



**STATE OF MINNESOTA**  
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE**  
**SAINT PAUL**

ORVILLE L. FREEMAN,  
GOVERNOR

January 17, 1955

2:17p

*[Message on Legislative Problems] submitted  
to the Minn. Legislature.*

To Members of the Senate and  
House of Representatives of the  
State of Minnesota:

I respectfully submit this message  
containing legislative problems for your  
consideration.

Sincerely yours,

*Orville L. Freeman*

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**STATE OF MINNESOTA**

January 17, 1955

**TO MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA**

As members of the 59th Legislature of the State of Minnesota, you have before you a task of great importance to the people of the state. It is a difficult task which will require all of your energy and ability in the months ahead. I hope that by this message and in others to follow I can contribute toward a cooperative effort on the part of the legislative and executive branches of our state government, to the end that we may fulfill our responsibility to the people by the enactment of a wise and constructive legislative program.

This message is not intended to encompass all of my recommendations for action at this session. Recommendations regarding appropriations, taxes, and other financial matters will be presented to you in the budget message later this week. They are, of course, of paramount importance.

Legislative action to accomplish necessary reorganization of our state government is likewise one of the most important tasks we face. I believe that such legislation is essential if we are to achieve greater economy, efficiency, and responsibility in our state administration. I have arranged for informal conferences with the House and Senate majority leaders and with the chairmen of the committees on civil administration to discuss problems of administrative reorganization. Other discussions will be held with members of the state administration. Proposals for improved classification under our civil service program will be appropriately taken up in connection with reorganization. After careful consultation and consideration, I shall present to you my recommendations in this field.

Problems of highway safety in Minnesota are serious. The toll taken

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in lives and property by highway accidents is one that can be reduced only with the cooperation of every driver in the state. I have, therefore, called a conference on highway safety to meet on January 26, to give serious attention to proposals to meet and solve this problem. After this conference has been held, I shall make my recommendations for legislation to further highway safety.

Another area in which public support is essential is that of conservation. New legislation is necessary in this field. I am presently reviewing proposals, conferring with technical and scientific experts, and consulting with leaders of sportsmen's and conservation groups, to secure the benefit of their advice before final formulation of a program which I will recommend for your consideration. Meanwhile, I urge you to recognize that the fundamental basis of any sound policy for the management of our natural resources must be based upon the understanding and cooperation of all groups of our citizens; and for that reason, conservation education is an essential part of any program which we undertake.

#### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is a basic industry in the State of Minnesota. Upon its economic health depend not only the welfare of our farmers and farm families but the success of all related business and industry in our town and cities. This basic fact is well known to you as Senators and Representatives in the Minnesota Legislature.

There are two other factors to which I would like to call your attention. One is that the interdependence of our society in the United States is so great that a large proportion of the measures proposed or enacted for the benefit of agriculture must apply to agriculture throughout the country and, therefore, must be approached by the national government.

The other is that we in the United States and in Minnesota are committed to the support of an agricultural economy based on the family-sized farm. We believe that the spiritual, cultural, social, and economic values that accompany a family-sized farm economy have contributed greatly to the soundness and strength of our American way of life, to our successful development of free enterprise and to our effective practice of the principles of democracy. We must, therefore, direct our efforts toward policies that will maintain and enhance this system of farming, toward policies that will deter and discourage any trend toward the type of agriculture which is characteristic of totalitarian economies or huge corporation-type agricultural enterprise with absentee ownership.

But if our agriculture is to continue to represent the free enterprise of owner-operated family-sized farms, our hundreds of thousands of individual farmers must be free to work together with each other to secure for themselves those advantages in producing and marketing their products which they cannot attain acting singly as one small unit in our great economic system. And, therefore, our laws must continue to encourage the democratic development of cooperatives through which our people may work voluntarily, free from arbitrary restrictions.

