cures may be years away, many patients see stem cells as their best long-term hope.

When scientists first isolated and cultured embryonic stem cells in 1998, they opened discovery into the pathways by which a few microscopic cells grow into the complex human body with all of its highly specialized parts. Now researchers world-wide are solving mysteries of how cells mute some genes while turning on others to form a beating heart, blood, skin and all of the parts a body needs. Their goal is to learn to replace defective cells and even whole organs.

Eventually, scientists predict the studies also will unlock darker secrets of what happens when something goes wrong, when diseases start and grow.

continues on page 4

Gov. Tim Pawlenty threatened to veto the bill last year. As it began moving through House committees this February, the Republican governor sent a letter to every member of the Legislature, restating his opposition.

(Over)

INSIDE

'King Croesus' opera: a low-brow hit in its heyday, page 5



MINNPOST.WORLD

The new Russia has reverted to the one-party domination of the bad old Soviet days. Sunday's national election holds no suspense whatsoever, justifying the age-old assumption that Russians value stability above all else. page 2

SHARON SCHMICKLE

Science on the Web: an ambitious project. page 3

PAMELA ESPELAND

Jaleel Shaw to bring his sax appeal to both sides of river. page 4

COMMUNITY VOICES

Politics still hot, but urban issues draw strong comment from readers, too. page 6

The next big battle at the Legislature: stem cell research

continued from page 1

But because embryos, donated from fertility clinics, were destroyed to create the first lines of stem cells, the research has been dogged by controversy. Opponents are promoting research on cells from adults, something scientists say also has potential but has been more difficult to develop than the naturally versatile embryonic cells.

A test vote

The bill at issue would establish a state policy sanctioning research on both adult and embryonic stem cells as long as patients who donate embryos for the studies consent in writing. The research would need to be approved by review boards at appropriate institutions. The bill would allow the University of Minnesota to spend state funds for the research, but it does not provide any funding this year.

On Thursday, Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, proposed a substitute to Kahn's bill which would have banned the use of

any stem cell obtained through the destruction of an embryo and also banned human cloning in any form, including therapeutic cloning.

In floor debate, Kahn said Emmer's version of the bill would "move Minnesota out of this area of research far beyond any other state in the country ... beyond where President Bush would like us to go."

After Emmer's version was defeated, 68-62, the MCCL charged in a statement that House members had chosen "to treat human life as mere raw material for experimentation."

MCCL spokesman William Poehler said in an interview that some pro-life House members had missed the vote Thursday and could make a difference when Kahn's bill comes back to the floor.

Kahn said she is confident she has enough votes to pass her version of the bill but probably not to override a veto.

New approaches

In his letter last week, Pawlenty didn't mention a veto.

He argued for following a new approach that came to light in November when scientists in Wisconsin and Japan reported they had reprogrammed genes in ordinary skin cells to create the equivalent of embryonic stem cells.

Many scientists agree that the breakthrough could lower the need for the embryonic cells. But it may be years before the reprogrammed cells are ready for practical use. And their development depends on the embryonic versions. They form the gold standard against which the new cell types will be measured.

The University of Minnesota is setting up technology to work with the reprogrammed cells, said Jonathan Slack, director of the University's Stem Cell Institute. Meanwhile, research continues on both embryonic and adult stem cells.

Since 2001, the United States has banned federal funding for research on all but a few lines of embryonic cells. Thus Minnesota scientists face tradeoffs over limiting their research or losing major funding. California, Wis-

consin and several other states subsidize embryonic stem cell research, putting their scientists at a competitive advantage.

Even though the Minnesota bill doesn't provide new funding this year, Slack said, "It would be good news if they passed it."

Among other benefits, he said, it would "signal to the world that Minnesota was not hostile to this sort of thing," which could help the state's research institutions continue to recruit top-notch scientists.

If the bill were amended, as proposed Thursday, to ban therapeutic cloning, that could set back future research, he said. While the process of creating cell lines for transplantation is called cloning, he said, "it is a million miles away from creating a cloned individual."

The bill's ban on cloning a person is no problem, he said.

"Everybody is against human cloning for purposes of copying people," he said.

Sharon Schmickle writes about foreign affairs and science. She can be reached at sschmickle@minnpost.com.

Jaleel Shaw to bring his sax appeal to both sides of river



PAMELA ESPEILAND

The alto saxophone can be smooth or strident, cool or funky. It can whisper or wail, honk or caress the senses. Legendary Charlie Parker played the alto sax. Counting Parker among his influences, young lion Jaleel Shaw plays it these days.

Next week, Shaw brings his horn and his considerable chops to the Twin Cities for three nights of smart, joyous jazz. On Thursday, March 6, he'll perform with the Roy Haynes Quartet at the Ted Mann Concert Hall as part of the Northrop Jazz Season. (Also on the menu that night is the Ravi Coltrane Quartet.)

On Friday and Saturday, March 7 and 8, Shaw will have top billing at the Artists' Quarter in St. Paul. These dates fall midway between his 30th birthday (Feb. 11) and the release of his second CD as a leader (March 18).

Shaw says he's happy to return to the AQ, a club he has played twice before. View a video from his last visit below.

"The thing that's great about the AQ is the fact they were willing to bring me in as a young artist," he tells me in a phone interview. "Not many clubs are doing that anymore — bringing in musicians from New York, giving us opportunities to play."

Born in Philadelphia, Shaw grew up hearing jazz records

played by his mother, Olivia. He started playing the alto sax at age 9. His education as a jazz cub included music schools, jazz camps, mentoring by local musicians like Grover Washington Jr., and playing in a youth jazz band led by Lovett Hines, who counts Christian McBride and Joey DeFrancesco among his former students.

He won a full scholarship to the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he earned dual degrees in music education and performance and a trunk full of awards. From there he went to the Manhattan School of Music, again on scholarship, and graduated with a master's in performance in 2002. He taught at Temple University for three years.

Today, Shaw calls himself a freelance jazz musician, but he has gigs that are probably the envy of many young artists. He's a member of both the Mingus Big Band and, since 2005, the Roy Haynes Quartet, with whom he will play at the Ted Mann.

Read the complete story — including information on local shows — at www.minnpost.com.

STAR TRIBUNE APR 2 '08
EMMER'S APRIL FOOLS

His party's the joke

✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, got one thing right in his commentary—the April Fools' Day joke is on the taxpayers.

The former Republican majority created a culture of taxpayers who think they can have good government and services without paying for them. "April Fools!"

The lower-taxes culture put the new Democratic majority in the position where it has to raise taxes. If Minnesota's fiscal and bonding needs had been adequately funded during the Republican majority, we wouldn't have a crumbling transportation infrastructure and wouldn't be playing "catch-up" on higher-education spending.

JAMIE JOHNSON, Minneapolis

Don't blame the DFL

Rep. Emmer's commentary reminded me how we desperately need a change in the tone of politics. He would have us believe that DFLers have frittered away our budget surplus through overspending. But, as Emmer knows, the economic downturn and implosion of the housing market are the culprits behind the current state deficit.

Furthermore, Emmer claims that DFLers have abandoned middle-of-the-road policy in raising taxes, yet the most significant tax hikes were endorsed by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. Has that also become a raging liberal organization? It was not the Democrats who had to cleanse politically impure legislators from their party.

The people of this state and nation are tired of the political squabbling that takes place in a parallel universe while we are stuck dealing with the problems here in reality.

THEO KOZEL, Minneapolis

Surragacy legislation is sent to the House floor

By T.W. Budig

ECM Capitol reporter

Opponents charge it legitimizes the sale of babies and the practice of eugenics — bill supporters argue the surrogacy legislation fills a void.

“We have nothing in state law about this,” said Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, R-Andover, whose legislation was passed by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee on Wednesday (March 12) and sent to the House floor.

According to the National Infertility Association, about 50 surrogate birth agreements are struck each year in Minnesota.

Tingelstad and attorney Steve Snyder argued that the surrogacy bill would help prevent litigation stemming from surrogacy disputes and serve to protect both the surrogate and parents.

Indeed, Tingelstad opined that spelling out surrogacy arrangement requirements in her legislation, the number of surrogate births could actually be reduced.

That because all parties will need to reflect on what they propose to do, she explained.

The bill stipulates, among other things, that the intended mother is the legal mother immediately on birth of the baby — custody rests solely with the intended parents — while also details eligibility requirements such as that the gestational carrier must be at least 21-years-old.

But opponents were sharply critical.

“This is fundamentally about baby selling,” said Tom Prichard, of the Minnesota Family Council of surrogacy.

Prichard opined that surrogacy diminishes the option of adoption.

Bill detractors, citing ads in newspapers for egg donors, additionally raised the spectre of eugenics.

Republicans on the committee also expressed concerns.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, argued the bill was needless—surrogates and intended parents already can use existing contract law, he said — and

Emmer was unimpressed that the Minnesota State Bar Association supported the bill.

“I can see why all the lawyers have approved it, because it looks like full employment for lawyers,” he said, noting the legislation leaves a 12-month window for legal actions from date of birth.

But Democrats spoke in favor.

“The law is entirely silent on this,” said Rep. Debra Hilstrom, DFL-Brooklyn Center.

“We’ve got the Wild, Wild West out there,” agreed Rep. Steve Simon, DFL-St. Louis Park.

The committee, on a rollcall vote, sent the legislation to the House floor.

Local lawmakers DeLaForest, Emmer, and Holberg voted against.

Kalin, Kranz, and Hilstrom voted in favor.

According to the National Infertility Association, some 145,000 Minnesotans have fertility problems.



B30.4

19B



MONDAY, APRIL 28, 2008
☁ 38° OVERCAST in TWIN CITIES (MORE)

MINNESOTA
PUBLIC RADIO®

NEWS &
FEATURES

EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP

ABOUT US

THE CURRENT

CLASSICAL

LISTEN
PLAYLIST

LISTEN
PLAYLIST

NEWS

LISTEN
SCHEDULE

RADIO Programs

Go

Budget negotiations heat up House and Senate

by Tim Pugmire, Minnesota Public Radio
April 28, 2008

St. Paul, Minn. — Budget negotiations are expected to heat up this week at the state Capitol, with lawmakers facing adjournment on May 19th.

DFL leaders in the House and Senate are working with Republican Governor Tim Pawlenty to solve a projected state budget deficit of \$935 million.

Democrats made a proposal late last week that suggested \$204 million in spending cuts as a starting point for the budget solution. But Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, dismissed the DFL proposal as inadequate window dressing. ✓

"This almost looks like third grade math. You've got to balance the checkbook. You can't say we're going to cut \$200 million. What are you going to do with the other \$800 million. I mean do you have to make that up with revenues, new tax revenues. If that's what you want to do, we should have that debate. The public should be allowed to witness the debate and determine if that is the direction we want to go," said Emmer. ✓

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich says the DFL wants to build a solution by first finding areas of agreement.

"We are close. If we look at this deficit it is a small portion of the overall state budget. If we keep working in this way of finding places where we agree instead of focusing on the areas we disagree I think we can build a solution," Sertich said.

Sertich says he thinks a budget agreement is close and negotiations could make significant progress this week.

©2008 Minnesota Public Radio | All rights reserved
480 Cedar Street, Saint Paul, MN USA 55101 | 651-290-1212

House debates reforming health care

By Don Davis

State Capitol Bureau

ST. PAUL — Smokers and obese Minnesotans would be targeted for health-improvement programs, soaring health care costs could slow a bit and thousands more Minnesotans would be added to public programs.

Those are among provisions in a controversial health care reform bill state representatives debated into the night Thursday. It and a more extensive bill senators earlier passed face a questionable future because Gov. Tim Pawlenty opposes part of the measure, although he says he wants reform, too.

Pawlenty would use money from the Health Care Access Fund in his budget-balancing plan. That is the fund DFL lawmakers want to use to expand state health care coverage and make other changes to the health system.

Bill sponsor Rep. Tom Huntley, DFL-Duluth, admitted the measure is controversial.

"The whole health care industry is nervous about it," he said before hours of debate began.

A vote was expected late Thursday or early today.

Despite controversy, Huntley said, the bill is needed "to Health care: See Page A6

put Minnesota back in the forefront of health care reform in the U.S."

A main Republican complaint with the bill is that it would drain \$296 million from the Health Care Access Fund, which is where a tax on health care providers is deposited.

Huntley was not worried.

"The latest analysis from the Finance Department ... does show a deficit in the

Health Care Access Fund by 2013," Huntley said. "We have quite a few sessions to fix that."

The department's analysis does not take into account cost savings the bill provides, Huntley added. He said the bill would save 20 percent of the state's health care costs.

Deputy Minority leader Tom Emmer, R-Delano, did not buy Huntley's arguments.

"You are bleeding it completely dry," Emmer said.

He said there will be two choices once the access fund runs out — raise taxes or take people off state programs.

The average Minnesotan would notice a couple of improvements if the bill becomes law, House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm, said.

For one, health insurance premiums should fall, Sertich said, because expensive care provided people without insurance — but which often ends up on the state's tab — will be curtailed.

Also, the leader said, the bill sets a goal of keeping insurance premiums to no more than 6 percent of a person's salary. That is achieved, in part, with state subsidies.

