

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.

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> 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-

et 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 Sertich, 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.

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.

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(over)

65A

Legislators hear local concerns

More than
100 people attend
town hall meeting

By LISA KACZKE
Staff Writer

Local officials and residents voiced their opinions about funding cuts proposed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty during a town hall meeting Saturday.

More than 100 people attended the meeting at the Bob Walls Memorial Union Hall, where speakers were able to provide two minute testimonies to Rep. Tom Anzelc, Sen. Tom Saxhaug, Rep. David Dill and Rep. Cy Thao.

Among the issues brought to the state legislators attention were cuts to social services, health care, local government aid and education.

In his closing remarks, Thau said people in his district in St. Paul expressed the same concerns as those who spoke at the Saturday's meeting. As a member of the House Health and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee, Thau told the crowd that members of the committee don't agree with Pawlenty's proposed cuts to social services.

Koochiching County Community Services Director Terry Murray said he was concerned with the severity of the proposed cuts, as well as the proposal to regionalize social services.

It's a time when residents

who have never used social services are turning to it, Murray said.

"What a great time to cut it," he said. He concluded by asking the legislators to let social services departments work out the funding problems instead of Pawlenty.

Resident George Konecny passionately asked the legislators to speak to Pawlenty

See **CONCERNS** Page 7A about the proposed cuts.

"My heart bleeds when I think of what Pawlenty is doing," Konecny said, pointing out that millions of Americans can't afford health insurance. "Don't cut the services for those who need it most."

Resident Jennifer Beck told the legislators that cuts are being made to services needed by vulnerable populations. She said she's looking for a job now and noted that cuts are being made to the Work Force Centers.

Cynthia Jaksa, Falls city councilor and site manager of Kootasca, said she is concerned cuts proposed for social services will cause a decline in the local economy and make it more difficult for businesses to survive. She also called for a more equitable tax system, because the current system causes residents with the lowest incomes to pay the highest tax rates.

International Falls Mayor Shawn Mason told the legislators that budget restric-

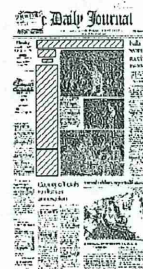
tions caused by local government aid cuts "unfairly target poor rural municipalities." Citing a study completed by the League of Minnesota Cities, she said Pawlenty "doesn't pass the fairness test." The LGA cuts are causing cities to restrict their budgets for items such as police, fire, recreation and libraries. The study compares how the cuts are going to cost residents in services in communities around the state. In Ely, the cost are estimated to cost \$156 per person and in International Falls, the cuts are estimated at \$142 per person, Mason said. That compares to a per capita cost of \$18 for residents in Minnetonka.

Marie Blumhardt, Falls High School teacher and president of the local teacher's union, said she was concerned about a 7-percent cut to education being proposed in the Senate. She noted that a cut in funding would cause larger class sizes for kindergarten, first and second grades. The larger class sizes would, in turn, create a situation where it is harder for teachers to instruct students in reading.

"We can't wait for an economic stimulus to teach out students to read," Blumhardt said.

Cuts to health care also concerned several people who spoke.

Koochiching County Public Health Director Susan



Congrave said maintaining funding to local public health departments is "key to protecting Minnesotans' health." She pointed to the purpose of local health departments in preventing diseases, which minimizes long-term costs to the state.

Bonnie Erickson, chief executive officer of Falls Memorial Hospital, said that while cuts are being proposed that will affect FMH, the hospital is getting hit with more patients.

"We have to provide care to those who don't have insurance. We can't turn people away," Erickson said.

Other people addressed key items Saturday:

- Drug Court Coordinator Della Warren and Judge Chad LeDuc implored the legislators to reject cuts to funding for drug court. Warren noted that in a recession, crime goes up, as well as drug and alcohol use. LeDuc asked that legislators not cut funding for a program that saves the county money.

- Koochiching County Commissioner Mike Hanson requested the legislators find a way to alleviate the impact state wetland laws have on the county. He also said he appreciated the support the county has received for its proposed plasmaifica-

tion project.

- Falls High School teacher Sue Nordquist asked the legislators to keep the importance of world language education in mind when discussing a proposed bill that would restore a law that would require districts to offer two years of a foreign language and increase the requirement to three years by 2015.

- Ward Merrill, executive director of Citizens for Backus, asked for federal stimulus money for several projects being planned for Backus/AB. The funding would be used to complete a \$1 million remodeling project that would add a community kitchen and third floor offices in Backus.

- LeeAnn Meer, of Friends Against Abuse, asked legislators to keep funding at its current level to her agency. She added that domestic abuse is "staggering" in Koochiching County and costs the county about \$890,000 annually.

- Adam Coe, of the Good Samaritan Society of International Falls, asked the legislators to review reimbursements to nursing homes. The low reimbursement rates for the Good Samaritan are causing a gap in funding between some

nursing homes, he said.

- Resident Jim Yount asked legislators to change the Minnesota Constitution to allow runoff elections. He cited the Senate trial case between candidates Al Franken and Norm Coleman as a reason for the change.

