



State Sen. Scott Newman says email gaffe was an error

By Joe Kimball | Published Tue, Jan 25 2011 12:41 pm

Lots of eyebrows were raised this morning at news that state Sen. Scott Newman's office had sent an email to the Minnesota Nurses Association essentially saying: You supported the other guy, so buzz off.

Opinions ranged from outrage over a perceived abuse of the democratic [with a small d] process, to amazement that a politician's minion would actually put something like that in writing.

After first telling news organizations that he would not be interviewed on the subject, the freshman senator from Hutchinson has now told the Strib and the Capitol media that it was an error made by a new aide.

"It's clearly my responsibility.. But this is a brand new [legislative assistant] ... what she put out is not — it is not my policy. If this nursing organization wants to see me, they will see me."

Shortly after that, he issued this statement:

"An email sent from my office suggested that I will not meet with groups or organizations that supported my opponent in the past election. While I did not personally send the email, nor was I aware of it, I do apologize for the confusion and frustration it has caused and I accept complete responsibility."

I want to be clear that it is not my policy to reject meeting requests on a political or partisan basis. I look forward to continuing to serve all constituents of Senate District 18 as the legislative session continues."

The nurses association, which endorsed Newman's opponent but didn't contribute to the campaign, had asked for a meeting with the senator. A return email, sent by Kim Kelley, Newman's legislative assistant, said:

"Unfortunately, Senator Newman will not see any organizations that donated to/supported his opponent Hal Kimball [no relation to me]. After some careful checking, I discovered that the MNA had donated to Kimball's campaign. Your association will be unable to schedule an appointment with Senator Newman."

Bluestem Prairie, a progressive blog from Hutchinson, first reported on the email and notes Hal Kimball's response in his own blog to the Newman email:

My first reaction was surprise. Really? Senator Newman won't meet with local Vietnam Veterans, college students, local farmers, school teachers, Racino supporters, local laborers, local nurses, etc?

Absurd!


My initial shock wore off quickly. During my time with the Minnesota State University Student Association, I worked with higher education groups across the state. We worked to set up

meetings with legislators in a strong effort to "Freeze Tuition". We met with virtually every State Representative and Senator, except then Representative Newman. I literally chased him from the House chambers to his office in the State Office Building trying to talk to him about higher education issues. It didn't matter ... Representative Newman didn't want to talk to us.

Now, he wants to know who you voted for and who you gave money to before he talks to you. Per an email to the Minnesota Nurses Association, Senator Newman refuses to meet with them because they endorsed my candidacy for the State Senate. They incorrectly assert that the MNA provided my campaign with much needed funding. Per our campaign finance board reports, they did not, despite what Senator Newman's Legislative Assistant Kim Kelley thinks she found.

Like what you just read? [Support high-quality journalism](#) in Minnesota by becoming a member of MinnPost.

Advertisement:



COLLEGE OF
Saint Benedict

Position Announcement

**Chief of Staff and Executive
Assistant to the President**

Apply Online
<http://employment.csbsju.edu>

Women and people of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural
backgrounds and persons with disabilities are encouraged
to apply. The College of Saint Benedict is an
Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

1 Comment: [Hide/Show Comment](#)

E-mail address

Password

☐ Remember me for two weeks.

[Login](#)

[Forgot Password?](#) | [Register to Comment](#)

MinnPost does not permit the use of foul language, personal attacks or the use of language that may be libelous or interpreted as inciting hate or sexual harassment. User comments are reviewed by moderators to ensure that comments meet these standards and adhere to MinnPost's [terms of use](#) and [privacy policy](#).

We intend for this area to be used by our readers as a place for civil, thought-provoking and high-quality public discussion. In order to achieve this, MinnPost requires that all commenters register and post comments with their actual names and place of residence. [Register here](#) to comment.



