

SESSION WEEKLY

A Nonpartisan Publication of the Minnesota House of Representatives ♦ April 3 1998 ♦ Volume 15, Number 11



Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of the Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Office. During the 1997-98 Legislative Session, each issue reports daily House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and upcoming committee meeting schedules, and provides other information. The publication is a service of the Minnesota House. No fee.

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Session Weekly (ISSN 1049-8176) is published weekly during the legislative session by the Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Office, 100 Constitution Ave., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298. Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Session Weekly, Public Information Office, Minnesota House of Representatives, 175 State Office Building, 100 Constitution Ave., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298.

Printed on recycled paper which is 50% recycled, 20% post-consumer content.



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Minnesota House of Representatives • April 3, 1998 • Volume 15, Number 11

Reflections

Once again in less than a year, disaster has disrupted the order of things. In the closing weeks of the 80th Legislative Session, the Legislature is presently debating decisions on how to construct surplus revenue proposals that will not impose a governor's veto. Now, they must consider providing emergency funds for the most recent tragedy in and around St. Peter, Minn.

Natural phenomena like floods, droughts, forest fires, and tornadoes are never expected. Every time they occur on a large or small scale, they wreak havoc and disrupt the well-being of all those who directly experience them.

In April 1997, the flooding of the Red River caused billions of dollars of damage in western Minnesota. The March 1998 tornadoes destroyed century-old public buildings and homes that can never be replaced. These are not the only disasters that lawmakers have taken on to help provide relief.

Disaster struck "when in 1873, a severe blizzard left 70 settlers dead, an uncounted number injured, and thousands of farm animals destroyed." The Legislature provided \$5,000 for medical, surgical, and other aid. Such was not the case back in 1871 when farmers barely survived after their crops were ruined by hailstorms and prairie fires. Gov. Horace Austin called for private contributions for the needy, but this failed, so he called on the state to help. The Legislature refused, but did offer seed grain.

Another tragic phenomenon in Cottonwood County from 1873 to 1878 was the arrival each year of the Rocky Mountain locusts that ate most of the crops. Locust or "locus ustus" means "burnt place" in Latin. This describes exactly what the "despicable" insects left behind. Grasshoppers, as the farmers called them, appeared "as a large black cloud . . . from which came an ominous sound." They ate thousands of acres of grain and grasses, and other plants were stripped to nothing but stubble. It was former Gov. Henry Sibley, then president of the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, who rallied volunteers to financially help. Later, Gov. Cushman Davis was able to get state help with direct relief.

One of the worst disasters of all was the Great Hinckley Fire of 1894, when over 418 people lost their lives in fires that engulfed many towns and land in east central Minnesota. While 248 individuals perished just in Hinckley, so did Chief Wacouta and 23 of his Chippewa men who were on a hunting trip. Relief came in from around the country, and true to its nature, the Minnesota Legislature, through Gov. Knute Nelson provided contributions and supplies for those who survived.

As life goes on, disasters that affect the lives of Minnesotans will continue to occur. Lawmakers may well make the cliché, "a rainy day fund," an ongoing reality.

— LeClair Grier Lambert

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On the cover: A raindrop reflects the Capitol.

— Photo by Andrew Von Bank

First Reading

Relief efforts under way . . .

Spring tornadoes ravage south-central Minnesota

By Jim Thielman

A string of rare spring tornadoes that hit four Minnesota counties with winds approaching 200 mph left lawmakers scrambling as the end of the legislative session approaches.

The tornadoes that killed two March 29 also collapsed barns, shredded homes, toppled trees, downed power lines, and prompted a statewide effort to provide aid.

Gov. Arne Carlson said a preliminary damage assessment and aid bill was expected in the first few days of April. He said a one-day special session could be called later this year if issues beyond the emergency funds need to be addressed.

The regular legislative session is expected to wrap up around Easter.

Carlson pledged swift state aid to the area and asked President Clinton to declare the affected counties a federal disaster area.

President Clinton on April 1 declared Brown, Le Sueur, Nicollet, and Rice counties major disaster areas. The declaration frees up federal money for recovery efforts by residents, businesses, and local governments.

Measures moving through the House and Senate also would provide aid.

House Speaker Phil Carruthers (DFL-Brooklyn Center) said the House and Senate "try to create a situation in our annual budget where we do have a reserve for these situations," and added this year the state is in very good financial shape to deal with the disaster.

The state currently enjoys a forecast budget surplus of \$1.9 billion.

Officials and residents of the tornado-stricken areas have been invited to testify via interactive television before the House Ways and Means Committee April 6.

"We want to hear directly from people in affected communities as we work on a tornado relief proposal," Carruthers said. "But we don't want to take them away from their important tasks. By using the House interactive television system, we can, in effect, bring the committee hearing to them."

Two-way television links will be established at three sites for the hearing.

Almost immediately, three House bills were introduced pertaining to damage the insurance industry estimates to exceed the \$120 million insurers paid during the Red River flooding of 1997. (Tornado damage is covered under most home insurance policies, which



Peter Langsjoen walks through what's left of his parents' tornado-damaged home on North Fourth Street in St. Peter, Minn., March 30.

usually do not provide coverage for flood damage.)