- Resident Dennis Wagner requested legislators investigate an odor coming from the AbitibiBowater mill in Fort Frances during the summer. He also asked the legislators to support funding for the extension of a sewer project east of International Falls toward Rainy Lake. He concluded by asking the legislators to expedite a land transfer that would allow a girls camp at Camp Koochiching to expand on Rainy Lake.

- Resident Dan Blais asked that the government eliminate the Federal Reserve.

- Resident Roy Sandstrom asked the legislators to request the federal government allow residents to receive the TV channels they want. He also asked the legislature pass a bill legalizing medical marijuana.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Input from town hall meeting will be brought to St. Paul

To the editor,

We want to thank everyone, and there were well over 100 of you, who took the time to participate in our legislative town hall meeting in International Falls this past weekend. Your stories and ideas show clearly what is at stake in our efforts to responsibly close our record budget deficit in the face of the worst economic recession in decades. We also want to thank Rep. David Dill from Crane Lake and Rep. Cy Thao, who traveled over 300 miles from his home district in St. Paul to hear from the citizens we represent.

While there were many different opinions

expressed at the meeting, common themes certainly emerged. Most people who spoke talked about the value and need for specific programs and services, but understood sacrifices will be required to close our \$5 billion deficit. More than anything, we heard that people want those sacrifices to be shared by all Minnesotans so that no particular region or group of Minnesotans are asked to unfairly bear too large a burden to close this deficit.

We plan on bringing your voices to the state Capitol as we work to balance our budget fairly. That means making sure Minnesotans share in the sacrifice so that

our children, seniors and disabled aren't asked to endure the deepest spending cuts. It also means making strategic budget choices to maintain programs and services that will position us for long-term economic success, including support for our public schools and programs and services that promote and create jobs.

Again, thank you for participating in the democratic process and helping us better serve our communities in the state Legislature.

Rep. **Tom Anzelc**, DFL-Balsam Township
Sen. **Tom Saxhaug**, DFL-Grand Rapids



65A

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What's on your mind?

Have you seen the new City Pages? OMG!

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MN Lobbyists has an idea: rate the legislators

Posted last week • Comment



Biz Daddy at 12:15pm March 29

I loves it! Let's do it



Voice of Reason at 12:22pm March 29

Figures you'd love it BD. I'm not so sure... Still wanna get drinks?



MN Lobbyists at 12:25pm March 29

Not to worry, VoR--we can do this anon.

Your Legislator

PEOPLE YOU MAY KNOW See All



Bobby Joe Champion

Add as Friend

x



Erin Murphy

Add as Friend

x

A GUIDE TO THE BRIGHTEST STARS AND THE DIMMEST HACKS IN THE STATEHOUSE,
BY THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEM BEST: LOBBYISTS

by **bradley campbell**

capitol facebook

by Bradley Campbell



The 2009 legislative session sucks. That's the word from Capitol insiders. Minnesota finds itself searching for a solution to a **\$4.6 billion budget deficit**. The state unemployment rate just pulled even with the national average. A school system once the envy of the nation has been trimmed to within an inch of its life. And health care is poor, even for the rich.

Now more than ever, we need good leadership. So *City Pages* decided to peek inside the vaunted marble halls in St. Paul to check on the 29 legislators who represent the Twin Cities. We wanted to see how they stack up as policy-makers, and if they deserve the responsibility of working for the people.

To achieve this, we sent out surveys to some **1,350 statehouse lobbyists**.

Let lobbyists rank the legislators!?

Yes.

There is no other profession that works closer with our legislators, none that has the insight into how the sausage of our laws gets made—who carries a big stick, and who carries nothing more than fancy stationery.

The participants couldn't use their names without risking their careers. After all, how do you call in favors from a guy you savaged in print? Hoping for honest assessments, we granted total anonymity.

This story is largely gossip and opinion of the very best kind. We borrowed the idea from *Willamette Week*, an alt-weekly in Portland that has a Pulitzer sitting on the shelf. *Willamette Week* found this was the best way to get an honest assessment of Oregon's legislators. They've done the story for 32 years and counting.

Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL)
District 60A—Minneapolis



OVERALL	8.5
BRAINS	8.3
WORK ETHIC	8.7
EFFECTIVENESS	8.5

No legislator received higher praise than the speaker of the House. Comments about her read like they were written for a book jacket:

"Our next governor? A grownup in a building filled with children."

"The savvy diplomat who brings together diverse voices while fighting for the most underrepresented in our communities. It is not easy to keep together a caucus, and she has done it with grace and style."

"A leader for our times! Very smart; eager to learn; listens extremely well; seeks common-sense solutions that work for all Minnesotans; tough, but in a kind of compassionate way; very flexible; and highly respected. One of the very best."

It was a struggle to find any negative opinions of her. We only found two: one lobbyist said they miss former speaker Dee Long; another felt that her talents needed to produce action earlier in the session. But that was it.

The budget is her baby this session, and if Kelliher-Anderson powers through a tax increase for the wealthy, her praise could turn into hero worship among progressive insiders.

"She is a powerhouse."

