



State Rep. Emmer pays to settle campaign billboard issue

by Tom Scheck, Minnesota Public Radio

September 15, 2009

St. Paul, Minn. — Republican state Rep. Tom Emmer, has agreed to pay \$750 to settle an issue involving a campaign billboard.

Emmer, who's running for governor, is paying the civil penalty after the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board found that the owner of a sign company put up an Emmer campaign billboard in the last two election cycles after discussing the idea with Emmer's campaign manager in 2006. The signs weren't reported as campaign contributions.

Emmer disputes the findings because he says his campaign manager doesn't even remember talking about the issue, let alone directing the sign to be put up.

"Rather than getting caught up in a protracted battle, I agreed to [a] compromised settlement with no admission of liability because obviously I dispute the findings if there be a violation," Emmer said. "But with the small amount that they're talking about it's better to put it behind us. We have a campaign to run."

Campaign Finance board Executive Director Gary Goldsmith said Emmer negotiated the penalty without any admission of wrongdoing.

"If you look at the conciliation agreement, you'll see that the Emmer Committee has agreed to notify its staff members of the conditions under which an inadvertent conversation in which an independent expenditure could become a contribution without even knowing it happened," Goldsmith said.

The Campaign Finance Board also ordered a liberal group called Progressive Majority to pay \$1,025 for making payments to the DFL Party and Women Winning Minnesota, without filing the proper paperwork.

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Emmer says he'll run for governor

House member has change of heart

PIONEER PRESS JUL 7 '09
By Bill Salisbury
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✓ State Rep.
Tom Emmer
previously
served on
two city
councils.

State Rep. Tom Emmer, a Delano Republican and perhaps the most loquacious floor debater in the Minnesota House, announced Monday that he will run for governor in 2010.

"Now is the time for real leadership," Emmer said in a press release. "We must turn the tide on the rapid growth of government. If our great state is ever going to return to the days of prosperity, the days when we attracted the best of the best, the most innovative and the most creative, we must fundamentally change our course."

Emmer, 48, is serving his third term in the House, representing District 19B, which covers eastern Wright County.

An attorney and an outspoken conservative, he frequently led the charge against Democratic tax and spending bills during House floor debates. He was the deputy House minority leader during the 2007 and 2008 sessions.

Emmer's announcement reflects a change of heart. When Gov. Tim Pawlenty announced last month that he would not seek a third term, Emmer at first said he wasn't interested in the job but wouldn't rule it out. Instead, he announced his intention to run for the House minority leader's post Rep. Marty Seifert vacated.

But he pulled out of that race and threw his support to Rep. Kurt Zellers, the newly elected House GOP leader. The night Zellers was elected two weeks ago, Emmer told reporters he was thinking about running for governor.

"Over the past couple of decades, we have stood silently by as the public bureaucracies have grown at an astounding pace at the expense of our private economy," he said in his press release. "Our employers are leaving. Our jobs have been following them. This cannot continue if our children and grandchildren have any hope of enjoying the American dream here in Minnesota."

Before he was elected to the House in 2004, Emmer served on the Independence and Delano city councils. He and his wife, Jacquie, have seven children.

He joins a crowded early field in the governor's race. At least six other past or current Republican legislators either have announced or have filed papers with the state campaign finance board so they can raise money for the race. Ten more, including former U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman and former U.S. Rep. Jim Ramstad, reportedly are exploring a run.

Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, officially kicks off his campaign today with a news conference in Fridley, the start of a four-day 14-city tour.

On the Democratic side, eight candidates either have announced or filed campaign papers for governor, and at least five others are thinking about it.

For more information about Emmer, visit his Web site at www.emmerforgovernor.com.

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Medical marijuana is OK'd, but a veto looms

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E12.24 E16.16

● Pot use would only be for the terminally ill. Lawmakers also voted to make not wearing a seat belt a primary offense.

By KEVIN DUCHSCHERE
and PAT DOYLE
Star Tribune staff writers

STAR TRIBUNE MAY 19 '09

A bill that permits terminally ill patients to use marijuana to ease their pain cleared the House and Senate on Monday night, a measure significantly narrowed from an earlier version that would have allowed any suffering patient, terminal or not, to use the drug for medical purposes.

The House passed the bill, 70-64, a victory for supporters who have long worked to get medical marijuana legalized in Minnesota, but one not nearly big enough to override the likely veto by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Hoping to make the bill more palatable to Pawlenty, Rep. Joe Atkins, DFL-Inver Grove Heights, introduced the last-

minute amendment to allow marijuana to be used only by terminal patients. But there seemed little chance that Pawlenty, who has long expressed reservations, was inclined to approve the bill in any form.

The Senate, which previously had passed a broader version, took up the amended bill after the House vote and approved it, 38-28.

The issue of medical marijuana, which has been legalized by 13 states, prompted impassioned debate that pitted concern for the suffering against worries that legalizing the drug even for limited use would lead to increased drug addiction and crime.

The Atkins amendment made no difference to Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, who insisted on calling the drug

"medicinal pot."

"It is a gateway drug. It does lead to other issues," he said.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," said Rep. Thomas Huntley, DFL-Duluth, a sponsor of the bill.

Rep. Tony Cornish, R-Good Thunder, who is a police chief, said the potential benefits of the legislation didn't outweigh its drawbacks. Legalizing marijuana even for limited circumstances will lead to problems for officers, he said. "I'm just not willing to give up on the war on drugs," Cornish said.

But other members said they favored the measure, citing sick family members who they said might have suffered less if they had access to medical marijuana. Rep. Rick Hansen, DFL-South St. Paul, his voice shaky, said that after a while morphine didn't help his dying mother.

And Rep. Mark Buesgens, R-

Jordan, a usually reliable conservative vote, said that medical marijuana wasn't a partisan issue. "Let's do the right thing for a few people," said Buesgens, who voted for the bill.

Seat belt bill

The House and Senate passed a bill that would allow police to pull over drivers if they or their passengers aren't wearing seat belts. Right now, officers must see another traffic offense before they can stop a motorist and ticket someone for not being strapped in.

Proponents described the requirement as a major safety measure and said the rule would help secure federal transportation funding. Opponents argued that wearing a seat belt should be voluntary and warned that mandating it could result in racial profiling. The fine for the offense: \$25.

Legacy funds

The House passed a bill allocating \$234 million for programs for the outdoors, clean water, parks and arts, as provided by the Legacy Amendment sales tax voters approved last year. The Senate was expected to take up the measure.

Anti-bullying bill

An expanded state policy against bullying and intimidation in public schools would take effect next year under a bill passed by both houses.

School districts would be required to adopt their own written policies by next summer that address various harassment scenarios, including those using the Internet. The policies would apply to students, teachers, administrators and other school employees.

Employees would have to be

trained on preventing and responding to bullying.

Election bill

Both chambers passed a compromise that overhauls some of the state's elections laws and moves up the state's primary elections from September to early August. However, the final deal dropped a provision that would have allowed early voting. And it didn't include a requirement sought by Republicans that voters show photo ID cards at the polls.

The bill establishes centralized boards to count absentee ballots, allows voters to go online to confirm they're registered, and prevents courts from letting campaigns decide whether specific absentee ballots are valid.

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C152.5 TIM KINGSTON, Fridley
STAR TRIBUNE MAY 2 '09
POLITICIZING CRIME

Grandstanding measures will make us less safe

Last-minute amendments at the Legislature display politics as usual, not good leadership.

- ✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, wants all "predatory offenders" to have "Mr. Yuck" license plates. Rep.
- ✓ Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, wants to ban those convicted of "crimes against property" from working in building weatherization programs
- ✓ for life. He and Sen. Warren Limmer also think some ex-offenders should not be eligible for public assistance, and 112 representatives actually voted for this amendment.

These proposals will only make it more difficult than it already is for ex-offenders to safely rejoin our communities, and will take resources from smart public safety programs, making Minnesota less safe. They also don't say much for our belief in redemption, forgiveness and human dignity.

I think these legislators know this, and don't even care if they pass. In the next election, they just want candidates to be able to say, once again, "Representative X voted to hide sex-offenders in your neighborhood."

Please thank the legislators who did have the courage and sense to oppose these proposals. The good news is their ranks seem to be growing.

MARK HAASE, Minneapolis; director of public policy, Council on Crime and Justice

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M124.8 Sponsor of DWI change has 2-ticket DWI record

• The incidents involving GOP's Emmer aren't recent, and a DFL panel chairman still backs the measure.

STAR TRIBUNE MAR 30 '09
By JIM FOTI • jfoti@startribune.com

In the era of the Internet, a mistake you made nearly 20 years ago may be just a click away from publicity.

That's what state Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, was reminded over the weekend when a former staffer for Democrat Al Franken used a personal blog to post court records of DWI charges filed against Emmer in 1991. The blogger, Dusty Trice, said he had read about a legislative bill that would delay revocation of licenses for suspected drunken drivers — a measure sponsored by Emmer.

Trice said Sunday that he often looks through public records and meant "absolutely no malice toward Representative Emmer." His post, in fact, did not criticize Emmer, even though Trice's blog describes itself as "the kind that attacks Republicans."



✓ Tom Emmer

Emmer, who was 30 at the time, pleaded guilty to careless driving, while two drunken-driving charges and a license-plate charge were dropped. He also received a DWI-related ticket in 1981, when he was 20.

Emmer said Sunday that he'd learned from the mistakes. "We all come to the Legislature with life experiences, but it has nothing to do with this bill," he said. "This is a good bill."

✓ Rep. John Lesch, DFL-St. Paul, is chairman of the House committee on crime victims and criminal records, one of two panels that endorsed Emmer's bill last week. Lesch said Sunday that he wasn't aware of Emmer's driving record and would have voted for the measure either way.

"When I look at the bill, I'm going to look at the bill independent of any record from the author, especially if it's from 1991," Lesch said. The bill's merits lie in its efforts to address the shortfalls in the judicial system, he said.

Currently, suspected drunken drivers face revocation before they go to court. The minimums are 90 days for failing a sobriety test and a year for refusing a test. Under Emmer's proposal, drivers would be subject to revocations of at least 30 and 60 days for failing or refusing tests, but only after they're convicted or plead guilty.

"I think some have suggested that it lessens penalties. ... It doesn't at all," Emmer said, noting that the idea was brought to him by municipal prosecutors. He also said that revocations under the current law don't in fact happen immediately.

Sponsor of DWI change has DWI record

◀ DWI FROM A9

Emmer and other supporters say the law drives up costs by requiring separate hearings for the civil revocation and for the criminal DWI case. Budget cuts have caused some courts to give drivers their licenses back rather than fight lawsuits over the revocations.

Opponents of the change include Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and Stephen Simon, the head of the state's DWI task force, who say the measure would reduce the deterring effect of the implied-consent law, which gives police the authority to give sobriety tests. They're planning to continue to fight the bill.

Emmer will be hard at work as well, though he said Sunday there's a new item on his to-do list: "Now I get to explain [this] to my kids."

Jim Foti • 612-673-4491

DWI continues on A11

/ > **Keeping it clean**

Protect the vote — require a photo ID

Of the following activities, which one do you think should have the greatest level of protection to prevent fraud and abuse: opening a checking account, renting a movie, buying a drink at a bar, confirming seats on an airplane or casting a vote in an election?

PIONEER PRESS JAN 29 '09

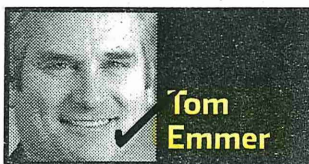
For all but one of the above activities, most people wouldn't think twice about showing a photo ID when asked. During the course of a normal day, being asked to show a photo ID generally isn't unexpected. But for some reason, whenever the issue of requiring a photo ID to vote is even suggested, the tone of response from opponents quickly becomes uncivil and unhelpful.

Countless challenges and (even the threat of) litigation have irrevocably changed the way we as Americans conduct elections. But it is imperative that we maintain the integrity of the electoral process and thus the public's confidence in that process. Voters want to know that their contribution to our enduring democracy will not be cancelled out through fraud or abuse. We simply must have something in law that allows poll workers and those charged with facilitating our elections to quickly and without hassle confirm a voter's identity.

Citizens have a right to know that every election, no matter the margin of victory, is concluded fairly with respect to the idea of one person, one vote.

While one part of the solution came from our elected officials in Washington in the form of the Help America Vote Act, the second — and I think far more important part — must come from the individual states. Since enactment of the Help America Vote Act in 2002, several states — including Georgia and Indiana, which attracted publicity for their efforts — have proposed tougher voter identification standards: standards that require photo ID to vote. Despite furious legal challenges, national polling shows that almost 80 percent of American citizens agree that photo ID should be required to verify identity before casting a ballot.

Photo identification requirements are designed to do one thing: prevent fraud in our elections. Unfortunately, the occurrence of fraud in our voting system is all too prevalent. The Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform (chaired by former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker) made such a determination when it released its report in 2005. The



**Tom
Emmer**

report cited numerous examples from other states that demonstrate how fraud has played a role in recent U.S. elections. One such case in East Chicago, Ind., resulted in the Indiana Supreme Court invalidating a mayoral

primary based on evidence of rampant absentee ballot fraud that included the use of a vacant lot as an address for nonresident voters.

But critics of requiring photo ID at the polls argue that it somehow violates the First and 14th amendments to the Constitution because it imposes an unwarranted burden on a person's right to vote. Opponents claim it's a burden that would fall disproportionately on minorities and other groups that tend to vote in lower numbers. I'm not sure how carrying a (free, if need be) state-issued photo ID card imposes a burden on American citizens, but if someone has an explanation, I'm willing to listen.

A 2007 study by the Institute for Public Policy at the University of Missouri found that when a photo ID requirement was instituted before that state's 2006 elections, not only did voter turnout increase by two percentage points compared with a similar off-year election in 2002, but that there was "no consistent evidence" that counties with higher percentages of minorities, poor, elderly or less-educated population suffered "any reduction in voter turnout relative to other counties." To me, an increase in voter turnout and no undue burden on voters seems to be a goal that everyone, regardless of political ideology or party affiliation, should be willing to support.

We as elected officials are slowly realizing the destructive force that voter fraud can have on our system of government. Citizens have a right to know that every election, no matter the margin of victory, is concluded fairly with respect to the idea of one person, one vote.

Requiring a photo ID at the polls will go a long way toward ensuring that future elections are conducted fairly in every instance and voters who play by the rules are protected.

Tom Emmer, of Delano, is the lead Republican on the State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

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Delano Republican to run for governor

● Rep. Tom Emmer is one of the most outspoken conservatives in the House. He is the third candidate to announce a run since Pawlenty decided not to seek a third term.

STAR TRIBUNE JUL 7

By KEVIN DUCHSCHERE
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✓ State Rep. Tom Emmer, one of the Minnesota House's most outspoken conservatives, announced Monday that he is joining a rapidly expanding field of candidates running for governor in 2010.

The Delano Republican said in a statement that it is time to turn back the tide of governmental growth, and use leadership and innovation to usher in a new era of prosperity.

"Minnesota can no longer tolerate career politicians with no experience beyond the walls of our Capitol or gov-



Emmer

ernment bureaucracies," Emmer said. "Over the past couple of decades, we have stood silently by as the public bureaucracies have grown at an astounding pace at the expense of our private economy.... This cannot continue if our children and grandchildren have any hope of enjoying the American dream here in Minnesota."

Emmer, 48, is a trial lawyer who has made a name for himself representing insurance companies and the insurance interests of several cities and

counties in Minnesota. He was raised in Edina and received his law degree from William Mitchell College of Law in 1984.

Emmer served on city councils in Independence and Delano for 10 years before being elected to the House in 2004. He has said that high taxes were his prime motivation for seeking public office, but he first won wide attention for sponsoring legislation to mandate castration of some sex offenders. He also has fought to require voters to show photo IDs to prevent fraud.

In 2006, then-House Minority Leader Marty Seifert named Emmer deputy minority lead-

er. Last year Emmer challenged Seifert for the top position but lost.

Seifert is expected to formally announce his candidacy for governor this morning.

Several Republicans — including announced candidates Rep. Paul Kohls of Victoria, Sen. Mike Jungbauer of East Bethel and former state Rep. Bill Haas of Champlin — have been weighing a run since Gov. Tim Pawlenty said last month that he won't be seeking a third term.

One possible candidate is former U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman, who conceded the long-running Senate race to Al Franken last week and said that he may have an announcement soon on his political plans.

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HB 7B

Rural health co-op looks for help, but finds trouble

FTC warns of higher costs, reveals probe into possible price fixing

PIONEER PRESS APR 3 '09
By Jason Hoppin
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Hoping to preserve rural health services, a group of Minnesota hospitals and clinics banded together 15 years ago to do what several Minnesota industries have done in the state's history — they formed a cooperative.