Highlights of the bill, which would cost \$225 million when fully ramped up in 2010-11, include:

- State-funded health programs would add thousands of Minnesotans to their rolls by 2011.

- Ninety-six percent of Minnesotans would have health care coverage by 2011, counting both private and public programs.

- A mandate would simplify paperwork required of health care providers such as doctors.

- A provision would spend \$100 million over three years

to promote better nutrition, physical fitness and preventive measures on the assumption that such moves would reduce obesity, tobacco use, alcohol abuse and drug addiction.

The state's main insurance program for the poor, MinnesotaCare, would gain 28,000 enrollees under the bill. It would provide insurance to a family of four earning \$61,500 annually once medical expenses top \$3,690.

Republicans see a problem with how health care providers would be paid under the bill. Rep. Matt Dean, R-Dellwood, said those providers don't understand how the provisions would affect them.

Rural health care providers, in particular, are not ready for major changes in how health care data is reported, Dean said. "We don't know how this is going to work, but (Democrats say) we have to implement this immediately."

Rep. Laura Brod, R-New Prague, said the world-famous Mayo Clinic in Rochester cannot even figure out how to deal with the bill's changes, so small-town providers cannot be expected to understand.

However, Democrats produced letters from several medical groups, including Mayo, supporting the bill.

Representatives seemed to agree with at least one of the bill's goals: reduce chronic diseases. Rep. Tom Rukavina, DFL-Virginia, said that is an important issue, even though he admitted to being a smoker and being overweight.

"I'm almost as tall lying down as I am standing up," Rukavina said.

Don Davis works for Forum Communications Co., which owns the Bemidji Pioneer.

✉ ddavis@bemidjipioneer.com



19B

H8.6

H8.6E



Berglin, DFL push for constitutional amendment to stop raids on state health care fund

BY BRITT ROBSON, MINNESOTA MONITOR
May 12, 2008

- ✓ Tired of watching Governor Tim Pawlenty try to raid Health Care Access Fund dollars to balance deficits in the general fund, DFL legislative leaders are attempting to put the matter in the hands of the voters. On Thursday, Senate Health and Human Services Budget committee chair Linda Berglin (DFL-Minneapolis) brought forth a bill for a constitutional amendment that would mandate that HCAF monies go to the state-supported health insurance plan known as Minnesota Care, as originally intended when HCAF and Minnesota Care were created by Berglin and other legislators 16 years ago. Berglin's counterpart in the House, Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), is expected to introduce a companion bill in that body either Friday or early next week. If approved by both the full House and Senate before the session adjourns (the deadline is a week from today), the amendment will appear on the ballot this November.

Almost every year that he has been governor, Pawlenty has attempted to take HCAF monies — derived from a tax on health care providers and insurance plans — to balance a deficit or otherwise fund programs contained in the state's general fund. This session he recently dropped his proposal to tap \$250 million from the fund, but is still asking for \$48 million per year to ease the transition of people enrolled in General Assistance Medical Care into Minnesota Care. Supporters of Minnesota Care (and additional health care funding in general) view the governor's attempt to use HCAF for an ongoing budget line item rather than as one-time money as a potentially unwelcome precedent.

"We believe a constitutional amendment is necessary because clearly the current law, which prohibits these transfers, is not being enforced," said Minnesota Nurses Association representative Mary Jo George in testimony before the Senate Finance Committee yesterday. "Hundreds of millions of dollars have been transferred from the Health Care Access Fund to reduce deficits, and sadly tens of thousands of Minnesotans have had their medical safety net severed for the sake of balancing the budget...we are concerned, without dedicated funds, we may not have a [Minnesota Care] program." An executive from Allina Hospitals & Clinics and a representative of the SEIU also spoke in favor of Berglin's bill, which passed the finance committee and was sent by the full senate to the rules committee yesterday.

Huntley's companion bill will have to go through similar legislative hurdles in the House and any differences between the two will have to be reconciled before this session's May 19 deadline. Governor Pawlenty cannot veto proposals for constitutional amendments passed by the legislature. Asked if she fears that the bill will prompt Pawlenty to take a harder line on the current budget negotiations in general and health care spending in particular, Berglin laughed and said, "he's already threatening cuts, so what's the difference?"

The Minnesota House on Wednesday passed a bill that would allow the University of Minnesota to use state funds to conduct research using embryonic stem cells. The measure prompted a flurry of amendments by pro-life Republicans designed to derail the bill.

- ✓ Rep. Matt Dean, R-Dellwood, introduced an amendment that would limit the use of embryos only to those that had died a "natural death." Rep. Dan Severson, R-Sauk Rapids, offered an amendment that would have forced Minnesota's attorney general to investigate the University of Minnesota, because Severson feels research conducted at the university on embryonic stem cells violates the law.

"The researcher has to take this living organism and has to slice it up," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano. "It destroys the living organism." He continued, "Would we take an individual that is sentenced to life imprisonment, would we start cutting them up for research? No. And you might think that's a little over the top, but it's the same thing for some of us."

It might be a little over the top. The embryos used for stem-cell research are called blastocysts and have, on average, between 50-150 cells. An individual who is sentenced to life imprisonment has an estimated 50 trillion to 100 trillion cells. And is of course a human being.

- ✓ Kahn's bill would only allow research on embryos that patients have donated to science. "Let's talk about the life of those frozen embryos," said Kahn. "They stay alive only as long as the couple who created them wish them to stay alive. If the commercial entity that stores those embryos isn't paid, then those embryos are discarded and at some point they are no longer viable and are discarded."

She also said that public funding would help to allay many people's concerns over cloning or unethical procurement of embryos for research. "For people who have ethical concerns, you have to have public funding. That's the only way you get public oversight," she said.

The stem-cell bill passed the House 71-62 Wednesday afternoon. The bill passed the Senate in the 2007 legislative session. Gov. Tim Pawlenty will likely veto the measure.

The stark contrast in political ideology is evident in the dueling press releases that emerged Thursday morning after the vote.

From the office of Rep. Kahn:

ST. PAUL — Recognizing the significant potential for medical and scientific breakthroughs, the House of Representatives today passed legislation authorizing the University of Minnesota to perform stem-cell research. The bill lays the scientific and medical basis for stem-cell research and defines what can be studied, including embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells. Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL — Minneapolis), the chief author of the bill, said the bill enables Minnesota to join other states on the cutting edge of medical and scientific research.

"Stem-cell research offers immense potential to fight and cure pervasive and chronic diseases," said Kahn. "Minnesota has historically been a haven for biomedical and scientific innovation and we should join other states in the effort to realize the curative promise that stem-cell research can offer to hundreds of millions of suffering Americans."

And from Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life:

ST. PAUL — In a heartless act of disregard for the earliest stages of human life, the Minnesota House of Representatives today voted 71-62 in favor of human cloning and embryo-killing experiments. The vote approved the deadly Kahn Cloning Bill, S.F. 100, which legalizes human cloning and forces taxpayers to pay for the destruction of human life on a scale never before seen in Minnesota.

"House members today had a chance to do the right thing and protect vulnerable human life, but instead they chose to treat human life as mere raw material for experimentation," said Andrea Rau, MCCL legislative associate. "It is a dark day for citizens to see their taxes being spent on such unjust treatment of human life."

House members approved the deadly bill authored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis, which allows taxpayer funding for the destruction of human embryos for experiments and also the wanton creation and destruction of human life through cloning at the University of Minnesota.

Article Tags: Government, Wellness

— A30.1 R80
Dog bill gets Senate's unanimous support

STAR TRIBUNE MAY 13 '08
The Senate unanimously approved a canine-oriented bill (SF 2876) allowing dogs to accompany their owners to outdoor dining areas if local cities approve and imposing new restrictions on dog ownership for people who have used animals in violent crimes or had pets involved in vicious attacks.

The dine-with-your-dog measure got roughed up a bit in the House before passing by a 110-23 margin. Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, said it raises sanitation concerns, especially if the dogs try to lick patrons' plates or soil the patio.

"Are they going to come in with a pooper scooper next to my table?" Emmer asked.

It would be up to the restaurant to clean up dog waste immediately.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

19B

x \

Airline incentive move blocked

ST. PAUL — House Republicans tried unsuccessfully Wednesday to offer Delta Air Lines tax breaks to locate headquarters for a merged airline in the Twin Cities, not Atlanta as planned.

They tried to attach the provision to a bill dealing with the Metropolitan Council, but it was rejected.

✓ House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm, said the most effective way to address the Northwest Airlines merger with Delta would be through Gov. Tim Pawlenty and legislative leaders, not by taking a plan

first to reporters, as Republicans did on Tuesday, and then to the House floor, as they did Wednesday.

"This proposal is fool's gold for those families that potentially could be affected by this merger," Sertich said.

Republicans said lawmakers should be doing everything possible to keep airline jobs in Minnesota.

✓ "Should we just stand on the Capitol steps and wave bye-bye?" Deputy House Minority Leader Tom Emmer, R-Delano, asked. "We're trying to make sure we keep those jobs here."

House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, did not shut the door on the GOP plan.

"I think there are going to be a lot of ideas in the next couple of weeks," she said.



192



Emmer's words impact convention — without intent

Tuesday, 25 March 2008

It wasn't written on butcher wrap but penned on narrow sheets of paper that Deputy Minority Leader Tom Emmer, R-Delano, tucked into his suit jacket pocket.

Emmer's recent address at an endorsement convention in Anoka County has been interpreted as an attempt to sabotage the endorsement of Rep. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, one of the Override Six, but Emmer dismisses the idea.

"I've done this speech five or six other times," said Emmer.

"I gave it three times that day — exact same speech," Emmer said of subsequent stops in Morrison County and at Cold Spring.

To Abeler, Emmer was heaving chunks of red meat to the delegates.

Emmer's appearance at the convention was not the result of a one-word teletyped message — "Abeler" — received from higher party authorities but in response to a request by Rep. Tom Hackbarth, R-Cedar.

He asked Emmer to address the convention, explained Hackbarth.

It's a routine thing, he said of leaders addressing conventions.

Indeed, before speaking, Emmer asked him what kind of speech he wanted — an endorsement speech?

No, said Hackbarth.

Just give a speech as a representative of the House Republican Caucus, Hackbarth said he told Emmer.

"The whole speech was not even a kind of fire and brimstone speech that I kind of expected from Rep. Emmer like he does on the House floor," said Hackbarth.

Still, Abeler looked "distraught" afterward, Hackbarth opined.

Abeler failed to get re-endorsed.

Like other conservative House Republicans, Hackbarth likes Emmer.

Emmer, an attorney by profession, is probably the most conservative and aggressive leader in the House Republican ranks, Hackbarth opined.

"And I think we need that. Because we have some pretty passive leadership — you can quote

me on that and I don't care," said Hackbarth.

Emmer adds balance, he said.

Rep. Sondra Erickson, R-Princeton, called Emmer intelligent, disciplined, with a strong grasp of policy.

"He's a breath of fresh air to me," she said.

Elected in 2004, Emmer came to the Legislature with a courtroom combativeness.

Instead of passively taking questions from reporters, Emmer used to demand why the reporter was phrasing the question in a certain way.

Those who watch body language have told him, Emmer explained last week, that his furrowed brow or raised eyebrow make him look angry.

That's not fair, Emmer opined.

Angry or not, Emmer, like other House Republicans, found the transportation override vote stressful.

"I didn't realize how emotionally and physically invested I was in the process when it ended on Monday (Feb. 25)," said Emmer.

"I was," he said.

"Wednesday afternoon (after the override) was tough. It was the first time the whole caucus was together. I think people's emotions were still pretty raw," said Emmer.

One caucus member compared the caucus to a family, but he didn't buy it, explained Emmer.

"And my response was 'No. We're not. We're a team,'" said Emmer.

"This thing about voting your conscience is great," Emmer further explained.

"But my point was that it had nothing to do with that. The issue within the caucus is you're only as good as your weakest link," he said.

"And it seemed to me we've got about seven star players who go and do whatever they want, which is fine if they're truly voting their conscience," he said.

"But when they're being selfish, it impacts everybody else's ability to do what they need to do for their district," said Emmer.

"That's a problem," he said.

The questioning of his motives behind his appearance in Anoka County may stem from private words he had with Abeler, Emmer opined.

Abeler hasn't been up front with him, opined Emmer, and sometimes in life that means you simply can't deal with people.

For his part, Abeler said Emmer told him, "I'm done with you."

Emmer insists nothing is personal.

"But I don't have any hatred — I don't have any animosity (toward Abeler)," said Emmer.

"Jim has got to do whatever Jim has got to do," he said.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, reported that his caucus was pulling together and that he personally felt a thousand times better than he had earlier.

"I think divisions are put to bed. And we're united now," said Seifert.

"Today I feel we're absolutely focused on the 85 (House DFL) tax and spenders and regulators," said Seifert.

"We're doing great," he said. —Tim Budig, ECM Publishers

Social Bookmarking



Close Window

Brazelton wins DFL nod for House seat

Tuesday, 18 March 2008

by Joni Astrup
Associate editor

Chris Brazelton has been endorsed by the DFL to run for the Minnesota House of Representatives seat now held by Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano.

The district, 19B, covers a number of cities and townships in Wright County, including Otsego, Albertville and St. Michael.