The Congress of the United States is now considering the adoption of a declaration of principle in support of the family-sized farm economy. I would urge the Minnesota Legislature to adopt such a declaration, and to memorialize Congress urging that the national as well as state policy might be directed toward this sound, healthy development of American agriculture.

Measured by the usual parity standards, the prices received by Minnesota farmers are substantially below the national average. So long as this is true, our state government must concern itself with this disparity of

income so far as Minnesota agriculture is concerned. To correct this disparity we in Minnesota must utilize all the resources at our command. I urge the Legislature to express to Congress its urgent request that the national agricultural policy be revised to establish in law the principle of support for American farm prices on such a basis that the farmer's income meets at least the standards of 90 per cent of parity.

As members of the Minnesota Legislature, you will be considering many items of legislation relating to the establishment of standards and grading for agricultural products, and providing for regulations to be issued and enforced by the Department of Agriculture, Dairy, and Food. Many such bills have been, and are being, drafted. Some of them represent technical and administrative improvements, some meet specific requirements of new developments in agriculture, some involve new policies and programs. It is neither my function nor my intent in this message to consider such proposals in detail, or to recommend specific and technical items. I would, however, recommend that you enact legislation for the grading and labelling of butter as sponsored by Minnesota farm organizations, in order to encourage a wider marketing of this important Minnesota product.

In your consideration of legislation in these fields, I would urge you to weigh all proposals on the basis of the extent to which they meet certain standards which should be our criteria for such legislation. Among these are (1) their effect on the competitive position of Minnesota agriculture; (2) the equal protection of the interests of farmers producing all varieties of agricultural products in all parts of the state; (3) the effect of such legislation on the efficient and economical operation of the Department of Agriculture, Dairy, and Food in carrying out its proper functions;

(4) the development of the science of agriculture so that it can make the greatest possible contribution to the welfare of our farmers and all of our people; and (5) the maintenance and establishment of the highest possible standards of health and sanitation.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the interests of Minnesota farmers are vitally affected, not only by legislation specifically related to agriculture, but also by legislation relating to education, conservation, highways, and many other areas. I know you will agree that in considering action in all of these fields, we must constantly consider its effect on the goals which we have set for Minnesota agriculture.

## LABOR

### Labor Relations

Laws relating to labor relations should be directed toward the handling of labor problems in a manner which will be fair to all concerned, and will facilitate the settlement of labor disputes as quickly as possible. To that end, I urge that you amend the Minnesota Labor Relations Act to substitute administrative procedure for the present court procedure for handling unfair labor practice matters, giving the conciliator authority in the first instance to attempt to settle disputes by conciliation. If that fails, an impartial referee should hear the parties and render a decision which, if necessary, could be enforced by court action.

I further recommend that you amend the law to substitute a "petition for conciliation" instead of the "strike notice" requirement of the present law. This would be essentially a change in terminology, since the filing of a notice would still be required before a strike could be called, and waiting

periods would remain the same. However, the state of mind reflected by a "petition for conciliation" is much more conducive to an orderly settlement of a labor dispute than is a "strike notice" and would, therefore, strengthen the conciliation aspect of the law.

In the interest of fairness to all, I urge you to give serious consideration to the repeal of those existing Minnesota laws which deny to certain employees the right to strike. If the requirements of health, safety and the public interest are so great that they require laws which prevent the stoppage of essential public service, then certainly the employees thus deprived of the right to strike must be given guarantees that will insure them adequate procedure to resolve their grievances. Their right to collective bargaining on all issues should be made secure -- and a fair procedure for the impartial settlement of all issues on which agreement cannot be reached should be provided.

The union suability law should either be repealed or so amended and clarified as to make sure that labor unions and their members should not be held responsible for acts which they did not authorize.