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL)
District 63A—Minneapolis



OVERALL	8.5
BRAINS	8.8
WORK ETHIC	8.5
EFFECTIVENESS	8.1

When you Google "Paul Thissen," the first result is his upstart bid for governor. He believes he has the skills for higher office, as do plenty of others inside the Capitol. His credentials are first-class: B.A. Harvard University, J.D. University of Chicago. The man has academic horsepower to spare.

"Paul is a top-notch legislator with a real future in higher office," says one lobbyist.

Much of the praise is due to his detailed understanding of policy. One lobbyist was impressed that Thissen actually knows what's inside the many folders he carries around, emphatically stating he is the best legislator in the entire bunch.

Another feels that Thissen does better with policy than with politics, a possible hindrance as he works his way up the ladder of power.

Recently, he came into the spotlight for a different reason. His Catholic high school, the Academy of Holy Angels, stripped him of Hall of Fame honor because of his support of abortion rights.

This year, among other issues, he's supporting a bill to help the unemployed obtain temporary health care.

"A real rock star," declares one lobbyist. "Any political wannabe would be smart to hitch to his train. If he were governor, we'd be much better off."

Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL)
District 61—Minneapolis



OVERALL	8.1
BRAINS	8.1
WORK ETHIC	8.5
EFFECTIVENESS	7.6

Berglin commands respect. Lobbyists say she is someone you shouldn't try to B.S. The veteran politician first came to the Capitol in 1972. Since then, the graphic designer-turned-healthcare policy guru has established herself as the chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division.

"Linda is the single most effective legislator in the Minnesota Legislature," says one lobbyist. "She knows more and accomplishes more in the single most complicated area the Legislature deals with—healthcare—than any other three legislators combined."

Insiders say she is the most feared and respected legislator at the Capitol. She takes a no-nonsense approach to her work.

"Amazing grasp of the budget, history, and impact on real people," says another lobbyist.

This session has Berglin aiming to reduce the cost of state healthcare. Potential solutions include a move to discourage the overuse of cesarean section deliveries and efforts to trim provider reimbursement rates for federal Medicaid dollars.

"Like healthcare?" one lobbyist asks rhetorically. "Thank Linda."

Sen. Scott Dibble (DFL)
District 60—Minneapolis



OVERALL	7.8
BRAINS	7.9
WORK ETHIC	8.1
EFFECTIVENESS	7.5

The triathlete from Minneapolis began his political life as an advocate for gay and lesbian rights. While the issue remains critical to Dibble's political framework, he's widened his focus over the years and become a critical voice inside the Capitol on a number of different issues.

The bills he's entered this session exemplify his diversity, from regulations about the selling of cocoa-bean-shell mulch to waiving the \$50 to \$100 testing fee on the state GED for homeless folks.

"He can grasp a huge amount of information quickly," says one lobbyist. "He's also very eloquent; I love to hear him in committee."

His signature bill this session would amend the state anti-bullying law, adding 14 categories aimed at prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and violence. He's used all his skills to get it through, without increasing monetary cost, something legislators are avoiding out of necessity this session.

"One of the most effective legislators at moving key legislation while maintaining his progressive values," says one respondent.

"Rising star," adds another.

A GUIDE TO THE BRIGHTEST STARS AND THE DIMMEST HACKS IN THE STATEHOUSE, BY THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEM BEST: LOBBYISTS

Our own efforts were immediately met with skepticism. **"You're asking us to risk our reputations and careers on your story with the 'goal' of candor. No thanks,"** wrote back one lobbyist. Other lobbyists got on their moral high horses and met our mass emails with mass emails of their own, pleading with peers to ignore the survey.

But 32 lobbyists took the opportunity to open a window to government. We asked them to rank each Twin Cities legislator on a scale of 1 to 10 in three categories: **Brains, Work Ethic, and Effectiveness.** Then we calculated the average of those numbers for an overall score. We're listing them from best to worst, acknowledging up front that it's not a scientific survey.

What follows is a glimpse underneath the emperor's gown.



Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL)
District 62A—Minneapolis



OVERALL	7.7
BRAINS	7.4
WORK ETHIC	7.9
EFFECTIVENESS	7.7

Davnie chairs the Labor and Consumer Protection Division Committee, but the former social studies teacher isn't myopically focused on just one issue.

"He is able to spread thinner and be successful," explains one lobbyist. "He's fast and thinks quick. Sometimes it's hard to get a word in. He's firing on all eight cylinders all the time."

Davnie received high marks for his ability to build coalitions on a multitude of issues. This year he's focused on foreclosure policy and tenant rights as well as sponsoring a bill that further regulates payday lending.

The lobby does admit to one annoyance: his love of playing partisan politics.

"Eighty percent of the Twin Cities legislators are over-partisan," avows one lobbyist. "He tends to get that way on the floor."

Sen. Mee Moua (DFL)
District 67—St. Paul



OVERALL	7.6
BRAINS	7.6
WORK ETHIC	7.9
EFFECTIVENESS	7.4

Moua entered the political scene with fanfare. She's the first Hmong American elected to a state Legislature

and, according to lobbyists, might be the smartest legislator at the Capitol.