Brazelton, of Delano, and Dennis Sucik of St. Michael sought the DFL endorsement for the seat.

Brazelton received just over 70 percent of the vote on the first ballot to win the endorsement Saturday at the DFL Senate District 19 convention, held at Buffalo Community Middle School.

"I was thrilled to have such a strong showing of support among the delegates," Brazelton said Monday. "Several of them volunteered on the spot to work on the campaign, many wrote checks to contribute."

She believes she can be a more effective advocate for people's issues at the Legislature than Emmer. Brazelton describes him as "a man with a confrontational and combative style that is not serving us well."

Brazelton also ran against Emmer in 2006.

Both Brazelton and Sucik, meanwhile, addressed delegates and answered questions before the endorsement vote.

Brazelton is a child support officer with Wright County Human Services.

She graduated from Brady High School (a Catholic school that is now closed) and from Metro State University with high honors with a degree in social science (anthropology, sociology and political science).

She worked as sales coordinator for a housewares manufacturer, a paralegal, an advocate in a domestic violence agency and a waived service coordinator for children with special needs before becoming a child support officer.

A native of central Minnesota, Brazelton is one of 11 children. She is married to Larry and has two adult children and one grandchild.

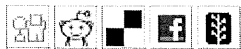
Brazelton and her husband have been doing foster care for the past several years and are currently caring for a child with special needs.

19 B



Sucik, meanwhile, was making his first run for office. He and his wife own and operate a graphics business. Sucik also is a professional musician in the Rockin' Hollywoods and he works as a bus driver.

Social Bookmarking



Close Window

198



Bachman receives endorsement

Thursday, 10 April 2008

by T.W. Budig

ECM Capitol reporter

Sixth Congressional District Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, R-Stillwater, was endorsed by unanimous acclaim at the Republican district convention in Blaine on Saturday, April 5.

Bachmann, 52, sometimes wiping tears from her eyes, in her endorsement speech told delegates "we are lovers of freedom."

Referring to earlier comments by Gov. Tim Pawlenty about the marketability of Republicanism, Bachmann told delegates that the party had a story to sell.

In her brief acceptance speech several times Bachmann took religious tones.

"God has shed his grace on the United States of America," said Bachmann, alluding to freedom as a gift bequeathed by earlier generations of Americans.

It sometimes feels, said Bachmann, that the country is walking on ball bearings, but she veered off the sentiment by saying she didn't intend to be a "Debbie Downer."



Bachmann told delegates that she had kept her word to them and that her votes in Congress reflected that. She has voted the way she said she would vote, she explained.

She would continue.

"I will keep my word to you," said Bachmann.

Duty sometimes demands saying "no" to things, Bachmann said.

That comes at a price, she opined.

You are "vilified" when you say "no," Bachmann told delegates.

Just check the editorial page of any newspaper, she said.

Bachmann's speech was neither broadcasted nor recorded by the media.

Sixth District Republican officials, in an unusual move, prohibited reporters from using tape recorders or video cameras within the convention.

Note taking and still photography was allowed.

Sen. Betsy Wergin, R-Princeton, said Bachmann has proven a consistent Republican voice.

"She hasn't changed her story for circumstances," said Wergin, who officiated at the convention.

✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, told delegates Bachmann had more courage in her little finger than most the people he meets have in their entire body.

Sixth District Democrats will hold their endorsement convention later this month.

Former Ventura Transportation Commissioner Elwyn Tinklenberg and St. Cloud businessman Bob Olson are vying for endorsement.

Democrats have an arid viewpoint of Bachmann, seeking a second term in the U.S. House.

"Rep. Bachmann has pursued the most polarizing, divisive career that we have seen in Minnesota politics," said Tinklenberg.

"And you don't move forward through division. You don't grow through division. You grow through addition," he said.

Growing sentiment against earmarks, says Bachmann

by T.W. Budig

ECM Capitol reporter

Congressional earmarks — language in spending bills directing funding to specific projects — might prove an issue in the 6th Congressional District race.

Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, R-Stillwater, said there's growing sentiment in Washington against the use of earmarks.

"When all is said and done, my guess is that this year Congress will not do earmarks when all is said and done," Bachmann recently opined.

The public views earmarks as corrupt, she said.

"And that's part of me going to Congress — I am a reformer," said Bachmann.

"I don't believe in business as usual," she said.

Still, this does not mean ignoring federal funding.

"A congressman should seek federal money for their district for worthy projects," said Bachmann.

Her office has dedicated one, full-time staffer to work with local communities to obtain federal dollars for meritorious projects, she explained.

Asked if U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman James Oberstar, D-Chisholm, placed an earmark in a bill for the district whether would she oppose it, Bachmann indicated she would not.

"If he (Oberstar) would want to put that in, that would be great — I would welcome him putting something in," she said.

"But that system, the old system, is a corrupt system," said Bachmann.

"If we can get a transportation bill that has money in it for our district, then that would be great," she said.

"I just don't believe in a corrupt, crony-based system," said Bachmann.

"I'm going to do what I have control over," she said. "We (Republicans) cannot guarantee the outcome," she said.

Democrats control the Congress.

St. Cloud business Bob Olson and former Ventura Administration Elwyn Tinklenberg, DFL congressional challengers, also have opinions on earmarks.

Tinklenberg views earmarks as having a place.

"Absolutely I think there's a role — I think there's significant reform that needs to be put into place," he said.

"They (earmarks) should be transparent, they should be part of the bill — they shouldn't be hidden in the background," said Tinklenberg.

"When a group of people like Anoka County and Ramsey and the city of Anoka got together and made a request for improvements along Highway 10, that's a legitimate request," he said.

"The Highway 23 bridge in St. Cloud — that's a legitimate request," said Tinklenberg.

"The I-35W bridge in downtown Minneapolis — that's an earmark," he said.

"Northstar Corridor would not be moving ahead if it weren't for earmark funding that helped keep that project moving," he said.

"So absolutely I think there's a role for designated funding," he said.

Olson argued that Republicans were being disingenuous on the topic of earmarks.

"To a great extent the Republicans are continuing their solid record of hypocrisy," charged Olson.

"They have used earmarks a lot in the past," he said.

"My opinion is Congress will be better off when we do get rid of earmarks but until then, I as a congressman representing the 6th District will not unilaterally disarm," he said.

"I will take care of the 6th District as a very strong member of Congress," said Olson.

Read what others are saying about this topic by clicking below:



Social Bookmarking



Last Updated (Thursday, 10 April 2008)

Close Window

Crop of legislative candidates better than most

Tuesday, 28 October 2008

19B

Kiffmeyer better of two

The race for House District 16B features two candidates who have developed strong connections in their communities.

Steve Andrews would offer a fresh voice and a strong advocate for better and fairer education funding, but our staff believes Mary Kiffmeyer's experience would help her hit the ground running and has endorsed her for House District 16B.



Steve Andrews



Mary Kiffmeyer

The Big Lake woman, who is the oldest of 14 children, has demonstrated leadership throughout her life, whether it was as a nurse when a fatal bus crash in Monticello occurred or leading the Secretary of State's Office through Y2K, a 15 percent budget reduction or implementing new laws handed down from the Minnesota Legislature.

Kiffmeyer and her husband, Ralph, both of whom are nurses by trade, have been a fixture in local politics, but Mary waited until after their four kids were raised to run for office.

Kiffmeyer has jumped in with both feet in the House race. She is already delving into Green Acres legislation that area farmers have lampooned since its passage. She has also been vocal about how the township should react to a proposal for a race track.

She sees the racetrack venture as a great economic development tool. She has strongly suggested the town board develop a task force with the city and county to work on planning and zoning issues to make sure residents' needs are met. Andrews has been advocate for making sure people are informed.

Although we're not sure the town board should readily accept a racetrack, we're confident if one were to materialize it would be good to have Kiffmeyer in the Legislature to push for needed infrastructure improvements.

We like that both candidates have taken an interest in such local matters. We hope it's a prelude to better representation.

The Star News news staff believes Kiffmeyer's experience heading the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office uniquely qualifies her to discuss bills and the implementation processes that will take place.

We are pleased with the homework she has done to date to prepare herself for the job. She doesn't seem to be resting on her laurels because of name recognition.

Andrews, a director of technology for a brokerage firm in Brooklyn Center, is a good candidate, too, for having experience in local government on a local parks commission, and a housing and redevelopment authority as well as his service on a fiber optics task force that is bringing high speed fiber optic technology to Monticello.

He is wise to want to see some of the burden lifted off of property taxes, as people have been placed in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between continuing to support education like they have in the past and protecting their fragile wallets in tough economic times.

We see Andrews landing on his feet in politics somewhere, if he's not first elected to the House of Representatives.

Peppin an easy choice

Rep. Joyce Peppin, R-Rogers, was an easy choice for endorsement in the race for House District 32A.

The energetic legislator who has brought home tornado relief funds for Rogers, helped the Maple Grove hospital project leap a tall moratorium hurdle and constantly seeks cost-saving governmental reform, has proven she can work well while serving in the majority and the minority in her first two terms. She is needed back in St. Paul to continue her work for her district and the state.



Grace Baltich



Joyce Peppin

Peppin is effective in part because she is willing to work across party lines. She demonstrates you don't have to agree with colleagues on everything to work together.

She has been the chief author of an increasingly popular proposal to lift the ban on consideration of nuclear energy, and will be well-positioned to resume the effort in 2009.

This smart legislator, who was the only one of 134 legislators to have an M.B.A., also supports the plan to develop renewable energy technologies so that they provide 20 percent of the region's electricity generation by 2020. She is focused on growing base capacity.

Peppin is a believer in good, open government. She plans to work with Rogers this year to see if some of the money in this past year's transportation bill can't flow to the Rogers area.

She has already had conversations with Mike Opat, who is a Hennepin County commissioner and a key champion with the Northwest Corridor Partnership looking at bus rapid transit between Rogers and Minneapolis. Constituents won't have to worry about Peppin trying to pull a fast one.

She said she would never throw something on them or increase a tax without getting their input and support first.

Peppin, who took a bus to work at US Bank in Minneapolis during a six-year stint in the private sector as a public relations manager, says having a rapid bus route could be a huge boost to her area.

Peppin actually voted against the transportation bill that the governor vetoed only to be overturned. She thought the bill was too much, and said it was not a compromise.

Our team likes that she went for the levy cap, because it was a compromise that forced local governments to sharpen their pencils just like the state and families. At 3.9 percent, it was not too stringent of a cap.

On matters of education, we're happy she takes offense to the lack of equitable funding in the state and is also a reformer.

Peppin is a vocal supporter of Q-Comp, which would reward the best teachers, and she would like to add alternative pathways to licensure for teachers.

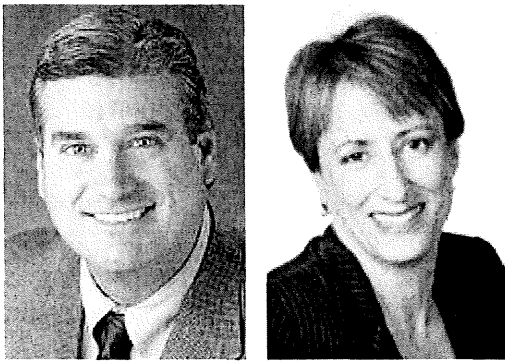
Peppin doubts there is money available to improve ECFE programming and/or add all-day, everyday kindergarten, but she opens to the fact that both programs have merit.

Her opponent, Grace Baltich, would serve as more of an attack dog on the issue of equity in school funding. The Hanover woman who grew up with her father in a wheelchair from multiple sclerosis is passionate about seeing more equity in school funding. The social worker by trade would also be a stronger supporter of preventative measures when it comes to programs like ECFE. But, overall, Peppin makes for a stronger candidate.

Emmer ready to shift gears, seek solutions

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano has made his case for returning to House District 19B in St. Paul and has won the endorsement of the Star News news staff.

He argues that as he comes up on the conclusion of his second two-year term, he is finally hitting his stride and can begin working on solutions to some key matters.



Tom Emmer

Christine Brazelton

We are excited about the idea of Emmer moving beyond some of the issues he has tackled in his first two terms and taking a larger role in the health-care debate and issues of equitable funding.

We like that he has developed a free-market solution to health care that he offers as an improvement to Minnesota Care. He realizes chances of getting some solutions through will not happen in one term but will, perhaps, take several.

What Emmer has to prove to us is that he can trade out some of his fire and brimstone speeches and begin to do a better job of reaching across the aisle. If he can't he might struggle to push for any solutions — no matter what the issue.

Our news staff likes that Emmer is tired of the shell game that is Local Government Aid (LGA) funding and likes that he has a plan to shred current legislation in favor of divvying up the pot of money to let local governments spend as they see fit.

We understand Emmer's frustration with seeing school districts lining up lobbyists and share his desire for more transparency in reporting of education costs, teacher salaries and the impact of rising health care costs. But we hope Emmer realizes some of the decisions at the Legislature and its inability to address them has left some school districts — even well-run ones — in difficult situations.

The Star News news staff would like to see Emmer apply the same kind of thinking he has on LGA to education funding, and work on the disparities of what districts like Elk River, Albertville and Delano get compared to Minneapolis.