AFTERNOON EDITION

'Pay-to-play' state senator taking heat over staff email

By Brian Lambert | Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2011

That e-mail, first reported by [Sally Jo Sorenson on her Bluestem Prairie blog](#), has state Sen. Scott Newman's office telling a representative of the Minnesota Nurses Association that they would never get a meeting with him because they supported his (defeated) opponent in the '10 election? "Just an error, that's all." Mike Kaszuba writes on the Strib's "Hot Dish Politics" blog: "Newman, who is from Hutchinson and sits on the influential Senate Health and Human Services Committee, said he had first heard of the email early Tuesday morning. "It's just an error, that's all," he said. "I've tried to limit the lobbyists that are coming in to see me involving committees I'm on and issues that are important to me," he said. "I literally feel besieged" by lobbyists. "I don't have time to talk to constituents. I don't have time to get any work done," said Newman."

For her part, [Sorenson follows up](#), writing, "[T]he Strib's phrasing — 'freshman legislator' — is somewhat misleading. Scott Newman served in the Minnesota House from 2004 through 2006, and thus isn't a first-term legislator. He is a first-term senator, and the Strib should use the more precise language. Certainly, the Minnesota House has ethics rules as well. But perhaps Newman's blaming his secretary will be a sticky excuse. As for Newman first hearing about the email Tuesday morning — I'm surprised that the Republican Party of Minnesota (whose IP address showed up on my site traffic software in a hit on the post late yesterday afternoon) didn't contact the Senator about the news."



The lefty blogs are eating it all up. [Jeff Rosenberg at MNPublicus writes](#): "So Newman is unwilling to take responsibility for his own actions. What about his caucus leaders? Why has the Senate GOP leadership been silent? They must discipline Newman and show that they are committed to representing all Minnesotans. Majority Leader Amy Koch has an obligation to ensure that her caucus members behave ethically — failure to do so is giving tacit approval to Newman's actions."

[Joe Kimball, here at MinnPost](#), adds a response from that aforementioned opponent, Hal Kimball. "During my time with the Minnesota State University Student Association, I worked with higher

education groups across the state. We worked to set up meetings with legislators in a strong effort to "Freeze Tuition." We met with virtually every State Representative and Senator, except then Representative Newman. I literally chased him from the House chambers to his office in the State Office Building trying to talk to him about higher education issues."

Today's Pawlenty radar finds columnist Jeff Mapes of The [Portland] Oregonian jabbing at our former Governor for his shifting views on cap-and-trade. Writes Mapes: "In 2007, Pawlenty was quite happy to be seen as taking the lead on fighting climate change at the time the Bush administration was downplaying the issue. 'The nation has been asleep at the switch,' Pawlenty said in a 2007 press release, 'but here in Minnesota we are kick-starting the future by increasing our nation-leading per capita renewable fuel use, boosting cost saving measures and tackling greenhouse gas emissions.' That was then. By the fall of 2008, when the economy was taking its deep dive, Pawlenty was on Glenn Beck's radio show saying that the 'debate on cap and trade has faded into the background' as people are struggling to pay their bills, MinnPost.com reported."

He adds: "[R]eading about Pawlenty, I'm struck by how much this happens with governors. Members of Congress may have to take thousands of votes, but governors actually have to put laws in place and help administer them. And when they find themselves on a national stage, they often look at what they did in a different light." ... A warm and flattering light.

Several outlets have picked up on Pawlenty's not-exactly-new-to-us suggestion in his speech in New Hampshire last night that Social Security benefits be limited when it comes to wealthier seniors. Philip Elliott of the AP quotes Pawlenty saying: "What that means is, in the future, if you are wealthy, your increase to Social Security will be smaller than if you're middle income or lower middle-income or poor." Pawlenty said drawing lines between classes is not ideal, but the nation faces a mathematical reality in what it can afford. He called the scaling 'reasonable' but added it would not be enough to solve the entire national debt that now totals \$1.4 trillion. Pawlenty also said raising the retirement age is an option he's willing to consider for younger workers entering Social Security programs."

