

Poised to promote rural agenda in St. Paul

By Tom Cherveney

tomc@wctrib.com

✓ CLARA CITY — **Lyle Koenen** has fended off challengers in three, hard-fought elections and is now poised like never before if returned to the Legislature for a fourth term.

The DFLer from Clara City started out in a Republican controlled House, but today his party holds the majority and Koenen has the seniority to play a very prominent role.



Koenen

But this is no time for politics, according to Koenen, 52. He said his goals remain no different than when he first began representing the district. He wants to be a voice for rural Minnesota, and for solutions that benefit the farmers and working people of District 20B.

Nothing chafes him more than when those on the extremes of both parties bring politics to the House floor when real business needs to be done, said Koenen. "You can tell when it's coming," said the legislator.

He knows well what's coming when the Legislature convenes next year: The state will be facing a major budget deficit and the challenges of an uncertain economy.

That's where Koenen believes his experience and perspective can play an important role. Koenen said he knows the hurt that resulted when budget cuts were made by a Republican led Legislature in 2003.

Koenen/ Page A2

He said the Legislature needs to address the upcoming budget deficit as it did last session. He supports making cuts, tapping reserves and raising revenues to balance the budg-

et.

There are ways to raise revenues while not raising taxes on farmers and working people, according to Koenen. He supports making the state's tax system more progressive. He'd require the wealthiest people in the state to pay the same share of their income in taxes as do those in the lower and middle income brackets.

The candidate said he'd support legislation to increase taxes for those earning more than \$400,000 a year.

Koenen said he also wants to return to St. Paul to fight for more equitable education funding, and for better overall support for education. Minnesota's education policy should be to provide students with the best so that they can compete for the best jobs in a world economy, he explained.

He wants the state to shoulder more of the costs for education, but said he also wants more local control. Local school boards should have greater autonomy and flexibility to do what's best for their districts, he said.

The incumbent said he remains committed to rebuilding the district's roads and bridges, and points to the gas tax increase approved during the last session as an important accomplishment.

He also said the state needs to remain committed to developing ethanol, wind and bio-fuels industries.

Koenen said his three terms in office have only strengthened his interest in serving. He enjoys the opportunity to develop policy and work with people

most of all, he said.

Koenen and his wife Sandy are parents of four children. He operated a family dairy farm for 25 years and raised beef cattle for two years after. He currently is a milk hauler and school bus driver.

He is part of a politically active family. His father Kenneth is a Chippewa County commissioner and his brother Kurt is the Mayor of Clara City. All three are running for reelection and have opponents.

Lyle Koenen

Age: 52

Address: Clara City

Family: Married; four children.

Occupation: Crop and livestock farmer for 27 years; part-time truck and school bus driver.



20B

Marshall Independent
January 28, 2008

Legislators hear workforce, adult education success stories

By Rae Kruger



Photo by Rae Kruger
Neng Yang told lawmakers how ABE helped him and his family
resettle in Walnut Grove.

MARSHALL — Just a few years ago, Joshua Percy wouldn't have been able to do what he did Friday morning in a conference room at the Lyon County courthouse in Marshall: Speak to state legislators.

"Years ago I probably couldn't have sat in this room without shaking," Percy said. "To be able to talk to a big group like this and not be nervous, to not be shaking..."

Percy said he couldn't have shared that Friday without the help from the Marshall area Adult Basic Education program and the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Center/Private Industry Council. ABE and the workforce center gave him confidence to believe in himself, improve his speech and to improve his life.

"They've been a big plus for me," Percy said. "I needed to believe in myself."

Percy now has two jobs and plans on continuing his education.

Pat Thomas, the director of the Marshall ABE said one of the best things ABE and the workforce center does is believe in people and inspire people to believe in themselves.

Percy was one of more than a dozen ABE and workforce participants who shared their stories with four state legislators and an aide from U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman's office Friday morning.

Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm, said a meeting like Friday's was important because the Legislature starts its session in February.

"As legislators we see the line items and the dollars in the budget. You've connected these stories to the real dollars," Frederickson said. "We know ABE and workforce participants gave Frederickson and Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, Sen. Jim Vickerman, DFL-Tracy, and Gerald Woodley, Coleman's aide, plenty of stories Friday.

Neng Yang and his family live in Walnut Grove where he works with the Hmong residents and at the local school. ABE and the workforce center helped him and his family when they moved to Walnut Grove, Yang said.

Yang works as a school custodian and recently became a bus driver.

"I see the adult program (ABE) and dislocated workers program help newcomers," Yang said. "Right now, some have gotten jobs, others know how to speak English (better) and some have completed job applications. I'd like to thank adult school and the workforce center for that."

Thomas said there are more stories out there but the ABE program can't keep up with the need with existing funding.

"As costs continue to go up we can't keep up with the need," Thomas said. "We aren't able to serve new students because we don't have the funds."

Yet, ABE isn't asking the state for more money, just better use of what it has already designated, Thomas said.

State law "says that if the program grows by 3 percent the Legislature will automatically give us a 3 percent increase in funds," Thomas said.

Legislators won't see a 3 percent growth in the ABE program because the program can't pay for any more growth, Thomas said.

ABE needs a 3 percent increase and the state must drop the 3 percent growth requirement, Thomas said.

ABE would like the cap the state has to not allow more than \$100,000 to go to any program within ABE to be removed.

That should be changed to a maximum of 25 percent to allow for more flexibility to direct money, Thomas said.

ABE would also like the state to provide all \$40 in help to each GED graduate rather than the \$20, Thomas said. The state has \$40 available but so often the money remains unused because only \$20 is designated, Thomas said.

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Advocate Tribune

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Railroad asks Supreme Court to review trail case

[Print Page](#)

By Scott Tedrick Staff Writer

On December 24th a Minnesota Appeals Court opinion affirmed a district court decision made one year earlier attesting to the right of the city of Granite Falls to exercise eminent domain in acquiring proposed trail property, which runs alongside a railroad on lands owned by Twin Cities and Western Railroad.

Despite the opinion, TC&W Railroad has elected not to give up with their efforts to stonewall the city's actions. According to a January 25 letter from Granite Falls attorney, Kevin K. Stroup of Marshall, the Railroad has decided to petition the Minnesota Supreme Court for review of the decision by the Minnesota appeals court.