That endeavor now is under attack by health care plans and federal regulators in an assault co-op supporters say imperils rural medical care as the state knows it, along with a Minnesota tradition.

"This is like making Goldy Gopher illegal," said David Balto, a Washington, D.C., antitrust lawyer who is defending the Minnesota Rural Health Cooperative (MRHC), a coalition of dozens of hospitals and clinics dotting the sparsely populated plains of southwest Minnesota. "This is something essential to the Minnesota economy."

The early-1990s formation of a health

RURAL HEALTH CO-OP, 3A

* twincities.com St. Paul Pioneer Press

CONTINUED FROM 1A

> Rural health co-op

provider cooperative was a new development in Minnesota's history of using co-ops to sustain small, rural enterprises. Others have since formed, but the MRHC remains the largest.

The co-op had the blessing of the Legislature, which looked past potential antitrust issues in the interest of preserving health care access for rural Minnesotans. But when the co-op asked the Legislature this year for legislation to cement its antitrust exemption and provide for oversight of the contracts it negotiates, all hell broke loose.

The Federal Trade Commission weighed in on the bill, which has been offered in the House and Senate, saying it would drive up health care costs for patients, employers, insurers and government health care programs.

In addition, the FTC revealed it had been investigating the MRHC since 2005, looking into "serious allegations that MRHC engaged in collective negotiation of physician, hospital and pharmacy prices."

The FTC would not comment on its investigation beyond a 10-page letter it sent to Rep. Tom Emmer. The Delano Republican had asked the FTC to comment on the bill and then released its response.

According to the letter, the agency told the MRHC to quit misrepresenting FTC staff views on the bill in testimony to Minnesota legislative committees.

The MRHC denied the alle-

gations, saying it hasn't violated any laws. U.S. Reps. Collin Peterson and Tim Walz have weighed in, siding with the co-op in a letter they sent early last year to the FTC to stress how the co-op has aided rural residents.

The tussle came to a head at a House committee hearing this week when Rep. Larry Hosch, DFL-St. Joseph, defended the co-op against critics.

"It's extremely important for providing access, especially in the rural areas. To say that this would allow for collusion, or prohibited practices, (it) would not happen," said Hosch.

He cited portions of the bill barring anticompetitive practices and added the bill doesn't change anything from the way the co-op has always operated.

"If what you're proposing makes sense for Minnesota, don't you think we should address what's in the letter?" Emmer replied. "That's all I'm saying."

Cooperatives are a part of Minnesota's history. Land O'Lakes, for example, began in 1921 as the Minnesota Creameries Cooperative Association. And the Capper-Volstead Act, which creates antitrust exemptions for farmer cooperatives, borrows its name from former Minnesota representative Andrew Volstead.

The Minnesota Rural Health Cooperative seeks to support and promote the vitality of medical providers not having the size and strength of large urban hospitals. By combining forces, health care providers hoped to achieve the negotiating power of larger hospitals, save small providers from the pressures of consolidation and make it easier for rural Minnesotans to get health care.

While critics have no problem with the co-op negotiating cheaper prices on linens, drugs and other purchases, they do have issues when clinics and hospitals combine forces as sellers of health care

services. Those alliances raise antitrust issues because providers could set artificially high prices, they contend.

"We're convinced ... that these are not, in fact, good for local health care markets or consumers," said Thomas Pursell, a former head of the Minnesota Attorney General's Office's antitrust division who is lobbying against the bill on behalf of the Minnesota Council of Health Plans.

But others support the co-op, including the Minnesota Hospital Association. Laurence

Massa, association president, said the co-op has helped level the negotiating playing field for smaller health care providers.

"They've been negotiating with health plans since the mid-90s, and I'm not aware of any problems with that," Massa said.

While Balto, the Minnesota Rural Health Cooperative lawyer, admits providers negotiate as sellers collectively, he said health plans are always free to leave the table and deal with hospitals and clinics indi-

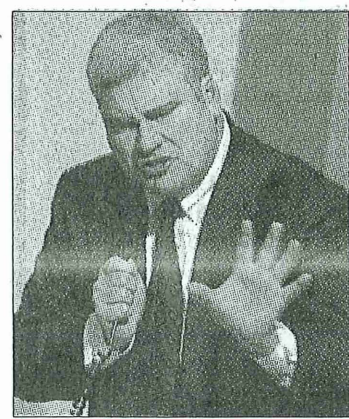
vidually. And even if insurance companies negotiated lower prices with hospitals and clinics, there's no evidence they would pass those savings on to consumers, he said.

Balto said health plans, to cut their costs, want to eliminate hospitals and clinics.

"It is in the insurance companies' interest to have as few providers as possible and make people drive as far as possible," Balto said. "The purpose of the co-op is access — to provide better access for consumers."

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\$1 billion^{B30.4} tax hike passes House, Senate



MARLIN LEVISON • Star Tribune
✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, of Delano, was one of the Republicans speaking out against the tax bill on Friday.

- Pawlenty vowed to reject as soon as he can the plan to raise income and alcohol revenue.

By PATRICIA LOPEZ
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STAR TRIBUNE MAY 9 - '09
Despite a governor vowing to veto the bill as soon as he can "get the cap off the pen," the DFL-controlled Minnesota House and Senate voted Friday for a bill that would raise income taxes on the wealthiest 2 percent of Minnesotans, boost alcohol taxes by four to five cents a drink and throw a hefty surcharge on credit card companies that charged high interest rates.

The bill would raise \$1 billion

over two years and dedicate the money to schools, hospitals and nursing homes. It would, DFLers say, take the place of Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposal to borrow a similar amount through appropriation bonds.

The House's approval came on a 86-45 vote. Later in the evening, the Senate passed the bill 44-20.

Passage of the bill sets up a showdown with the governor, who has refused to consider tax increases as a means of solving

the state's \$4.6 billion deficit.

Before the House vote, Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, said DFLers have tried to compromise with Pawlenty, making even deeper spending cuts than he had, but DFLers had been frustrated by what she called his "tremendous stubbornness in attitude."

If he remained inflexible, she said, legislators "will be left with only one choice, and that is

Capitol continues on A13 ▶

WHAT THE BILL WOULD DO

- Create a fourth-tier income tax rate of 9 percent for high-income earners.
- Raise sales taxes from 2.5 percent to 5 percent on alcoholic beverages.
- Charge credit-card companies a 30 percent surtax on income from interest exceeding 15 percent.
- Grant higher tax credits to small-batch brewers.
- Raise \$1 billion over two years.

(Over)

House, Senate back \$1 billion tax hike, but veto is looming

◀ CAPITOL FROM A1

to attempt an override."

DFLers have successfully overridden the governor only once before, when they peeled off six Republicans in 2007 to increase the gas tax. This time, because of bulked-up numbers from the 2008 election, the DFL would need all of its members and only three GOP votes in the House. Senate DFLers already have a veto-proof majority.

Going to the mat

"This is a defining moment of this session," said Rep. Paul Marquart, DFL-Dilworth. "With 10 days to go, this is a game-changer. It breaks our logjam and moves us closer to a successful session and one we can get done on time."

But Marquart and others signaled that, having found unity on a select number of taxes, DFLers may be prepared to go beyond the scheduled May 18 adjournment, if necessary. "We are willing to go to the mat to protect our senior citizens, our young families, our students," Marquart said. "Dollar for dollar, dime for dime, this money goes to fund our most cherished priorities."

In a letter to House and Senate leaders before the votes, Pawlenty, too, sounded determined to resist what he called "a hastily processed and ill-considered tax increase proposal."

Pawlenty asked in the letter that the Legislature send him the bill "today so I can veto it immediately and leave a maximum number of days for better legislation to be considered and passed."

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, R-Marshall,

called the legislation "a really bad bill ... cobbled together in the dark of night," that would leave the state with one of the highest alcohol taxes in the country and the fourth-highest income tax rate.

Sen. Geoff Michel, R-Edina, said the bill would kill jobs. "We're going to get to watch the governor play catch-and-release," he said, playing on today's state fishing opener. "This is going to be the fastest veto in the history of Minnesota."

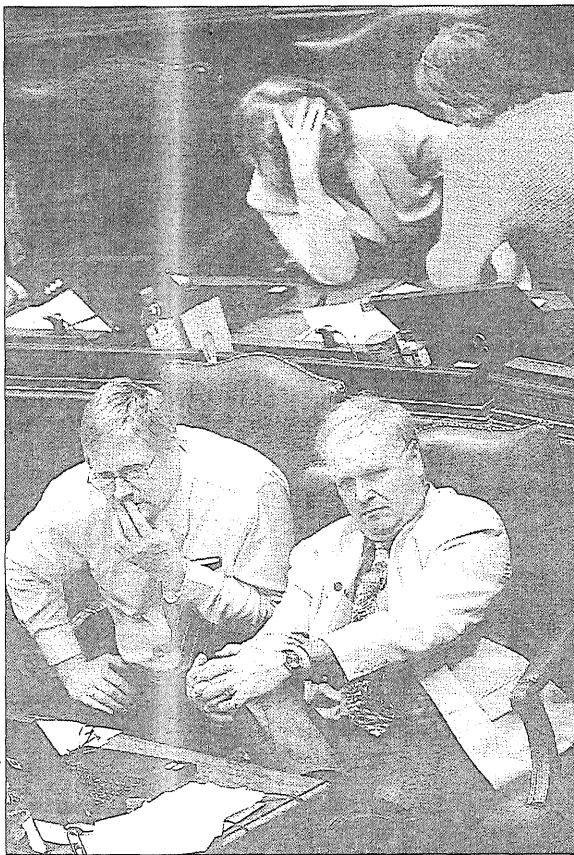
Who pays

The bill is the product of a late compromise between House and Senate DFLers after they realized they could not get enough support even from their own members for earlier and far heftier tax proposals. This bill limits its bite to a fraction of the population and those taxes that polls have indicated a majority of Minnesotans support.

More than 65 percent of the income taxes would be paid by those who net more than \$1 million a year and 94 percent of small businesses would see no change in their tax bills, according to nonpartisan House research. The income tax hike is scheduled to sunset in 2014 if the state is in the black by then.

Pawlenty and GOP legislators have insisted that higher income taxes would further damage a fragile economy and could send jobs out of the state.

But DFLers countered that health care has become a major industry in the state, with hospitals and nursing homes providing not only a valuable service, but economic lifeblood to struggling rural areas. They expect to bring that last point home to Republican legislators



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GOP Reps. Paul Anderson, of Starbuck, left, and Dean Urdahl, of Grove City, took in the House debate on Friday. The House passed the bill, a compromise between House and Senate DFLers, 86-45.

« I DIDN'T COME HERE TO RAISE TAXES, BUT I DIDN'T COME HERE TO DISMANTLE MINNESOTA. »

Rep. Ann Lenczewski, DFL-Bloomington, chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee

with nursing homes and hospitals in their districts that are on the point of financial ruin.

While a number of Republicans pledged on the floor that they would not be swayed, House Taxes Committee Chairwoman Ann Lenczewski, DFL-Bloomington, urged them to keep an open mind. "We know that sometimes people think anew when they have to make choices," she said. "If there are people who want to say they value million-dollar earners

over our schools, our health care, vote no. I didn't come here to raise taxes, but I didn't come here to dismantle Minnesota."

As distasteful as raising taxes might be, she said, the alternative was Pawlenty's "debt-borrowing scheme" that would keep the state paying interest for years.

Sen. Tom Bakke, the Senate Taxes Committee chairman, said the bill was hardly perfect. But borrowing money to close the deficit, he said, was "unac-

ceptable."

The bill also would make a potentially major change to Minnesota's credit card market, with a special 30 percent surcharge tacked on to earnings a company made from interest rates above 15 percent.

Kelliher said the provision was intended to rein in companies who were "gouging their customers," and would produce \$230 million over two years. But Republicans warned of unintended consequences.

"In the last 10 years I don't think I've seen a tax provision more imprudent," said Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess. "This has the possibility of having a permanent credit crunch in this state." He predicted that costs would be passed on to consumers and could result in far tighter credit.

Deeper cuts

Even with the \$1 billion tax increase, DFLers must still find an additional \$500 million to \$700 million to bring their budgets into balance. That could well mean additional cuts to every major part of state government, including schools, health care, public safety or higher education.

DFLers are trying to avoid Pawlenty's level of health care cuts, which would eliminate eligibility for 113,000 Minnesotans by 2011, when federal bailout money runs out.

"This is a sham," said Rep. Sarah Anderson, R-Plymouth. "This is your idea of bold leadership? I think it's time for you to step aside."

But House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm, said he recalled the last time the state had to fill a \$4.5 billion shortfall, just after Pawlenty took office in 2003. That year, he said, schools were cut and the remedies fell heaviest on the state's most vulnerable citizens.

"Bad things happened in this state," he said. Now, he said, the time had come to stop saying no and "try to say yes."

Staff writer Kevin Duchscherer contributed to this story.

Patricia Lopez • 651-222-1288

19B

✓ E76.16 No-excuse early voting bill approved by House

By Bill Salisbury

bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com
PIONEER PRESS MAY 15 '09

Minnesotans could vote before Election Day without an excuse, and absentee ballots would be counted more reliably under a bill passed Thursday by the House.

✓ The bill's sponsor, Rep. Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley, said it was drafted to correct flaws in the state voting system that became apparent during the still-undecided U.S. Senate election between Republican incumbent Norm Coleman and Democrat Al Franken. He said the measure should ensure that every vote is counted.

✓ No-excuse early voting is a "matter of convenience for voters who have increasingly busy lives," said Rep. Will Morgan, DFL-Burnsville.

The change would allow voters to show up at their city halls or courthouses four to 15 days before an election and vote "exactly like they would on Election Day," Morgan said.

The early voting would be faster and simpler than voting by absentee ballot, which requires completing complicated paperwork. Thirty-two other states allow no-excuse early voting.

The bill passed on an 87-46 vote, largely along party lines.

✓ Republicans opposed the legislation primarily because it would not require voters to show photo identification before voting. Rep. Tom

Emmer, R-Delano, said photo IDs would prevent voter fraud.

The bill would standardize absentee voting procedures across the state. It would create local absentee ballot boards to accept or reject ballots and require those boards

to notify voters whose ballots were rejected so they could vote again.

Local election judges no longer would have to make subjective judgments about voters' signatures on absentee ballots and applications. Voters would be identified by their Social Security and driver's license numbers.

The bill now goes to a House-Senate conference committee, which will try to work out differences between the measures passed by the two chambers.

The House bill does not include Senate provisions to move the state primary election to June from September and fill congressional vacancies by special elections, instead of appointments by the governor.



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## Politics In Minnesota: The Weekly Report

**Volume 4, Issue 47**  
**May 29, 2009**

(An excerpt from this issue)

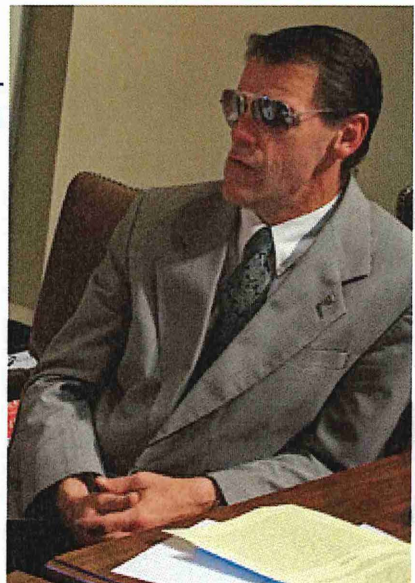
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Twitter on trial

Since Twitter has become part of the online Minnesota political landscape, it comes as no surprise that legislators would object to some of the tweeting. But two House members' objections have now become the subject of a formal House Ethics hearing. The complaint was filed by Reps. **Mark Buesgens** (R-Jordan) and **Tom Emmer** (R-Delano). Here's what happened.

During the long and testy debate on the House tax bill, Rep. **Paul Gardner** (DFL-Shoreview) [sent these tweets](#).

Gardner sent another tweet about Buesgens wearing sunglasses. "Why is Buesgens wearing sunglasses? Black eye?" Referring to Buesgens' thesaurus-like grasp of terms for political theater, he also wrote, "Buesgens or **Woody Allen**? I object..This trial is a travesty..of a mockery of a sham of a mockery of a travesty of two mockeries of a sham," referring to the classic comedy Bananas. [This [photo portion is from Don Davis](#).]



Emmer maintains that the tweet about him "dishonestly suggested that [Gardner was] harassing female colleagues." Buesgens, that the tweet about him "was clearly suggesting that Rep. Buesgens has been involved in a violent confrontation."