Emmer's opponent, Christine Brazelton of Delano, suggests Emmer is too divisive to have success on such important matters. We see it as Emmer's job to prove her wrong, and we're putting our support behind him in the belief that he can.

Fobbe has an edge

We in the news room at the Star News were stunned to hear that Sen. Betsy Wergin, R-Princeton, would be stepping away from

her state Senate post, but we are happy to report that there are two strong candidates ready to replace her.

Lisa Fobbe, chairwoman of the Princeton School Board who resides in the Zimmerman area, and Alison Krueger, a business owner with her husband, each would make a strong voice for this area. Both prospective lawmakers have impressed us with their homework, the tenacity and passion they would bring to the Capitol and their stances.



Alison Krueger



Lisa Fobbe

Fobbe, with eight years of experience on the School Board and her position on the Minnesota School Boards Association, could offer some strong leadership on education funding reform. The wife of a Dr. Americo Fraboni of Fairview appears to offer a moderate voice on fiscal issues, but would stand for improved education funding including for Early Childhood Family Education. She chaired an ECFE Advisory Council in Princeton.

But Krueger would be no slouch, either, on matters of education, having been an advocate for school choice for more than a decade. The Big Lake woman is poised to ask tough questions as she digs into the results of local school districts.

It's commendable the efforts that Fobbe and Krueger have made to reach out to constituents and across party lines to help formulate their views. Neither will let people tell them how or what to think. We believe that a critical trait for first-time candidates.

Fobbe is wise, we think, to have a goal of reducing local government's reliance on property taxes and to seek out disparities in income taxes. She's also realistic enough to say she can't necessarily support any spending increases given the state's projected deficit. But she also sees the value of the proposed Minnesota Miracle and sees it as a more equitable approach that would benefit outstate Minnesota.

Krueger believes school districts are deserving of the large pot of money made available for them, but says performance matters most. Her job will be to find out why things are not working in some districts.

We at the Star News appreciate the desires to improve education through better funding and greater accountability.

Both Fobbe and Krueger also have special areas of interest they would like to advance legislation.

Krueger would like to see Jessica's Law, which could address the punishment for human sex trafficking that travels down I-35 from Duluth to Louisiana. Fobbe would like to see more done in the area of mental health issues, which still stigmatize sufferers.

Each candidate is strong and different, but we believe Fobbe's experience as a school board chairwoman gives her the edge.

Both Hackbarth and Lawrence have potential

Rep. Tom Hackbarth, R-Cedar, is a good legislator, but we think he could be even better if he split his time a little more between the matters he's most passionate about and some of the other matters that he lets others do the heavy lifting on.

We could throw him our support for the endorsement in House District 48A if he would step outside his normal sphere of influence to better represent his district on issues of education and transportation. His opponent, Sharon Lawrence, we could also get behind, as she has been a legislator before and even moved through a difficult piece of legislation giving more power to

PIONEER PRESS NOV 16 '08
Minnesota



Minnesota House Republicans picked Rep. Marty Seifert. ✓

Seifert re-elected minority leader

Minnesota House Republicans re-elected Marty Seifert as minority leader Saturday.

Seifert, of Marshall, will get two more years at the helm. He was challenged by his former deputy, Rep. Tom Emmer, of Delano. ✓

Republicans head into the next legislative session with 47 seats, although two recounts are pending. Republicans are coming off a third consecutive election with losses.

Democrats who control the House say they will stick with Speaker Margaret Anderson ✓, Kelliher, of Minneapolis, and Majority Leader Tony Ser-tich, of Chisholm. The DFL majority now sits at 87 of the 134 House seats.

— Associated Press

85-097
L60-58
L60-28I
L60-097

19B

Legislative reforms move on

House will consider large slate of possible changes to the law-making process

ST PAUL LEGAL LEDGER

BY CHARLEY SHAW

Staff Writer

AUG 18, 2008

A state House panel on Friday voted 7-5 to send a slate of legislative reforms to the larger House for consideration in 2009.

The Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee approved a 20-page draft with more than 80 suggested changes to the legislative process.

In a series of hearings this summer, the committee debated aspects of the process ranging from conference committees to limitations on floor debate.

✓ Rep. Gene Pelowski, DFL-Winona, the committee's chairman, said the proposed changes address problems in recent legislative sessions when conference committees have broken down and deals have been cut behind closed doors at the end of session.

"The most far-reaching changes would be to ensure that the public always understands what we're doing. In last two sessions we have had difficulty," Pelowski said.

The proposed changes address problems like floor sessions that drag on into the early morning hours and policy changes that happen in inappropriate committees. Some aspects of the legislative process create a hurried atmosphere in which changes to legislation are made on the fly, according to Pelowski.

"There have been problems with the process, serious problems," he said.

The 2009 Legislature will decide if it wants to adopt some, all or none of the proposals.

But some members of the committee criticized the proposals.

✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, said he's opposed to a proposal that asks the House to establish a process for setting time limits for debate on floor amendments to a bill.

"There are voices that need to be heard. ... There has to be some balance," Emmer said.

The committee members didn't vote on the individual proposals.

Among the recommendations that were sent to the House:

- Lawmakers shouldn't be able to waive the exception that allows a floor session to continue past midnight.
- The House should more strictly enforce its rule that no member speaks more than twice on the floor.
- Members should serve on fewer committees.

Some proposals could be implemented by rule changes; other changes would require legislation. In one proposal, Minnesota citizens would need to amend the Minnesota Constitution to repeal the 120-day limit on legislative days. In that case, the Constitution would maintain that the regular session lasts between January and May.

Particular items in the draft proposals prompted discussion about the larger meaning of the legislative branch of government. For example, three proposals would set up new ways for House and Senate committees to work in tandem during legislative sessions. Emmer reacted to those proposals by making a motion to recommend the Legislature become a unicameral, or one chamber, system. Emmer's motion was voted down 11-1.

✓ Rep. Neil Peterson, R-Bloomington, noted that some proposals conflict with each other. For example, one proposal wouldn't allow floor amendments that were previously offered or voted down in committee. Another proposal would allow amendments that were voted down in committee.

Peterson suggested the committee narrow the proposals and take them "one bale at a time, rather than the whole wagonload."

Pelowski, however, said the proposals are interrelated.

"If we're making one change it's likely it would necessitate changes somewhere else," Pelowski said.

Time limited

Government operations committee
kicks around ideas to improve
policymaking



BY CHARLEY SHAW
Staff Writer

Members of a state House panel are debating legislative reforms that include limiting the amount of time legislators can debate bills on the floor.

"It's not responsible serving the people if we debate a bill for 12 hours," said Rep. Alice Hausman, DFL-St. Paul, during a Thursday hearing.

Hausman is a member of the Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee that's mulling several significant changes to the rules of the House. The issue of time limits has come up after recent legislative sessions in which lawmakers have debated large omnibus bills into the wee hours of the morning, a practice some say leads to errors or bad policymaking.

Operations | pg 16



1 STPAUL LEGAL LEDGER JULY 14, 2008

19B

Operations Pelowski: "When you're pushing those kinds of hours, what are you accomplishing?"

Continued from page 1

Limiting debate on the floor, however, is a controversial topic.

Rep. Sarah Anderson, R-Plymouth, said limiting debate on major omnibus bills would hinder members' ability to represent their constituents.

"When it comes down to shutting down the voice of Minnesotans, that is wrong," Anderson said.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, said time limits on floor debate would result in "muzzling the minority [party]."

The committee has been meeting about every two weeks this summer to craft a set of rules for consideration by state lawmakers in the 2009 legislative session.

Chairman Gene Pelowski, DFL-Winona, said the committee will hold at least two more hearings before it finalizes its recommendations to the Legislature. The potential proposals run the gamut from formal rule changes to establishing new norms of common courtesy.

Committee members Thursday discussed floor procedures like time limits and the legislative process at the end of session. In addition to time limits, legislators talked about requiring floor amendments to be filed at least 24 hours before the day's session. Lawmakers on the committee also floated the idea of passing finance bills earlier in the legislative session.

But time limits drew the most passion from legislators.

Rep. Mindy Greiling, DFL-Roseville, said she isn't convinced time limits will be effective. "To try to have rules that some members would get around anyway, I'm leery of," she said.

Rep. Pat Garofalo, R-Farmington, said there's a big difference between a time limit that is imposed by the majority and a time limit rule that is agreed upon by members of both parties.

Rep. Will Morgan, DFL-Burnsville, said he supports bipartisan time limits on debate.

"I think we can make our floor work to be more efficient ... if we have mutually agreed to time limits," Morgan said.

Hausman said the lack of a time limit results in some members monopolizing floor debate.

"Lack of a time limit in a debate gives more power in the legislative process to

the person who dominates," Hausman said.

Pelowski said time limits, which some states have, would prevent the errors and poor policy-making that occur when the Legislature meets into the wee hours of the morning.

"When you're pushing those kinds of hours, what are you accomplishing?" Pelowski asked.

Rep. Laura Brod, R-New Prague, said that legislators should complete finance bills early in the session.

"It seems to me that when you build a house you have to know where the money is first," Brod said.

Rep. Steve Simon, DFL-St. Louis Park, said he supports a rule that would require more advance notice of floor amendments before they are introduced and debated on the floor.

"A lot of people from other states can't believe we don't have a notice rule on amendments," Simon said.

“

"I think we can make our floor work to be more efficient ... if we have mutually agreed to time limits."

Rep. Will Morgan, DFL-Burnsville

“

LC0.6A

GOP, DFL lawmaker bond over the budget – but only briefly

Thanks to the gloomy budget forecast, Gov. Tim Pawlenty's bonding-bill figure is at least \$140 million less than the proposals in the House and the Senate. This week, the two chambers have been negotiating a more modest proposal that hopes to escape the governor's veto stamp. The whittling means lawmakers' pet projects back home may go wanting.

By G.R. ANDERSON JR.

Love was all around at the Capitol March 17. St. Patrick's Day cheer brought out the bipartisan collegiality -- one House member even announced during the floor session that there was cake to share in honor of the holiday.

Then Marty Seifert had to spoil the fun. Seifert, a Republican from Marshall, played up his role as House minority leader and took to the mike right after adjournment for an announcement. There he called out Rep. Alice Hausman, a DFLer from St. Paul who happens to be carrying the gavel on the bonding bill. Where, Seifert wondered, was the bill more than a week after it passed the House? What happened, he asked in a tone that was not playing nice, to the deadline of March 15? Why, Seifert wanted to know, hadn't a conference committee set up to hash out House and Senate differences on the bill not even met yet?

Hausman rose and emphasized the importance of the bill and the "urgency" of getting

it done. "Without an agreement on the size of the bill, however, it's hard to even write the first line," Hausman said. "You don't know what the target is. And so, we are waiting for some agreement about the total of the bill."

Seifert, who emphasized that he was not blaming Hausman, went on to slam the Senate DFLers for holding up the bill. "My announcement is to the people of Minnesota," Seifert concluded. "The left hand does not know what the far left hand is doing."

Most everyone saw Seifert as engaging in a bit of political theater, but he had a point: What was going on with the bonding bill?

Ten days earlier, the House passed an "omnibus capital investment bill" consisting of \$960 million in general obligation bonds. At the same time the Senate approved a proposal for \$965 million for bricks-and-mortar infrastructure repair and upgrades around the state. On Jan. 14, Gov. Tim Pawlenty's office issued a proposal for \$965 million in general obligation bonding. Everyone, it appeared, was on the same page.

But then the state's budget forecast came out in February, predicting a gloomy \$1 billion shortfall. Pawlenty re-jiggered his dollar amount, saying the total for any bonding projects should be \$825 million, a figure that is within 3 percent of the state's projected revenues -- maintaining a long-standing policy that debt service and costs never go higher than that chunk of the state's budget.

Now the House and Senate are having trouble shrinking their wish lists. Some lawmakers are eyeing cuts in each bill, but are also wary of speaking out for fear of losing

pet projects that bring home the bacon in their own districts. But the belt-tightening has to happen. If not, Pawlenty will likely veto any bill that doesn't come within spitting distance of his \$825 million.

"The gorillas can wait," chuckled Rep. Larry Howes, a Republican from Walker, referring to some \$11 million in the House bill for "renovation of the polar bear and gorilla exhibits" at the Como Zoo. "They seem to be comfortable and don't seem to be escaping. We've got to get down to \$825 [million]. That's when we earn our salary."

On track for a veto?

Lawmakers have been waiting all week to hear that a compromise on the bill from both chambers will be back on the floor, but it looks like they might have to wait at least until Friday. The sticky wicket, according to some, is Sen. Keith Langseth, a DFLer from Glyndon who is carrying the bill in the Senate. (Langseth did not return calls for this story.)

Many believe that Hausman and House DFL leadership are willing to come down to Pawlenty's figure, something Langseth is not willing to do.