Moua completed her undergrad degree at Brown, went on to receive a Masters of Public Policy from the University of Texas-Austin, and earned her law degree from the University of Minnesota. She chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, and has proven to be a quick study.

"Not many legislators have grown into their role as much as Senator Moua has grown since first being elected," says one lobbyist. "She is a true stateswoman."

Sen. Lawrence Pogemiller (DFL)
District 59—Minneapolis



OVERALL	7.6
BRAINS	7.9
WORK ETHIC	8.2
EFFECTIVENESS	6.8

Vain. Slippery. Ruthless. Sneaky. Arrogant. All these adjectives were used to describe the Senate majority leader.

To some, partisan bickering is an annoyance, getting in the way of the business of enacting law, but Pogemiller seems to relish the knife-fighting.

"Can be a bully—I've seen him make other legislators cry in public," wrote one lobbyist.

This year, he's sharpening his saber over the budget. That means a battle over taxes with Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Pogemiller leads the DFL in its effort to raise taxes on the richest Minnesotans. Insiders also note that the Senate's budget plan is mostly Pogemiller's.

Aside from his brutish tactics, lobbyists point to his smarts as the reason he's climbed the legislative ladder over the years. He's adept at using the press as his mouthpiece. It's hard not to include one of his signature one-liners in a story.

Yet some question the effectiveness of his rhetoric. One lobbyist thinks he's out of touch with greater Minnesota.

"If stopping T-Paw was the name of the game, he would truly rule the roost," says a lobbyist. "Unfortunately, government is a little more complicated than that."

Rep. Erin Murphy (DFL)
District 64A—St. Paul



OVERALL	7.5
BRAINS	7.5
WORK ETHIC	7.8
EFFECTIVENESS	7.2

It's easy to like Erin Murphy. The Irish Catholic from St. Paul commits herself to policy over politicking. Her former life as an operating-room nurse gives her an accurate read on the pulse of healthcare policy.

She's introducing a dozen or more bills looking to improve the system this session. They include ideas to change the way flu vaccinations are administered, and the licensing of respiratory therapists.

"Absolutely a rising star," says a lobbyist. "Never seen her without a smile. The way she responds and treats people is outstanding. She is amazingly effective."

With the benefit of people skills, she continues to hone her political chops.

The lobby views her as a future leader of the House.

"Smart, works hard, and pleasant. The rare trifecta in legislators," says a lobbyist.

Sen. Ellen R. Anderson (DFL)
District 66—St. Paul



OVERALL	7.2
BRAINS	7.3
WORK ETHIC	7.5
EFFECTIVENESS	6.9

Paul Wellstone lives! His progressive mission continues with former volunteers like Anderson, a research director for his 1990 campaign.

Like her late boss, Anderson had to fight to gain respect. "She started out running into the ol' boys' club," recalls one lobbyist. "But she worked her tail off and paid her dues."

As chair of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Budget Division, she acts as a point person on energy issues. In 2007, her reform-oriented energy legislation was hailed by the DFL as one of the major accomplishments of the session. But her predilection for renewable resources has some still questioning her willingness to work with big industry.

"Focused on saving the earth and that is about it. Well intended, but..." sniffs one lobbyist.

Thanks to the voter-approved Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, she's the rare legislator this session who has money to spend.

"A formidable member," says a lobbyist. "She knows what she wants."

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL)
District 62B—Minneapolis



OVERALL	7.1
BRAINS	7.3
WORK ETHIC	7.5
EFFECTIVENESS	6.5

Representative Wagenius is the greenest of legislators. She chairs the Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division, and could be mistaken for Mother Nature.

And the inconvenient truths of her policy command both respect and revulsion in the Capitol.

"She is tough, not receptive to certain audiences, but receptive to logical arguments," says a lobbyist.

Her motherly instincts extend to new colleagues, and she's the first to take newbies under her wing. "She has worked very hard to help to develop other legislators," explains a lobbyist. "She does not just think about developing her power but rather empowering others to lead in the future."

When voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, the money was supposed to boost conservation efforts. Instead, some of her colleagues are thinking the extra cash can allow cuts.

Which means Gaia better get her game face on.

[See CAPITOL FACEBOOK page 17]

Sen. Richard Cohen (DFL)
District 64—St. Paul



OVERALL	7.1
BRAINS	7.2
WORK ETHIC	6.7
EFFECTIVENESS	7.3

There's a quiet kid in every class. But every once in while there's a quiet kid who carries more punch than the burliest of bullies. Senator Cohen, the silent chair of the Finance Committee, is that kid.

"Dick is one of those guys who is not in a top leadership position, but has a lot of power," says a lobbyist. "He is the consummate operator."

Cohen is also a movie buff and has a Blagojevich-worthy mop. He's on a mission this session to overcome the historic budget deficit. So he's flexing all his muscle this session, going up against the mighty anti-tax governor.

"Not a lot of people mention him, but he is a hard worker and knows state finance phenomenally well," says another lobbyist. "Soft spoken. Carries a big stick and knows how to use it."