The proposed 8.2 mile trail from Granite Falls to Wegdahl, will connect with the Minnesota Valley Recreational Trail already in existence as a 4.8 mile trail that runs from Montevideo to Wegdahl.

Upon securing the property, it is the intent of Granite Falls to turn the land over to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The DNR would take on the expense of constructing the trail and would be in charge of its upkeep.

The trail is expected to act as boon for economic development and tourism.

Appeal

Legal arguments of the Railroad claim the city failed to negotiate for the purchase of the property and questioned the city's rights to use eminent domain to acquire property only to turn it over to the DNR. In addition, TC&W states that no agreement exists between Granite Falls and the DNR regarding the proposed trail.

"The City has no intent to build a trail but simply hopes to convey the land at some undetermined future time and some undetermined future price to DNR in the hope that, at some other undetermined time, DNR will build a trail ... DNR has not agreed to accept the land or build a trail and has no funds to do so. It is hard to envision a more speculative project," read the Railroad petition.

Same old, same old

Granite Falls City Administrator, Bill Lavin, stated that, "It doesn't come as any real surprise that they would take this to the next step. I didn't expect them to exhaust all of their options for appeal."

Regarding the material Supreme Court Appeal, Lavin commented, "Nothing has changed. They are basically restating the same arguments that they have maintained from the beginning, in my opinion."

During the rulings of the Court of Appeals, the Court denied both railway claims with the belief the city had sufficiently attempted to negotiate the purchase of the property and

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recognized that the trail was still to be intended for public use once turned over to the DNR.

Contrary to the Railroad statements that the DNR was not on board, Lavin said, "We would never agree with those statements. We have had multiple public meeting and the DNR was in attendance. They are certainly aware of this project, there is no doubt about that."

During a January 10th meeting with the city, Senators Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls and ✓ Lyle Koenen DFL - Clara City both agreed to submit \$4.5 million in bonding requests toward trail development during the upcoming legislative session. Lavin said that those funds would then be directed to the DNR for trail advancement. Representatives of Chippewa County, director of the Minnesota Parks and Trails Council, Dorian Grilley, director of the Minnesota Parks and Trails Council, and Geoff Hathaway, a member of the local trails initiative, were also given voice at the meeting.

Response petition

Granite Falls' attorney, Stroup, in coordination with League of Minnesota Cities, says he has three weeks in which to draft a response petition that will be sent to the Minnesota Supreme Court.

While Stroup said that the Supreme Court has as much time as they want to make a decision whether to review that they would likely come to a conclusion within a month after receiving Stroup's response.

Stroup said that the Supreme Court's decision will likely weigh upon whether they think the question is important if for the future, or if it is a one time deal. "I don't think the Supreme Court will review it. I think it's well within the parameters of the city to do this and that is going to carry the day," he said.

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Legislators override veto of transportation bill

In what supporters are hailing as a victory of good public policy over partisan politics, the Minnesota Legislature came together Monday to override Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of the transportation bill.

This new legislation will put \$6.6 billion into roads and bridges over the next 10 years, create 33,000 jobs every year for the next five years, and will ease some of the pressure on property owners who are paying more than ever for local transportation projects.

Of the \$6.6 billion, \$1.5 billion will be dedicated for County State Aid Highways, \$600 million for bridges, and \$10 million for rural road safety.



Lyle Koenen

Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, one of the co-authors of the bill said that it had broad based support from the Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Farm Bureau, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, Minnesota State Patrol Troopers Association, and county and city engineers associations.

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Support for the families

To The Editor:

Dear Neighbors,

On Tuesday Feb. 19 we all suffered a great loss. Four amazing children passed away in an accident that still doesn't seem real. Fourteen others were hospitalized with physical injuries and countless more suffered emotionally. The pain and grief that we all feel is crippling but it can't possibly compare to the pain and grief that the families of these children are suffering.

We must keep these families in our thoughts and prayers. We must be strong and persevere together.

The needs of these families are great right now. Our thoughts and prayers will offer comfort but we should remember that there are also tangible needs that these families must deal with. Please do what you can to support these families in their time of need.

With great sadness,

✓ **Rep. Lyle Koenen**
DFL-Clara City



Some legislators already casting thoughts to Nov. elections

While tackling session at the state Capitol, slew of regional lawmakers begin contemplating campaigns and their possible opponents

By Carolyn Lange

clange@wctrib.com

WILLMAR — Legislators are knee-deep in their work at the Capitol, but most are keeping at least half an eye cocked forward to the November elections.

Endorsing conventions have already been held in some districts where there are clear candidates, like incumbents running for re-election.

Opposing parties, meanwhile, are scrambling to find viable candidates to run against incumbents.

Rollie Nissen, chairman of the Kandiyohi County Republican Party, said so far no one has "expressed an interest" to run in the District 13B House race against Willmar DFL Rep. Al Juhnke.

"We have some folks who are thinking about it," Nissen said, who declined to reveal any names.

He did say, however, that Bonnie Wilhelm, who ran two unsuccessful campaigns against Juhnke, is discussing plans with her family. He said Wilhelm, a Willmar resident, "hasn't reached a decision yet."

He said the county Republicans will likely wait until after the filing deadline in mid-July to hold an endorsing convention.

"We have no one to endorse at this time," said Nissen.

With the possibility that Republicans may still be the minority party next year, recruiting candidates may be difficult in districts currently held by Democrats.

But Democrats also face challenges in recruiting candidates in strong Republican districts.

Bruce Shuck, a DFLer from Sunburg who has been defeated three times by Rep. Bud Heidgerken, R-Freeport, said he's been

asked by state Democrat leaders to try a fourth time to defeat the popular Heidgerken.

Campaigns/ Page A8

"I'm seriously considering it," said Shuck, who said he's a "realist" and knows another campaign would be challenging. "I've lost three times," he said with a laugh. "How hard do you have to be beat on the head?"

Yet Shuck said he "thoroughly enjoys" campaigning and meeting people, and feels a sense of duty to serve.

"I won't let him run unopposed," said Shuck. "I feel compelled to serve."

He said, however, if someone else wants to run against Heidgerken he'd be OK with that.