"I totally believe Representative Hausman is willing to come down to \$825 million," Howes said Tuesday. "Senator Langseth wants to come in at \$965 million. They can put one together at \$925 million, and it should be pretty much completed."

continues on page 4

(Over)

INSIDE

The Daily Glean by David Brauer

In today's compendium of local news, Minnesota farm income soared 70 percent last year, but the state's wealth ranking dropped out of the Top 10. Also: A Minnesota contractor is found dead in Iraq, the smoking ban works -- waitrons' carcinogenic intake cut 80 percent, NTSB decides design and excess weight caused collapse of 35W bridge and Norm Coleman 3.0, now out of beta (!).

page 5

MINNPOST.WORLD

Will a verbal misstep stick to Hillary Clinton and damage her campaign?
page 2

ROB NELSON

Economy got you down? Depression-era comedies still ring true in Parkway's 'Sweet Escapism' series.
page 3

COMMUNITY VOICES

Investing in the Power of YOU is good for students and the state.
page 6

GOP, DFL lawmaker bond over the budget – but only briefly

continued from page 1

Even if the House and Senate can agree to that dollar amount, it's not likely to get them anywhere. "Anything above \$825 million, I'm told, will be vetoed," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano. "It will be vetoed."

Pawlenty didn't just arrive at his \$825 willy-nilly. That's 3 percent of the state's projected revenue, and that cap has been agreed upon by all party leadership for decades at the Capitol. It's also the recommendation from state economist Tom Stinson. The thought is that going above the 3 percent figure would be frowned upon by bond houses, threatening the state's bond rating.

"For 30 years we haven't broken the 3 percent rule, we didn't even make it a law," said Patrick Garofalo, a Republican from Farmington. "The governor's not going to break the 3 percent rule. It's not negotiable. People who don't want to come in at \$825 million don't want a bonding bill."

But many lawmakers in both chambers are comfortable with the bills as they stand -- because no one wants to see personal projects cut. Many are willing to vote for a \$925 million bill, all the while awaiting the governor's veto stamp. And many note that because of the ugliness

that came with the override of Pawlenty's veto on the \$6.6 billion transportation/transit bill earlier this session, legislators are not anxious to betray the governor again.

"How many times do you want to push your luck with an override?" Howes asked. "People at home start wondering what you're going, and you can't explain it in a 10- to 15-second sound bite."

But everyone agrees that the session can't end without a bonding bill. So a veto would likely send lawmakers back to the drawing board. "Why are we looking at \$925 million? Because it's an election year?" Garofalo asked Wednesday. "I'd rather we just do it right the first time."

DFL: It's a 'jobs bill'

Hausman sees the 3 percent rule as somewhat arbitrary. "It's a little like signing a no-new taxes pledge," she said late last week.

But everyone is aware that the state's economic picture isn't pretty. To that end, the DFLers are spinning the bonding bill as a jobs bill.

"With the Minnesota economy desperate for recovery and jobs at a premium," reads the Senate summary of Senate File 3295, "the Senate has taken the lead in efforts to spur much-

needed investment in critical infrastructure and job creation."

Hausman certainly sees it that way. "In a year of economic downturn, we have to have the courage to create jobs," Hausman said, adding that there are 4,000 jobs to be had in the bill. "Isn't this the year for something like the Minnesota Marshall Plan?"

A good question, but an idea that's a bit far-fetched. Both bills call for roughly \$135 million for the University of Minnesota, while the Senate version calls for \$200 million for MnSCU and the House calls for \$280 million. They both have roughly the same figure -- \$35 million -- for the Department of Education, and generously fund projects for the Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The House, Senate and governor all have different visions for funding roads and bridges -- a political hot potato -- but some believe there's plenty of that in the transportation bill.

So, it really is going to come down to line-item cuts if all three parties are going to agree. Hausman is aware of the governor's warning about "porking up the bonding bill," but she also said there is "so little understanding about the bonding bill. People don't make a connection between the bonding bill and all

the rest of the state's infrastructure."

That may be true, but she has to deal with Langseth and her cohorts in the Senate as well as the governor before she can convince the public.

Which could be difficult, according to Sen. David Senjem, R-Rochester and Senate minority leader. Senjem said the Senate version contains Langseth's "great tradition" of funding higher education, and is also big on flood control this year, two things he's not likely to give up.

"These aren't easy decisions," Senjem said. "Some of these things we have to fund. The House bill is a little partisan, and ours might be geographically, but we need to do some things and cut some other things."

Senjem realizes that Senate Republicans, outnumbered by DFLers two to one, can't do much, but he thinks DFL leadership and the governor should just sit down and hammer out a bill.

"This bonding bill is going to have a rocky road," Senjem said. "It's whoever can play the big game of chicken well."

G.R. Anderson Jr. covers politics, the state Capitol and issues related to public safety.

But many lawmakers in both chambers are comfortable with the bills as they stand -- because no one wants to see personal projects cut. Many are willing to vote for a \$925 million bill, all the while awaiting the governor's veto stamp. And many note that because of the ugliness that came with the override of Pawlenty's veto on the \$6.6 billion transportation/transit bill earlier this session, legislators are not anxious to betray the governor again.

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.

POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Political blogs full of Pawlenty VP talk

By Don Davis

ddavis@wctrib.com

ST. PAUL — The Tim Pawlenty vice presidential buzz keeps growing louder.

Recent blogs were full of speculation about the Minnesota governor becoming Sen. John McCain's running mate.

Jonathan Martin of the Politico Web site reported that Pawlenty packed a Georgetown townhouse in Washington, D.C., Wednesday night to raise money for his campaign committee.

Pawlenty's campaign said he raised more than \$40,000.

Event host Ken Mehlman mentioned the fact that Pawlenty is on Sen. John McCain's vice presidential short list, but Pawlenty himself did not discuss the issue.

Florida radio station WJNO's political blog talks about Pawlenty: "Many McCain camp insiders have hinted that the vice presidential candidate would be a relatively unknown governor and Pawlenty would certainly fit that mold. He wouldn't outshine McCain

and, at 47-years-old, he's much younger."

And from Fox News: Political analyst Ron Faucheux puts the odds at Pawlenty being the pick at 5 to 1.



Pawlenty



McCain

Democrats respond

Minnesota legislative Democrats responded to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's initial budget-balancing offer by ignoring it and offering their own opening proposal.

The Democratic Farmer-Labor proposal would reduce Minnesota spending and raise revenues by \$164 million, which legislative leaders say includes items the House, Senate and governor already have agreed to do. Democrats also suggest cutting another \$40 million, but did not specify what would face the ax.

The proposal also calls for spending \$107 million more for state construction projects, most of which would be used to build a passenger rail line between the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul, as well as building a new veterans' home in Minneapolis.

Republican Pawlenty earlier suggested cutting \$125 million from state health and human services programs as a step toward eliminating Minnesota's \$935 million budget deficit.

House Republicans said the DFL offer lacked

specifics.

"This almost looks like third-grade math," said **Tom Emmer**, R-Delano, the deputy House minority leader.

Mall not on her aid list

Rep. Sandy Wollschlager says she has no choice but to buy half of her wardrobe at the Mall of America.

"There aren't too many stores that can fit me," the Cannon Falls Democrat told labor leaders lobbying for a state subsidy to help the mall build an addition, saying she is taller than 6 feet, weighs more than 200 pounds and needs size 11 shoes.

Despite her dependence on the megamall, Wollschlager said, she cannot support the subsidies mall owners seek. She blamed the mall, in part, for slumping retail sales in her area.

And her constituents don't want the state to provide aid: "People are telling me it doesn't help them to help a shopping mall that already is making a lot of money."

Who's on first?

Marty Seifert and **Tony Sertich** don't look alike. And their political opinions are far apart.

However, even their best legislative friends sometimes flip-flop their names.

On one recent day, for example, House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher of Minneapolis called Seifert "Sertich" three times. And a Kelliher fill-in, Rep. Al Juhnke of Willmar, did the same.

So Sertich (or was it Seifert?) had name-tags

made with their lastnames in huge print.

The two have taken the mix-ups in good humor. They switched desks for a time the other day to see if that would clear up the confusion. It didn't.

To make matters worse, Sertich is the House majority leader and Seifert the minority leader. So both frequently talk on the House floor.



Wollschlager



COMMENTARY

Minnesota shouldn't wait

ST PAUL LEGAL LEDGER

MAY 8, 2008

U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of voter ID



Tom Emmer

The United States Supreme Court delivered a milestone ruling last week in preserving and maintaining the integrity and reliability of our elections.

The decision to confirm the validity of Indiana's photo ID law in elections is likely to spur action

in other states that have sought to pass stricter regulations.

Minnesota is one of those states.

In a world in which we have much turmoil and such contested elections, it is imperative to maintain the integrity of and public confidence in the electoral process. When elections are decided by a few hundred votes, we need to know the votes were cast by legally registered voters. Voters want to know their vote counts, and that their votes will not be canceled out by a fraudulent vote. We simply must have something in law that allows us to confirm that we are who we say we are when we cast our votes.

A photo identification requirement does exactly that. It prevents fraud, instills voter confidence in elections and ensures that your vote will not be discounted by an illegal ballot.

The American public agrees with this concept. National polling shows that almost 80 percent of American citizens agree that photo identification should be required to verify identity prior to voting.



Minnesota need not wait to suffer harm. We have the right to know that every election, no matter the margin of victory, is determined fairly with respect to the idea of one person, one vote.

The high support for this issue among people is only paralleled by very vocal opposition.

The concern most often expressed regarding this common sense legislation is that there is not a wide-spread fraud problem with our election process, and that a measure such as photo identification will prevent poor people and senior citizens from voting.

Neither is true.

Despite the apocalyptic assertions of wholesale voter disenfranchisement, there is not a single piece of evidence of a registered voter being prevented from voting. In reviewing voting in Indiana before and after photo identification laws were passed, the Institute of Public Policy at the University of Missouri found in a report published in December "no consistent evidence that counties that have higher percentages of minority, poor, elderly or less-educated populations suffer from any reduction in voter turnout relative to other counties."

Voter identification laws are designed to prevent fraud in our elections.

Congress has enacted numerous requirements including the Help America Vote Act of 2002 designed not just to increase the number of citizens who register to vote while simultaneously protecting the integrity of the election process. Photo identification is a logical extension of that goal.

We are not talking about a new or untested concept. Twenty-five states require identification at the polls for all voters. At least nine other states including New York, California and Missouri have considered photo ID measures.

Minnesota need not wait to suffer harm. We have the right to know that every election, no matter the margin of victory, is determined fairly with respect to the idea of one person, one vote. Photo identification preserves the integrity of the election process and the validity of the outcome.

State Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, an attorney, is deputy minority leader in the House and is in his second term.

HometownSource.com

- Publications
- Printing
- Distribution
- ECM Contacts
- Classifieds
- Subscriptions

19B

7✓

House reviews transportation bill

Friday, 25 April 2008

by **T.W. Budig**
ECM Capitol reporter

A momma's-driving-you-to-the-prom or graduated driver's license provision sparked lengthy debate when the House took up its transportation policy bill on Thursday (April 24).

The license provision restricts provisional license holders from having more than one passenger under age 20 in the car who is not a family member while driving.

The restriction lasts for the first six months.

For the second six months no more than three passengers under 20 who are not family members can drive with the novice driver under the provision.

Additionally, late night vehicle operating restrictions are put in place for the first six months.

While one Greater Minnesota lawmaker criticized graduated driver's license as ending teen double-dating — the first six months' midnight to 5 a.m. driving restriction as forcing mom behind the wheel on prom night — others saw value in the proposal.

Rep. Lynn Wardlow, R-Eagan, a former driving instructor, recalled that as a teen he had driven 110 mph with the car besides him driving faster.

Teenagers can do foolish things, he argued.

"(It) just seems some of the stuff they do seems stupid," he said of teen behavior.

Wardlow, a former driving instructor, supported the provision.

Others did not.

Rep. Mark Buesgens, R-Jordan, spoke of the long arm of state government taking the rightful role of parents.

"We are instituting a statewide curfew," argued Rep. Sarah Anderson, R-Plymouth.

"That's what we're doing here," she said.

Other lawmakers argued the provision was confusing.

"The kids are going to need a New York attorney or (Representative) Tom Emmer to figure this out," quipped Rep. David Dill, DFL-Crane Lake.

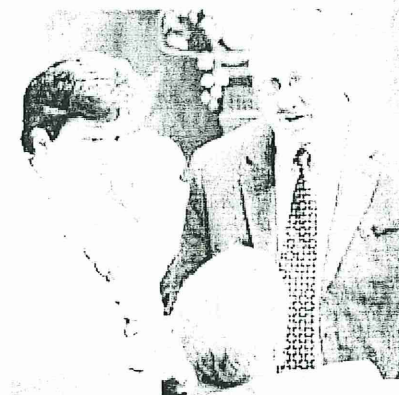
Emmer, of Delano, is an attorney and Republican House Deputy Minority Leader.

During floor debate the graduated driver's license provision was divided into two sections and voted on separately.

But in both cases attempts to remove the language failed.

Another section of the bill sparking debate was the so-called "get your stuff back" provision that would allow the homeless, the poor, or those receiving government relief to gather personal belongings from impounded vehicles.

Rep. Tom Hackbarth, R-Cedar, attempted to strike the provision, arguing towing companies will stuck with junker cars if owners are



allowed to collect personal belongings from them.

Towing company will be forced into "mini welfare programs," Hackbarth argued on the House floor.