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL)
District 59B—Minneapolis



OVERALL	7.0
BRAINS	7.7
WORK ETHIC	7.1
EFFECTIVENESS	6.1

Don't mess with a woman whose glasses would fit right in on a Friday night at the Triple Rock. Kahn continues to represent the most progressive views of the Legislature, and keeps journalists happy with story-ready bills.

This year they included hemp production, legalization of liquor sales on Sundays, booze on Augsburg College's campus, gender-neutral marriage law, lowering the voting age to 16 in local elections, opening the state to sports gambling, and a California style of stopping at intersections for bicyclists.

Like Barry Bonds in his late career, Kahn drops bombs. And lobbyists seem amused, saying she's always good for a wing-bat moment.

"From marrying cousins to stealing literature, the word 'crackpot' seems apt," says a lobbyist. "The shame is that the seat could provide the DFL the ability to add some new blood with new ideas for the state."

But the aging veteran still has plenty of firepower left. As one lobbyist notes: "Phyllis knows where every body is buried and how to work the system. Very effective."

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL)
District 66B—St. Paul



OVERALL	6.9
BRAINS	6.7
WORK ETHIC	6.8
EFFECTIVENESS	7.3

The good Democrat from St. Paul has long been an advocate for public transportation, and one lobbyist noted that she's finally seeing results.

"Hausman is a public-transit guru."

She chairs the Capital Investment Finance Division Committee, which has taken over her life. "It's a huge responsibility," says a lobbyist. "She tries to be reasonable, but it's very stressful. She's pretty much living and being her job."

Hausman also found herself having to tiptoe on the topic of sulfide mining. She wants to make sure mine owners cough up the necessary insurance and don't spit pollution into the ecosystem. This position pits her against business interests in the Iron Range, who see her as a hindrance to industrial growth.

"Her constituents love her," says a lobbyist. "When she takes on an issue, she has plenty of conviction."

That's good news for supporters of the high-speed rail line to St. Paul—Hausman has jumped on board.

Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL)
District 60B—Minneapolis



OVERALL	6.8
BRAINS	6.6
WORK ETHIC	7.0
EFFECTIVENESS	6.9

Every lobbyist has their favorite, and Representative Hornstein was on the top of many lists. But it was more

for his humor than his political acumen—the man is a walking SNL skit.

"Frank's an incredibly hilarious storyteller," says one lobbyist.

"He understands the importance of politics growing from the grassroots," says another, before quickly adding: "He is also probably the funniest member of the House."

Hornstein's impersonation of Jesse Ventura is a Capitol favorite. But his impersonation of Paul Wellstone is so accurate it's eerie.

"He has never been cross with anyone," says a lobbyist. "It's miraculous. Never caught him being cranky."

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL)
District 64B—St. Paul




OVERALL	6.5
BRAINS	7.0
WORK ETHIC	6.1
EFFECTIVENESS	6.3

After a stint on the City Council in Duluth, Paymar moved down to St. Paul and was elected to the House, not an easy feat in the provincial city.

While still relatively fresh to the scene, he's carving out a niche as an independent thinker who can handle close political combat.

"Paymar is pretty effective," says one lobbyist. "He's a trench fighter. Very tough and determined. He digs in and hangs



What's on your mind?

Polically savvy but not a deep thinker.

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Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (DFL)
District 62—Minneapolis



OVERALL	6.6
BRAINS	6.6
WORK ETHIC	7.1
EFFECTIVENESS	6.2

The jury is still out on the Colombian-born senator who made her name as a tireless fighter for people of color.

Her background offers a viewpoint few others can provide. On a proposed law to make it illegal to smoke in a car with children, she made sure the legislators knew it could be used as a way to ask Latinos about their immigration status, simply for smoking.

Lobbyists say she is fearless on behalf of her constituents, and "bird-dogs" the opposition. "She has the potential to be good," says one lobbyist.

But she frustrates many, ignoring dissenting views.

"Doesn't know a lot and refuses to meet with lobbyists that do," complains one. "A perfect combination for an uninformed senator."

tough and gets what he sets out to achieve."

His relatively low ranking may be a result of his relatively low profile. One lobbyist said Paymar doesn't typically call attention to himself.

But this year he's changing that by introducing some legislation with heat. His bills include: expanding the open alcohol container law to include certain off-road recreational vehicles, modifying provisions on the transfer of pistols or semiautomatic military-style assault weapons, and a statewide moratorium on new billboards.

He also co-authored the Freedom to Breathe Act. One lobbyist said the easiest way to piss off Paymar is to light a cigarette in front of him.

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL)
District 59A—Minneapolis



OVERALL	6.5
BRAINS	6.3
WORK ETHIC	7.1
EFFECTIVENESS	6.2

This session has been tough sledding for Loeffler: Healthcare and [See CAPITOL FACEBOOK page 18]

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human services policy is her focus, and those areas are threatened with a cut exceeding \$1 billion. That means Loeffler must do the unpopular work of restructuring budget programs, including those that help disabled children.

No matter what happens this session, Loeffler will battle it out. Lobbyists say her work ethic is top-notch. "She's a bulldog," says one lobbyist. "If she is working on an issue, she is passionate about it, she's inexhaustible. Works really hard."

