

Newman claims misunderstanding in who he'll meet with at Capitol

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By Jorge Sosa

OF THE HUTCHINSON LEADER

A representative of the Minnesota Nurses Association was surprised when she was told that State Sen. Scott Newman, R-Hutchinson, wouldn't meet with her group.

Governmental affairs assistant Eileen Gavin said her meeting request with Newman was refused via e-mail Thursday by Newman's legislative assistant, Kim Kelley.

"Unfortunately, Senator Newman will not see any organizations that donated to / supported his opponent Hal Kimball," the e-mail read. Kimball was Newman's DFL opponent in the 2010 election.

"After some careful checking," the e-mail continued, "I discovered that the MNA had donated to Kimball's campaign. Your association will be unable to schedule an appointment with Senator Newman."

Gavin said she was trying to schedule a time for Newman to meet nurses from District 18 during the Minnesota Nurses Association's annual "Nurses Day on the Hill." Gavin, who has worked for the association for four years, said she has been turned down by other legislators before due to schedule conflicts, "But I've never gotten a response like that."

When asked to confirm Tuesday morning if she had sent the e-mail, Kelley said, "Unfortunately, due to media policies here, I am not able to comment on that."

"Yes, my legislative assistant sent that out," Newman later said. "It was, however, sent out in error and it's not the position I am taking."

Newman said his position was inaccurately stated due to a misunderstanding. He noted his legislative assistant is "brand new" but added, "It's my fault, I should be giving clearer instructions."

Newman plans to meet with only lobbyists that are working on issues he's involved in or committees he's serving on. "I'm not picking on people that didn't endorse me," he said.

He added there are hundreds of lobbyists at the Capitol seeking to speak with legislators and he is trying to limit the number he'll speak to. "Honestly, it's becoming a problem ... I think it's more important to talk to constituents and get some work done then to talk to lobbyists," he said.

Newman said he'd be willing to meet with the nurses association, because he's on the Senate Health and Human Services committee and he assumed the association would want to speak with him about those topics him about those topics.