Shuck has already signed the public subsidy agreement with the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, which gives him the ability to start raising funds for a campaign.

When it comes to campaigning against Heidgerken, Shuck said it's "hard to run against someone who claims he's a Republican but is really a Democrat."

In 1988, Heidgerken ran for the Legislature as a Democrat, and his recent vote to override Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of the transportation bill has endeared him to Democrats and Independent voters. Some Republicans, however, are not pleased.

Endorsing conventions haven't been held yet for Heidgerken, who said he doesn't expect to face a challenger from his own party.

Touting his independent streak, Heidgerken said he has been courted by Democrats to switch sides, but he said he intends to "stay where I'm at" in part, because of the pro-life beliefs he shares with Republicans.

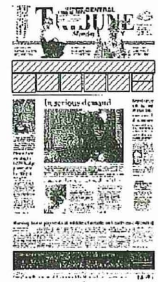
Heidgerken said he actually has a "difficult time" with either party and would prefer that both Democrats and Republican parties be eliminated so legislators could go to the Capitol to work and "then go home."

In District 18B Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City, said he doesn't know who the Democrats will find to run against him this fall. Dr. David Detert of Litchfield has tried three times to unseat Urdahl. There's no indication so far that Detert will try a fourth time.

Urdahl, who voted to uphold Pawlenty's transportation veto, said he's heard very little negative feedback and doesn't believe his vote will hurt him this election.

"I don't know many cases that people generated a lot of opposition because they voted against a tax increase," said Urdahl. Besides, he said, those who wanted the transportation bill in the form it was presented, got what they wanted.

Urdahl, who had the job of recruiting candidates for his district before he was elected, knows how difficult it can be to find someone to run against an



(Over)



incumbent, especially in a district that heavily leans to one political party or the other.

The sooner a party finds a candidate to run, the better chance they have of winning, he said.

Every day that goes by without an opponent publicly declaring to run is "an advantage to the incumbent," said Urdahl, who remembers driving candidates to file for office "minutes" before the filing deadline.

- ✓ In Districts 20A and 20B, Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, and Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Appleton, were both endorsed earlier this month.

There were no other candidates seeking the Democratic endorsement for either seat, said Koenen. When it comes to potential Republican challengers for his seat Koenen said, "I just plain haven't heard anything." He can't imagine he'll go unopposed. "I'm sure the Republican Party is working on it."

Sometimes parties are able to get reluctant candidates who file against an incumbent but "do very little" in a campaign, he said.

Koenen agreed with Urdahl that the longer a candidate waits to file, the harder it is to raise money and wage a decent campaign.

Some candidates are already eyeing Senate races that will be held in 2010.

- ✓ Karna Peters, DFL chairwoman of Senate District 13, said there's already strong interest brewing among potential candidates to run against Sen. Joe Gimse, R-Willmar.

"I have heard from some people that are interested," said Peters, declining to name names. "People are already talking about it even though it's two years away."

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FINANCE AND COMMERCE

Business News

Law enables governments to fund, build wind turbines

by Charley Shaw Staff Writer

Counties and cities in Minnesota can now get into the business of generating wind energy.

Renville County Commissioner Bob Fox and other officials from rural and metropolitan governments pushed for the new authority this session.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed the bill Tuesday despite objections from some in his GOP party that the legislation would allow the state to be too involved in private business matters.

Fox, whose central Minnesota county is doing a study to determine its potential for wind-energy development, said that investors are interested in building wind turbines in his area – and that the new policy approved by Pawlenty would allow Renville and other counties to partner with wind energy investors.

"We did not have the right as a county to do this before. That was our first step to have this authority," said Fox, a member of the Rural Minnesota Energy Board, which consists of 17 counties in southern and western Minnesota.

The Metropolitan Energy Policy Coalition, which consists of seven metropolitan counties and the Metropolitan Council, also advocated for the legislation.

Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, and Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, sponsored the legislation.

Kubly said local units of government that build wind turbines will be able to sell power wholesale to utilities or sell retail power to residents. The new law will help Minnesota meet state requirements that electric utilities generate 25 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2025.

"I think it will help the utilities meet their mandate in addition to allowing local units of government to save money," Kubly said.

The bill sparked controversy in the House and Senate before Pawlenty signed it. The House passed the measure 95-35. The Senate passed it 53-10.

Sen. David Hann, R-Eden Prairie, voted against the bill. He questioned if government should get involved in the marketplace for wind energy.

"If things are really economically advantageous, you don't need to spend taxpayer money to make it happen," Hann said in an interview.

Kubly, however, said developing wind energy will benefit Minnesotans. Moreover, wind can be obtained for free, while other energy sources such as coal can only be gotten for a price.

"The cost of wind will still be nothing. ... I think it is going to save the taxpayers' money," Kubly said.

The bill received several hearings this session in House and Senate committees. Among the changes made during the legislative process, lawmakers inserted a provision that would deny local governments from using eminent domain to take land on which to build a turbine. Kubly said that most cities own land on the outskirts of their boundaries that tend to be good locations for a turbine or two.

Fox noted that investors of smaller community-based energy development (C-BED) projects are limited to a 15 percent stake in a single project. But he said the new law is useful because a county could chip in for a portion of the project if necessary.

✓ A separate bill moving through the Legislature at the end of session would help finance local energy projects. The bill, which was waiting for a vote in the House and Senate on Friday, was sponsored by Rep. Jeremy Kalin, DFL-Lindstrom, and Sen. Scott Dibble, DFL-Minneapolis. ✓

The bill would provide financing to help local units of government obtain the engineering and other services needed to do renewable energy projects. The financing is called a tax-exempt lease purchase agreement. Kalin said the proposal would provide financial assistance to local governments who want to do wind and conservation projects.

"The lease purchase, I like to describe it, is a 'funded unmandate,'" Kalin said.

Fox said government officials still have more work to do to provide wind energy incentives.

Federal tax policy, in particular, needs to be changed in order to provide better incentives for renewable energy, Fox said. But he added that Minnesota's wind-energy potential should be pursued in the face of rising energy costs.

"We're going to have to do something different. Our demand curve for energy keeps going up," Fox said.

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Law enables governments to fund, build wind turbines

ST PAUL LEGAL LEDGER
BY CHARLEY SHAW

Staff Writer

MAY 19, 2008

Counties and cities in Minnesota can now get into the business of generating wind energy.