"We should just take this out of the bill," he argued.

Anyway, many towing companies already allow people to gather needed items from impounded cars, provision opponents argued.

But supporters countered by arguing that junker cars have value to recyclers.

Further, low income people are not exempt from paying impound fees, said House Transportation and Transit Policy Committee Chairman Frank Hornstein, DFL-Minneapolis.

The can simply get their stuff, he explained.

Hackbarth's amendment failed by a wide margin.

Other features of the bill include a ban on text messaging while driving and also provisions dealing with school bus driver training.

The bill passed the House on a 82 to 44 vote.

[< Prev](#)

[Next >](#)

[\[Back \]](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Capitol Roundup](#)
- [Columns/Opinion](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Ask a Trooper](#)
- [Hometown Heroes](#)

ECM Publications

- [ABC Newspapers](#)
- [Caledonia Argus](#)
- [Dairyland Peach](#)
- [Dakota County Tribune](#)
- [ECM Post Review](#)
- [ECM Specialty Publications](#)
- [Forest Lake Times](#)
- [Isanti County News](#)
- [Mille Laes County Times](#)
- [Morrison County Record](#)
- [Princeton Union-Eagle](#)
- [Star News](#)
- [ThisweekLive](#)

Columns/Opinion

Howard Lestrud
Don Heinzman
Joe Nathan
T.W. Budig
ECM Editorial Board
Dave Wood
Inside the First Amendment

search...



At the Capitol

C118-NWA

House bars vote on Delta proposal

Headquarters effort called 'fool's gold'

PIONEER PRESS APR 17 '08
Associated Press

The Minnesota House blocked a vote on a plan to entice Delta Air Lines to move its headquarters to Minnesota as it merges with Northwest Airlines.

Democrats ruled Wednesday that the tax break proposal was out of order when Republican Rep. Kurt Zellers, of Maple Grove, tried to amend it onto a bill dealing with the Metropolitan Council.

The DFL-controlled House upheld the ruling on an 85-46

vote.

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm, said the proposal is "fool's gold" for Northwest employees who may lose their jobs. Instead, he urged lawmakers to work with Gov. Tim Pawlenty and present a unified response to the merger, which could leave Minnesota without a major airline headquarters.

"We will continue to work with the governor to save as many jobs as possible for Northwest Airlines — not as Democrats or Republicans but

as Minnesotans," Sertich said.

Northwest chief executive Doug Steenland said Tuesday that the airlines would not reconsider their headquarters location. The combined airline will have its headquarters in Atlanta, where Delta is based. Northwest has its headquarters in Eagan.

The proposal from Zellers would offer sales-, property- and wage-tax breaks if Delta brought its headquarters to the state. Zellers and other Republicans acknowledged that they made the proposal without contacting Delta or speaking with legislative Democrats.

INSIDE

> In Business: Wall Street continues to punish Delta and Northwest. Page 1C

"Should we just stand on the Capitol steps and wave bye-bye?" said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano. "We're trying to keep those jobs here. This is an emergency. It's a crisis."

Zellers' proposal will get a hearing next week in the House Taxes Committee. Two other legislative committees plan to hold hearings on the Delta-Northwest merger.

19B

HometownSource.com

- [Publications](#)
- [Printing](#)
- [Distribution](#)
- [ECM Contacts](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)

House Republicans propose series of tax breaks to lure Delta corporate office to Twin Cities

Tuesday, 15 April 2008

by **T.W. Budig**
ECM Capitol reporter

House Republicans today (April 15) proposed a series of corporate tax breaks for Delta Airlines to lure the company's corporate office from to Atlanta to Minneapolis/St. Paul.

✓ "It's not just a gesture," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, of the proposal. "It's to bring Delta here," he insisted.

House Republicans want to eliminate the corporate income tax, provide sales and use tax exemptions, along with a workforce recruitment credit and wage and salary credits for new employees.

These corporate breaks currently would be offered only to Delta, but House Republicans argue business incentives are key to economic growth throughout the state.

✓ He understands, said Rep. Morrie Lanning, R-Moorhead, that some people want to be philosophical purists and not provide any incentives to business. "That would be well and good if Minnesota were island," he said. Neighboring states are already beating Minnesota to the punch, Lanning argued.

Could be simple business decision

Moving its corporate office to Minnesota could become a simple business decision if the state provides the right incentives, Emmer argued..

Emmer theorized it would be a net gain and financial gain to the state.

Delta officials have indicated its corporate office will be located in Atlanta.

U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman James Oberstar, DFL-Chisholm, at a Washington press conference this afternoon called the proposed merger of Delta and Northwest the "worst development" in the airline industry since the advent of deregulation.

Oberstar's reactions to Northwest/Delta merger (audio clip)



"It will be a globe-stratling, mega-carrier," of a merged Delta and Northwest.

It will start a merger cascade he opined.

His House committee, Oberstar said, will hold in-depth hearings on the proposed merger in the future.

The U.S Department of Justice thoroughly vetted the proposed merger of the two airlines, he opined.

"I think they will want to be clean on this," said Oberstar

over

An era gone away

- ✓ Sen. Jim Carlson, DFL-Eagan, lamented the apparent passing of Northwest Airlines into history. "That's an era gone away," he said.

While noting that the corporate headquarters situation favors Atlanta, Carlson explained that Northwest does have a technology building at Minneapolis/St. Paul that could offer Delta a facility to expand.

Carlson suggested while legislative hearings on the proposed merger could take place, Delta and Northwest officials would probably be limited by law to what they could say about the deal.

In a letter to Delta CEO Richard Anderson and to Northwest Airlines President and CEO Doug Steenland, Gov. Tim Pawlenty noted the Northwest Airlines made a legally binding commitment to keep the hub and headquarters of the airline, or its successor, in Minnesota.

"Those agreements are explicit and were obtained by the state in exchange for approximately \$440 million in loans and lease concessions," said Pawlenty.

Pawlenty indicated he planned to reserve judgement on the merger until full details become available.

Oberstar does not see the financial obligations Northwest has to the State of Minnesota as a serious obstacle for the airlines. Delta could pay off an outstanding loan in a "heartbeat," Oberstar opined.

Boon to consumers

Delta/Northwest officials portray the merger of the two airlines as a boon to consumers.

According to a company Web site, the Delta/Northwest 2008 schedule includes two new international routes from Minneapolis/St. Paul to London-Heathrow and Paris.

The merger will bring new domestic service from Minneapolis/St. Paul to Dubuque, Fort Wayne, Jamestown, and Iron Mountain.

Among benefits the company depicts coming to non-pilot employees is a four percent equity stake in the new company upon merger closing.

There will be no involuntary furlough of U.S.-based frontline employees or hub closures, claims the airlines.

Merger to take time

Airline officials note the proposed merger will take time.

They will file with the Justice Department this month and over upcoming weeks seek shareholders approval, complete the regulatory process, and potentially close the merger by late fall or early winter.

Airline officials claim one benefit of the merger will be cost savings on fuel.

According to the Web site, more than 40 cents of every dollar of passenger revenue goes toward fuel expenses.

Five years ago it was about 17 cents, claim the airlines.

The combined airlines will generate more than \$12.8 billion in annual economic benefits to Minnesota and employ about 12,625 Minnesotans.

L60-6A P214 Ambitious public works bill now up to Pawlenty

The Legislature invites
a veto with its passage
of the \$925 million plan

PIONEER PRESS APR 3 '08

By Bill Salisbury

bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com

After the Legislature on Wednesday passed a hefty bill to finance state construction projects, Gov. Tim Pawlenty has a choice.

He can either "chop or liquefy," House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, said during the floor debate.

The bill authorizes the state to borrow \$925 million to finance public works projects, and Pawlenty has said it's too much.

So he can either use his line-item veto power to "chop" individual projects from the bill, or he can "liquefy" it by vetoing the entire bill. The latter would force lawmakers to craft another version of what is arguably the most important bill of the session.

The Democratic-controlled Legislature passed the bonding bill despite the Republican governor's veto threat. It flew through the House on a 90-42 vote and cleared the Senate, 57-10.

Inside

Proposed projects range from college classrooms to hockey rinks and light rail.

Page 6A

BONDING BILL, 6A >

CONTINUED FROM 1A

> Bonding bill

That would be enough votes to override a veto, but Republican legislative leaders said most GOP lawmakers who voted for the bill would reverse themselves and vote to sustain a Pawlenty veto.

The bill would pay for college classrooms and research labs, flood-control projects and water and sewer systems, rail and bus transit lines, parks and trails, hockey arenas and zoo exhibits.

Pawlenty contends the measure spends more than the \$825 million allowed under a guideline that limits debt service payments to 3 percent of the state's general fund.

On Tuesday, he called the bill fiscally irresponsible. But he said he would carefully review it before taking action.

The bill's chief House sponsor, Rep. Alice Hausman, DFL-St. Paul, said lawmakers found a way to spend more and "not break the 3 percent guideline" by spreading out bond sales over a longer period of time.

More important, Hausman said, "this bill will put people to work immediately." Although she didn't put a number on it, she said it would create jobs for thousands of construction workers at a slow time for builders.

She noted that legislative negotiators had pared nearly \$4 billion in requests to less than \$1 billion for the most essential and beneficial projects.

But Seifert, citing the hockey rinks, theaters and zoo exhibits in the bill, said it also was loaded up with a "massive amount of pork."

During a four-hour House debate, Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, warned that the bill would "leave an enormous and unreasonable debt on future generations and future legislatures."

There were fewer disputes during a half-hour Senate debate. Sen. Geoff Michel, R-Edina, said lawmakers were playing a "game of chicken with the governor" by going over the spending limits.

"We have to show some restraint. In a recession, we have to say no," he said.

But the bill's chief Senate sponsor, DFLer Keith Langseth of Glyndon, said the

WHAT'S IN THE BILL

Gov. Tim Pawlenty has said he might veto the nearly \$1 billion public works projects bill passed Wednesday by the House and Senate, saying it's too expensive.

What's at risk? Here are some of the major projects funded in the bill:

University of Minnesota	\$131.2 million
U science classroom and student services building, Minneapolis	\$48.3 million
Bell Museum of Natural History, St. Paul	\$24 million
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system	\$280.9 million
Department of Natural Resources	\$104.8 million
Faribault state prison expansion	\$16 million
Duluth convention center and hockey arena	\$38 million
Bemidji event center and hockey arena	\$20 million
Crookston ice arena	\$10 million
St. Cloud State National Hockey Center	\$6.5 million
Itasca County steel plant infrastructure	\$28 million

Some east metro projects

Century College classroom renovation	\$7.9 million
Inver Hills Community College classroom addition	\$13.2 million
Metropolitan State University classroom center	\$5 million
St. Paul College transportation and technology labs	\$13.5 million
Closed landfill cleanup, including Washington County	\$25 million
State Capitol restoration	\$13.4 million
Chicago-St. Paul high-speed rail	\$4 million
Cedar Avenue bus rapid transit	\$4 million
Central Corridor light-rail transit	\$70 million
St. Paul Union Depot	\$2 million
Como Zoo	\$11 million
St. Paul National Great River Park	\$5.8 million
St. Paul Asian-Pacific Cultural Center	\$5 million
Anoka County forensic crime lab	\$3 million

administration's debt service numbers have consistently been wrong, and legislators would not top the 3 percent limit even if they spent \$925 million.

The most important reason to vote for the bill, he said, is it authorizes the University of Minnesota to borrow \$233 million to build four biomedical research laboratories in the next eight years. The state would pay 75 percent of the debt service costs.

That would enable the U to "go out into the scientific community around the world and recruit the very best talent they could get" to promote medical breakthroughs and create new businesses and jobs, he said.

"I think this is far and away the most important legislation that we have had before us maybe during the time I've been in the Legislature," said Langseth, a 34-year legislative veteran.

193

On April Fools' Day, a DFL present for the taxpayers

STAR TRIBUNE APR 1 '08

By TOM EMMER

T4.24

"We are a very fiscally moderate caucus."

MARGARET ANDERSON-KELLIHER, Nov. 9, 2006

Those seven words from then soon-to-be House Speaker Margaret Anderson-Kelliher came two days after Election Day 2006. Echoing the professed sentiments of more than two dozen newly elected rural and suburban Democrats, Kelliher's statement no doubt felt reassuring to the Minnesotans who took Minnesota Democrats at their word when

they claimed, throughout the 2006 election season, to carry the mantle of fiscal responsibility and balanced priorities.

Minnesotans wanted change; Democrats wanted their votes. On Nov. 9, 2006, each seemed to have gotten what it wanted.

But here we are on April Fools' Day 2008, and clearly the joke is on

us. Starting today, hard-working Minnesotans trying to get through tough times will pay the first in a series of tax increases imposed by Minnesota Democrats who tossed aside their pledges of moderation and common-sense priorities like Election Day's smelly laundry.

First they'll pay at the gas pump; soon they'll pay at the cash register. When it comes time to buy a new car, they'll pay higher taxes again, all courtesy of those "fiscally moderate" Democrats.