In their complaint, Buesgens and Emmer contend that Gardner violated the spirit of the House's code of ethical conduct. The details of the violations are spelled out here [in the complaint](#).

PIM talked to both Buesgens and Emmer this week, and reminded them that defamatory remarks about elected officials are a dime a dozen online. Both responded, true, but that

accusations of sexual harassment and assault crossed an important line. Plus, like all things online, they live forever.

Apparently, as most House speakers do, House Speaker **Margaret Kelliher** (DFL-Minneapolis), upon receiving the complaint, tried to broker an acceptable resolution to all parties to avoid convening the House Ethics Committee. Buesgens and Emmer wanted a letter of apology, [which they got](#), and a verbal apology on the House floor, which they did not get. *PIM* asked Gardner why he didn't offer one, and he responded that he thought the letter was sufficient.

That brings us to the hearing, to be held next Tuesday, June 2 in the State Office Building, which will be broadcast on the House feed online. [[Here's the official letter.](#)]

That is surprising on two fronts. We had forgotten that House Ethics Committee hearings are always public unless a majority votes to close the doors (which could happen here, but we doubt it). And, two, a quick check with House Director of Public Information Services **Barry LaGrave** confirmed that other House Ethics Committees have also been televised (two complaints against former GOP Rep. **Arlon Lindner** in 2000 and 2003).

Back to the merits. The *PIM* office is all over the map here. Some of us think that Buesgens and Emmer are right: lines were crossed and defamation occurred. But some of us also think that the Internet is information central for tons of derogatory information obtainable in nanosecond Google searches. However, we do all agree that a Twitter tweet is a publication. Should be fascinating watching the House Ethics Committee explore the issues. The committee is chaired by Rep. **Mary Murphy** (DFL-Hermantown), vice chaired by Rep. **Steve Smith** (R-Mound) and includes as members, Reps. **Mary Liz Holberg** (R-Lakeville) and Rep. **Steve Simon** (DFL-St. Louis Park) with Reps. **Tina Liebling** (DFL-Rochester) and **Ron Shimanski** (R-Silver Lake) as alternates.



• [Gardner53A](#): My apologies to my colleagues Rep. Emmer & Bucsgens! <http://tinyurl.com/ryfujk> (expand) A legislator fesses up to his mistake.
1 day ago from [TweetDeck](#) · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



• [Gardner53A](#): Emmer seems to belittle his female colleagues (rage, sarcasm) on the floor more than the men? Great face to the GOP?
6 days ago from [TweetDeck](#) · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



• [Gardner53A](#): Four \$1B options: borrowing, gaming, taxes, or cuts to schools, hospitals, nursing homes in addition to our cuts > than Guv
6 days ago from [TweetDeck](#) · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



• [Gardner53A](#): Why is Bucsgens wearing sunglasses? Black eye?
6 days ago from [TweetDeck](#) · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



• [Gardner53A](#): I'm sure everyone is thinking that legislators get per diem according to number of words uttered on the floor...
6 days ago from [TweetDeck](#) · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



• [Gardner53A](#): Bucsgens or Woody Allen? I object..This trial is a travesty..of a mockery of a sham of a mockery of a travesty of two mockeries of a sham.
7 days ago from [TweetDeck](#) · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

Paul Gardner
State Representative

District 53A
Anoka and Ramsey Counties



**Minnesota
House of
Representative**

May 11, 2009

The Honorable Tom Emmer
301 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Mark Buesgens
307 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representatives Emmer and Buesgens:

As the legislative session winds down, tensions often run high. As members of the majority and the minority do their best to stand up for their principles and see the session to a timely and successful conclusion, there will be friction between the caucuses and among individual members. Despite these pressures, it is the responsibility of all members of the Minnesota House of Representatives to conduct themselves with the highest level of professionalism and decorum, and to focus on differences of policy and not on personalities.

On Friday, May 8th, I failed in that responsibility. Using a new social networking framework – Twitter – I sent out two messages that were disparaging of you and Representative Buesgens personally. I apologize for this transgression. We often get emotional during important debate, and tempers can flare, but that can be no excuse. Late Friday, I deleted the offending “tweets” so that they are no longer on the system.

Having reflected on this event for several days, I pledge to do my utmost to comply not just with the letter but the spirit of our House rules and standards of decorum. My hope is that during these final tense days of the session, this incident will help focus all members on the need to elevate the political debate to a higher level.

During these last days of reflection, I also recalled that it was Rep. Emmer who was the first of the Republican House caucus to greet me on the first working day of my first term. You went out of your way, and I at once felt welcome in the House. I hope that we might renew that initial camaraderie and ask for your pardon.

I wish you the best for the remainder of the session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Gardner". The signature is fluid and cursive.
Paul Gardner

May 15, 2009

HAND DELIVERED

Honorable Margaret Anderson Kelliher
Minnesota House of Representatives
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Gardner Ethics Complaint

Madam Speaker:

On Friday, May 8, 2009, Representative Mark Buesgens and I presented you with an ethics complaint. The Complaint addressed false and defamatory statements published by Representative Paul Gardner. After receiving the Complaint, Representative Gardner did provide us with a letter of apology.

On Tuesday, May 12, 2009, you met with us and Representative Gardner, Representative Seifert and Michael Charboneau to discuss a possible resolution of the Complaint. During the meeting, Representative Gardner acknowledged his actions and expressed remorse. We discussed the indelible realities of the internet and real and potential ramifications of publishing false statements on "Twitter" and "Facebook." You referred to the existing House policy addressing electronic communication(s) and you suggested that members probably needed reminding of the policy. You also discussed the possibility of Representative Gardner publishing his written apology on the internet and that he would make a public apology on the House floor if Representative Buesgens and I agreed to withdraw our Complaint. At the conclusion of our meeting, it was agreed that Representative Seifert would discuss the matter with his Executive Board and that we would reconvene to confirm whether we would agree to withdraw our Complaint if Representative Gardner followed through on the proposed publication of his written apology and a public apology on the House floor.

On Wednesday, May 13, 2009, without a conclusion to our meeting (and without warning) Representative Gardner published his written apology to all members by e-mail during a House floor session. Unfortunately, Representative Gardner's e-mail led unaware members to believe that he was apologizing for a mistake he made in his communications with a couple of fellow members. On Thursday, May 14th, in response to an e-mail from Representative Mariani, I attempted to clarify for members that Representative Gardner's conduct went well beyond an excusable mistake in how he communicated with colleagues. Later that evening, the members received an e-mail from you reminding of written policy relating to electronic communication. I responded directly by thanking you for sending the reminder.

Yesterday, in the morning, Representative Buesgens and I met with Mr. Charboneau at

Yesterday, in the morning, Representative Buesgens and I met with Mr. Charboneau at his request. I understood Mr. Charboneau was following up on our earlier meeting. Neither Representative Buesgens, nor I ever received a follow up from Representative Seifert with any direction from House GOP leadership.

During our meeting with Mr. Charboneau, we expressed our concerns with Representative Gardner's publication of the matter without explanation to the members before the parties to our meeting on the 12th had agreed how the matter would best be handled. Despite our concerns, we advised Mr. Charboneau that if Representative Gardner followed through on the public apology (so members understand the gravity of his actions and to eliminate any misunderstanding) we would agree to withdraw our Complaint as you requested. At the conclusion of this meeting, we understood the matter would be resolved before the end of the day Friday.

At approximately 9 pm on Friday night, Representative Buesgens and I were called to a meeting in the Clerk's Office with Mr. Charboneau. At that meeting, Mr. Charboneau advised that Representative Gardner felt he had generally complied with the intent of the proposal for resolution that you had negotiated and that he was not inclined to follow through with his public apology. Considering our discussions and your prompt and good faith handling of this serious matter, I was - to say the least - surprised and disappointed by Representative Gardner's sudden change of heart.

As I explained to Representative Mariani, I accept Representative Gardner's apology but I think it is clear that he fails to recognize the real issue. This is NOT an issue of how to communicate WITH your colleagues. This is an issue involving the knowing publication of false and defamatory statements about the character and reputation of two members that are doing nothing more than representing their constituents. No one will dispute that it is always fair game to attack a philosophy or legislative proposal. Similarly, no one can disagree that it is not acceptable nor excusable to purposely defame the character of fellow members into a public arena where the false statements can never be fully withdrawn or remedied.

I understood your suggested resolution was sincere. I think it extremely unfortunate for the institution and everyone involved that Representative Gardner was unwilling to follow through and now that the matter must move forward. I do hope this is not a foreboding of future dealings between members involved in these matters. Again, we should never hesitate to publically and vigorously criticize the philosophy, the votes, the approach, the demeanor, and the volume of each other's debate . . . but no one (on either side of the aisle) should ever knowingly publish false and defamatory statements for no purpose other than to damage another member's reputation in the community and to attempt to silence a member through public intimidation. When false statements are published that have an impact on any member's family and potentially on a member's ability to provide for his/her family, there must be consequences. Again, this is not an issue of how we communicate with each other - this is an issue of public

defamation that goes well beyond the confines of this chamber

<http://www.politicsinminnesota.com/files/letter.jpg>

is not an issue of how we communicate with each other - this is an issue of public defamation that goes well beyond the confines of this chamber.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Tom Emmer
District 19B

76.62 I 4 Reforming ballot rules pushed back to next year

Voter ID feud holds up widely favored changes

PIONEER PRESS JUN 1 '09
By Bill Salisbury
bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com

The Minnesota Supreme Court will hear arguments today on the 2008 U.S. Senate race, which focused attention on glaring defects in the state's elections system that Democrats, Republicans and local officials agree need to be fixed.

The legal contest between Republican Norm Coleman and Democrat Al Franken centers on how absentee ballots were cast and counted.

State and local election officials agree on what reforms are needed, but change will have to wait.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie and the 2009 Legislature tried to correct those problems, but the election reform bill they produced fell victim to partisan bickering. Last month, the Democratic-Farmer-Labor-controlled House and Senate passed the legislation without a single Republican vote, and Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed it, saying election

ELECTION REFORM, 6A >

CONTINUED FROM 1A

> Election reform

ills should be bipartisan. "Unfortunately, this bill fails that test," he said.

Last week, Pawlenty, Ritchie and key legislators from both parties said in separate interviews that the absentee ballot system still needs to be fixed, and they hope to get the job done during the 2010 legislative session. The question is: Can they put aside their partisan differences on other election issues to solve the absentee ballot problem? The major players agree they should.

"Minnesota's system is pretty good," Pawlenty said last week. "It's not like we're taking a piece of junk and rebuilding it from the ground up. It needs some adjustments and improvements, but it's not overly complicated."

The problem stems, in large part, from the growing popularity of absentee ballots.

The number of absentee ballots cast nearly doubled last year, climbing from 162,000 in 2006 to about 300,000 in 2008. That's about 10 percent of the votes.

Those ballots had to be sorted and counted on Election Day by local election judges swamped by the largest voter turnout in state history.

Here's how Ritchie described the situation: "The procedure for sending out 300,000 absentee ballots to 4,000 polling places to be processed by 30,000 mostly volunteer election officials at the end of the day after 3 million voters walked through the door — when you say it out loud, that's crazy."

After the election, Ritchie solicited suggestions for repairs from city, county and township election officials. Their ideas were incorporated in the Legislature's major election reform bill of the session.

The bill's DFL sponsors tacked on several more-controversial provisions. They included measures to allow voters to cast regular ballots early without an excuse, move the primary election from September to August and provide online voter registration and automatic registration of driver's license applicants unless they opt out.

Republicans objected to many of those provisions, which they asserted would make it easier to vote without adding protections to prevent voter fraud. They wanted to require voters to provide photo identification before voting.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, said Democrats and Republicans have a fundamental disagreement over that issue. DFLers want to make it easier for more people to vote, he said, while the GOP argues for more steps to protect the integrity of the voting system.

"If you're going to reform the system to make it easier for people to exercise their right to vote, you can't just ignore the safety and security measures," Emmer said.

To placate the Republicans, the bill's DFL sponsors — Sen. Katie Sieben, of Newport, and Rep. Ryan Winkler, of Golden Valley — agreed to take all the contentious sections out of it. "The final bill was pretty stripped down and noncontroversial," Sieben said.

The bill's centerpiece would have streamlined the absentee ballot process. It would have shifted authority to count those ballots from precinct election volunteers and given it to more professional county elections officials, provided them more time to sort the ballots and permitted anyone whose ballot was rejected to cast another vote.

The measure also would have reduced the likelihood of election recounts and frivolous challenges to recounted ballots.

No one openly opposed those steps. But Winkler said Republicans objected to photo ID being left out of the bill.

"When we went to the Republicans and said, 'We'd like to get common-sense, non-controversial election reform work done and signed,' they said, 'Terrific. All you have to do is include photo ID,' " he said. "That was the ransom for getting anything done."

Democrats adamantly oppose photo ID. Why? "Because it would disenfranchise approximately 160,000 Minnesotans. They are largely senior citizens who don't have driver's licenses anymore," Sieben said.

Democrats also argue that the poor and disabled are least likely to have government-issued photo IDs. They also are more likely to vote for Democrats.

Ritchie, a Democrat, said that photo ID is a "controversial, partisan issue all over the country" and that no election reform bill that includes it would get bipartisan support.

But photo ID wasn't the only reason Republicans opposed the bill. Sen. Chris Gerlach, of Apple Valley, the lead Republican on the Senate election subcommittee, said the bill came up in the middle of the Coleman-Franken case, and GOP lawmakers wanted to see the Supreme Court's decision before making changes.

"The absentee ballot issue wasn't time-critical," Gerlach said, "and we wanted to see what the results of the court case were before we jumped into it, because we might do something wrong or leave something unfinished and then have to reopen it next year."

But Ritchie said all the absentee ballot issues were made clear weeks ago. "Those issues were thoroughly vetted by a dozen lawyers over eight weeks and thousands of hours of testimony by local election officials," he said, referring to hearings by the state canvassing board and a three-judge panel that ruled on the case April 13.

Pawlenty also vetoed the bill because it would have moved the primary from September to August. He said fewer people would turn out to vote during the dog days of summer.

That wasn't a partisan issue. Rep. Laura Brod, R-New Prague, said she proposed the change primarily to ensure there's enough time after the primary to get general election absentee ballots sent to military personnel overseas and returned. Ritchie said about 500 absentee ballots cast last year by soldiers in remote locations were returned late and not counted.

The U.S. Department of Defense requested that change.

Brod and Ritchie said they would try to revive the provision for an earlier primary next year.

Emmer said the uncounted votes are one reason many lawmakers are eager to take another run at fixing the absentee ballot system next year.

"When we hear from our constituents that their votes weren't counted, especially military folks who are stationed overseas, clearly something has to be done," he said.

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19B

POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Politicians take to Twitter

The Twitter short-message electronic networking system is becoming popular among politicians, many of whom now send tweets.

A recent message from House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm, tweaked politicians who visit Iowa to get presidential support. "A MN politician in Iowa for all the right reasons ... visiting family," he wrote while seeing his wife's family.

Then there was Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who may soon send tweets from Iowa himself while running for president: "Wrenched back playing hockey. Thankful for chiropractor. Getting old, but in the spirit of season of Lord Stanley's Cup, will play hurt."

Rep. Paul Gardner, DFL-Shoreview, isn't Twittering any more. During debate on the House floor near the end of the session he used Twitter to question speeches by Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano: "Emmer seems to belittle his female colleagues (rage, sarcasm) on the floor more than the men."

And he went after Rep. Mark Buesgens, R-Jordan, who was wearing sunglasses in the House chamber: "Black eye?"

The House Ethics Committee ordered Gardner to apologize to the pair on the House floor.

House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, has tweeted while on duty, but also while away from the Capitol. Just hours after a long last day of session, she commented: "Just finished Barton School Spring Concert —

and stayed awake."

Goals met

The Minnesota Department of Transportation reports it is meeting most of its goals, such as reducing traffic fatalities, improving bridges and reducing Twin Cities' congestion. But better roads continues to be a priority, MnDOT says in a newly released report.

"Upgrading state highway pavement condition remains both a priority and a challenge," the report says. "It may be boosted somewhat by the influx of federal economic stimulus dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act."

Another issue that needs to be addressed, the report adds, is better bus service to communities outside the Twin Cities. "Service increased from 2000 to 2007, but at 1.03 million hours it remains well short of the target of 1.4 million hours to meet 80 percent of need in 2010," the report said about greater Minnesota bus service.

Overall, the state transportation commissioner was happy.

"Setting goals and measuring results will help us build a better transportation system for Minnesota," Tom Sorel said. "This performance report is one important step in meeting Minnesotans' expectations of transparency and accountability."

The report is at www.dot.state.mn.us/measures/performance.html.