Renville County Commissioner Bob Fox and other officials from rural and metropolitan governments pushed for the new authority this session.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed the bill last Tuesday (May 13), despite objections from some in his GOP party that the legislation would allow the state to be too involved in private business matters.

Fox, whose central Minnesota county is doing a study to determine its potential for wind-energy development, said that investors are interested in building wind turbines in his area – and that the new policy approved by Pawlenty would allow Renville and other counties to partner with wind energy investors.

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Wind Power

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"We're going to have to do something different. Our demand curve for energy keeps going up," Fox said.

Olivia man seeks Republican nod in 20B

From staff reports

OLIVIA — A lifelong Renville County resident is seeking the Republican Party endorsement for the Minnesota House of Representatives District 20B seat.

Don Swoboda, 47, of Olivia, announced this week that he intends to run for the office currently held by Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City.

"I am running because I am gravely concerned about conditions in rural Minnesota," said Swoboda. He said rural schools, roads, nursing homes and towns are suffering as political power shifts to the metro area.

Swoboda describes himself as a farmer, small-business owner and resident of Olivia in a news release announcing his candidacy.



Swoboda said his legislative priorities would be to keep a lid on taxes, reform health care by empowering consumers and a free market, ensuring a strong agricultural economy and fighting for fair education funding for rural schools.

He charged that the DFL officeholder has supported tax increases that have been harmful to working people, senior citizens and small business owners.

District 20B stretches from Milan in the northwestern corner of Chippewa County to Fairfax and Buffalo Lake in eastern Renville County along with the eastern portion of Yellow Medicine County and western edge of McLeod County.



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WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE *Online*

✓ **Dist. 20B: Swoboda says he'll 'get priorities in line'**

By Tom Cherveney

West Central Tribune - 10/25/2008

OLIVIA — Don Swoboda is making his first run for elected office, but he darn well knows the run to the capitol in St. Paul.

Swoboda, 47, often joined his parents Delores and Gene Swoboda as they led farmers to the state capitol under the banner of Groundswell during the farm crisis in the 1980's. They returned again and again when state and federal governments eyed the bedrock along the Minnesota River to bury hazardous and even nuclear wastes.

Through it all, one lesson he learned in St. Paul has really stuck: "They don't seem to care about what's happening out here," he said.

Swoboda said he wants to go to St. Paul to speak up for rural issues.

Most of all, he said, "we have to get our priorities in line."

Swoboda is the Republican endorsed candidate for the District 20 B seat and faces DFL incumbent Lyle Koenen of Clara City.

He and his wife Mary are parents of two sons and live in Olivia. He farms the family's land in southern Renville County. They also own Country Court Mobile Home Park.

Economic issues are at the forefront of his concerns.

"Our local economy is getting nailed," said the candidate.

The state is facing tough economic times, and needs to focus its resources only on those things that matter most, according to the candidate. He wants to see education, roads and bridges, health care and veteran's issues given top priority.

He opposes the Clean Water Legacy Amendment. He said he has concerns about raising taxes when people are worried how they will pay this winter's heating bills. He's also concerned about how the money would be spent.

Asked how he would address the projected state budget deficit, Swoboda said: "Do we need all of these state employees?"

There are lots of ways the state can do with less, according to the candidate. He likens the state budget to a family's decision between buying an expensive plasma or low-cost, standard TV screen. It's time for government to be more frugal, he said.

Swoboda said he'd also fight to ease the economic burdens the state puts on businesses and local governments with ever tougher pollution standards. He pointed to his manufactured home park as an example. New, more stringent arsenic standards are forcing him to install a \$12,000 water filtering system to reduce levels from 50 parts per billion to 10. There's no guarantee the system will work, and Swoboda questions whether there is any real health benefit.

Health costs are the "big gorilla" that no one seems able to address, said Swoboda. He believes there are ways caps can be placed on costs to make health care more affordable.

He also believes that the state should make health care services more accessible to veterans in rural areas. Some are now traveling 150 miles for care that could be provided closer to home, he said.

New to the role of being a candidate, Swoboda said he knows it's an uphill battle to unseat an incumbent but he is enjoying the opportunity all the same. "The main thing I'm running for is so we can help some people," he said.

Koenen receives conservation award

✓ State Representative Lyle Koenen received a "100% Minnesotan" award Sept. 22 from the Conservation Minnesota Voter Center. The award recognizes a perfect record on key conservation, energy and clean water votes in the 2008 Minnesota legislative session. The Conservation Minnesota Voter Center is a non-partisan organization that gives information to the public to evaluate the performance of elected leaders on issues important to Minnesota's land, lakes and way of life.



DISTRICT 20B HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Koenen re-elected to fourth term by nearly 2-to-1 margin

Incumbent ready to focus on budget issues

By Tom Cherveney
tomc@wctrib.com

CLARA CITY — Rep. **Lyle Koenen**, DFL-Clara City, fended off a challenge by first-time Republican candidate Don Swoboda to return to St. Paul.

Koenen won a fourth term as the District 20B representative in the Legislature by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, collecting 8,357 votes to Swoboda's 4,384 votes with 90 percent or 69 of 76 precincts reported as this edition went to press, according to unofficial results from the Minnesota Secretary of State's office.

Koenen said he is looking forward to returning to St. Paul and ready for the hard work ahead. He said the Legislature will be making difficult decisions as it puts together its budget while dealing with projections for a

major deficit.

Although disappointed not to have won, Swoboda said he has no regrets about his decision to make his first run for state office and held open the option for another run.

"I got to meet a lot of great people," he said of the experience.

Swoboda, R-Olivia, said he learned from the experience too. He feels a late endorsement by the party meant a late start in fundraising and campaigning. Republican candidates also faced a head wind this election, said Swoboda. All of these factors made his bid to unseat an incumbent more difficult, he said.

The trying was worth it, he said. The campaign offered an opportunity to raise the issues affecting the rural district.

Rural issues are very much on the mind of Koenen as well, who said that

voters often cited concerns about the economy, health care costs and education during the campaign. He said he also heard from many people eager to see renewable energy opportunities developed in the region for both their economic and environmental benefits.