Denny! It's been too long. But our favorite car dealer is back in the news today, accusing his lawyer and the (overworked) bankruptcy trustee of ... lying. John Welbes of the PiPress reports: "In a seven-page, hand-written, rambling letter that Denny Hecker wrote to a bankruptcy judge, the fallen auto mogul accuses a bankruptcy trustee and his own former attorney of lying to the court. The letter to U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert Kressel — written in pencil and dated Jan. 17 — says Hecker's former attorney, William Skolnick, lied about where Hecker obtained \$75,000 a year ago to secure the title to Hecker's Medina home. Once the bankruptcy court trustee, Randall Seaver, figured out Skolnick's alleged deceit about the source of the funds, Seaver held 'the lies over [Skolnick's] head' to extract information from Hecker that ended up hurting his bankruptcy case, Hecker says in the letter. 'I am not saying I am not guilty at all,' Hecker writes near the top of his letter. But he expresses frustration that Seaver and attorneys for Chrysler Financial 'stood before you and lied to you.' " And thanks for that concession, Denny, about "not being guilty at all."

Yes, alcohol was involved. Jessica Fleming of the PiPress has the story of two guys boozing and watching football Sunday: "Robert Michael

Thomas and James Koenig were drinking and watching football Sunday when a fight erupted. Burnsville police said the argument left Koenig dead and Thomas in jail. Both have had previous issues with alcohol, according to court records and Thomas' estranged wife." Somehow you knew there was going to be at least one estranged wife in a story like this.

Get your sleeping bags and start camping out now. Target, ripped for writing checks that supported anti-gay politicians, has an "exclusive" deal that will allow you to buy ... the new Ricky Martin CD. I am NOT making this up. [Tom Webb, also of the PiPress](#) says: "Martin, who recently confirmed he is gay, is releasing his first new studio album in six years, titled 'Musica + Alma + Sexo' (Music +Soul + Sex). On Feb. 1, Target stores and Target.com will sell an extended version with seven exclusive tracks, including unreleased songs and dance mixes. Target's version also contains a solo version of the single, 'The Best Thing About Me is You.' A video of the song delivers a strong message of tolerance, including a pro-gay theme." I can't tell from the story how much of Target's profits from the "exclusive" deal will go to gay-related charities.

[Tom Scheck of MPR](#) has a story of a luncheon of the Minnesota congressional delegation in D.C.: "DFL Rep. Keith Ellison said all eight members of Minnesota's House delegation sat down and broke bread today. 'We don't know what we might work on unless we get together and talk about it,' Ellison said. Ellison said the new dean of Minnesota's delegation, DFL Rep. Collin Peterson, called the meeting. He said it's the first time the delegation got together to talk about issues. Ellison declined to discuss the full details of the meeting but said one main theme was improving the state's education system. 'There may be some common ground there,' Ellison said. 'Everyone knows we have to have an educated populace.' " And yes, if you're wondering, Michele Bachmann did attend.

[A Sporting News story](#) says Twins first baseman Justin Morneau has reached a point with his concussion where he is being told to push through it: " 'Now he's at the point that the doctors told him if you have any small symptoms of that concussion just fight through it, just work through it and he said he's been feeling real good,' [Twins GM Bill] Smith told MLB Network. 'He's doing all his conditioning work right now. He'll start the baseball activities. He did say he played catch the other day. He's going to start swinging the bat probably the first of February, which gives him two months before opening day.' " He *played catch* the other day?

Like what you just read? [Support high-quality journalism](#) in Minnesota by becoming a member of MinnPost.

5 Comments: [Hide/Show Comments](#)

E-mail address

Password

☐ Remember me for two weeks.

[Login](#)

[Forgot Password?](#) | [Register to Comment](#)

MinnPost does not permit the use of foul language, personal attacks or the use of language that may be libelous or interpreted as inciting hate or sexual harassment. User comments are reviewed by moderators to

ensure that comments meet these standards and adhere to MinnPost's [terms of use](#) and [privacy policy](#).

We intend for this area to be used by our readers as a place for civil, thought-provoking and high-quality public discussion. In order to achieve this, MinnPost requires that all commenters register and post comments with their actual names and place of residence. [Register here](#) to comment.