— **Compiled by Don Davis, Minnesota Capitol Bureau.**



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E16.60 E16.62

Recount revealed flaws in Minnesota's election process, state senator says

DFLer Ann Rest working on bipartisan reform legislation

PIONEER PRESS JUL 11 '09

By Bill Salisbury

bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com

A key Minnesota Senate committee chairwoman will try to craft a bipartisan election reform bill that would correct flaws uncovered during the state's just-completed 2008 U.S. Senate election.

Sen. Ann Rest, a New Hope DFLer who chairs the committee that oversees election law, said Friday that she will meet with DFL and Republican legislators in coming months to draft legislation to make the voting process easier for vot-

ers and to help ensure that elections are fair and honest.

It wouldn't be major reform; it would just "get rid of some dust mites" in the system, Rest said after a panel discussion on the U.S. Senate recount at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. Her plan would have the changes take effect before the 2010 elections.

Among other steps, Rest said, the legislation could streamline absentee ballot counting procedures across the state. Last year, election judges rejected about 12,000 absentee ballots, more than

1,300 of them improperly. Those ballots were at the heart of the election trial between Sen. Al Franken and former Sen. Norm Coleman.

Rest said she hopes to draft the bill before the 2010 Legislature convenes Feb. 4 and pass it during the first month of the session.

The DFL-controlled Legislature passed a major election reform bill last year, but Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed it, largely because it lacked bipartisan support. GOP lawmakers opposed the legislation because it didn't

include a provision they insisted on that would have required voters to show photo identification before voting.

The lead Republican on the House elections committee, Rep. Tom Emmer, of Delano, said during the panel discussion that he believes GOP lawmakers could support a bipartisan election bill that does not require photo IDs. But he said it would have to include other steps to protect the "integrity of the process."

Last year, Emmer said, about 17,000 more ballots were cast than there were registered Minnesota voters. He wants to clean up the voter registration lists to ensure, among other

aspects, that dead people and felons aren't listed.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie defended the integrity of last year's election, saying that during the Senate trial, lawyers for Franken and Coleman "agreed with local election officials 99.99 percent of the time." Only 14 of the 2.9 million ballots cast last year were challenged during the trial, he said, noting that a Coleman attorney said his legal team "found not a whiff of fraud."

Nonetheless, Ritchie proposed a series of election law changes, including one that would have prevented one of Minnesota's U.S. Senate seats from sitting vacant during the

Coleman-Franken trial. After an election recount, he called for granting a "provisional election certificate" to the canvassing board's declared winner. The loser still could challenge the result in court, he said, but judges would be under less intense public pressure to make a hasty ruling.

Ramsey County elections manager Joe Mansky suggested several other reforms, including allowing voters to learn online whether their absentee ballots had been accepted or rejected and permitting registered voters to certify their own absentee ballots, instead of requiring another voter's signature.

1913

E16.64 MGB- Sec of State
Minnesota

High court dismisses voter data suit

PIONEER PRESS JUL 24 '09

By Rachel E. Stassen-Berger
rstassen-berger@
pioneerpress.com

The Minnesota Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit that claimed the state elections system wasn't updated as quickly as it should have been after the 2008 election.

The court found that it didn't have the jurisdiction to decide on the merits of the suit, which was filed in May by a group called the Minnesota Majority, a conservative advocacy group, against Secretary of State Mark Ritchie and local elections officials.

"Improving the accuracy of the voter registration database is a laudable goal. But our jurisdiction ... is limited," the court wrote. The order, filed Wednesday, was unanimous, but Justice Christopher Dietzen recused himself. Dietzen did sign an earlier order regarding the case.

Minnesota Majority and some citizens, including three Republican House members, among them gubernatorial candidate Rep. Tom Emmer, claimed there was a major problem in the state elections system because there were more ballots counted than voters registered in the state voter database.

When the suit was first filed in May, the discrepancy between ballots and registrants was about 28,000, according to the secretary of state, but that number has

diminished.

Deputy Secretary of State Jim Gelbmann said the numbers of registrants in the database and the numbers of voters who voted will never be an exact match for a variety of reasons.

For instance, when people die their registrations are inactivated, and when people cast absentee ballots that arrive late, they are given a voter history in the database, but their votes aren't counted in the election, he said.

The dismissal from the state Supreme Court is unlikely to stop the petitioners' quest for a deeper look into the state's elections system.

Minnesota Majority attorney Erick Kaardal said the petitioners could sue counties individually over voter database problems or take other legal steps.

2009 Minnesota Legislature

As lawmakers assemble, a few sparks begin to fly

GOP's cost-cutting suggestions face quick rejection

By Bill Salisbury and Dennis Lien
Pioneer Press JAN 7 '09

It was a sign of things to come.

The Minnesota Legislature started its 2009 session Tuesday with debates over how much lawmakers would spend on their own postage stamps and travel as they grapple with a \$4.85 billion budget shortfall.

Faced with making painful spending cuts, the House and Senate convened shortly after noon to take their oaths of office and handle routine steps to get organized for the year.

A feisty little band of Senate Republicans — they're outnumbered by Democrats, 46-21 — created the first friction of the session by challenging the majority party to start cutting its own spending immediately.

✓ Sen. Amy Koch, R-Buffalo, made a motion to trim the senators' postage allowance from 5,500 to 3,500 first-class stamps, saying that would save the state



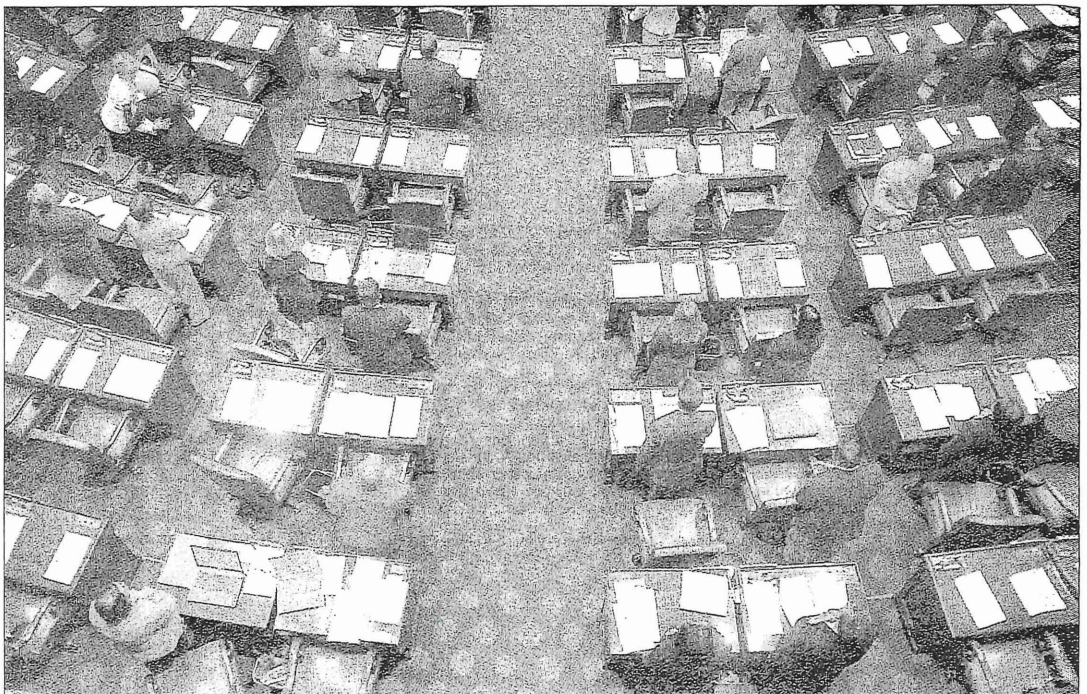
BEN GARVIN: PIONEER PRESS

Myles Champion, 5, on Tuesday tries out the desk of his father, first-term Rep. Bobby Joe Champion, DFL-Minneapolis.

about \$56,000. Legislators don't need to mail that many letters "in these days of e-mail, Facebook and Twitter," Koch said later.

2009 LEGISLATURE, 6A

(over)



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: BEN CARVIN

Senators recite the Pledge of Allegiance on Tuesday as the 2009 Legislature convenes at the Capitol in St. Paul. The House and Senate convened shortly after noon to take their oaths of office and handle routine steps to get organized for the year. For more photos of the opening session, go to twincities.com.

CONTINUED FROM 1A

> 2009 Legislature

But Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, said some senators need all their stamps to maintain contact with their constituents, and most DFLers agreed. They voted down Koch's motion, 36-29.

Next, Sen. Ray Vandever, R-Forest Lake, tried to bar senators from getting reimbursed for travel during the session. He said it would show their willingness to sacrifice and set an example for the rest of the state.

But Pogemiller said the Senate already has drastically cut its travel budget — both the House and Senate slashed their budgets by \$800,000 in the first round of spending reductions in December — and some travel is needed to educate lawmakers and inform the public. Again, the DFL leader prevailed on a 49-12 vote.

After the two-hour floor session, Senate Minority Leader David Senjem, R-Rochester, said the Republicans' unsuccessful attempts to start making small spending cuts immediately were symbolic gestures to demonstrate their intent to "find savings within government."

The moves also showed that the Senate Republican minority plans to be more assertive than it's been in the past.

"You'll probably see a little more feistiness this year," Senjem said.

But for the most part, the opening day featured an abundance of bipartisan goodwill.

Pogemiller, who often battled with Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty in the past, said DFL senators and House leaders worked closely with the governor on the first round of bud-

get cuts last month and hope to continue that relationship to solve the massive budget deficit after the governor proposes his budget fix Jan. 27.

"There's no partisan solution to this," he said.

In a show of bipartisanship, the Senate re-elected Sen. Jim Metzen, DFL-St. Paul, as president and Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm, as president pro tem. It's unusual for a member of the minority party to hold a high Senate office. Frederickson, who was first elected to the post in 2007, will preside over floor sessions when Metzen is absent.

The Senate session started on a poignant note with Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau presiding in a chamber where 11 months earlier senators voted to remove her from her second job as state transportation commissioner.

A somber Molnau told senators she was honored to be there, presided over Metzen's election and then quickly departed without stopping to chat with the lawmakers.

In the House, legislators mixed with family and friends



Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau presided over the start of the Senate session Tuesday. Eleven months earlier, senators voted to remove Molnau from her second job as state transportation commissioner. On Tuesday, she told senators she was honored to be there, presided over the election of the Senate's president and then departed without stopping to chat with lawmakers.

on the floor before spending two hours handling routine business such as re-electing Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, as House speaker.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, proposed reducing daily expense payments and housing allowances for legislators, but House Majority Leader Tony Fertich, DFL-Chisholm, promised the issue would be taken up in a future committee hearing.

A first-time legislator, Rep. Jeff Hayden, DFL-Minneapolis, had a good-sized gathering of

proud family members sitting directly behind him. Before the session began, he said he couldn't be more enthusiastic about tackling business.

"I'm really excited, really proud and really humble the people in my district picked me to represent them in this tough time," Hayden said, noting that a key objective this year will be to figure out how to make state government work smarter.

Another legislator who was clearly happy to be there was Rep. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, one of the "Override Six," a group

of Republican legislators who voted last year to go against the party and governor and support a controversial transportation spending bill. After being chastised by party leaders, several of them were either defeated or chose not to seek re-election.

"I stuck my neck out for them, and they backed me up," Abeler said of his constituents.

He said legislators must be especially thoughtful this year as they try to figure a way out of the state's projected budget deficit.

"We need to figure out what's essential, what's important, and what's nice," he said.

Abeler said that, for him, the time leading up to the session had been very collegial. He said Kelliher, for example, appointed him vice chairman of the Health and Human Services Finance Division, a figurehead position usually reserved for a member of the majority party.

He said he's approaching this session with renewed vigor and hopes his colleagues are "less focused on divisive issues."

"Man, it's going to be a tough year," said Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul. "It's going to be tough for everybody. But at the same time, it's an opportunity for us to remake government, to rethink what government means to the people of Minnesota."

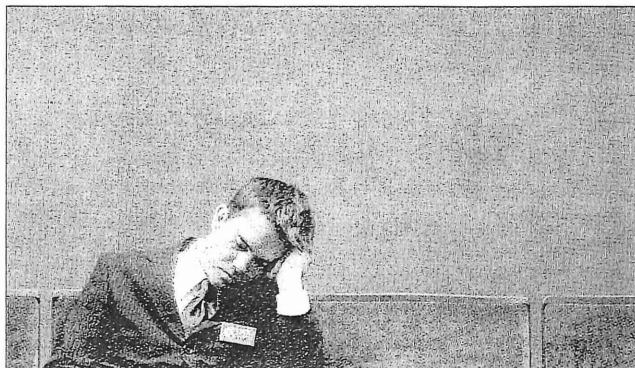
Thao said he's especially interested in trying to figure out how to contain long-term health care costs.

Kelliher was re-elected as speaker on an 86-42 vote.

"I think everybody is pretty serious about this session," she said before it got under way.

In her acceptance speech, she stressed cooperation.

"This must be our goal — better and improved results for the public even if the path before us is marked with obstacles and our past positions don't easily bend," Kelliher said.



An unidentified intern catches a few winks in a Senate gallery.

At the Capitol

E76.66 E76.64 I4

Requiring voter IDs is back on the agenda

Bill will get a hearing — and opposition

PIONEER PRESS JAN 27 '00
By Bill Salisbury
bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com

Reviving a politically divisive idea, Minnesota Republican legislators Monday proposed a bill that would require all voters to show photo identification before they could vote.

Photo IDs would prevent voter fraud and ensure the integrity of the state's elections, **Rep. Tom Emmer**, R-Delano, the bill's chief House sponsor, said at a Capitol press conference.

"You show an ID everywhere else you go," Emmer said. "You show an ID to cash a check ... (and) to get through security at the airport. If you

have to do that for the most basic activities in our daily life, why wouldn't you ... want to do that for one of the most important activities that we exercise, and that's our right to vote."

Republican Rep. Mary Kiffmeyer, of Big Lake, a former secretary of state who first proposed a photo ID requirement in 2000, said they would boost public confidence in elections.

"I think when you increase voter confidence, you increase voter turnout," she said.

But Democrats have argued for years that thousands of Minnesotans lack government-issued photo IDs and

that such a law would disenfranchise the people least likely to have driver's licenses: the poor, the disabled and the elderly. Those people also are more likely to vote for Democrats.

Democrats contend there's little evidence of voter cheating in Minnesota.

"I think it's a solution in search of a problem," said Sen. Ann Rest, DFL-New Hope. But Rest, chair of the Senate committee with jurisdiction over election legislation, said she would give the GOP bill a hearing.

Emmer said he didn't know whether anyone had been accused of voting illegally in the last election.

Asked why the bill hasn't passed earlier, he replied, "Because some people have

mistakenly decided that this is a partisan issue." He insisted it isn't.

Under the bill, a voter would be required to show election judges a Minnesota driver's license, state-issued ID card, U.S. passport or tribal ID card.

To make it easier to get the required document, the bill would require county auditors to issue free voter ID cards to Minnesota citizens who don't have driver's licenses.

It also would allow voters who showed up at polling places without a photo ID to cast a provisional ballot. The ballot would be counted if the voter presented proof of eligibility to a county auditor or city clerk within five days of the election.

19B

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101

✓ I4 E16.64 E16.16 GOP legislators want photo IDs for voting in Minnesota

● The lawmakers said IDs are needed to ensure honest elections; critics say it would disenfranchise some people.

STAR TRIBUNE JAN 27 '09
By JAKE GROVUM
jake.grovum@startribune.com

House and Senate Republicans on Monday announced a renewed push for legislation that would require all Minnesota voters to have a photo ID before casting a ballot.

✓ The bill's chief House sponsor, Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, called the issue a "matter of integrity in our elections."

"This is not a partisan issue," he said at a State Capi-

tol news conference, flanked by supporters with signs reading "Don't trash my vote" and "Restore trust." Emmer added that if someone needs an ID for everyday activities, voting shouldn't be any different.

But critics say the bill would only put up more hurdles for voters and increase the chances of disenfranchisement. They say that instances of voter fraud are virtually nonexistent and that legislation requiring a voter ID is unnecessary.

The bill would provide free

voting-only ID cards for those who need them and a process for casting provisional ballots if a voter couldn't provide a photo ID on Election Day.

Republicans likened the measure to Indiana's voter ID law, which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld last April in a 6-3 ruling.

Unnecessary added burden?

✓ Constitutional or not, Rep. Phyllis Kahn said she's opposed to requiring a voter to show a photo ID. She called it an "added burden" that's unnecessary, especially without evidence of fraud. "It's one of

these things that's a solution searching for a problem," said Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis.