The question is: Will she adapt enough to live up to her full potential? As one lobbyist put it: "If she had people skills, she could be a leader."

Rep. John Lesch (DFL)
District 66A—St. Paul



OVERALL	6.4
BRAINS	7.1
WORK ETHIC	6.4
EFFECTIVENESS	5.8

Lesch received high marks for his intelligence, if not his personality. "Very bright, but diplomacy can be a challenge at times," says one lobbyist.

It's his ego that annoys some. "Not nearly as smart as he thinks he is," says one lobbyist.

After giving glowing reviews of every other legislative member of the Twin Cities, one lobbyist said, "You want one bad guy: John Lesch. You don't know where he's coming from. Not a hardworking guy."

On his Facebook page, Lesch says he enjoys the music of Third Eye Blind and Tegan and Sara, the latter of which shows good taste. He fancies himself an unpublished poet, an unemployed philosopher, and an unrepentant pragmatist—and that comes from his campaign site.

Lobbyists seem to think he needs to bone up on the process. If that doesn't happen, says one respondent, he'll remain "the most disliked member of the St. Paul delegation."

Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL)
District 67A—St. Paul



OVERALL	6.3
BRAINS	6.1
WORK ETHIC	6.8
EFFECTIVENESS	6.1

The workingman's legislator has had to climb the ladder of politics. It's a tough feat, and he's still trying to surmount it.

"I've seen him with a suit and tie or with a welding torch and lunch can," says one lobbyist. "He didn't get holed as a labor hack."

Behind the scenes, Mahoney is focused on reform in workers' compensation. But his most public issue is his proposal involving \$33 million to create "The Pond," a 120,000-square-foot, three-level hockey palace.

"He has the reputation of thinking he knows everything, and this always seems true to me," says one lobbyist. "There is an air of superiority when you talk to him, and not the good kind."

Still, many lobbyists say he runs a good committee, and unlike some others inside the Capitol, continues to grow in his skills as a legislator.

Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL)
District 67B—St. Paul



OVERALL	6.3
BRAINS	6.3
WORK ETHIC	6.6
EFFECTIVENESS	6.1

The chair of the Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division Committee is a quiet man—maybe a little too quiet. Some lobbyists worry he's falling asleep at the switch. "He's a low-energy guy," says one.

Johnson did attach his name to a hemp production bill, along with dozens of other legislators. For Johnson, that's like ordering a second round of Wondrous Punch at the Red Dragon.

"He's very quiet, but very thoughtful," says a lobbyist. "He thinks through his subjects. He delves into the topic. But he doesn't go out and brag about it and boast about it. He doesn't introduce a whole lot, but whatever he votes on, he know what it means."

Another lobbyist thinks Johnson lacks strong control of his own committee. Pressed for more details, the tipster offered: "I'll just say the chair does not rule with an iron fist in that committee."

Sen. Sandra Pappas (DFL)
District 65—St. Paul



OVERALL	6.3
BRAINS	6.1
WORK ETHIC	6.5
EFFECTIVENESS	6.4

Pappas is known as a feisty and determined legislator who chairs the Higher Education committee. She doesn't give up on issues important to her, and insiders say she knows how to use her power within the St. Paul delegation.

But some wish she'd incorporate street smarts into her political repertoire. "Call it tenacious or call it stubborn, but Sandy has a bit of a blind side to reality on getting some of her bills passed," says a lobbyist.

Pappas caught flak early this session for a tone-deaf move: In a time when receiving bonuses and extra pay are akin to beating a small puppy, Pappas took home \$16,416 in per diem pay last year, the most of any Senate member—this from someone who has the Capitol in her backyard.

"Politically savvy, but not a deep thinker," says a lobbyist.

Higgins is one legislator who gives special attention to the issue, representing a district that includes north Minneapolis.

She didn't receive high marks from the lobby, but that may be because she's made no secret of her disdain for them.

"I've seen her take lobbyists to task," says one.

Others offer a different take, viewing her as a warhorse. "Well respected by both parties and is definitely an emerging leader," says one lobbyist.

One of her signature projects is a planetarium atop the central library in downtown Minneapolis. It remains to be seen whether she'll be among the stars.

Rep. Cy Thao (DFL)
District 65A—St. Paul



OVERALL	6.2
BRAINS	6.5
WORK ETHIC	5.9
EFFECTIVENESS	6.1

On his campaign website, the Laotian-born Hmong American brags about his Eagle Scout ranking, but some lobbyists think he could use a refresher course on his work-ethic merit badge.

"The laziest legislator in the house," says a lobbyist.

Other than that, the lobby didn't have much to say about Rep. Thao. He's not a major player, unless you care about laws



"By far the worst legislator on the list."



"Can't get his own bills out of committee he chairs."



"Another dinosaur."

Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL)
District 58—Minneapolis



OVERALL	6.3
BRAINS	6.1
WORK ETHIC	6.6
EFFECTIVENESS	6.2

While the budget is the 500-pound gorilla this session, everybody knows something must be done to stanch the foreclosures across the state. Senator

regarding barrel use when baiting bears. Thao is one of the few urban legislators who can handle a rifle.