Drivers aren't the only ones who will pay the price of electing the bait-

and-switch Democrats of 2006. Just ask the senior citizens or the property taxpayers who watched a \$2.2 billion surplus disappear in the blink of an eye. They were left holding the short straw after Democrats "got the job done" in 2007 without lifting a finger to help two of government's core responsibilities. Never mind that rural nursing homes are on the brink of financial ruin and that near-record numbers of schools are asking property taxpayers for more money, the Democrats finished the session on time!

As is evident today in our higher taxes and neglected needs, Minneso-

ta Democrats are not fiscally moderate and they do not share the priorities of most Minnesotans. They are adept at hiding their tax-and-spend agenda behind an unpopular president, but even that curtain is about to be pulled away. When it is, they will do their best to hide or pin the blame on someone else. It won't work now that they have commanding majorities in both houses of the Legislature. Minnesotans may have been fooled in 2006, but they won't be fooled again.

Tom Emmer, R-Delano, is a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives.

19B

STAR TRIBUNE MAR 13 '08

M68-AG L4.8

Attorney general's office turmoil prompts inquiry request

A leading House Republican is requesting a formal investigation into developments at the Minnesota Attorney General's office that include allegations of punishment against an attorney for going public with ethical concerns and of intimidation of workers who are trying to organize a union.

✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, deputy House minority leader, sent letters to legislative leaders and to the Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services on Wednesday seeking

the inquiry regarding the office of DFL Attorney General Lori Swanson.

“The actions in the attorney general's office during the past year have become an unnecessary concern for public employees in that office,” Emmer wrote to Mediation Services.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 5, the union pursuing the organizing effort, has contended that the attorney general's office has created an atmosphere of in-

timidation for attorneys seeking to unionize and stifled criticism.

Most recently, an assistant attorney general who is an advocate of the organizing effort, Amy Lawler, was placed on administrative leave after she spoke to reporters about ethical concerns she had over how some consumer protection lawsuits were handled.

Swanson's office said Lawler was placed on paid leave not because of union-related activities or for speaking to the me-

dia, but because she failed to report her concerns as required to the Minnesota Board of Professional Responsibility.

✓ Since last year, Emmer has repeatedly called for a legislative hearing on the attorney general's office, but so far DFL leadership has not scheduled one. He made the same request on the House floor Tuesday to Majority Leader Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm, who said he was unsure about when or whether such a hearing might take place.

MARK BRUNSWICK

H24.5 H24.15

STAR TRIBUNE MAR 1 '08
VETO OVERRIDE

The funding was there

The state of Minnesota is collecting record amounts of revenue. Transportation is just a political football. House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher and the DFL legislators have more taxpayer dollars at their disposal than ever before.

The only good reason to raise taxes to provide the desperately needed funding for our roads and bridges is that legislators blew their allowance already. The state has been collecting the money needed for transportation for decades. It's just been squandering it away on just about everything but transportation.

Thanks to House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, Rep. Tom Emmer and the other 42 Republicans who opposed this bill for trying to bring accountability back to our state government. I have a strong feeling that Minnesota voters are watching the great money grab of '08 and will act accordingly in November.

ANDY LIPKOWSKI, Anoka

193

Surrogacy legislation fills a void, say supporters

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

by **T.W. Budig**
ECM Capitol reporter

Opponents charge it legitimizes the sale of babies and the practice of eugenics — bill supporters argue the surrogacy legislation fills a void.

"We have nothing in state law about this," said Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, R-Andover, whose legislation was passed by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee on Wednesday (March 12) and sent to the House floor.

According to the National Infertility Association, about 50 surrogate birth agreements are struck each year in Minnesota.

Tingelstad and attorney Steve Snyder argued that the surrogacy bill would help prevent litigation stemming surrogacy disputes and serve to protect both the surrogate and parents.

Indeed, Tingelstad opined that spelling out surrogacy arrangement requirements in her legislation, the number of surrogate births could actually be reduced.

That because all parties will need to reflect on what they propose to do, she explained.

Legal mother

The bill stipulates, among other things, that the intended mother is the legal mother immediately on birth of the baby — custody rests solely with the intended parents — while also details eligibility requirements such as that the gestational carrier must be at least 21-years-old.

But opponents were sharply critical.

"This is fundamentally about baby selling," said Tom Prichard, of the Minnesota Family Council of surrogacy. Prichard opined that surrogacy diminishes the option of adoption.

Bill detractors, citing ads in newspapers for egg donors, additionally raised the spectre of eugenics.

Republicans on the committee also expressed concerns.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, argued the bill was needless— surrogates and intended parents already can use existing contract law, he said — and Emmer was unimpressed that the Minnesota State Bar Association supported the bill.

12-month window

"I can see why all the lawyers have approved it, because it looks like full employment for lawyers," he said, noting the legislation leaves a 12-month window for legal actions from date of birth.

But Democrats spoke in favor.

"The law is entirely silent on this," said Rep. Debra Hilstrom, DFL-Brooklyn Center. "We've got the Wild, Wild West out there," agreed Rep. Steve Simon, DFL-St. Louis Park.

The committee, on a roll call vote, sent the legislation to the House floor.

Local lawmakers DeLaForest, Emmer, and Holberg voted against.

Kalin, Kranz, and Hilstrom voted in favor.

According to the National Infertility Association, some 145,000 Minnesotans have fertility problems.

19B

PIONEER PRESS MAR 13 2008

Labor probe at A.G. office sought

ALB-AG 24.8
A state legislator is asking the Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services to investigate labor issues in Attorney General Lori Swanson's office.

Representative Tom Emmer wants the bureau to look into allegations that Swanson has been an obstacle to employees attempting to organize a union.

Swanson put an assistant attorney general on leave earlier this week but denied the suspension was punishment for speaking with news media about the union drive.

Messages left for Bureau of Mediation Services Commissioner James Cunningham were not immediately returned.

Emmer, a Republican, has been pushing DFL House leaders to investigate Swanson, who is a Democrat.

He is asking House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller for a formal inquiry into Swanson's office.

— Associated Press

Lawmakers plan to burst out of session starting gate

By Don Davis
State Capitol Bureau

ST. PAUL — Not much has changed in the nearly nine months since Minnesota lawmakers wrapped their 2007 legislative session.

One of the issues at the forefront of the 2008 session, which begins at noon today, is a prime example. Democrats plan to unveil a transportation funding plan that includes a higher gasoline tax and a Twin Cities-area sales tax increase.

Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty twice vetoed transportation funding bills similar to the one Democrats plan to introduce today. He said they just raised taxes too much, and most legislative Republicans agreed and sustained his vetoes.

There are some areas of agreement, such as some health care provisions that require little spending, with broad support. But most major issues remain contentious, with Pawlenty and Republican lawmakers on one side and Democrats who control both chambers of the Legislature on the other side. Dueling Monday news conferences drove home that point.

House Speaker **Margaret Anderson Kelliher** and Senate Majority Leader **Larry Pogemiller**, both Minneapolis Democrats, talked to reporters for 30 minutes. Pogemiller did not attack Pawlenty by

name, but after hinting that the governor failed to keep Minnesota on track on transportation and other issues, he said, "We can do better."

Kelliher and Pogemiller emphasized that creating new jobs would be Democrats' top priority.

"Our strength and prosperity will come from keeping jobs that we have and attracting more jobs," the speaker said. Democrats said the three first bills they plan to consider will do just that — a constitutional amendment to dedicate money to outdoors and arts programs, a transportation funding bill and a public works funding measure. Democrats' hopes are that the three jobs will create construction and other jobs throughout the state.

Pogemiller said Democrats won't even consider how to deal with an expected budget deficit until after a Feb. 28 economic update and the passage of the first three major bills.

But a leading Republican said that priority is backward. Deputy House Minority Leader **Tom Emmer**, Delano, said Republicans' top priority is fixing the deficit, which now is \$373 million and is expected to grow. Only then, he said, should lawmakers move on to other business.

Kelliher and Pogemiller said they expect their first three bills to pass by mid-

March. The state constitution requires them to adjourn by May 19.

The main job this legislative session is the public works bill, which is funded by the state selling bonds. Pawlenty and Democrats agree on spending nearly \$1 billion on those projects, but differ

about how the money would be divided.

Because of the expected deficit, there is a good chance last year's two-year budget will need to be trimmed. Republicans expect Democrats to seek tax increases to fund state programs, but Pogemiller would not talk about that Monday. Pawlenty spokesman **Brian McClug** said the governor will fight raising taxes.

While Democrats and Republicans were sniping at each other, a small organization took both sides to court Monday.

Minneapolis Attorney **Erick Kaardal** announced that a four-member organization known as Citizens for Rule of Law is suing the Legislature for "per diem" payments, checks handed out to House and Senate members for expenses. Lawmakers are paid more than \$31,000 a year in salary, and many also receive housing and mileage expenses.

"They tend to be difficult in the court, but they always win on the street," Kaardal said of such lawsuits.



19B

B28

House OKs bridge victims' funds

\$40 million would be divided among survivors, families

By Debra O'Connor
watchdog@pioneerpress.com
PIONEER PRESS FEB 29 '08

A bill that creates a \$40 million fund for victims of the Interstate 35W bridge collapse passed the Minnesota House 120-10 on Thursday. It would give money to the 164 people who survived the collapse and to relatives of the 13 who died in exchange for their promise not to sue the state.

"What happened to these people is unthinkable," said sponsor Rep. Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley. "Even

Online @ 3:35 p.m.

though we can never change what happened on Aug. 1, we have a responsibility as a state to do all we can to provide these survivors the resources they need to move forward."

Under his plan, the amount awarded to each person would be determined by a "special master" appointed by the executive council, made up of the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state and state auditor. The process is loosely based

on one used for compensating victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The bill would waive the law in effect at the time of the bridge collapse, which restricted the state's liability to \$300,000 per person and \$1 million per event. The state has not admitted liability, and the National Transportation Safety Board is investigating why the bridge collapsed.

Victims who receive money from the state and sign the

BRIDGE VICTIMS, 6B



ASSOCIATED PRESS: JIM MONE

Survivors of the Aug. 1 Interstate 35W bridge collapse, and attorney Chris Messerly, second from right, listen Thursday in the Minnesota House gallery. Several of them wore red and donned buttons featuring the I-35W highway sign.

CONTINUED FROM 1B

> Bridge victims

waiver can still sue other entities, such as companies that built or maintained the bridge, said Chris Messerly, one of a group of lawyers representing victims at no charge. He expects those lawsuits will proceed once more is discovered about the cause of the collapse.

One concern with the bill may be resolved. Insurance companies typically have the right of subrogation, which means that if a victim covered by health insurance receives money from another source, the

insurance company can demand the money. Some legislators have said they are loath to give money to victims only to have insurance companies take it.

Earlier, state-regulated insurance companies agreed not to exercise their subrogation rights.

Critics of the bill said they are worried about new spending at a time when the state's budget forecast, released Thursday, shows a \$935 million deficit.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, said he's concerned about fairness — victims of other Minnesota tragedies usually don't receive such special treatment from the state.

Many of the bridge collapse vic-

tims already have received money from other sources. The Minnesota Helps Bridge Disaster Fund raised more than \$1 million in donations, and the state has offered up to \$20,000 per victim in emergency funds.

The Senate version of the bill, which has not worked its way through committee, removes the state's \$1 million-per-event cap but would keep the current \$400,000-per-person limit. Messerly said some victims' expenses will go beyond that. "The Senate bill assures litigation," he said.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty has said he hopes to sign into law a victim compensation fund by the end of March.

WHERE THE \$40 MILLION WOULD GO

Victims would be able to request money for:	suffering	• accounting fees incurred for making a claim
• medical expenses	• inconvenience	Waite House, a Minneapolis community center in the Phillips neighborhood, would receive a \$680,000 grant to provide services for the children who were on the bridge in a Waite House bus.
• earnings losses	• physical impairment	
• burial costs	• loss of enjoyment of life	
• loss of business or employment opportunity	• loss of society and companionship	
• property loss	They could not request money for:	
• physical and emotional pain and	• attorney fees	
	• punitive damages	

(17B)

HometownSource.com

- [Publications](#)
- [Printing](#)
- [Distribution](#)
- [ECM Contacts](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)

Pawlenty, Tim

Capitol Notebook: Pawlenty's style of deliver of State of State had different quality to it

Friday, 15 February 2008

by T.W. Budig

ECM capitol reporter

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, thought Gov. Tim Pawlenty's style of delivery of his State of the State Address in St. Cloud on Wednesday (Feb. 13) had a different quality to it.

It wasn't the words but the expressions on the governor's face during pauses in the speech, Emmer explained.

"Some said he (Pawlenty) looked like me," said Emmer, raising an eyebrow quizzically.

Whether that's a compliment might matter on what side of the political aisle you're on, said Emmer.

Rep. Sandra Masin, DFL-Eagan, styled Gov. Tim Pawlenty's State of the State Address as "not particularly uplifting."

Indeed, Masin found Pawlenty referring to his veto pen as "the taxpayer protection pen" as "extremely confrontational."

Masin felt the address lacked a bipartisan tone. She further felt Pawlenty showed minimal interest in getting a transportation finance bill passed — that's important to her, she said.

Masin was perplexed, she explained,

How is it, she asked, that the governor lives in the same city she does but his views fail to match the comments she hears from district residents.