✓ However, Rep. Mary Kiffmeyer, R-Big Lake, said the legislation could help stave off problems like voter fraud before they ever reach final vote tallies or before the first instance of fraud is reported.

Minnesota is more vulnerable to election problems without this legislation, added Kiffmeyer, a former secretary of state.

"Let's make the whole process work," she said. "We owe the people of this state to address these problems up

front."

✓ In another proposal, Sen. Mike Jungbauer said Monday he'll offer legislation under which statewide recounts would be done by machine with a possibility for a runoff election. Jungbauer, R-East Bethel, said the legislation would address some of the issues that have come up in the Senate race between Republican Norm Coleman and DFLer Al Franken.

Machines would do recount

Instead of a close statewide race triggering an automatic hand recount, ballots would be

counted again using the optical scan machines.

If the recount overturned the results from Election Day and the difference between the vote totals was less than one-half of 1 percent, then a runoff election would be held.

Jungbauer says his bill would also make sure only the votes cast and counted on Election Day would be part of the recount.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Jake Grovum is a University of Minnesota student on assignment for the Star Tribune.



B 30.4

19B

DFL legislators keep hearing that dreaded four-letter word: When?

By Doug Grow | Friday, Feb. 6, 2009

When?

It happened again Thursday. The Minnesota House was meeting in full session, running through some routine business, when Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, rose, cleared his throat and said to DFLers, "We've been here a month; why are we still waiting for your budget proposal?"

There were some head shakes, but no response. The House got back to the business at hand.

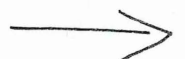
✓ Dist. 19B



Emmer's question has become the mantra of state Republicans. In every public forum, at least one or two Republican legislators raise the question: If DFL legislators don't like Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed budget, why don't they come up with one of their own?

"It's strategic," said House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, of the Republican cry. "It's designed to freak people out on our side, and it takes attention off the governor's budget."

✓ Dist. 6DA





House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher

Chant is historically popular no matter who's in office

Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, said the Republican chant is not only strategic, it's historically predictable: Whoever is out of power points the finger at the other party.

But both Pogemiller and Kelliher say that Republicans ask that "where's-your-budget?" question only in public. In private meetings among DFL and Republican leadership, the rhetoric is dropped.

Still, it seems like a worthy question.

Coming into the session, all knew the state's financial situation was a red-ink mess, which is expected to get worse when a new round of financial predictions come out next month. Why weren't DFLers prepared to move immediately with their own budget proposals?

Pogemiller said the Legislature ALWAYS works from the governor's budget proposal.

"We don't even have complete drafts of his bill yet," he said. "When we get the full proposal, we will work off what he has. You see what's doable and where there might be disagreement."

Kelliher notes that the governor had all of the state's commissioners and finance experts working on the budget for months. The Legislature does not have those resources.

"He's had 7½ months. It's unrealistic to expect us to respond in just a few days," she said.

Both DFL leaders did express surprise over the budget plan Pawlenty has proposed — particularly that it seems to do little to address financial problems beyond the coming biennium.

✓ Dist 59

"Seventy-one percent of his solution is one-time money," said Kelliher. "That is simply not sustainable. It only means we'll be back here next year and the year after that facing the same problem."

She was highly critical of the governor's plan to sell \$1 billion in appropriations bonds to deal with part of the budget problem. (The governor calls this "tobacco money," though it's not.)

"That's the last approach you'd tell a family that's in a financial crisis to do," Kelliher said of the plan to sell bonds to pay debt. "You don't take on more debt to pay debt."

DFLers suggesting deeper cuts?

Surprisingly, Pogemiller, a classic Minneapolis liberal, said he didn't think the governor made deep enough cuts in the budget he's proposed. Pogemiller held up the sacred cow of state government spending on public education.

"When K-12 is 40 percent of the budget, I don't see how you can hold it harmless (as the governor proposes)," Pogemiller said. "I know I'm going to take knocks for this, but it just can't be done."

A moment for speculation here: Pogemiller's comment about cutting K-12 funding smells a little fishy. It's highly unlikely that Pogemiller really would favor cutting K-12 spending. It's more probable that this is his way of saying the governor will have to accept some tax increases to hold K-12 harmless and to balance the budget.

Pogemiller and other DFL senators have come up with a magic number — 13.5 percent — to show how deep spending cuts would have to go if the state is to cut its way out of the current budget crisis. That would mean 13.5 percent out of everything, including such relatively popular things such as K-12 education, veterans programs, public safety, the judiciary and the environment.



Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller

This 13.5 percent number may be the DFL's way of saying that the state budget cannot be balanced without some form of tax increases, because



13.5 percent across-the-board cuts would not be acceptable to most Minnesotans.

Though not clearly stated, there appear to be two guiding principles to the DFL's approach to the this budget process: "shared sacrifice" and "sustainability." Both could be euphemisms for tax increases.

Yes, DFLers admit, it may be necessary to cut the Health and Human Services budget. But those cuts can't be as deep as Pawlenty has proposed. If the poor are to take a hit, then, the DFL will say it's reasonable to expect that the richest in Minnesota also should be expected to "share in the sacrifice" by paying higher taxes.

One-time fixes in recent years have not fixed anything. In fact, each biennium, the deficit problem gets bigger. The state will have a "sustainable" budget only if it raises more revenues and make cuts.

But how — and when-- will all of this unfold? At what point will DFLers stop poking holes in the Pawlenty proposal and come forward with their own ideas?

Both Kelliher and Pogemiller say that process already has begun and that even their harshest critics, like Emmer, know it.

In both the House and Senate, there are finance committees that correspond to the state's major agencies. Each of those committees is gathering information on the financial needs of the respective agencies. As time goes on, the chairpersons of those committees will meet with House and Senate leaders to talk about agency needs and what is financially possible.

DFL budget plan will evolve

Hearings with the public also will be held. Sometime, before the Easter break in early April, after a considerable exchange of information between leadership and members of the committees, financial "targets" will be set. It's only then that the DFLers will have developed a contrasting plan to the governor's budget proposal.

In a break from tradition, Pogemiller said he's invited Republican leaders to sit in on the "target" conversations between Senate leadership and committee leadership.

"They're considering the offer," Pogemiller said.

Though Kelliher said she plans to bring the whole caucus into the target-setting discussion, typically, in the end, it is Senate and House leaders who make the big target decisions, a reality that rankles many members.

Sen. John Marty, DFL-Roseville, sees other weaknesses in the system, ones that are particularly glaring when the state is in crisis, as it is now.



Sen. John Marty

The committee approach to problem solving means that the Legislature lacks a macro view of state issues, Marty said. Instead, legislators tend to view the state's issues through the narrow prism of their own committee work. A lack of a big perspective only adds to the governor's already-great power in the budget process.

"We start with what he comes out with," Marty said. "So he starts with the bold statement 'No new taxes.' We (DFLers) argue for a while that that's not realistic, but in the end we say, 'Oh heck, we surrender,' and we keep moving closer to his end of the playing field. We seem to forget that he needs the budget balanced as much as we do."

And still another problem, in Marty's view, is the fact that after all the public hearings and public committee meetings, most of the vitally important target meetings are held behind closed doors. Marty introduced legislation on Tuesday that would open those doors to the media and the public.

"I have people say, 'But if we open it up, I won't be able to speak frankly,'" Marty said. "And I say to that, 'You mean, you can't speak frankly to the people of Minnesota?'"

To date, there probably hasn't been much public frankness. Rather, we've seen the same old game of DFLers and Republicans pointing fingers at each other.

But Pogemiller insists most of that is just political theater.

"There's a lot of bipartisan work being done here," he said. "We all understand the severity of the problem."

✓ Dist. 54

Doug Grow writes about public affairs, state politics and other topics. He can be reached at [dgrow \[at\] minnpost \[dot\] com](mailto:dgrow@minnpost.com).

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19B

PIONEER PRESS FEB 6 '09

How money permeates politics?

✓ Rep. Tom Emmer's viewpoint ("Protect the vote — require a photo ID," Jan. 29) contains one of the most curious statements I have read in a long time. Immediately into his argument, he compares casting a vote in an election with "opening a checking account, renting a movie, buying a drink at a bar (and) confirming seats on an airplane" as examples that require one to provide a photo ID in order to "prevent fraud and abuse" — protection that, he suggests, is not as vital as that of voting in an election.

Regardless of the central argument he is attempting to make, it is nonetheless striking that he would choose to compare casting a vote with four activities that revolve around the idea of a consumer exchanging money for a product or service. Why wouldn't his innate reaction be, instead, to compare it to donating blood or providing proof of age for marriage?

Is Emmer so entrenched in the money that permeates politics and elections that the examples he opted for are a more natural parallel for him to draw?

Luke Werner, Woodbury

19B

At the Capitol

ELG.64 ELG.16 I4

House committee kills voter ID proposal

Foes say election fraud not an issue

PIONEER PRESS FEB 13 '09

By Bill Salisbury

bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com

Minnesota voters apparently will be able to go through at least one more election where they can vote without showing photo identification.

A Minnesota House committee Thursday rejected a bill that would have required voters to produce photo IDs before voting. The government operations committee vote was 11-8, with most Democrats voting no and Republicans voting yes.

The bill's chief sponsor, Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, said photo IDs are needed to prevent voter fraud.

"This bill is about the integrity and legitimacy of the process; it's about confidence in the outcome of our elections," Emmer said.

Opponents argued the legislation is unnecessary. Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, a Democrat, told the committee he reviewed 150 years of state election history and could not find "any evidence of voter impersonation at the polls."

David Schultz, a Hamline University election-law expert, cited six cases of illegal aliens allegedly seeking to vote in Minnesota in 2006, but he noted that represents just 0.000003 percent of the 2.2 mil-

lion ballots cast. He also found no evidence of extensive fraudulent voting in other states.

"Voter fraud is statistically insignificant and has not affected the outcome of elections," Schultz told the committee.

Keesha Gaskins, executive director of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota, said a photo ID requirement would needlessly complicate the election process.

"It provides a political solution to a problem Minnesota does not have," she said.

But other witnesses cited evidence that some voters were voting improperly.

Minnesota law permits a registered voter to vouch for a person who lacks a valid ID. Morris Hanson, a Minneapolis

election judge, said he has seen voters vouch for several people they don't know.

Rep. Steve Gottwalt, R-St. Cloud, noted that the 2008 election recount revealed 25 precincts in which more votes were cast than voters registered.

Even if voter fraud is uncommon, Emmer said lawmakers shouldn't wait for fraud to occur before they act to prevent it. Democrats didn't buy that argument.

Republicans have proposed the photo ID requirement for at least nine years, and Democrats have repeatedly shot it down.

This year's bill isn't dead, but it would take a political miracle to revive it.

19B

DFL rejects plan to require photo ID at polls

STAR TRIBUNE FEB 13 09

Rejecting arguments that it would improve election integrity in the state, DFL members of a House committee Thursday voted down a plan to require voters to show a photo ID at the polls.

✓ Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, had argued that the bill could prevent voter fraud and possibly increase voter participation. But opponents said the bill, which would have allowed those without a valid ID to cast a provisional ballot, said the requirement would be anything but simple.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, a Democrat, told lawmakers the bill would lead to "a gigantic new bureaucracy" for creating provisional ballots. When asked if he thought requiring photo ID would improve election integrity, Ritchie said it would have "zero effect one way or the other."

Emmer hasn't said whether he will try to bring it up as an amendment on the House floor.

ASSOCIATED PRESS



Photo ID rejected, but could return

By Scott Wentz
State Capitol Bureau

ST. PAUL — Lawmakers rejected a plan Thursday requiring voters to show photo identification at the polls, but expect to see the legislation again.

A Minnesota House committee rejected the bill by Rep. Tom Emmer that would have required voters to show photo identification, such as a driver's license, when they vote.

"Without a photo ID requirement as part of our election process ... it calls into question the integrity of the process," said Emmer, R-Delano.

The photo identification proposal is not new at the State Capitol and traditionally falls along partisan lines. Republican lawmakers argue it would help prevent voter fraud, but Democrats say it would be a barrier, including for minority, poor and elderly voters who do not have photo identification.

Emmer said his legislation addressed that concern by allowing people without identification to obtain a government-issued voter identification card. It also would have permitted provisional voting if a voter showed up without identification but could provide it within five days of the election.

But the DFL-controlled State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee voted down the legislation 11-8.

Committee member Rep.

Bill Hilty, DFL-Finlayson, who has authored many election bills but voted against Emmer's bill, predicted the photo identification proposal will return this legislative session, probably as an amendment to other voting proposals.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie and his predecessor, Republican Mary Kiffmeyer, come down on opposite sides of the issue.

Ritchie, a Democrat, told lawmakers that in his recent conversations with election officials around the state, no one has offered evidence of voter impersonation occurring at the polls. Local officials are worried such a requirement would create longer voting lines and cost money, he added.

Kiffmeyer, now a state representative, said the measure would bolster voters' confidence in Minnesota's elections.

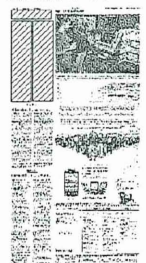
"We're talking about making a system and a process better," she said.

Committee member Rep. Paul Marquart, DFL-Dilworth, said he worried about the plan's impact on senior citizens who have voted for decades without having to provide photo identification.

"I think they've earned the right to vote without extra hassles," he said.

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

✉ swente@forumcomm.com



Printing imperfections present during scanning

Page 1 of 1

ID plan nixed

Officials wanted people to show IDs prior to voting

By Scott Wentle

swente @wctrib.com

ST. PAUL — Lawmakers rejected a plan requiring voters to show photo identification at the polls, but expect to see the legislation again.

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IDs/ Page A2

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Tribune photo by Scott Wentle

Rep. Morrie Lanning, R-Moorhead, listens to a debate Thursday over whether to require voters to provide photo identification. Lanning supported the measure, which failed to pass a House committee.



At the Capitol > Minnesota House

ETG.16 ETG.62

19B

Early voting a step closer

Ballots could be cast 15 days before election; photo ID requirement rejected

PIONEER PRESS MAR 11 '09
By Bill Salisbury
bsalisbury@pioneerpress.com

Minnesota voters who want to avoid long lines on Election Day would be allowed to cast their ballots early without an excuse under a bill that cleared its first legislative hurdle Tuesday.

"It will make it easier for people to vote," Gwen Myers of the League of Women Voters told a House elections committee before it approved

the bill.

Under the measure sponsored by Rep. Will Morgan, DFL-Burnsville, Minnesotans could start voting 15 days before Election Day and could cast early ballots through the Friday before the election. County auditors and city clerks would designate early polling places. Those sites would be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays plus at least one evening and one Saturday during the early

voting period.

Last year, about 10 percent of Minnesota voters cast early absentee ballots. That was double the number that voted early in 2006.

"We essentially have early voting now. It's just called absentee balloting," said Rep. Steve Simon, DFL-St. Louis Park.

To get an absentee ballot, a voter is required to sign a document stating he or she will be out of town or otherwise

incapable of getting to a polling place on Election Day. That forces people who want to vote early to avoid the Election Day lines to tell a "little white lie," Simon said.

"We shouldn't make criminals out of people who sign (a document) saying they will be out of town," he said.

The legislation would help fix one election problem that became apparent during the

EARLY VOTING, 6B >

CONTINUED FROM 1B

> Early voting

contested 2008 U.S. Senate race between Democrat Al Franken and Republican Norm Coleman. About 12,000 absentee ballots were rejected because of voter errors.

If voters could cast no-excuse early votes, they wouldn't have to fill out the complicated and confusing forms required for absentee

ballots, said Mike Dean, executive director of Common Cause of Minnesota.

Rep. Steve Gottwalt, R-St. Cloud, questioned whether early voting is needed. Minnesota had a record high voter turnout last year, which suggests, "The system we have now is working," he said.

Requiring cities and counties to staff early polling places would increase costs, Gottwalt said, and keeping the polls open longer would

increase the chances for errors.

Morgan contended that the cost of operating early polling places would be more than offset by the savings that would result from fewer absentee ballots being cast. Absentee-ballot costs include postage and envelopes.

The Democratic majority on the committee rejected an amendment proposed by Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, that would have required voters to produce photo identification

before voting. Emmer contends photo IDs are needed to prevent voter fraud.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty expressed conditional support for early voting.

"The governor is open to the idea, provided that there are safeguards against fraud and the time frame is reasonable," Pawlenty spokesman Brian McClung wrote in an e-mail. "We also believe that other election reforms, such as photo ID, should be considered this session."

19B

STAR TRIBUNE APR 5 '09
DWI LAWS

M124.3

Aren't we innocent until proven guilty?

It is good to see that someone is taking the time to address our current statutes for DWI arrests. The March 28 Star Tribune article failed to mention mandatory license plate impoundments. I don't think anyone clearly understands how severe these laws are.