Koenen first won office during a year of major Republican party gains. Now, he goes to St. Paul with greater seniority and as part of a party expected to increase its majority in the House. Koenen said he is looking forward to the opportunities to speak out for his district's needs.

Koenen, 52, operated a dairy farm for 25 years and raised beef cattle for another two years. He is currently a part-time truck and school bus driver. He and his wife, Sandy, are parents of four children.

Politics have long been part of the Koenen household. His father, Kenneth, is a Chippewa County commissioner and his brother, Kurt, is the mayor of Clara City.

Swoboda, 47, is a Renville County farmer and owner of a mobile home court. He and his wife, Mary, are parents of two children.



Koenen



Swoboda



Lyle J. Koenen

Age: 52

Address: Clara City

Family: Married, four children

Occupation: Crop and livestock farmer for 27 years; part-time truck and school bus driver

Education: Graduated from Maynard High School; graduated from Willmar Vo Tech in ag production

Elected positions, other government service:
State representative since 2003



Koenen challenged by Swoboda in District 20B

Incumbent Lyle Koenen is seeking his fourth two-year term in the Legislature, and feels he is well-poised to play a prominent role for the district as his seniority grows and as a member of the majority DFL Party in the Minnesota House.

Republican Don Swoboda is making his first bid for public office, but has experience with farm and rural issues. The candidate said he is "gravely concerned" about the condition of rural Minnesota.

District 20B in western Minnesota is comprised of Chippewa and Renville counties and part of Yellow Medicine County.

What is your No. 1 campaign issue?

Koenen: The economy and state budget are front and center. Every decision we make will depend on how well the economy is doing. We must continue the push in Minnesota to develop renewable and alternative energy sources.

Minnesota historically has been a leader in many measures, including economic, education, employment, health, recreation and other quality-of-life measures. The reason for this is past investment. Although we still do well, we've started to slip in some of these areas. The past couple of years we've started to turn this trend around, although there is still a lot to do.

Investing in the future through properly funded schools, college tuition within reach of all who wish to attend, research, affordable health care, clean water, recreation

opportunity, infrastructure, power transmission lines that include capacity for renewable energy sources, and up-to-date communication systems — these investments will continue and improve Minnesota's ability to compete globally.

Swoboda: Rural funding. What is your No. 2 campaign issue?

Koenen: The ever-increasing cost of health care is an ever-growing burden.

Many home foreclosures are due to health-related expenses that can't be covered by families. People who might be willing to go on their own and start a business don't because they don't want to give up their employer health coverage. The drag on the economy is substantial.

Insurance companies have too much power over our health care system. (Our local insurance agents do a good job, by the way.) Insurance companies, at times, get in the way of doctors' and their patients' health care decisions, and at the same time increase rates to patients, while cutting reimbursement rates to providers.

It is much more cost-effective to pay this cost up front, than pay after the fact in an emergency room or the cost of treating illness that was neglected in early stages.

Swoboda: Renewable energy.

What is your No. 3 campaign issue?

Koenen: Investing in education is an investment in the future. This benefits not only students but also their families, communi-

ties, as well as the state and country. To compete for the world's best jobs, we need a well-educated and highly trained work force.

In recent years there has been a shift to a heavier reliance on local property taxes. This can leave a big difference in opportunity between property-rich school districts and property-poor school districts.

Another point is Minnesota's Constitution lays the responsibility for an adequate education with the state. The state has a responsibility to pick up a greater share of school funding. This will also take the pressure off property taxes, a very regressive tax.

Smaller classes have better outcomes. A quick look at schools and we can see class sizes are getting bigger. In area schools, with declining enrollment, we are losing teachers faster than students.

Swoboda: Affordable, accessible health care.

Why are you seeking this office?

Koenen: I like living in west central Minnesota and would like to see my sons also choose to make this area their homes. If we want young people to live here, jobs with livable wages are a must. Families will also look at churches, education opportunities, recreation, transportation (roads) and communication reliability.

Swoboda: I am running because I am gravely concerned about the conditions in rural Minnesota. We must keep trying to become energy independ-



ent. The quality of life and the values we share are important, and we must protect and promote them whenever we can.

House 20B/ Page C4

Why are you the best candidate for this office?

Koenen: I know this part of our state. I was born and raised here. Went to school and votech school here. I was married here, farmed and work in west central Minnesota. I am a lifelong member of Bethany Reformed Church in Clara City. Sandy and I are raising our family in Clara City, and our sons go to school at MACCRAY here in west central Minnesota. I know the district and can represent the people of District 20B as one of them.

Swoboda: Rural Minnesota needs a new, strong, local voice in the state House of Representatives. All of my experiences have taught me to be concerned about rural Minnesota.

Lyle J. Koenen

Age: 52
Address: Clara City
Family: Married, four children
Occupation: Crop and livestock farmer for 27 years; part-time truck and school bus driver
Education: Graduated from Maynard High School; graduated from Willmar Vo Tech in ag production
Elected positions, other government service: State representative since 2003



Don Swoboda

Age: 47
Address: Olivia
Family: Wife, Mary; two sons, Keith, 21, and Lance, 18
Occupation: Farmer/small business owner
Education: Graduated from Redwood Falls High School



Rural state representatives to retain their committee chairmanships

By Scott Wentz

swente@wctrib.com

ST. PAUL — More than a dozen rural Minnesota lawmakers are among House Democrats named committee chairmen for the next legislative session.

✓ Rep. **Al Juhnke**, DFL-Willmar, will chair the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Committee

✓ **Lyle Koenen**, DFL-Clara City, will chair the Veterans Affairs Division

The Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party majority reduced the number of committees from 42 to 36 and is placing a greater emphasis on oversight of state agencies and programs.

"Minnesotans have been very clear they want to see more transparency and



Juhnke

Koenen

accountability in state government," House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, said Friday.

Chairmanships are prized because they give lawmakers broad authority to decide what legislation is — and is not — heard in committee.

Many of the high-profile chairmanships dealing with budget decisions did not change. Northeastern and western Minnesota lawmakers will lead key finance and tax committees in the

2008-09 Legislature.

Democrats added a panel to oversee finances related to the constitutional amendment voters passed in November dedicating a sales tax increase to the outdoors and arts.