"A wry sense of humor," says one lobbyist. "Gotten some stuff through."

Big changes will occur to his district when construction starts for the Central Corridor light rail. Of the few lobbyists familiar with him, one said he's close to his community and listens to their concerns. So at the very least, they have

[See CAPITOL FACEBOOK page 20]

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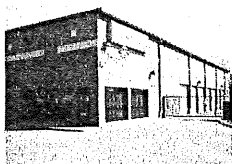
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CAPITOL FACEBOOK from page 18

someone to hear their thoughts as the huge infrastructure project rumbles through their backyard.

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL)

District 61A—Minneapolis



OVERALL	6.1
BRAINS	5.9
WORK ETHIC	6.9
EFFECTIVENESS	5.6

The list of bills Representative Clark introduced this session reads like a progressive manifesto: women's economic development, community-organization funding, prostitution prevention and tougher penalties for pimps, culturally based chemical dependency services. She's also looking into how the state can use stimulus money to improve low-income housing.

Lobbyists say Clark has a heart of gold, but they're not so sure about her brain.

"She's not really in touch with reality," says a lobbyist. "Wants to pass something but doesn't take into context the unexpected outcomes. She's a bit naive, but pure of heart."

Others take off their kid gloves when asked about Clark. "No one has been here longer and learned and done less," says a lobbyist.

"Crushes any dissenting views," adds another.

"Forgets there is real impact to her crazy ideas."

She's a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School, and her views are safely in line with Minneapolis constituents', one lobbyist noted. But those views, at times, should be weighed against the welfare of the state. Says a lobbyist, "Her blind ideology keeps her from being an effective legislator."

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL)

District 65B—St. Paul



OVERALL	6.1
BRAINS	6.3
WORK ETHIC	5.9
EFFECTIVENESS	6.1

The chair of the K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee came into the media crosshairs early this session when he pushed for a bill allowing students to graduate even if they don't pass state tests.

Mariani has been a supporter of medical marijuana. And one lobbyist said he's extremely dedicated to people who are denied equal opportunity. Another noted he is one of the few legislators who challenges his colleagues to talk about racial issues.

The problem, it seems, is that he has his blinders on.

"Narrow interests," says a lobbyist.

Rep. Jeff Hayden (DFL)

District 61B—Minneapolis (rookie)



OVERALL	6.0
BRAINS	6.6
WORK ETHIC	5.9
EFFECTIVENESS	5.6

One of the few legislators without a formal education (though he plans to finish his B.A. in communications in the fall),

Representative Hayden prepped at the city level under Councilman Gary Schiff and is already being tagged as a future leader. Affordable housing is his issue.

"He will be an effective and loved legislator," predicts one lobbyist.

"Seems very sharp indeed," says a lobbyist. "Time will tell."

Rep. Bobby Joe Champion (DFL)

District 58B—Minneapolis (rookie)



OVERALL	5.9
BRAINS	6.4
WORK ETHIC	6.6
EFFECTIVENESS	4.8

The first-year representative is one to watch. Many lobbyists gave him modest scores only because he's new to the game.

"Promising," says one lobbyist. "But still learning the ropes."

Champion lives up to his surname when it comes to civil rights. That's where he cut his political teeth. He's the director of the Excelsior Gospel Choir and serves as a vice chair on the Transportation Finance and Policy Committee. One lobbyist noted he's a natural orator.

"Appears smart," says a lobbyist. "We'll see how he does."

"Too early to tell with him," adds another. "But could be good."

Sen. Ken Kelash (DFL)

District 63—Minneapolis (rookie)



OVERALL	5.1
BRAINS	5.1
WORK ETHIC	5.1
EFFECTIVENESS	5.1

Kelash hasn't made much of an impression during his brief time in the Capitol. "Who?" and "too new to tell" were repeated phrases among the lobby when approached with his name.

So to give the world an introduction: Kelash is a retired carpenter who went to Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He has a Master's in Public Administration. He's probably adept with a table saw.

One lobbyist who actually met him gave him a decent review. "No one knows him. He has a right to be cautious as a freshman senator. He struck me to be very thoughtful and intelligent. And he is very connected to the labor world."

Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL)

District 58A—Minneapolis



OVERALL	4.9
BRAINS	5.1
WORK ETHIC	5.0
EFFECTIVENESS	4.6

Love is left behind when Capitol insiders air their opinions of Mullery:

"By far the worst legislator on this list," says a lobbyist.

"Sloppy, lost; is he a really a lawyer?" asks another. "Terrible policymaker."

"Can't get his own bills out of the committee he chairs. District 58A must have someone better than this," says a lobbyist.

"Another dinosaur that sits comfortably in his safe seat, and merely prevents reform and legislation to help Minnesota progress." □

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D32

Bill would help plug gaps in dental care

• Dental association objects to lack of supervision.