Imagine having your license plates impounded for a first offense only to find out that any and all vehicles registered in your name will also have their plates impounded. Your son could be driving the car you lent him around a college campus, or your 16-year-old daughter could be taking her driver's test in the family vehicle boldly displaying the whiskey plates. Even service vehicles registered in your name will be included.

Keep in mind that the drivers of those vehicles did not get stopped for suspicion of drunken driving, and as such their civil rights are being violated. This impoundment lasts for a year.

And, along with the license revocation and possible vehicle forfeiture, all of this takes place before you have your day in court. In other words, if you have a DWI arrest in Minnesota, you are guilty until proven innocent. Does this make any sense?

DEBORA ANTHONY, Coon Rapids

• • •

Heads up, Minnesotans! Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, is at it again. This time, Emmer is proposing legislation that would make it harder for the state to take away the driver's licenses of those who fail or refuse to take a Breathalyzer test.

Emmer would like us to think he is protecting due process and sticking up for the little guy, but nothing could be further from the truth. Prepare to have drunken drivers back on the road the next day if this legislation passes.

LS. JOSEPH, Mendota Heights

Proposals would change traffic laws

I thought it might be helpful this week to provide an update on recent legislation passed on the House floor, as well as two public safety bills currently moving through the House committee process.

State Rep. Tom Emmer, a Republican from Delano, has introduced legislation that he believes addresses shortfalls in the judicial system when it comes to penalizing persons arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. Emmer said the idea for the legislation was actually brought to him by municipal prosecutors.

Currently, if someone is suspected of driving drunk their license is revoked even before they go to court, a minimum of 90 days for failing a sobriety test and a year for refusing to take a test.

Under Rep. Emmer's proposal, drivers would lose their license for at least 30 days for failing a test, and at least 60 days for refusing to take a test, but only after they're convicted or plead guilty. Supporters of this change say that the two separate hearings, one for the civil license revocation and another for the criminal DUI case, drives up the cost — which is especially challenging in light of budget cuts to the court system.

In fact, court

costs have become so prohibitive that some courts have actually given drivers their license back rather than fight costly lawsuits in court. This bill was passed in the Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee and will next be heard in the Finance Committee.

Another bill, sponsored by Rep. Kim Norton, a Democrat from Rochester, would allow police officers to pull over vehicles when they observe that either the driver or passengers are not wearing seat belts. Traffic crashes are the number one killer of Minnesotans ages 1-34; this bill will help address the need for safety with new drivers and give standards for overall safety in our vehicles.

Minnesota already received \$15.3 million from the federal government for our 85 percent compliance in wearing seat belts. If we pass a primary seat belt law, we will receive an additional \$3.4 million in 2010.

We passed legislation this week to authorize spending nearly \$600 million in federal stimulus dollars on roads, bridges and other transportation projects, a necessary step to receive the federal funding. About \$500 million will be coming for roads and more than \$90 million for transit projects. The bill now goes to Governor Pawlenty for his signature.

Finally, we passed the Federal Tax Conformity Conference

Committee report on Monday, giving Minnesotans the opportunity to take advantage of tax breaks passed by the U.S. Congress. The report also included changes to the Green Acres program that will restore tax fairness for Minnesota landowners of both agricultural property and non-agricultural property.

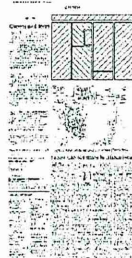
Legislation passed last year inadvertently made it more expensive for some farmers to participate in the Green Acres program by limiting tax relief for non-agricultural land. This year, a new category for land called Rural Preservation was created, which will allow rural property owners to receive tax relief for non-productive land, as well as for agricultural property, as long as it is home-steaded and at least 50 percent is in ag use.

If you have any questions about these bills or any other proposal before the Minnesota House, please contact me at (651) 296-5368, or by email at rep.kory.kath@house.mn.

Kory Kath is state representative from District 26A. He lives in Owatonna.



Rep. Kory
Kath



19A

HOUSE, SENATE BILLS DIFFER

Civic Center funds included in one version, but not othe

Times staff and wire services

ST. PAUL — Minnesota lawmakers are ready to battle over a bonding bill that would borrow millions of dollars for building and infrastructure projects.

The House on Monday approved its \$248 million version of the bill, which does not include money to expand the St. Cloud Civic Center.

The bill is smaller than the \$368 million measure the Senate passed last month, which does include \$13 million for the Civic Center.

A conference committee will have to work out a compromise on that and many other differences between the two bills.

Rep. Alice Hausman, a Democrat from St. Paul who leads a committee overseeing the bill, says a big part of the bill will pay for things like fixing roofs, painting and repairing electrical systems.

But Republican Rep. Marty Seifert of Marshall says the bill will break the state's self-imposed credit card limit and puts wants ahead of needs.

The bill includes \$30 million to fix and replace heating, plumbing, roofs and

other critical infrastructure at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities campuses such as St. Cloud State University and St. Cloud Technical College.

The House and Senate bills include language that lets St. Cloud State spend money left from renovating the Brown Science Hall to complete design and demolition work for a science and engineering lab,

See **BILL, 2B** ►

which would require future state bonding money to complete.

St. Cloud received \$2 million in state bonding money last year to get the Civic Center expansion rolling.

The city has pledged to match state bonding money with \$15 million in local food and beverage tax revenue to expand the Civic Center across Fourth Avenue to allow it to host more and larger events.

Part of that plan includes closing Fourth Avenue between First and Second Street North and redirecting traffic to Fifth Avenue, a change that would take place in 2010.

Neither bill includes a

\$2 million request for land acquisition for St. Cloud Regional Airport.

HOW THEY VOTED

The Minnesota House of Representatives on Monday voted 93-40 to approve HF 855, which would spend \$238 million on state capital improvement construction projects.

CENTRAL MINNESOTA LAWMAKERS VOTING YES

- Rep. Al Doty, DFL-Royalton
- Rep. Larry Haws, DFL-St. Cloud
- Rep. Larry Hosch, DFL-St. Joseph
- Rep. Gail Kulick Jackson, DFL-Milaca
- Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba, DFL-Long Prairie
- Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City

CENTRAL MINNESOTA LAWMAKERS VOTING NO

- Rep. Bruce Anderson, R-Buffalo
- Rep. Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck
- Rep. Steve Gottwalt, R-St. Cloud
- Rep. Mary Kiffmeyer, R-Big Lake
- Rep. Dan Severson, R-Sauk Rapids



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At the Capitol

Sparks fly as House debates spending

DFL proposal tweaks Pawlenty

PIONEER PRESS APR 24 '09
By Jason Hoppin
jhoppin@pioneerpress.com

The Minnesota House on Thursday night debated a \$579 million state government operations bill that erupted into political gamesmanship when DFLers proposed what was intended as a surprise referendum on a key part of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed budget.

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, DFL-Chisholm, proposed floating a \$1 billion appropriation bond that would ultimately cost taxpayers \$1.6 billion to pay back over 20 years. Those are the same numbers Pawlenty proposed for a similar appropriation bond, but one the Republican governor said would be repaid through a 1998 settlement with tobacco companies.

"We have a responsibility to balance the budget today, not to kick the can down the road," Sertich said, in criticizing Pawlenty's proposal.

By floating a mirror of Pawlenty's proposal, Sertich tried to force Republicans into effectively voting up or down a proposal that Sertich never intended to pass. It was voted down 130-2, but not before some partisan fireworks.

Republicans were furious at the move.

"It's not the time for politics, Rep. Sertich," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, his voice rising.

DFLers have objected to Pawlenty's statements that the money comes from the tobacco settlement, pointing out the money actually comes out of the general fund. Up to \$200 million from the tobacco settlement flows into the general fund, but Sertich said it would be impossible to sell bonds based on a settlement with tobacco companies.

"You can't securitize that. It's like a junk bond. It won't sell," Sertich said.

On the merits of the governor's proposal, House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, said borrowing against the tobacco settlement isn't ideal but that it's a better solution for balancing the state's \$4.6 billion deficit than tax increases that would destroy businesses and cost jobs.

The bill funds the operation of state government, including the Legislature. It includes another highly charged proposal — one targeted at political appointees of Pawlenty across state agencies, eliminating their jobs and saving \$16.5 million.

"While I don't necessarily agree with the depth of the cuts, I wholeheartedly agree that management should share in the state job cuts," said Rep. Phyllis Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis, the sponsor of the omnibus bill.

"Gov. Pawlenty is willing to streamline the executive branch of government and has proposed a 5 percent reduction in agency operating budgets, including the governor's office," Pawlenty spokesman Brian McClung said. "However, Rep. Kahn's bill should treat staff in the executive branch and the Legislature fairly and not single out a certain group of employees."

That provision and others had not been voted on by midnight. They include a definition of domestic partners and an extension of benefits to domestic partners of state employees.

The bill would prohibit the state from naming public buildings after living people. A proposal allowing the state to sell the naming rights to any building or meeting room other than the Capitol, State Office Building or Minnesota Judicial Center survived an attempt to remove it from the bill.

It also requires the state to turn out the lights in its buildings at night for several weeks each year so as not to interfere with migratory birds.

19B

PEOPLE: Stepping Down

One more goal in his playbook

Emmer leaving House in hopes of scoring the state's top job

By SUE HEGARTY

After scoring a hat trick — a skilled hockey player, family man and state representative — Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Delano) is chasing one more goal: he's vacating his House seat to run for governor.

Emmer views his legislative career as a team effort and a familiar play taken from life's playbook.

"I'm probably just like every other person who's born and raised in Minnesota. You're just trained to give back, you know. People who gave

to you set the example, and one day you find yourself coaching your kids' T-ball teams, and the next day you're sitting on a church finance council, and before you know it, you're on a city council and then somebody says, 'You know, you should run for the Minnesota House of Representatives,' and you're dumb enough to think it's a part-time job."

He shares another Minnesota virtue — a passion for hockey. He played a year of U.S. Junior Olympic hockey in Boston before returning home to help with the family lumber business. That's when he met his wife, Jacquie. The couple has raised one daughter and six sons, currently between the ages of 8 and 20, in Delano, a community he describes as "on the cusp of the metro."

When he was first elected to represent District 19B in 2004, Republicans held the majority in the House. He said it was a period of fewer committee hearings and "family-friendly" hours that enabled him to arrive at the Capitol around 5:30 a.m. and leave at 7 p.m. so he could coach hockey until 10:30 p.m. almost every night through March.

"You decide what level of involvement you want to have. For me, you're either all in or you're all out, so I've pretty much been all in."

One of the first bills he sponsored was a county border issue. The City of Rockford, largely in Wright County, had an isolated neighborhood in Hennepin County. To increase response times for emergency services such as

fire and police, the county border was moved so that the neighborhood could receive Wright County services.

He has sponsored many bills since then, including judicial topics. "I did learn very quickly that it's territorial around here. I was told privately that the judicial branch will take care of its own stuff."

Working at the Legislature is not that different from working in the private sector, he said. "It's all about relationships. You need to know the rules; you need to understand the process; then you just need to apply your interpersonal communications skills to building relationships so you can get things done."

There isn't one piece of legislation that defines his work; rather, it was being consistent and keeping his word.

"What I'm most proud of is that I've been true to what I've told my constituents that I would do; I have voted the way they expect me to.

He makes no apologies for his sometimes rigorous stance on the issues.

"We're supposed to be allowed to debate aggressively."

But like the end of a hotly contested game, "You need to be willing to walk across the aisle and shake somebody's hand and get them to recognize that, 'You know what, I'm just a human being like you.' It's up to you to take the initiative, to go and get to know someone and understand what drives them, what motivates them," he said.

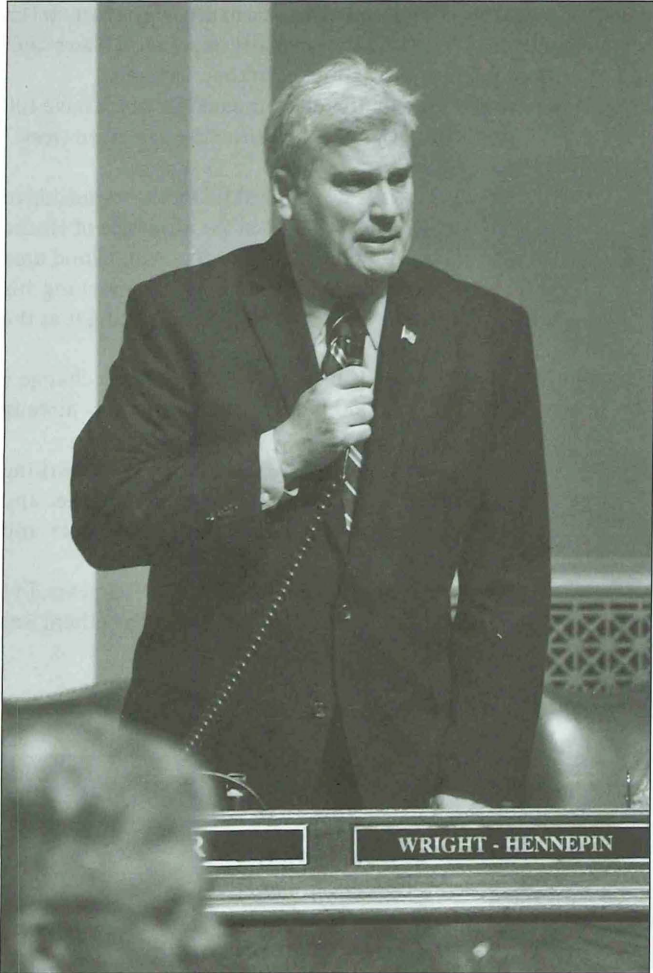


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Emmer is vacating his House seat and running for governor.

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Tom Emmer

Republican

District 19B - Delano

Terms: 3 (elected 2004)

Advice to successor: "Just remember, it's all about serving. Learn the rules, read the bills, answer your constituents and when it's time, go home."

PEOPLE: Stepping Down

Retiring from public service — again

After helping others for 48 years, Haws to focus on family needs

By Lauren Radomski

When Rep. Larry Haws (DFL-St. Cloud) took to the House floor May 16, he offered an explanation as to why he'd waited until the last night of session to announce he would not seek re-election.

"One of the reasons that I would do it this way is I have no resistance to my friends trying to talk me out of things," he said.

Haws, a former Stearns County commissioner who was elected to the House in 2005, said his family is going through "some serious health challenges."

"This is an honorable place to serve, but when your family has a need, that's God's work and I'm going to do God's work," he said. "Thanks for allowing me to serve with you."

A former teacher and longtime coach, Haws has served the St. Cloud area in different capacities for most of his life. He spent 32 years in the St. Cloud Park Department — including 17 as director — an experience that put him in touch with many different community groups. Over the years he recruited 2,000 volunteers annually and garnered \$8.4 million in donations, resources that were particularly helpful in difficult budget years.

Haws was approached by the DFL, Republican and Independence parties to run for a House seat when former Rep. Joe Opatz stepped down. He decided the policies of the DFL were the best fit with his views, which he's never kept secret.

"Everybody in town knows me and they already know my opinions," he said.

Haws said he is proud of his collaboration with Gov. Tim Pawlenty and Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids) in 2007 to pass a major veterans benefits bill. Haws had committed to working

on behalf of veterans after coaching children who later served in Vietnam as adults. He'd also worked on veterans issues during his eight years as a county commissioner.

As was the case with the veterans bill, Haws has worked closely with lawmakers who hold very different opinions from him on many topics. The key to success has been to focus on a shared goal.

"That policy or project or program is much more important than the area in which you conflict," he said.

Haws is also proud of his sponsorship of parks legislation that benefitted rural regional parks and earned him recognition from The Trust for Public Land, a national land conservation organization. He's also

been recognized by fellow lawmakers, who nominated him for "Legislator of the Year" three times.

Haws has observed that it takes much longer for constituents to feel the effects of legislation than it does a decision by a city council or county board. At the local level, a decision can be made on Monday, with feedback to decision-makers by Wednesday, and a change to the policy on Friday, Haws said. On the other hand, it may take months to correct a law that was poorly thought out or has an unintended consequence.

That makes communication with constituents especially important, Haws said. He's been diligent in that respect.

"It would not be unusual for me to have 100 contacts (with constituents) in a given week," he said.

Haws said he's thankful for the friendship of fellow lawmakers and the guidance of House staff. A member of two-dozen St. Cloud area boards, he expects to stay busy serving his community — he just won't be doing it at the Capitol.

"I don't think my life is going to change a lot," he said, adding his calendar is already pretty full.

Haws is also looking forward to working on his family's organic farmers market and coaching his grandchildren in soccer and running.