✓ Veteran Rep. Mary Murphy, DFL-Hermantown, will lead the Cultural and Outdoor Resources Finance Committee. She said it will consider the types of projects that will be funded with the tax revenue.

"This is something that is supposed to go for a generation and the decisions that we will make form what happens for generations to come," Murphy said.

Republicans have criticized the DFL for adding committees after the party took control of the House in 2007.

Some committee chairmanships rural legislators will hold in coming session

Rules and finance committee chairmen include:

■ Majority Leader Tony Ser-tich, Chisholm: Rules and Legislative Administration

■ Loren Solberg, Grand Rapids: Ways and Means

■ Paul Marquart, Dilworth: Property and Local Sales Tax Division

■ Al Juhnke, Willmar: Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance

■ Bill Hilty, Finlayson: Energy Finance and Policy

■ Tom Rukavina, Virginia: Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy

■ Tom Huntley, Duluth: Health Care and Human Services

Finance

■ Mary Murphy, Hermantown: Cultural and Outdoor Resources Finance

■ Bernie Lieder, Crookston: Transportation Finance and Policy

Policy committee chairmen include:

■ Mary Ellen Otremba, Long

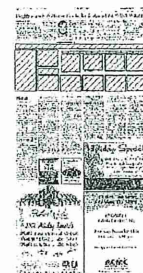
Prairie: Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs

■ Lyle Koenen, Clara City: Veterans Affairs Division

■ Kent Eken, Twin Valley: Environment Policy and Oversight

■ David Dill, Crane Lake: Game, Fish and Forestry Division

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20B

Koenen says counties will feel state's pain

By Tom Cherveney

tomc@wctrib.com

GRANITE FALLS — Counties are sure to feel the state's financial pain, perhaps even before the Legislature convenes, **State Rep. Lyle Koenen**, DFL-Clara City, warned the Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday.

Koenen told the commissioners that he expects Gov. Tim Pawlenty to use his authority to begin making budget cuts, or "unallotments," to begin balancing the budget before year's end.

The state's projected budget deficit for this biennium was pegged less than two weeks ago at \$426 million. A new projection indicates the deficit has grown by another \$32 million, and the trend continues toward an even larger gap. Koenen told the commissioners.

The state has roughly \$900 million in unencumbered funds at this point. That includes somewhere between \$100 million to \$150 million in local government aid for cities and counties.

No matter what the governor might do to balance the budget, the worst is sure to follow, according to Koenen.

"It's going to be miserable," he said of the budget decisions facing

legislators when they convene in January.

Legislators will begin dealing with new projections that now anticipate a \$6 billion to \$7 billion deficit for the following biennium, according to Koenen.

He said he anticipates cuts in "all areas, whether we like it or not."

Koenen pointed out that education and health care expenditures represent nearly 70 percent of overall state government spending, and they are not likely to escape cuts.

He said there are likely to be efforts to also find new sources of revenue. One idea already being considered would extend the sales tax to services.

Gov. Pawlenty has indicated his opposition to any tax increases, but Koenen said the governor compromised at the end of the last session and could again. If the governor refuses to consider anything but cuts, "we could be in trouble," Koenen said.

The county commissioners noted that the county has kept its budget in the black and has been building a reserve, but now commissioners fear the state will address some of its problems at the expense of counties. "You are going to put us into the same state you are now," said Commissioner Gary Johnson of Clarkfield.



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YMC Board approves budget, nixes courthouse expansion

By Robert Wolfington III
rwolfington@marshall
independent.com

GRANITE FALLS — The Yellow Medicine County Board passed its 2009 budget, declined to approve a pay increase for itself and decided against moving forward with the attorney addition to the courthouse Tuesday.

The board approved its budget without the building expansion, leading to an 8.5 percent levy increase in its 2009 budget.

In addition to passing its budget, the board met with state and federal representatives Tuesday to discuss issues facing the county in 2009.



Koenen

Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, Gerald Woodley of Sen. Norm Coleman's office and Andy Martin of Sen. Amy Klobuchar's office, were at the meeting.

Commissioner Gary Johnson said possible cuts in local government aid from the state make it difficult to move

forward with a building project. "Not having local government aid coming is a concern," said Johnson.

The building expansion would give the county additional office space for its attorney's office, currently located in downtown Granite Falls.

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Yellow Medicine County Attorney Keith Helgeson said the county is currently spending \$750, plus utilities, for its office space. It is currently in a lease that ends in 2009.

Earlier this year the board set out for bids on the project but declined to accept them.

The expansion was included in the initial 2009 budget which would have had a 9.9 percent levy increase.

Yellow Medicine County Administrator Ryan Krosch said the county could revisit the building expansion in the next few years.

The board froze its salary for the second year in a row in a unanimous vote.

The commissioners did approve a cost of living increase and increases on its step salary system for its other employees, including three elected officials.

After it set its budget the board met with Koenen, Woodley and Martin.

Koenen said the Legislature is working on its budget and hopes to know what will happen with local government aid by the end of the year.

Johnson said the board voted against moving forward with its building expansion due to the unknown future of local government aid.

The Legislature is currently working with a large deficit that Koenen said wouldn't be solved only by raising taxes.

"We're going to have to

make cuts," Koenen said.

Johnson said he had concerns about where some state dollars have been spent in recent years in the face of cuts to local government aid.

"You've been spending money on things like parks and bike trails when roads aren't getting worked on," said Johnson. "It should come from the state, you should be tightening your belts."

Johnson said the county has been cultivating a budget reserve for a number of years and is concerned cuts in the state could trickle down and eventually force the county out of its own reserves.

Commissioner Ron Antony said he was disappointed with continued discussions on designated sales tax, including a proposed 1-cent sales tax on bottled water.

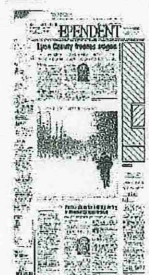
Antony said the Legislature traditionally should determine where tax dollars go in its budget.

"When you have a designated sales tax it takes away what the Legislature should be doing," said Antony. "It makes your constituents think you're not really doing your job."

On the federal level, the board had concerns about a lack of funding for infrastructure — specifically a project that would upgrade a stretch of U.S. Highway 59 between Marshall and Cottonwood.