The benefits provided under our Workmen's Compensation Law must be increased if the law is to meet modern standards and correspond with increases in average earnings. I recommend that the weekly minimum benefit be increased to \$20.00 and the maximum to \$50.00. I further recommend a general 25 per cent increase in scheduled indemnities and in compensation for death cases. The present ceiling of 104 weeks on the healing period should be removed in order to permit the healing period to extend for such period as may be necessary. Other changes are needed to liberalize definitions and benefits; and improvements should be made in our rehabilitation and re-training program.

gainful occupation; a limitation on night work for those under 18; and the requirement of employment certificates for minors under 18 in any gainful occupation.

Each year the farmers of Minnesota need the services of migrant farm laborers in the care or harvest of sugar beets, potato, onion, and other vegetable crops. Including the children, between 10 and 15 thousand of these migrants come to Minnesota each year, and stay for periods varying from a few weeks to seven months. The state benefits from the labor of these people and is responsible for their welfare, yet their living and working conditions are often deplorable and the children are frequently deprived of the opportunity of attending school. Experience has shown that the best class of labor is secured where working conditions are most favorable. I urge you to enact legislation which will insure that these thousands of American workers will have decent living and working conditions during their stay in Minnesota.

### EDUCATION

The most important recommendation in the field of education is one to which I referred in my inaugural message and which will appear again in my budget message -- the increase in basic aid from \$80 to \$92 per pupil unit. This is essential to meet rising school costs and maintain our educational standards.

School district reorganization is a critical educational problem in Minnesota. Only through sound district organization can the resources of the state be most effectively directed toward providing good education for all pupils. There is evidence that some of the unification in the past has not only failed to provide adequate school districts, but in some instances has actually hindered the formation of satisfactory districts. The emphasis



in the future should not be upon the elimination of districts but upon the creation of adequate districts. Our extensive system of state aids and of school taxation should be directed to encourage the formation of districts which can maintain acceptable educational programs and services. I urge the members of the Legislature to give careful study to the important question of school district organization.

I further recommend that you take steps to furnish financial assistance to school districts that need such help in order to provide adequate school buildings and facilities. Such assistance should take the form of providing loans at low interest rates through the use of Minnesota's permanent funds or by the use of the state's credit.

#### PUBLIC WELFARE

The public welfare problems of Minnesota must be approached both from the point of view of immediate needs and that of a long-term program. For the latter purpose, I recommend that you establish an interim commission to spend the next two years studying the whole body of welfare laws in Minnesota. Its function should be not only to codify, revise, and simplify existing statutes, but to study the merits of several proposals that have been made for the improvement of welfare programs. For example, such a commission could make a study of medical care costs in the public assistance program. These costs have increased tremendously in the past few years and we shall soon reach the point where some long-term plan will have to be devised to meet the problem. A related suggestion is that the state make available a sizable sum of money to be used on a grant-in-aid basis to subsidize the construction of nursing homes for the care of chronically ill and aged infirm persons. Political sub-

divisions as well as voluntary charitable organizations might obtain such funds on a 50-50 matching basis and thus relieve the present shortage of nursing home space, as well as reduce the present costs in this area of care.

From the point of view of immediate needs in the welfare program, I submit the following recommendations:

(1) A uniform one-year residence requirement applying to all public assistance programs should be adopted. Considerable confusion now arises in the minds of the public, legislators, social workers and public officials because of the variations in our residence requirements.

(2) Under present law the Willmar State Hospital is the only state institution that may admit inebriates for care and treatment. Authorization should be given for the use of the Sandstone State Hospital for the same purpose, to serve patients from the northern part of the state.

(3) There should be established a uniform system of county welfare administration, with general relief included. At the present time there are only 24 counties out of the 37 that are administering poor relief on the township system. Placing this program with the county welfare department in every county would insure better administration as well as more uniform treatment of recipients throughout the state.

(4) The present legal definition of "Totally and Permanently Disabled Person" is very restrictive. It should be liberalized to the extent permitted by the Federal Act. While this would result in an increase in the number of cases, and a resulting increase in state appropriation, it would also result in Minnesota receiving additional federal funds of approximately \$800,000 a year for this program. It would also relieve the counties, municipalities and townships of the burden they are now carrying in caring for these people from general relief funds.