"I've been a public servant for 48 years, I've retired three times and every one of them was terrific," he said.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Larry Haws is proud of his collaboration to pass a major veterans benefit bill.

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Larry Haws
DFL
District 15B - St. Cloud
Terms: 3 (elected 2005 special election)
Advice to successor: "Try to vote on what you think is right and do research on the bills you're voting on."

At the Capitol

T25 C92.5

Possible amendment action waits in wings

It's still tough to get items on ballot

PIONEER PRESS FEB 26 '09

Associated Press

There's no shortage of proposed constitutional amendments at the Capitol this session.

For example, Sen. Geoff Michel, R-Edina, thinks too many of his colleagues are re-elected too easily and wind up holding all the power as committee chairs. He wants to limit senators to three terms and representatives to five. Offices like the governor and secretary of state would have two-term limits.

"One of the ways to bring some new blood and some fresh ideas, and to frankly break the power of this small number of legislators who hold a lot of the cards around here, is to bring term limits to Minnesota," Michel said.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, wants the constitution to block employers from making union membership a condition of employment.

"The individual should have the right not only to work in a place he or she is qualified and is wanted, but they should also have the choice whether they want to be part of an organized union or not," Emmer said.

Emmer also is sponsoring an amendment to protect freedom of choice in health care. And those are just three of the 13 amendments already on the table this session.

The hurdle for changing the constitution is higher in Minnesota than in most states, but some legislators think it should be even tougher. Sen.

Tom Bakk, DFL-Cook, said a proposal should also require the support of 60 percent of both legislative chambers.

Bakk said the past two constitutional amendments approved by Minnesota voters were bad policy. Two years ago they dedicated revenue from the motor vehicle sales tax to a highway trust fund, and in November they increased the sales tax and directed the new money to environmental and cultural programs.

Such policies, Bakk said, should require more votes to get on the ballot.

"My issue with locking up more and more pots of general fund money, saying this is what it has to be spent on, reduces the flexibility of future legislatures to respond to new information, to respond to changing priorities on the part of the public," Bakk said. "So, I think making it more difficult to get something on the ballot is good public policy."

House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, said Bakk makes a good point, but she said the current system has worked well enough to keep the constitution from being muddled with amendments.

"I think the reality of passing a constitutional amendment with the voters is very, very difficult," Kelliher said. "And the amendment that was passed last fall was over a decade in the making and took a lot of muscle to get it done."

19B



JEFF WHEELER • jwheeler@startribune.com

Shahn Anderson of Electric Dragonland inked the artwork on a tattoo for Jonathan Simmons.

Regulate the tattoo industry? Some artists agree on the point

STAR TRIBUNE APR 12 '09

By JAKE GROVUM • Star Tribune staff writer

To open a tattoo shop in Minnesota, an owner needs money, ink, needles and a clientele, to name only the obvious essentials. But, in much of the state, a license or training isn't on the list.

A bill in the Legislature — which has drawn both the support and the ire of tattoo artists — would change that.

"That there's not more of a groundswell of understanding, that this boom industry is completely unregulated — to me, it's difficult to comprehend," said Ryan Welles, a

former tattoo artist who worked in Duluth, Stillwater and upstate New York.

The estimated 750 body art practitioners and 250 establishments in Minnesota aren't regulated by the state, though a number of Minnesota cities and counties — including Minneapolis, St. Paul and Hennepin County — have ordinances. Federal occupational-health and safety regulations also apply to the artists' methods.

The bill would mandate standard health-related practices for artists and require

Tattoo continues on A16 ▶

◀ TATTOO FROM A1

training and inspections. If local regulations met or exceeded the bill's requirements, providers would be exempt from the license requirement but still subject to inspection.

Supporters say the bill would protect the health of patrons who visit these increasingly mainstream businesses. Opponents call the changes burdensome, unnecessary and even anti-competitive.

Health issues

Dr. Bruce Bart, a dermatologist at Hennepin County Medical Center, said health concerns are inherent in giving and receiving a tattoo.

"These people are actually penetrating the skin," he said, which allows for the spread of hepatitis B if contaminated instruments are used. "They certainly should be knowledgeable about potential risks and techniques which they're using."

Bart said that while infections from tattoos are rare, they happen.

Tom Hiendlmayr, health occupations program director at the Minnesota Department of Health, said there have been no known instances in the state where tattooing or piercing alone has been the source of blood-borne pathogens such as HIV or hepatitis.

Blood banks such as the Red Cross and Memorial Blood Centers remain cautious, however, deferring donors who have gotten a tattoo in the past year, as a precaution.

The sponsor of the bill in the state Senate, Yvonne Prettner Solon, DFL-Duluth, said she was approached by constituents about the need for regulation. She said she hadn't known that the industry was unregulated.

Welles is one of those constituents, calling the bill a "pro-active measure." He has seen people with tattoos where he could tell the artist wasn't technically skilled, which, he said, can mean they skipped out on

(Over)

19B



Jonathan Simmons admired the work of tattoo artist Shahn Anderson. A bill working its way through the Legislature would regulate tattoo parlors. Photos by JEFF WHEELER • jwheeler@startribune.com

« IT'S NOT A GOOD THING THAT ANY GUY WITH A COUPLE THOUSAND DOLLARS CAN JUST OPEN A SHOP. »

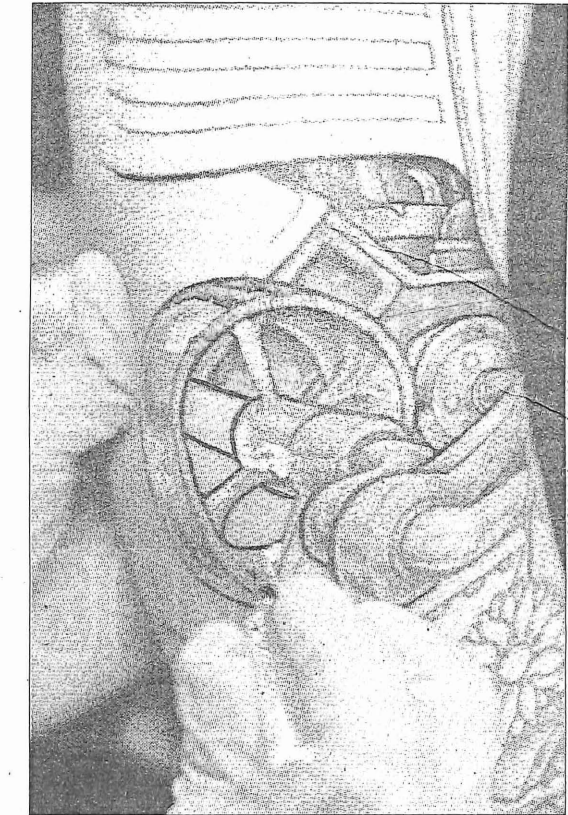
Dwayne Holt, tattoo artist at Anchor's End Tattoo, Duluth

safe health practices as well. **Not the first attempt** This isn't the first attempt to regulate the body art industry in Minnesota. Similar bills were introduced last session but didn't reach the floor. Prettnner Solon said her proposal could be included in a larger bill, but a companion bill in the House stalled after a tie vote by a licensing panel. "It was regulating something that nobody's come forward to talk about regulating," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, a panel member who voted against the bill. "There was no information to suggest there's

been a problem." Under the bill, an establishment would pay \$1,000 for a three-year license and each artist would pay \$100 annually for a license. Artists on both sides of the bill say that, as an industry, body art shops have been good self-regulators. Nonetheless, Dwayne Holt, a tattoo artist and shop manager at Anchor's End Tattoo in Duluth, said it's "2009 now; there should be regulation in this industry."

"It's not a good thing that any guy with a couple thousand dollars can just open a shop," he said. "You couldn't go and get your hair cut by someone who just picked up the scissors this morning." Tanika and Don Nolan, 20-year owners of St. Paul-based ACME Tattoo Co., have become the loyal opposition, collecting hundreds of signatures on a petition asking lawmakers to hold off on the bill.

They don't oppose regulation. They have been advocating for state regulation for years. But Tanika Nolan says this bill simply isn't the right answer and needs more input from the industry. One concern, she said, is that the bill is too broad, providing regulations and guidelines that go beyond public health. One provision, for example, would require that each workstation have 45 square feet of floor



Anderson's Electric Dragonland wouldn't be affected by the bill; he falls under Hennepin County regulations, which are stiffer than the proposed statewide legislation.

space. Tanika Nolan said that's unnecessary and could make it harder to enter the profession, potentially pushing some practitioners underground. Blood banks, though, have their own stake in the bill. If a tattoo were applied in a state-regulated shop, a donor wouldn't have to wait a year to give blood, but rather just long enough to make sure there were no infections.

That could help provide what is a constant need for blood, Geoff Kaufmann, CEO for the North Central Blood Services Region of the American Red Cross, said at a Capitol hearing. "They want to donate," he said, "and certainly they're not afraid of needles." Jake Grovum is a University of Minnesota student on assignment for the Star Tribune.

Plan puts brakes on penalties for DWI

• The author of a bill that has already drawn opposition says current law wrongly punishes before conviction.

STAR TRIBUNE MAR 28 '09
By PAT DOYLE
pdoyle@startribune.com

Consequences would come more slowly to Minnesotans suspected of drunken driving under a proposal advancing in the Minnesota House.

Drivers stopped on suspicion of drunken driving would not have their licenses revoked until they were convicted of impaired driving under a bill authored by Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano.

Currently, drivers face revocation soon after their arrests and before they go to court. The revocations are a minimum 90 days for failing a sobriety test, and a minimum one year for refusing a test.

Under Emmer's proposal, drivers would be subject to revocations of at least 30 and 60 days for failing or refusing tests — but only after they're convicted or plead guilty.

The proposal was denounced by Stephen Simon, a longtime supporter of the state's implied-consent law, which imposes the quick revocations. He said changing the law would hamper society's ability to reduce repeat drunken driving and accidents.

Drunken continues on A8 ►

DRUNKEN-DRIVING PENALTIES: NOT SO FAST

Now: Under current law, drivers can lose their licenses, have their license plates impounded or even forfeit their vehicles soon after being arrested for refusing or failing a breath test.

Proposed: Under legislation moving through the House, none of those sanctions could take effect until drivers are convicted or plead guilty to an impaired driving offense.

Proposal puts brakes on penalties for those caught driving while drunk

◀ DRUNKEN FROM A1

"If [it] was repealed, Minnesota's DWI law would lose much of its effectiveness," said Simon, head of the state DWI task force.

But supporters of the proposal say it's needed because pre-conviction revocations penalize drivers before proving they're guilty.

"He [Simon] objects to people actually being convicted before they are punished," said Jeffrey Sheridan, an Eagan defense attorney.

Sheridan said the current law, which allows revocations to begin seven days after an arrest, typically punishes drivers before they have their day in court.

"The suspension happens on the roadside," Sheridan said. "This is a revocation notice signed by no one other than a police officer."

The bill also would end the impoundment of license plates and forfeiture of vehicles before conviction.

Costs an issue

Aside from concerns about civil liberties, Sheridan and Emmer criticized revocation, impoundment and forfeiture before conviction as fostering a costly civil court bureaucracy.

Both said the current law requires separate court hearings for the civil revocation procedures and the criminal DWI case. State and local budget constraints have caused some courts to give drivers their licenses back rather than fight

◀ THIS IS A

REVOCATION ORDER

SIGNED BY NO ONE

OTHER THAN A POLICE

OFFICER. »

Jeffrey Sheridan, Eagan defense attorney who supports changing the DWI penalty process

◀ IF [IMPLIED

CONSENT] WAS

REPEALED,

MINNESOTA'S DWI LAW

WOULD LOSE MUCH OF

ITS EFFECTIVENESS. »

Stephen Simon, DWI task force

civil lawsuits over the revocations.

"We are trying DWI cases twice, for no good reason," Sheridan said. "There is a real budget crises and the courts are saying, 'Look, if you're going to cut our budget, one of the first things to go are these duplicative hearings in DWI cases.'"

Court may be avoided

The proposal would allow a first-time offender who paid a maximum \$1,000 fine within 30 days to plead guilty to a petty misdemeanor instead of

a misdemeanor and avoid going to court.

The proposal also specifies that a drunken-driving arrest that results in a conviction for careless driving would be punishable by a license revocation under the DWI law — as many as 90 days for a first-time offender and 180 days for a repeater.

"We're not interested in making it easier for drunk drivers," Emmer said.

But Simon defends pre-conviction license revocations and forfeitures, saying research shows that they have more impact deterring people from drinking and driving than do revocations that become effective after a conviction.

Lynne Goughler, legislative director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Minnesota, agrees. "There are 40 states that have [administrative license revocation]," she said. "It is proven. It is immediate. It is swift."

The bill, Goughler said, represents "absolutely the wrong message to send to people."

"We will continue to fight it."

Simon is not swayed by the argument that the current law penalizes people who haven't been convicted.

"Driving is a privilege, it's not a right," he said. Noting that accused drunken drivers are a relatively high risk, he said, "It's necessary for the state to proceed quickly to limit their use of a license."

Pat Doyle • 651-222-1210

19B

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I tweet, you tweet, even Pawlenty tweets

Welcome to Twitter, Minnesota's new frontier of political communication

PIONEER PRESS MAY 26 '09
By Rachel E. Stassen-Berger
rstassen-berger@pioneerpress.com

Minnesota politicians long ago perfected the art of using lots of words to say almost nothing. This year, they worked on saying an awful lot with just 140 characters.

When Gov. Tim Pawlenty sent a budget offer to Democratic lawmakers during the legislative session, House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher's first public response was on Twitter, a social messaging service.

"Governor's letter a compromise? Compromise in word only, doesn't balance the budget. Not a responsible plan," wrote the speaker, who posts on Twitter as @MAKMinnesota.

If you were interested in the debate about whether police can stop drivers to enforce seat belt rules, you could find a concise explanation on Twitter.

"Primary seatbelt legislation on house floor. The various arguments boil down to personal responsibility vs. enforcing safety," wrote @laurabrod, aka Rep. Laura Brod, R-New Prague,

from the House floor last week. The bill was passed and signed into law.

Welcome to the new frontier of political communication. Twitter users can send notes no longer than the first two sentences of this article. Elected officials have started voicing opinions, sharing news and connecting with supporters, reporters and others on Twitter.

"It's a nice, simple, quick way of communicating," Brod said. "We need more and more people paying attention

WELCOME TO TWITTER, 6A

Tuesday 5-26-2009

CONTINUED FROM 1A

> Welcome to Twitter

to what we are doing from St. Paul, and I am looking for any opportunity I can get to engage people, in whatever venue or environment that works best."

Brod and Kelliher were two of the early adopters of Twitter, which really took off in Minnesota politics this year. More than 30 Minnesota politicians, state officials and staffers use Twitter to interact and get their messages out.

"I would equate it to play-by-play politics," said Blois Olson, executive vice president at Tunheim Partners and public relations guru.

The Twittering ranks include former Sen. Norm Coleman, aka @SenatorColeman — who recently posted that his knee surgery would be a good way to keep his mind off his court fight — about a quarter of the Minnesota House members, four of Minnesota's nine-member congressional delegation, several candidates for governor and Pawlenty's political arm, @pawlenty.

Pawlenty's Twitter initiation last month was a bit bumpy. At first, he had a staffer send his messages, and his Twitter page was designed with a white-on-white background, making it all but impossible to read. Now, according to Trisha Hamm, his political director, he often sends his "tweets" — as Twitter posts are known — himself.

The day after the legislative session ended, Pawlenty's Twitter channel transmitted his political take on the Legislature: "DFL #mnleg failed to enact balanced budget or any reforms. Now flying around state to brag about it. What color is the sky in their world?" (#mnleg is the hashtag — see guide inside for Twitter terms — followers of the Legislature

Political Animal has its own distinctive call on Twitter

Twitter quickly has become an important tool in my journalistic toolbox.

As a political reporter, I use Twitter to direct folks to our blog posts on the Political Animal (blogs.twincities.com/politics), share quotes from political debates and inform followers about political news.

I get as much as I give on Twitter. I follow numerous politicians, other journalists

and official sources, all of whom help keep me informed. Twitter is never my only source for any bit of news, but it's increasingly become a first alert.

Twitter also allows me to interact with those I cover, have conversations with others interested in politics and let those who follow me find out a little bit more about my personality than they would get from a

newspaper article.

What you won't find out about me on Twitter: what I had for lunch (unless it involves work), my plans for the weekend (unless they involve work) or where I am at any particular moment (unless it involves work).

Sound interesting? Check me out at twitter.com/polanimal.

— Rachel E. Stassen-Berger

POLITICAL TWITTER

For a listing of Minnesota politicians, governments, political reporters, bloggers and others involved in politics and have a Twitter presence, go to mnpoltwitter.pbworks.com.

use to keep track of events.)