Martin said funds were becoming available for projects like Highway 59 that could be used for the upgrades.

The board is scheduled to meet with Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, and newly-elected Rep. Andrew Falk-DLF, Murdock, during its Dec. 30 board meeting.



The Bemidji Pioneer

Pawlenty proposes new veterans' cemetery

Scott Wentz

Bemidji Pioneer - 03/12/2008

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ST. PAUL — Gov. Tim Pawlenty wants legislators to approve a plan transferring land in a northeastern Minnesota state park for a new state veterans' cemetery.

Pawlenty on Tuesday proposed using 60 acres in Jay Cooke State Park south of Duluth to construct Minnesota's second veterans' cemetery. The parcel in the 8,781-acre park would be transferred from the state Department of Natural Resources to the Veterans Affairs Department.

Pawlenty said there is a lack of access to military veterans' cemeteries in northern Minnesota, as the state has an aging and growing population of veterans. An estimated 46,000 veterans live within 75 miles of the proposed cemetery.

"This is something that's important to send the signal to our veterans that we respect and honor and appreciate them all the way," Pawlenty said while speaking to veterans who were in St. Paul to lobby for their issues.

Legislation is required to complete the land transfer. The proposal will be part of a larger land-related bill.

✓ Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, said once that legislation leaves House and Senate committees, it probably will not be controversial, increasing the cemetery provision's chances of becoming law.

"I just don't see that there's any issue, and I think the state recognizes that we sure could use a cemetery," said Koenen, who leads a Minnesota House veterans committee.

The state will apply for a federal grant to cover the estimated \$8 million cost to establish the cemetery. The state would pay annual operating costs of \$300,000.

Veterans Affairs Commissioner Clark Dyrud said while it is a competitive federal grant process, he is "almost 100 percent sure" Minnesota would get the funding it needed.

"This initiative was developed from a need to provide a peaceful resting spot for our veterans, our heroes, in northeastern Minnesota," he said.

Dyrud said there could be need for additional state veterans' cemeteries, including in southern and far northwestern Minnesota.

The proposed cemetery site is near Wrenshall in Carlton County, about 20 miles south of Duluth. It would be on flat and open acreage, making it suitable for a cemetery, Pawlenty said.

The cemetery could draw up to 40,000 visitors a year and provide a place for 500 burials annually, officials said. The first phase of the new cemetery's development will provide for 6,000 grave sites, said Dave Swantek, director at the Little Falls site, where the state's first veterans cemetery is located.

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Officials hope to begin construction within 18 months. Construction could take a year.

If approved, the cemetery would be the state's second for veterans, joining one established in 1994 just north of Little Falls. Minnesota has a national cemetery at Fort Snelling.

DNR Commissioner Mark Holsten said the plan is a good way for his agency to express its thanks to veterans.

"We couldn't think of a better place than Jay Cooke State Park," said Holsten, a former Stillwater-area legislator.

✓ Jay Cooke is in Sen. Tony Lourey's legislative district. The Kerrick DFLer's brother, Matt Lourey, was killed in 2005 while serving in Iraq.

"Having all too recently buried a brother in a veterans' cemetery out in (Washington) D.C., I know the importance to our veterans to having a respectful place for them to meet their final resting place," Lourey said. "I'm very pleased to have a local option for those brave men and women serving today."

Scott Wentz works for Forum Communications Co., which owns the Bemidji Pioneer.

Marshall Independent
January 28, 2008

Chamber's road funding plan could spur compromise solution, legislators say

By Rae Kruger

MARSHALL — Four state legislators implied Friday that the Minnesota State Chamber of Commerce's transportation proposal that includes a 7.5-cent gas tax increase could be the plan that gets legislators to compromise on transportation.

The chamber plan may not be the exact plan agreed to in the Legislature but it could lead to a compromise, legislators said at a meeting in Marshall.

"If a transportation bill includes a gas tax without other tax increases I think it will pass the Senate with bipartisan support," said Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm.

Frederickson, Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, Sen. Jim Vickerman, DFL-Tracy, Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, and Gerald Woodley, an aide for U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn., gave brief legislative updates and fielded questions at Friday's event sponsored by the Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce.

"I think there is enough understanding that there is such a need we've gotta get moving (on transportation)," Koenen said.

Koenen said he believed the House could reach a compromise on a transportation plan.

Vickerman said he'd be willing to support a gas-tax increase.

Seifert said there isn't uniform agreement yet in the Republican caucus on the chamber plan or any transportation plan. The chamber plan could lead to compromise but may not be the final plan approved, Seifert said.

The sales tax piece of the chamber plan will not be accepted, Seifert said.

"I think enough members of the caucus could see it as middle ground," Seifert said. "The state chamber policy...that may be the middle ground. If the governor and the Legislature can get together it may end up being a proposal like that. My guess is each side will have to give up something...to move forward."

No Child Left Behind

Marshall Schools superintendent Klint Willert asked if the Legislature will address the federal education program No Child Left Behind.

Legislators agreed the state needs to consider changing or dropping out of No Child Left

Behind, but said it could be monetarily risky to just drop out.

“We need a more thorough analysis before pulling out,” Frederickson said.

“We’d lose \$300 million if we just got out tomorrow,” Vickerman said.

Seifert said a study needs to be completed on the cost to implement the program. If the state spends more money on the program than it receives in federal aid, it would be good to drop the program, Seifert said.

Budget shortfall

The legislators will enter the session with a projected \$373 million shortfall in the budget but they said they were confident it could be handled.

Gordon Crow of the Schwan Food Co. asked where they’d cut to deal with the shortfall.

Seifert said he’d make cuts in the central office of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

Vickerman said he could make a 2 percent cut in veterans and agriculture budgets that wouldn’t impact programs but others must be willing to make cuts in their budgets.

“I am not going to do it at the expense of veterans and ag,” Vickerman said of making up the shortfall.

“The cuts should be spread out,” Koenen said.

This is also a chance to review the state tax system that needs to be adjust to reflect today’s economy, Koenen said. The state must also review spending and review delivery methods and other methods that may be outdated, Koenen said.

Frederickson said he wouldn’t cite specific budgets but said the budget, appropriations and other areas must all be reviewed.