HF3863, sponsored by Rep. John Dorn (DFL-Mankato), would make an unspecified appropriation from the general fund to the commissioner of public safety to be used as a state match to any federal funds related to the tornado damage. If it is determined any of the appropriation is not needed by Sept. 1, 1998, the unused funds would be returned to the general fund.

House Majority Leader Ted Winter (DFL-Fulda) said it is possible an omnibus disaster bill could be assembled that would include grain farmers in northwestern Minnesota who have suffered significant crop loss in recent years because of a plant disease called wheat scab.

Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson) introduced **HF3865**, which would direct the commissioner of revenue to make immediate payments of homestead and agricultural credit aid and local government aid to the areas that have suffered financial hardship because of the disaster. The payments would otherwise be made July 20, 1998.

Additional financial relief could come under **HF3868**, sponsored by Rep. Tom Workman (R-Chanhassen). Workman said there is typically a minimum 17-percent tax on solid waste disposal, and his bill would allow the

commissioner of revenue to waive that tax for construction debris generated from demolition and repair in the counties designated a disaster area because of the storm.

"It's pretty simple," Workman said. "The bill just says let's not have the state collect unnecessary tax revenue from a disaster."

Income tax filing extensions for those affected by the tornado are also being considered.

The day after the tornado struck, three officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) traveled to the stricken area to inspect damages, as did representatives of state agencies.

The disaster was particularly surprising in that of the roughly 1,000 tornadoes Minnesota has recorded in the past 50 years, only four had previously occurred in March.

A six-year-old boy and an 85-year-old man died as a result of injuries from the March tornadoes, and another 38 people were injured, three critically.

The historic river city of St. Peter was the largest town hit by the tornado, as winds reached 200 mph over a 140-mile long stretch in south-central Minnesota. (See photo story on pages 16-17.) A tornado with winds of 260 mph is the highest on the Fujita-Pearson Tornado Intensity Scale.

About 90 percent of the homes in St. Peter

were damaged or destroyed. The 137-foot steeple atop Christ Chapel at St. Peter's Gustavus Adolphus College crumpled to the ground, and most trees were uprooted on the quaint campus that sits on a wooded hill.

"But the good news," said Rep. Ruth Johnson (DFL-St. Peter), "is the cross atop the steeple is fine, and the stained glass window was not broken."

Further good news was that most of Gustavus' 2,350 students were on spring break when the storm swept through.

Johnson categorized the mood of the town as "shocked fortitude."

"I was in East Berlin in the '60s before some of the areas of the town that were bombed out in World War II were cleaned up, and it looks a lot like that," she said.

But, she said, a command center set up in the basement of 116-year-old Nicollet County Courthouse — one of 13 buildings in the town listed on the National Register of Historic Places — was operating effectively.

"Our local city officials have been running a command center like clockwork," she said. "There has been good patrolling of the city and the work of cleaning up is going well. I've seen badges on people who are helping from all over the state."

A team from the Minnesota Historical Society toured St. Peter and concluded damaged historical buildings still have structural integrity. There is optimism they can be restored.

Johnson said just days after the storm most of the debris had been cleared.

"Things looked better, but with all the trees and debris cleared out of there you could see more clearly how much damage had been done to the houses and businesses," she said.

Johnson also said she hopes the April 6 two-way television hearing, "will help expedite the process of getting help to our region."

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Bovey), chair of the Ways and Means Committee, said legislators want to hear about the extent of the damage and the specific needs of the affected communities.

"We know we won't have a complete picture, but it's important for committee members to hear about the situation as we proceed with a bill," he said.

Links for the hearing will be established in South Central Technical College in North Mankato and at Worthington Community College.

The Minnesota Public Safety Department's Division of Emergency Management has set up a toll-free number for people willing to volunteer or make donations. The number is 1-800-657-3504. 🐼



By Matt Wetzel

Former Rep. Todd Otis always had a passion for public service.

It was why he joined the Peace Corps, why he ran for the Legislature and served for six terms, why he made three unsuccessful runs for statewide offices, and why he now works as a public affairs consultant helping people deal with public issues.

Otis served in the House from 1979 to 1990, and his career of public service was almost inevitable. His father, James C. Otis, was an associate justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court from 1961 to 1982, his brother was in the Peace Corps in Thailand, and his grandfather was on the St. Paul City Council.

"I was raised in a family that was very public service-oriented. I grew up with a lot of political discussion and also a feeling of community service," Otis said.

Politics and public service were always discussed at the dinner table while Otis was growing up. Those discussions and President John F. Kennedy's call to the nation's youth for service in the 1960s inspired Otis to join the Peace Corps in 1967 after he graduated from Harvard University.

He was assigned to Senegal, a country in Africa, and worked in a small town called Linguere, where he taught English and helped with community development. He likened his service in the Peace Corps to his service some 10 years later in the Legislature.