A few hours later, Kelliher responded with a simple: "My Minnesota sky is blue."

The two messages were retweeted — that is, copied and sent out — to thousands of watchers.

Political Twittering can lead to unfortunate results.

Some of Rep. Paul Gardner's impassioned tweets during a tax bill debate offended two Republican members — so much so that they prepared an ethics complaint against the Shoreview DFLer.

Gardner's posts suggested Republican Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, targeted female politicians in his parries and that Rep. Mark Buesgens, R-Jordan, might have a black eye.

"This is the most bizarre thing

in the world," said Emmer, who was informed of the offending tweets soon after Gardner posted them. He said the online messages were unfair and inappropriate. "This is not only bad form, this is wrong. You go after people's reputations in the sea of the Internet, and it never goes away."

The offending tweets were deleted, a high-level meeting was called, and Gardner issued a public apology: "I apologize for this transgression. We often get emotional during important debate, and tempers can flare, but that can be no excuse."

In an interview, he said the lesson was learned.

"The first thing that pops in your head is not the first thing you should say on Twitter," he said.

Gardner said with all new communications tools — e-mail, Facebook, message boards — someone tests the limits, and that helps define good and bad uses.

"I'm the first guy to hit the fence," Gardner said. "The silver lining is that I think of a lot of people who were not really helping the debate with their electronic communications

should learn from my example."

But Emmer and Buesgens' ethics complaint lives on — days past the time Gardner deleted the messages — and last week, Emmer said the issue is unresolved.

House Speaker Kelliher said Twitter, like other new media, does call for a rethinking of how members communicate.

"I think sometimes people should count to 10 before they tweet," Kelliher said. "It does make us revisit again our policy on electronic media and the respectful use of electronic media in the workplace."

But Kelliher — who can talk at length about the glories of Tweetdeck, a program that helps manage Twitter — has embraced the social network, warts and all.

"I think it makes sense in the real time, especially in the fast-paced environment, (to be) able to respond and get something out there," said Kelliher, who added she sometimes tracked legislative action via Twitter during the session. "I actually think it's a tool that can add transparency to public negotiating on public matters. I think that is fascinating."

Who's next? Hopefuls are lining up quickly

PIONEER PRESS JUN 3 '09

By Jason Hoppin
jhoppin@pioneerpress.com

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's decision not to seek a third term created an interesting phenomenon Tuesday — en masse, Republicans ripped off their shoes and began dipping their toes in the political waters.

A broad potential field of candidates hoping to follow the popular governor is emerging, but there is no clear heir — after a spate of election losses, the Legislature, big-city mayoral offices and the state's congressional delegation are all dominated by Democrats.

"The state Republican bench is pretty thin," said Steven Schier, a political science professor at Carleton College.

And any contender will be running against a Democratic-Farmer-Labor candidate plucked from a crowded field of seasoned politicians, ranging from former U.S. Sen. Mark Dayton to former House Minority Leader Matt Entenza, who has already run one statewide campaign, to Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner, so far the only woman to officially announce her candidacy.

Several others, including House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman

and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, are all said to be weighing entry into the race.

There are some well-known Republican names looming — former U.S. Rep. Jim Ramstad, a moderate, deflected questions about his prospects Tuesday — but the long line of potential candidates will likely emphasize the role party politics plays in choosing a nominee.

"It reflects the fact that it is a wide-open race. And it's a wide-open race without many prominent candidates. And that, to me, makes the endorsement process important," Schier said. "I think that indicates there are great

dangers for the Republicans in this next cycle."

The part of the GOP base active in party politics is more conservative than the state as a whole, and thus the endorsement process is "not reliably likely to produce a candidate who is electable statewide," Schier said.

That could make the race the Democrats' to lose, especially given the way recent elections in the state have gone. But at least one Democratic candidate warned against ruling out Republicans, pointing out that Democrats haven't won a governor's race since 1986.

"Any Democrat or Republican who's measuring the drapes now had better be very careful," Entenza said.

Pawlenty said Tuesday he would back whichever Republican emerges to succeed him, offering up a simple piece of advice: Win. He painted a grim picture of DFLers controlling both the Legislature and the governor's office.

"Katy, bar the door. It's going to be a runaway train of problems," Pawlenty said.

Here's a list of who's in, who's out, and who's lurking in the wings. As long as it is, it is by no means a complete list:

Republicans

MICHELE BACHMANN



Bachmann, 53, of Stillwater, would be a dream for the conservative base and columnists who delight in her sometimes fact-challenged flights of TV punditry. A fierce campaigner, the

congresswoman could be a contender for the GOP nomination, but chief of staff Michelle Marston said Tuesday that Bachmann wasn't interested. "She's happy representing the people of the 6th District," Marston said.

JIM RAMSTAD



The 63-year-old moderate ex-congressman might have trouble getting the nomination, but he could make an end run around the party process and put his name in the ring for the

primary election. He sounded Tuesday like a man who isn't ruling out a run for governor. "Today is not the day to discuss my future plans. It's a day to praise and thank our great governor for outstanding leadership during these challenging times," he said.

NORM COLEMAN



The 59-year-old former St. Paul mayor and U.S. senator has made one run for governor, only to lose to Jesse Ventura. He is still locked in an election recount and court challenge, but one nearing an end. A spokesman did not respond to inquiries about whether he'd be interested in running for governor should the Minnesota Supreme Court rule against him.

BRIAN SULLIVAN



The wealthy, conservative party insider lost the endorsement to Pawlenty in 2002. His fortune, from building the maker of PUR water filters, gives him an advantage in a race. Sullivan, 47, couldn't be reached for comment Tuesday.

RAT ANDERSON



The former state auditor said Tuesday she is interested in running. Anderson, 42, was Eagan mayor and headed the state's Department of Employee Relations under Pawlenty before it was eliminated. "I will make up my mind in the next month or two," she said.

MARTY SEIFERT



The House minority leader from Marshall is in his seventh term and knows his way around the halls of the Capitol. Seifert, 37, has scheduled an 11 a.m. news conference today and is rumored to be relinquishing his leadership post. Asked whether he would explore a run

for governor, Seifert said: "I'm interested."

DAVID HANN



The 57-year-old assistant minority leader from Eden Prairie is in his second state Senate term and said Tuesday he would decide by the end of the week if he is running. He is an ardent

fiscal conservative and advocate of education reform. "I've been encouraged to think about this by a number of people, and I am thinking about it," Hann said.

CHARLIE WEAVER



The executive director of the Minnesota Business Partnership is a longtime friend of Pawlenty's, as well as his former chief of staff. At 51 years old, Weaver has also been a prosecutor,

served as commissioner of the Department of Public Safety and was a member of the House for 10 years. "It is certainly something that I would consider," Weaver said.

GEOFF MICHEL



The 45-year-old two-term state senator from Edina was rumored Tuesday to be weighing a run. He is fiscally conservative, having joined an effort during the last legislative session to freeze

state pay, but socially moderate and co-sponsored a recent medical marijuana bill that passed the Legislature. He could not be reached Tuesday.

PAUL KOHLS



One of the Republicans' young voices, the 35-year-old from Victoria is in his fourth term. A frequent speechmaker who champions conservative principles, he said Tuesday

he'd give himself some time to weigh a run.

LAURA BROD



At 37, the fourth-term representative from New Prague is another young conservative voice. Her floor speeches on taxes, abortion and elections are augmented by frequent "tweets" from

her Twitter account, and she has traveled the state on behalf of the party. She sidestepped questions Tuesday about whether she would run.

TOM EMMER



The 48-year-old third-term House member from Delano is known as much for his policy rants on the House floor as for his conservative principles. When reached Tuesday, Emmer said he

wasn't closing the door but didn't sound interested.

Democrats

SUSAN GAERTNER



The Ramsey County attorney, 55, announced her candidacy earlier than anyone in the 2010 race. She has a prosecutor's background, which helped propel Sen. Amy Klobuchar to victory, and is already capitalizing on Pawlenty's announcement, using it as the basis for a fundraising letter that went out Tuesday.

MATT ENTENZA



Another early campaigner, the 47-year-old former House minority leader has been active in DFL politics and has been traveling the state since February. He was

a candidate for attorney general in 2006, but withdrew after first denying, then admitting, that he'd hired a research firm to look into fellow Democrat and then-Attorney General Mike Hatch. Entenza said Tuesday he believes the economy would be the main issue in the race.

MARK DAYTON



At 62, Dayton has already used his personal fortune to launch a successful U.S. Senate campaign. Dayton stepped aside after one term, leaving an undistinguished record. He

announced earlier this year that he is running for governor.

CHRIS COLEMAN



The 47-year-old St. Paul mayor is seeking re-election this year, but that didn't stop him from raising his profile by using his pulpit as second vice president of the League of Minnesota Cities to criticize Pawlenty's policies during the last legislative session. A spokesman said Coleman is considering a run for governor.

R.T. RYBAK



Also running for re-election, Rybak was praised for his leadership following the collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge. Rybak, 53, was also one of the first big-city mayors to throw his weight behind President Obama, who carried Minnesota by a wide margin. A spokesman said Rybak is focused on re-election but is considering a run for higher office as well.

MARGARET ANDERSON KELLIHER



Coming off a bruising legislative session, the 41-year-old House Speaker from Minneapolis is in her sixth term and hasn't made an announcement of her future plans. She is widely

considered a contender for the DFL

nomination should she enter the race, but a spokesman said Tuesday that she is focused on her job as speaker and that no announcement is imminent.

TOM BAKK



The 54-year old from the Iron Range may end up being DFLers' leading outstate candidate. He is in his second Senate term after serving four in the House and chairs the Senate Tax

Committee — though he didn't vote for the DFL tax bill this session. He has already formed an exploratory committee for governor and said Tuesday he'd make an announcement next week about his plans.

STEVE KELLEY



This former Hopkins state senator is making another run at an office he's sought before. Kelley, 56, ran for the DFL nomination for governor in 2006 and lost to Hatch.

When Entenza dropped out of the attorney general's race, Kelley won the party's nod but lost to Lori Swanson in the primary. Swanson went on to win the general election and holds the seat today.

JOHN MARTY



The 52-year-old Roseville senator is in his seventh term and has already run once as the DFL-endorsed gubernatorial candidate. Marty has officially

announced he's in and hopes his progressive agenda — which includes universal health care and marriage equality for gays and lesbians — plays better than it did in 1994, when he lost to Arne Carlson.

PAUL THISSEN



Thissen, 42, of Minneapolis, is known as one of the smartest lawmakers at the state Capitol and has focused on health care. Six days after he was elected to his fourth term in the House,

he said he planned to run for governor in 2010 and has been campaigning since.

TIM WALZ



The 45-year-old second-term congressman from Mankato stunned observers when he defeated longtime incumbent Gil Gutknecht in 2006. He's a former teacher and football coach who

doesn't have a huge statewide profile, but is considered an attractive candidate in Democratic circles. His staff said Tuesday he would be running for re-election in 2010, not for governor.

Bill Salisbury and Rachel E. Stassen-Berger contributed to this report.

Health care choices: Cut a lot or cut a lot more

• The DFL cites painful reductions in bills passed Monday by the House and Senate, but they are not enough for Gov. Pawlenty.
 STAR TRIBUNE APR 28 '09
 By MIKE KASZUBA • mkaszuba@startribune.com

The Minnesota Senate and House approved multi-billion-dollar health and human service bills Monday, as DFLers continued their march toward a showdown with Gov. Tim Pawlenty over a major area of the state budget.

The two bills, which have some notable differences, include what DFL leaders said are painful but necessary reductions in light of the state's \$4.6 billion budget deficit. But the reductions fall short of what the governor said is necessary to slow down rising costs.

"I don't think we can take the kind of cut in health care suggested by the governor," said Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, who said Pawlenty was effectively taking a "meat cleaver" to health care programs for the poor and disabled.

The House approved its bill by an 85-49 vote after nearly nine hours of debate. The Senate passed its version 40-23 earlier in the day.

Sen. Linda Berglin, DFL-Minneapolis, said the Senate proposal would lower projected spending by \$625 million over the next two years, nearly \$200 million more than the House bill would. Much of the difference, she acknowledged, was because the House proposal pushed reductions into the next two-year biennium. Pawlenty has proposed about \$1.7 billion in reductions.

The House and Senate DFL majorities both tried to convince Minnesotans that Pawlenty is

Health care continues on A8 ▶

◀ CAPITOL FROM A1

going too far in pushing people off state-subsidized health care and in cutting funds for hospital and nursing home facilities. In his revised budget last month, the governor proposed savings through changes that would make an estimated 113,000 Minnesotans ineligible for subsidized health care starting in January 2011. State health and human services spending — which Pawlenty has repeatedly said is ballooning out of control — would be capped through 2013 at 2010 levels.

DFL House leaders warned that unless a package of tax increases adopted Saturday also is put into law, the proposed reductions in health and human services could rise from the roughly \$400 million to as much as \$900 million.

But Rep. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, echoed many GOP House members who said the bill did not go far enough in making cuts to a health and human service budget that is spiraling upward. "It's only a start of what has to be done," said Abeler.

Economy vs. philosophy

Berglin said it was the nation's lingering recession — and not generous health care benefits — that was causing the state's health care crisis. "It is true that more people [are] without health insurance than at any time that I can remember," she said moments after the Senate passed its bill. "It's all because of the economy."

But Pawlenty spokesman Brian McClung, signaling the philosophical gap between the governor and DFLers, was critical of both the House and Senate recommendations for health and human services. "Minnesota Democrats might not need to try to increase every tax under the sun if they'd implement reforms and slow down out-of-control welfare and health care spending," he said.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert agreed, saying the House bill did little to tackle needed reform. "It's woefully lacking in reform," said Seifert, R-Marshall. "It expands eligibility while we got billions of dollars in deficits. It doesn't make any sense."

Floor maneuvering

Much of Monday's debate was devoted to maneuvering for what is likely to be a bruising showdown in the coming weeks.

At one point, Rep. Thomas Huntley, DFL-Duluth, sponsor of the House bill, moved to eliminate the state's health care access fund — even though he doesn't favor such a move.

Huntley said he wanted to force a vote to show how much actual support there was among both DFLers and Republicans for the fund, which primarily pays for MinnesotaCare, the subsidized health program for lower-income Minnesotans.

Huntley's proposal, which would have transferred the money to the state's general fund failed on a 131-1 vote. While the House recommended giving the fund \$1.09 billion over the next two years, the governor — who has proposed tapping

the fund for broader budget purposes — has recommended \$540 million.

Republicans decried the maneuver as time-consuming "political posturing." Huntley said the purpose was to strengthen the position of legislators opposed to the governor's proposal as the issue is decided in conference committee and in talks with the governor's office.

But the overall House debate nevertheless signaled again the wideness of the GOP-DFL political gap.

"These programs haven't been working. They're upside down. All you keep doing is funding them," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano. "It's [all] about 'Gotcha, governor, gotcha, governor,'" he said of the DFL maneuvering.

The vote in the Senate also showed that some DFLers don't like their party's plans. Among the 23 senators voting against the bill was John Marty, DFL-Roseville, who recently announced his gubernatorial candidacy and has frequently chastised his party for going too far in health care cuts.

As in previous years, the House defeated — this time, barely — an attempt to bar the use of state health care funds for abortion. "We've seen this probably every year," said Rep. Tina Liebling, DFL-Rochester. "What this just does is set up a court challenge."

But Rep. Steve Gottwalt, R-St. Cloud, said such a move would not only be morally correct, but would save taxpayer money. In the end, the move failed on a 66-66 tie.

A focus on fraud

Both the House and the Senate also moved to fortify the number of welfare fraud investigators in Minnesota, a program that the Pawlenty administration had suggested be reduced.

Under the governor's earlier proposal, the number of investigators statewide would be reduced from 31 to 25, even as they would be asked to cover all of the state's 87 counties, instead of the 55 counties they currently do. The governor's change would save an estimated \$15,000 next year, but officials have said the main goal is to place the program under state control rather than having it run by individual counties.

In the Senate, DFLers on Monday recommended hiring eight investigators to try to extend the program's reach to counties not now served.

DFLers in both houses, in addition, moved to remedy the use of personal care assistants, a state program that the legislative auditor said earlier this year was "unacceptably vulnerable to fraud and abuse." The auditor said investigators had found 423 instances in which a personal care assistant claimed to have worked more than 24 hours in one day, yet state agencies paid for the services.

House leaders said their proposal would mean a loss of personal care assistants for an estimated 800 people, as opposed to an estimated 2,200 people losing the service under the governor's suggestion.

Staff writer Mark Brunswick contributed to this report.

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