(5) The maximum grant in the old age assistance program should be increased from \$60 to \$65 per month. Provision should further be made that income and other resources available to an old age assistance recipient should be deducted from his actual needs rather than from the maximum aid allowable. Under the present law, as an example, if a recipient's needs are \$80 and he has contributions from relatives in the amount of \$20, he will receive an OAA grant of only \$40, since the deduction is made from the present \$60 maximum. This still leave him \$20 short of meeting his needs. I further recommend the repeal of the old age lien law.

(6) There should be an increase in the state appropriation to permit matching of federal money that will be available during the next biennium for the vocational rehabilitation of blind persons. An investment in an expanded vocational rehabilitation program will pay big dividends, both from a human and economic standpoint. It should be kept in mind that we have a very favorable matching ratio, since the federal government contributes 61 per cent to the state's 39 per cent.

(7) The most acute new building need of the Department of Public Welfare is the provision of institutional facilities for mentally retarded children. As of January 1, 1955, there were 841 persons on the waiting list for admission to state institutions for the mentally deficient, and the net rate of increase of the waiting list is 17 per month. The 1953 legislature appropriated money for a site and preparation of plans, and a site near Brainerd was selected. The legislature should now provide for facilities for 1,000 mentally retarded children as the first unit to meet this serious need.

(8) The 1953 legislature appropriated \$275,000 for construction of a Children's Center on the Gillette Hospital grounds. When the architects' plans were completed and cost estimates received, it was found that the appropriation

was approximately \$125,000 short of the amount needed to build the Center as originally planned and presented to the 1953 legislature. All that is required now is an additional appropriation.

Construction on the Children's Center has never been commenced. When it became apparent to the Department of Public Welfare that funds were inadequate it was believed that the legislature should have an opportunity to re-evaluate the situation -- in the light of the total cost involved -- before any action was taken.

#### BUILDING CODE

The general welfare of our people, and the protection of life, health and property requires the establishment of minimum standards for buildings in all parts of the state. Modern science and technical developments require that such standards be kept up to date. However, many local government units find it impractical and expensive to draft and keep up to date a building code to meet such requirements. The state can and should assist them in this respect, by providing a code of rules, regulations and standards for the construction, reconstruction and repair of buildings for the protection of life, health and property, which could then be presented and proposed for adoption by the political subdivisions of the state, to be in effect only when so adopted.

I therefore recommend that you establish a study commission to prepare a performance type building code of minimum standards suitable for use throughout Minnesota, and to suggest to the succeeding legislature suitable improvements in our state laws in this field.

### HEALTH

The State of Minnesota should give all possible encouragement to voluntary efforts on the part of the people to provide security for their own needs. I therefore urge that you pass legislation authorizing the incorporation of voluntary pre-payment medical service plans.

### F. E. P. C.

I have already recommended legislation to translate into positive terms our belief in equal opportunity for all. Minnesota must no longer postpone the enactment of an enforceable fair employment practices act which will give assurance that there will be no economic discrimination against anyone based on race, color, creed, or national origins. We must pass this legislation because it is economically sound and morally right, and because it is absolutely essential if we are to do our part toward victory in the world-wide struggle for democracy and freedom.

### HIGHWAYS

In the interest of uniformity among the states so that residents of Minnesota operating motor vehicles in other states and the thousands of non-residents who use the highways of this state may readily understand the laws pertaining to driver licensing, it is recommended that the Minnesota Drivers License Law be made to conform as far as practicable with the provisions of the Uniform Vehicle Code as recommended by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances.

Under Chapter 690 of the Laws of 1953, there was vested in the Commissioner of Highways the authority to arrange for engineering services in addition to those contributed by the regular staff of the department. It

is recommended that the Provisions of Chapter 690 be extended for at least another two years. This recommendation is particularly important in view of the fact that new federal legislation may make available large increases in funds for highway purposes. Failure to take such action would create a very serious bottleneck in the preparation of surveys, designs and plans for an extended construction program.

#### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

There are two measures relating to business development in Minnesota which I recommend for your especial consideration.

One is a bill to establish a Minnesota Rivers and Harbors Commission. There are at present three commissions, now wholly or largely inactive, in the field of the economic use of our water systems. They are the Tri-State Waters Commission, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Tidewater Commission, and the Upper Mississippi-St. Croix River Improvement Commission. I recommend that you repeal the laws setting up these three commissions and substitute therefor a new commission possessing the powers and duties of the former commission plus others designed particularly to meet the challenge to Minnesota involved in the development of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway. The new Minnesota Rivers and Harbors Commission should make the most of this new opportunity for commercial and industrial development in Minnesota, and should also be empowered to represent the state in an inter-state compact of states adjoining the Great Lakes, in matters relating to water diversion, water pollution and commercial fishing.

I further recommend legislation to authorize the incorporation of a



I further recommend legislation to authorize the incorporation of a Minnesota Development Credit Corporation, similar to those operating effectively in the New England states, to serve as a source of capital for worthy new business enterprises in Minnesota which cannot obtain sufficient credit through regularly established financial institutions. The capital would be money loaned by public spirited private citizens and corporations, and the only state participation would be supervision of the State Banking Division.

#### ELECTION LAWS

The effective operation of democratic government depends on machinery whereby the will of the people can be translated into action by responsible officials elected to public office on the basis of a program to which they are committed. Experience has shown that such a program can be formulated and enacted only through the medium of political parties. This factor is so important that even under our present so-called non-partisan state legislature, members find it necessary to organize on some basis even though carefully avoiding the names of the major political parties in this state. I therefore urge that you provide for greater responsibility in government by enacting a law requiring partisan designation for members of the Minnesota State Legislature.

Further improvement in our election laws would make for higher standards of political morality and clearer choices on the part of the voter. I recommend for your serious consideration measures to make our corrupt practices legislation more realistic and more effectively enforceable. I further recommend measures to prevent the filing of candidates for the sole purpose of confusing the voter, to insure that all candidates who file for public

office shall be bona-fide candidates sincerely seeking public office and with some measure of responsible support.

### MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities in Minnesota, like those elsewhere in the country, have found it increasingly difficult to finance needed governmental services by means of the property tax. These financial difficulties are particularly acute in the large cities, where the per capita costs of government are highest. Additional revenue can be provided in a number of different ways, but any sound revenue plan should emphasize local responsibility to the greatest practicable extent and should recognize that the needs and resources vary from city to city. I recommend, therefore, the enactment of legislation which would broadly enable cities and villages to impose local non-property taxes in accordance with their individual needs and tax resources.

With more than a hundred governmental units affected by the rapid expansion of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, regional planning in this area has become an urgent need. I therefore recommend the establishment by suitable legislation of an adequately financed area-wide official planning commission for the Twin Cities metropolitan area to carry on regional planning activities of an advisory nature.

The increasing use of legislation which is general in form but special in application, and constitutional restrictions upon the effective use of the home rule charter privilege in cities and upon the development of new forms of county government, are indications of the need for revising our constitutional provisions on local government. The work of the constitutional commission in this field several years ago culminated in a proposal for a revised article on



local government which, while preserving the present legal relationship between statute and charter, would provide for a flexible system of municipal and county home rule. It would encourage the use of general laws by imposing workable restrictions upon special legislation. It would authorize the legislature to provide for city-county consolidation and separation with adequate safeguards for both urban and rural voters. Firmly convinced that strong local government is a bulwark of democracy, I recommend submission to the people of a constitutional amendment containing the essential features of this constitutional commission proposal with reference to local government.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

Finally, I want to repeat my recommendation that you immediately take the steps necessary to provide for the calling of a convention for the revision of our state constitution.