Rep. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, stood on the House floor during the debate on the constitutional amendment on the sales tax and flatly said he could not support the current transportation finance bill because its metro sales tax provision is too big.

Abeler said some weeks ago the sales tax component of the bill could be a breaker element.

DFLers are expected to have the transportation finance bill on the House floor this coming week — perhaps on Thursday (Feb. 21).

Rep. Melissa Hortman, DFL-Brooklyn Park, may not have expected that the green house gas discussion during the hearing on her auto emissions bill would somehow wind up focusing on the subject of flatulent canoeists.

But that was the vision conjured up by Rep. David Dille, DFL-Crane Lake, who suggested the canoeists up plying the northern lakes probably produced more green houses gases than the local automobiles.

Dille was kidding.

Sen. Pat Pariseau, R-Farmington, embraced former state senator Bob Lessard, DFL-International Falls, at a celebratory press conference following passage of the proposed constitutional amendment for the outdoors, arts, and other things.

The two lawmakers embraced, and Pariseau, with a laugh, told Lessard she had voted against the legislation.

Lessard was philosophical.

The vote on the proposed constitutional amendment largely followed party lines, but not wholly.

Indeed, an impressive list Senate DFL committee chairs — Bakk, Lnngeth, Marty, Murphy, Stumpf — voted against the legislation.

Over in the House, Rep. Ken Tschumper, DFL-LaCrescent, joined a few other DFLers in voting against the amendment.

Rep. Larry Howes, R-Walker, is looking to say a delayed “Thank You.”

Howes is carrying legislation to officially welcome back the Twins Platoon — a group of 150 civilians sworn into the U.S Marine Corps at the ballpark..

“The state of Minnesota sent you off to war and the Minnesota Twins did a great thing when they adopted this platoon on the infield grass at the old Met Stadium on a summer afternoon in 1967,” said Howes.

Now it’s time to thank the platoon, he explained in a press release.

Howes hopes to see Minnesota as part of a national welcome home celebration set for March 29.

The City of Forest Lake has led the way among Minnesota cities in thanking the veterans of this still controversial war, Howes noted.

Diane Finnemann, who helped establish Vietnam Veterans Day in Forest Lake, will be testifying at the committee hearing.

Her brother, Pfc. “Skip” Schmidt, posthumously was awarded the Silver Star at the Capitol for his service in Vietnam.

[< Prev](#)

[Next >](#)

[| Back |](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Capitol Roundup](#)
- [Columns/Opinion](#)
- [Auction Finder](#)
- [Ask a Trooper](#)
- [Hometown Heroes](#)
- [Sports Prep Zone](#)

ECM Publications

- [ABC Newspapers](#)
- [Caledonia Argus](#)
- [Dairyland Peach](#)
- [Dakota County Tribune](#)
- [ECM Post Review](#)
- [ECM Specialty Publications](#)
- [Forest Lake Times](#)
- [Isanti County News](#)
- [Mille Lacs County Times](#)
- [Morrison County Record](#)
- [Princeton Union-Eagle](#)
- [Star News](#)
- [Thisweek Newspapers](#)

Columns/Opinion

[Howard Lestrud](#)

[Don Heinzman](#)

[Joe Nathan](#)

[T.W. Budig](#)

[ECM Editorial Board](#)

[Dave Wood](#)

[Inside the First Amendment](#)

[search...](#)

AFTER THE COLLAPSE LEGISLATIVE ACTION

L60-107

35W bridge victims' benefit package wins 1st round

• A House committee approved a bill proposing a fund for bridge collapse survivors and the families of victims.

By PAM LOUWAGIE
plouwagie@startribune.com

STAR TRIBUNE FEB 15 '08

A bill to compensate victims of the Interstate 35W bridge collapse took its first legislative step Thursday morning by winning approval from a state House committee.

A proposal by Rep. Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley, to set up a Sept. 11-style fund passed the Government Operations Committee on a voice vote without dissent but not without debate.

Some Republicans questioned the standard such a fund might set for future catastrophes. The debate upset some bridge survivors attending the hearing. They met with an attorney afterward and made plans to come as a group to the Capitol on Feb. 25 to make their case for a fund.

"It's hard to hear some of the

BRIDGE BILLS AND MORE

• The House bill would establish a fund for bridge survivors and the families of victims that would be filled with a yet-to-be-determined amount of money. The fund could be refilled in the future for other man-made disasters, according to Rep. Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley, the bill's author. To see the bill, go to www.startribune.com/a4015.

• A companion bill in the Senate, authored by Sen. Ron Latz, DFL-St. Louis Park, is expected to be introduced soon. Latz has said his bill will include a cap of \$400,000 per claimant.

• A Star Tribune special report about the I-35W bridge collapse — 13 Seconds in August — is at www.startribune.com/a3913.

opinions that are offered," said Ron Engebretsen, whose wife, Sherry, died in the collapse. "People just don't tend to understand what we have gone through."

Committee member Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, voiced the most skepticism, saying that although his heart goes out to those affected, there is already insurance for property losses and a court system to deal with claims for things covered under Winkler's bill, such as pain, suffering and mental anguish.

Liability hasn't been determined yet, he reminded legislators.

"We do have a system that works," Emmer said. "I think you're going down that slippery slope where you're just going to create more problems and you're going to be asked for every exception — every emotional exception — that can possibly come around the corner."

Winkler's bill would set up a catastrophe fund modeled after the Sept. 11 victims' com-

pensation package that Congress passed after the 2001 terrorist attacks. The fund is intended to remain in place for future catastrophes and could be refilled by the Legislature.

It would compensate for lost wages, medical expenses, burial costs and other expenses not covered by other sources.

Under the bill, claimants would agree not to sue the state and they would not be subject to a \$300,000 state liability cap that they would face

in court. Winkler estimates the fund would have between \$30 million and \$60 million to meet the claims of bridge victims.

What-if scenarios raised

The bill was referred to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, which will take up the measure Monday.

Sen. Ron Latz, DFL-St. Louis Park, has said he intended to introduce a similar bill. His version would cap claims at \$400,000 apiece, he has said.

Winkler and Emmer hammered out an amendment to bar lawyers from recovering fees from the fund.

Another amendment from Emmer — creating a fund that would cover unreimbursed medical expenses only and leave other claims to the court system — did not pass.

Rep. Laura Brod, R-New Prague, said she found fault with the state's response to previous disasters.

"What we require is people

to come begging to the Legislature," she said. "Those monies are then appropriated on a case-by-case, sometimes partisan approach."

Winkler said his bill is designed only for man-made catastrophes. The bridge collapse "wasn't an act of God, it was a failure of man," he said.

After the meeting, Emmer said he was concerned about who will determine which tragedy qualifies for special compensation in the future.

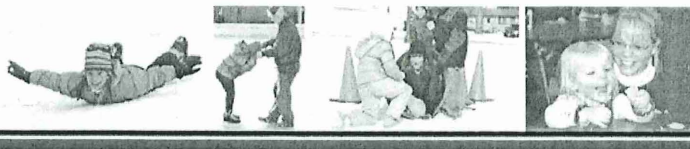
"Here are all the soldiers we've lost in this war," Emmer said, pulling out a list of the Minnesotans who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. "You tell me why we don't have a special compensation fund for their children? I mean, it just keeps growing."

University of Minnesota student reporter Emily Banks contributed to this report.

Pam Louwagie • 612-673-7102



19B



Wednesday, February 06, 2008

Beware of 35W compensation legal issues

By Scott Newman

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

To the Editor:

Dear Senator Dille and Representatives Shimanski, Seifert, Emmer and Gunther:

Gentlemen:

In deciding whether to proceed with legislation to create a special compensation fund for victims of the 35W bridge collapse, please consider the following:

- 1) Every victim has available mandatory no fault automobile coverage consisting of medical expenses, wage loss, replacement services or survivors benefits.
- 2) Every victim had the right to purchase increased no fault coverage over the state mandatory minimum.
- 3) Every victim has available or had a right to elect to purchase health insurance and disability insurance to cover medical expenses and lost wages.
- 4) Every victim who has had medical bills paid under an "Erisa" (federal law) health insurance policy will receive bridge compensation funds only after the health insurance company has been reimbursed from the fund for medical bills paid.
- 5) The government should get involved in disaster relief type payments for the public good only and not be an insurer for damages claimed by private persons.
- 6) The Legislature has deemed it appropriate to cap damages in any single event where the state may be liable, at \$1 million. In this case, legislation to tender the \$1 million to the court would be appropriate. The effect of such legislation would be to protect the state from the cost of multiple lawsuits and would allow the correct branch of government to determine distribution of the funds.
- 7) We have approximately five million people in Minnesota and about 100 bridge victims. To create a special class of claimants for a small group is an extraordinarily risky proposition with a very real possibility of unintended consequences resulting.

This is generally true when the government attempts to treat one group of people differently or provides benefits unique to that group.

For example, individual claimants in cases other than the bridge collapse in which the state of Minnesota has potential liability, could request the state to set up a special compensation fund for them as it did for the 35W bridge victims.

If the state refused or failed to act, they would have standing to file separate suits in state or federal court claiming among other causes of action a violation of equal protection and discrimination.

As outlined above, this proposed legislation is fraught with legal issues, unintended consequences and will set a dangerous precedent. Consequently, I encourage you to carefully research and analyze this bill before lending any support to the Bridge Compensation Fund.

Scott J. Newman

Hutchinson

snewman@hutchtel.net

Related Links

Content © 2008 McLeod Chronicle
Software © 1998-2008 1up! Software, All Rights Reserved

19B

L60.107 Legislative leaders promise quick work on creating jobs

Top DFLers say fast-track public works, transportation bills will put Minnesotans back to work

PIONEER PRESS FEB 12 '08

BY BILL SALISBURY

Pioneer Press

H24.15

Bills to create jobs through a massive infusion of new tax dollars into transportation projects and a \$1 billion public works program will be on the fast track when the Minnesota Legislature opens its 2008 session today.

Leaders of the House and Senate Democratic majorities said Monday they would take quick action on those two bills, plus a ballot measure to increase sales taxes to pay for clean water, wildlife, natural areas and the arts.

“I think what Minnesotans are going to see is a jump-start on this legislative session unlike they have ever seen before,” House Speaker ✓ Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, said at a Capitol news conference. “We are ready to put Minnesotans back to work.”

Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller, ✓ DFL-Minneapolis, predicted the Legislature

LEGISLATURE OPENS, 6A

Legislature opens

(continued from Page 1A)

would pass the transportation and construction bills before its Easter recess in mid-March. That would provide money for projects during the 2008 construction season.

A transportation bill to be unveiled today will include a gasoline tax increase, plus “some sort of metro sales tax” increase dedicated to bus and rail transit, Kelliher said. She declined to say how large those tax increases would be.

A spokesman for Gov. Tim Pawlenty said Democrats are starting in the wrong direction by proposing tax increases in two of the first three bills they plan to pass.

“We are a little concerned that when Democrats talk about jump-starting something that they will attach the jumper cables to your wallet,” Pawlenty spokesman Brian McClung said.

The back and forth set the tone for renewed partisan fighting in a year when House members, but not senators or the governor, are up for election.

After resembling a tomb for several months, the Capitol became a beehive of activity Monday as legislators began trickling into their offices, lawmakers and special-interest groups held competing news conferences, and the Capitol cafeteria reopened after being dark for eight months.

Kelliher said she hopes the transportation and public works bills will create more new jobs than the 23,000 Minnesota has lost in the past six months.

“We know that there are thousands of electricians, construction workers, plumbers (and) crane operators who are going to lose their homes and are in financial turmoil if there are not more jobs produced because of the slow housing market,” she said.

Last year, Pawlenty vetoed a transportation bill, saying the gas and sales tax increases in it were too high.

This year, Kelliher said, she believes the DFL majority will



Rep.
Margaret
Anderson
Kelliher



Sen. Larry
Pogemiller

persuade enough Republicans to support the bill to override a Pawlenty veto. The 85 House Democrats need five Republican votes to reach the two-thirds majority required to overturn a governor's veto. In the Senate, DFLers have a veto-proof majority.

Pawlenty has said he would accept a 5-cent gas tax increase if it were offset by other tax cuts.

Pogemiller predicted quick passage of a public works bill because Pawlenty and leaders in both houses have already agreed on a price tag: about \$1 billion financed largely through the sale of \$965 million in state-backed bonds that would be repaid over 20 years. The bill would fund everything from college classrooms and prisons to sewer systems and the Central Corridor light-rail line between St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Pogemiller also said both houses will vote this week on a constitutional amendment to dedicate funding for the environment and the arts. If approved, it would put a question on the November ballot asking voters to increase the state sales tax by 3/8 of 1 percent to raise \$290 million a year for 25 years.

House and Senate leaders reached agreement on the amendment on the final day of the 2007 session but didn't have time for a final vote.

Pawlenty and the Legislature also must erase a projected \$373 million deficit, but Pogemiller said lawmakers won't balance the budget until after the Easter recess.

A House Republican leader said lawmakers should balance the books before they increase taxes and spend more money. “The first issue that needs to be addressed is the deficit,” said House Deputy Minority Leader ✓ Tom Emmer, R-Delano. +