

StarTribune.com | MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA**Senate aide's e-mail sparks ethics complaint****By Eric Roper**

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By Brad Schrade

Three DFL state Senators filed an ethics complaint today against the Republican colleague who's office sent an e-mail saying he would not meet with groups that supported or donated cash to his opponent.

The episode involving Sen. Scott Newman, R-Hutchinson, raises questions that feed into the public's most cynical view about the influence of money on the political process at the Capitol. Newman backpedaled and apologized on Tuesday after the e-mail surfaced, saying he knew nothing of the email before it was sent in error and he has no such policy.

Sen. Sandra Pappas, DFL-St. Paul, said she and her two colleagues filed the complaint because incident places a blemish on the institution and discredits the Senate in the eyes of the public. It deserves an official review to get the facts of what happened and what prompted the e-mail.

"That's why we need to have an ethics hearing to get to the bottom of it," Pappas said.

Newman did not return a phone message before deadline Thursday and no one answered a knock on his Capitol office door late in the afternoon.

"Senator Newman didn't personally send the e-mail nor was he aware of it," said Michael Brodkorb, spokesman for Senate Republicans. "He accepted complete responsibility and apologized for the confusion and frustration it caused."

The e-mail signed by Newman aide Kim Kelley went to the Minnesota Nurses Association and said the senator would not meet with groups that donated to his DFL opponent Hal Kimball.

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

In addition to Pappas, Senators Kenneth Kelash and Scott Dibble signed the ethics complaint with the Senate Ethics Subcommittee. Under senate rules it must be considered by the committee within 30 days. It seems likely to raise partisan temperatures within the body just as the legislature begins full-on consideration of how to fix the state's \$6.2 billion projected budget shortfall.

Already on Thursday, the complaint was being attacked by the Republican Party. In a press release that called the DFL complaint the "Height of Hypocrisy," state party

chairman Tony Sutton brought up a 2007 DUI charge against then-Senate President and Ethics Committee Chairman James Metzen.

"His Democrat colleagues refused to utter a word of criticism, let alone file an ethics complaint against him," Sutton's statement said.

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