Seifert, Vickerman and Frederickson said cuts could also be made in money that has not yet been appropriated or is scheduled to be appropriated in the future.

Crow said he found it interesting the legislators said they could find a way to deal with the projected \$373 budget deficit but couldn’t find a way to handle the projected loss of \$300 million in federal aid if the state dropped out of the federal education No Child Left Behind plan.

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WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE *Online*

Legislator 'drowns' in floating horse teeth

By Carolyn Lange

West Central Tribune - 02/18/2008

WILLMAR — The issue of who should be qualified to “float horse teeth” is drowning at least one legislator in three years’ worth of reports, studies, committee meetings and proposed legislation.

Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, said he hopes the issue can finally be resolved during this year’s legislative session. “I’m tired of it,” he said, with a light-hearted chuckle.

Floating horse teeth involves smoothing down the teeth of horses with a file. It’s a necessary routine because horse teeth grow perpetually and the sharp points can cut a horse’s tongue and mouth. It can be painful and difficult for horses to eat if their teeth are not routinely filed.

The Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine has taken the position that only veterinarians should be allowed to do the procedure. In 2004 they sent a Hutchinson man, Chris Johnson, a letter ordering him to stop his family-learned business of floating horse teeth.

The veterinary board had grandfathered in Johnson’s father, but objected to the son doing the practice without receiving proper training, said Sen. Steve Dille, R-Dassel.

Dille, a veterinarian who has floated his own share of horse teeth, said it is “not appropriate” for an individual to float horse teeth “without any training.”

The controversy sparked a lawsuit and proposed legislation.

Koenen said he doesn’t think people who float horse teeth need to be veterinarians. With a limited number of large-animal vets practicing now, he said laypeople can do the job at a lower cost to horse owners.

“Veterinarians totally disagree with me,” he said, acknowledging that Dille is one of them.

Koenen compared laypeople who float horse teeth to farriers who trim horses’ hooves.

“It’s a simple, straightforward procedure,” said Koenen, who thinks Minnesotans should be allowed to carry on a business of floating horse teeth without having to go to vet school.

Veterinarians, however, argue that it’s a practice that requires training.

“That sets up that battle,” said Koenen. “It just can’t get settled”

In an interview Thursday, Dille said it doesn’t make sense to give all 5 million Minnesotans the right to do a veterinary procedure that he said requires training that veterinarians receive in school.

In 2005 Koenen helped author legislation to allow non-veterinarians to perform the non-invasive service.

Koenen’s bill was later amended to included options for a separate license for equine dentistry, with training required.

The issue of filing horse teeth opened the floodgates to discuss other animal husbandry issues.

In 2007, Koenen helped author a bill that would allow non-veterinarians to provide a variety of activities, such as animal massage, physical therapy, chiropractic care, artificial insemination and floating horse teeth.

Without reaching a resolution, legislators then agreed last year to work with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to

develop a study group to examine those different animal husbandry issues and provide a set of recommendations, Dille said.

Dille said the report recommends that people who float horse teeth would not have to be veterinarians but that training would be required. He said the proposal asks the University of Minnesota's College of Veterinary Medicine to establish a training program.

The report also recommends that people who want to practice chiropractic care on animals must be either a veterinarian or a licensed chiropractor.

Training would be required for people who want to perform physical therapy with animals.

Regarding artificial insemination, only veterinarians would be allowed to do it when surgery is involved, but in all other cases a layperson could provide the service.

Dille said he's drafting legislation that would "pretty much" incorporate the committee's recommendations.

Koenen said although it "goes against my grain a little bit," he would likely support a compromise bill that includes some or all of the committee's recommendations.

"If it's a true compromise, nobody will be happy," he said.

Meanwhile, the Institute for Justice filed a lawsuit against the Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine in 2006 in support of laypeople floating horse teeth. A hearing was held last month but a ruling has not been announced, Dille said.

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WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE *Online*

Legislature taking a look at Willmar, Montevideo nursing home proposals

By Carolyn Lange

West Central Tribune - 03/01/2008

WILLMAR — A proposal to build a veterans nursing home in Montevideo is making its way through the Minnesota legislature.

In action this week, the bill advanced in House and Senate committees.

Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, and Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, are pushing for the bill's passage, which is the first in a long series of steps to get placed on the federal veteran administration's list of projects.

At the same time, legislators from Willmar are seeking state funding to build a veterans nursing home here.

Kubly said the Willmar and Montevideo proposals could be competition with each other for final federal approval.

Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar, said the two projects are like comparing apples to oranges.

Work began more than three years ago on a proposal to build a 90-bed veterans hospital in Willmar and it's already on the federal list.

Last year, the state allocated funds to design the Willmar home. This year, a request was made to include it in the bonding bill.

Juhnke, chairman of the House Agriculture and Veterans Finance Committee, said he's "confident" the \$7.9 million request will be included in the House bonding bill that will be introduced at 10 a.m. Monday.

He said it's currently not in the Senate bonding bill.

If the state funding isn't approved, the Willmar project can't move up on the federal list for construction.

The state is responsible for providing one-third of the construction cost, with the VA picking up the rest.

The Montevideo proposal includes a unique strategy, however, that could help move it up the ladder.

Kubly said no state money is being requested to build the facility in Montevideo.

Instead, Chippewa County and the city of Montevideo have agreed to raise all the money locally to cover the state's share of construction costs. State funding would be required, however, to operate the home if it is built.

The city has also secured land about a mile from the VA clinic where the home could be built.

While it may be unusual for a community to raise money for a project that's usually funded by the state, Koenen said it's not unusual for that community, which also helped fund construction of the veteran's clinic.

Kubly said the community includes "a group of folks with a history" of raising money to build facilities that serve veterans.

A cap on the number of veteran nursing home beds in Minnesota and a two-hour distance requirement between VA nursing homes could restrict where new homes are built.

Koenen said, however, there may be exemptions to those guidelines that would allow nursing homes to be built in Willmar and Montevideo.

(Over)

Before a new home is approved, Juhnke said surveys and other procedures are required to make sure a home is built in a location where veteran services are needed the most. Willmar has already completed those steps whereas Montevideo is just starting, he said.

Sauk Centre and Brainerd are also looking to build a veterans nursing home. Juhnke said his committee will hear all proposals to help the state's veterans.