Given Minnesota's perennial perch atop "healthiest state" lists, it's shocking to see maps depicting the state's federally designated "Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas." Those who live in communities with an adequate number of dentists to serve their populations should feel fortunate. Much of northern and western Minnesota is considered underserved. So are wide swaths of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

✓ A band of Minnesota lawmakers led by state Sen. Ann Lynch, DFL-Rochester, and Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, have been working for several years on a smart solution to bridge gaps in dental-care access. Their legislation would allow new midlevel dental professionals — the equivalent of nurse practitioners — to practice only in underserved areas or with underserved populations. The new providers are called oral health practitioners (OHPs) and dental therapists. Among their duties: filling cavities, pulling teeth in some situations and administering medications. OHPs could, potentially, work even when their supervising dentist is not present.

This week, with the Senate bill heading toward a floor vote, the Minnesota Dental Association (MDA) launched an all-out media blitz targeting the legislation. The MDA, which laudably endorses midlevel dental therapists with on-site supervision, strongly opposes OHPs working without a dentist on hand, particularly on "irreversible procedures" such as tooth extraction. The organization also maintains that only training done at an accredited dental school is adequate. The MDA urges people to call lawmakers and tell them "unsupervised workers doing dental surgery is wrong."

But before you pick up the phone, consider some additional perspective. Midlevel dental providers

STAR TRIBUNE APR 16 '09

READ THE BILL

To read a copy of the bill that would establish midlevel dental providers in Minnesota, go to <http://tinyurl.com/danqve>

work — sometimes without a dentist on site — in Alaska and more than 50 countries. Numerous studies and reports have documented the quality of their care. One, published last year in the Journal of the American Dental Association, concluded that irreversible dental treatment provided by Alaskan midlevel providers did not differ from similar treatment provided by dentists.

The OHPs would hardly be running amok irresponsibly pulling teeth. They would work under the oversight of a Minnesota dentist, who would determine what procedures they could perform. Care would have to be authorized by the dentist, who would then remain available for consultation or referral. Requiring a dentist to be on site doesn't do enough to solve access problems in areas where dentists are already scarce. Both OHPs and therapists are needed.

As for training, it's a respectable group of MnSCU schools that will train many new providers. MnSCU institutions have done deep research into other countries' best practices and are centering coursework around them. Curriculum information has not been shared with MDA; it should be.

The introduction of other midlevel providers such as nurse practitioners, midwives and physician's assistants initially met with resistance here and elsewhere. These professionals now play a valuable role in providing cost-efficient, accessible care. The Lynch-Thao legislation offers pioneering solutions to help Minnesotans get the dental care they need, no matter where they live.

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FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2009 • STAR TRIBUNE • METRO • B9

You can vote early (but not often) if law passes

• The bill, which would allow early voting and online registration, will go to a conference committee to be reconciled with a similar bill passed by the Senate.

STAR TRIBUNE MAY 15 '09

By PAT DOYLE
pdoyle@startribune.com

Minnesotans are a step closer to being able to vote early without the hurdles of the state's beleaguered absentee-ballot system.

The House approved a bill Thursday that would overhaul the state's elections law, an effort given momentum by voting flaws uncovered during the long battle over the still-unresolved U.S. Senate race.

The vote was 87 to 46, mostly along party lines, with Democrats supporting the changes and Republicans opposing some. The bill will go to a conference committee to be reconciled with a measure passed

last week by the Senate.

The House version allows early voting in person four to 15 days before Election Day at places designated by local officials. The Senate bill extended the period to 18 days before Election Day.

The House, like the Senate, also approved online registration through a website run by the secretary of state.

For years, Minnesotans have used the absentee ballot system to cast votes before Election Day. But the trial over the Senate election dispute between Republican Norm Coleman and DFLer Al Franken demonstrated that stricter requirements for absentee voting — designed to prevent

fraud — also resulted in more mistakes by voters whose ballots were sometimes disqualified. County officials rejected nearly 11,000 such ballots in the 2008 election.

For instance, absentee voters must fill out materials signed by witnesses who are registered voters or notaries, which early voters could avoid.

The Senate bill's chief author, Katie Sieben, DFL-Newport, said anyone could vote early, but "when you're voting by absentee ballot, you need an excuse why you won't be in the precinct" on Election Day.

Republicans voiced concerns about early voting extending Election Day to the point where some Minneso-

tans will be voting on the basis of significantly different information than others. Sieben acknowledged that could happen, but said the short time frame the bills provide would minimize problems.

The House defeated several Republican amendments. One would have eliminated existing law that allows a registered voter to vouch for another who is registering on Election Day; another would have required that paper ballot instructions be in English.

The latter amendment prompted Rep. Cy Thao, DFL-St. Paul, who represents the heavily Hmong Frogtown district, to challenge its supporter, Rep. Steve Drazkowski, R-Wabasha, to an English spelling contest.

Missing from the House bill but included in the Senate ver-

sion are provisions to move up state primaries from September to June and to allow special elections to fill vacancies from death or resignation in the U.S. Senate or House.

While the latter provision would not apply to vacancies resulting from an election dispute, another provision in the Senate bill does grow out of the recount involving Coleman and Franken. It prohibits a court from allowing candidates to veto decisions by county officials tallying rejected absentee ballots in an election recount, something the Minnesota Supreme Court allowed in the ongoing Senate dispute. The House bill does not include such a prohibition.

Pat Doyle • 651-222-1210