"I was so impressed with my colleagues in the Legislature and my co-workers in the Peace Corps. They were bright, public-spirited, very concerned. It was the diversity and shared experience," he said.

After he returned from Africa in 1969, Otis went to Columbia University in New York to obtain a master's degree in journalism. He returned to Minnesota in 1970 to work in community relations for Dayton Hudson Corp. and later for First Bank.

He married his present wife Jane, in 1977, then went to work as a lobbyist for the National Federation of Industrial Business. In 1978, Gov. Arne Carlson, then a Republican legislator from Otis' district in south Minneapolis decided to run for state auditor. Otis sought the DFL endorsement for that House seat, received it, and won the election.

Otis stays in public service mode, calls House 'a great place to be'

"I was elected at a time when we had an energy crisis going, and we were in touch with those issues," he said. His chief concerns were energy, education, and economic development.

Otis, who now lives in St. Louis Park with his wife and two children, was born and grew up in the Macalester-Groveland area of St. Paul, graduating from St. Paul Academy.

Since leaving the House, Otis has mounted runs for U.S. Senate, governor, and state auditor. He also has served as state chairman of the DFL. He said he does not see himself running for statewide office again.



Former Rep. Todd Otis' career has taken him from a village in Africa to the Minnesota Capitol.

He started his consulting business in 1994, and then in the summer of 1995, he met the nightmare that every parent fears. His 22-year-old son, Philip, was working as a volunteer conservationist at Mt. Rainier National Park in Washington that summer. In August, while trying to rescue an injured climber, Philip slipped and fell off a cliff and was killed.

"It changes your life forever. You never get around it, but you try to integrate it into your life and you do accept it," he said.

His minister urged him to take something positive out of the horrible situation, and Otis did that. Philip was a passionate environmentalist, and one aspect of Otis' business is working on environmental issues. Otis said he thinks of his son when doing that work.

"His whole spirit, his big signature was his smile. If you don't believe in some form of God, or that we're connected to each other, I don't know how you can cope with this kind of reality. It's one of the most important things in my reality," he said.

Highlights



CHILDREN

Children's endowment fund

Minnesota voters would decide whether to create a constitutionally protected children's endowment fund, under a bill the House passed March 31. The vote was 68-62.

"It's a vision of making Minnesota the best it can be, starting with its youngest citizens," said Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood), sponsor of the bill.

The bill (HF3167/SF2775*) would submit the following amendment to voters in the 1998 general election: "Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to create a permanent endowment fund to enhance the development of young children through the age of four?"

Research indicates the portions of the brain that control language, emotions, and logical reasoning develop before a child heads off to kindergarten, Slawik said. The fund would be used to supplement spending on activities that heighten awareness of the importance of early brain stimulation and further research into early childhood development.

A number of states have trust funds for children, Slawik said, including California, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington. However, those funds are not constitutionally protected.

The latest annual report by the Children's Defense Fund indicates that the rates of teen pregnancies and violent juvenile crime are on the rise, Slawik said.

"If you want to stem the increase of crime, curb special education costs, and stop remedial education costs . . . you start with children," said Rep. Tony Kinkel (DFL-Park Rapids), who chairs the Family and Early Childhood Education Finance Division of the House Education Committee.

"We can help now, or we can pay later," Slawik said.

The exact source of funding for the children's endowment would not be decided until the 1999 Legislative Session, if the amendment is successful at the polls.

Potential sources of initial funds for the endowment include surplus dollars in state coffers, a portion of any proceeds from the state's tobacco lawsuit, and tax-deductible contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

Proponents compared the idea to the Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund — supported by state lottery revenue — that was established by a constitutional amendment in 1988.

"We did it for the animals. We did it for the fish. We should be doing it for children," said Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls).

Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska) argued that the environmental fund is different because voters knew beforehand exactly how that fund would be structured and financed.

The lack of a predetermined revenue source for the children's fund led to a debate on the House floor.

House Minority Leader Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) said the bill potentially could amount to "a billion dollar tax increase."

Critics repeatedly asked Slawik about how the state would pay for the children's fund.

"I hope you're going to show us the money," Rep. Mike Osskopp (R-Lake City) said. "If you really want to help children, get out of mom and dad's wallet."

The issue is expected to go to a House-Senate conference committee because the version of the bill the Senate passed March 18 differs significantly from the House version.

The Senate bill would rename the state permanent school trust fund as the "children's endowment fund." The school trust fund, which currently is managed by the Department of Natural Resources, is supported by income from timber sales and state land leases. Proceeds are divided annually among school districts across the state. Under the Senate bill, money from the school trust fund would instead be earmarked for activities that support the development of children through age six.



CRIME

Omnibus crime prevention bill

A slightly altered omnibus crime prevention bill (SF3345) is on its way to the governor's desk. The full House accepted the conference committee's adjustments and gave the bill final passage April 1. The vote was 89-40.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) and Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls), contains most of the major crime initiatives and public safety funding for this session.

Several provisions in the earlier House bill

did not make it into the conference committee's final version. The so-called "three strikes" provision, backed by Rep. Charlie Weaver (R-Anoka), was one such casualty of conference committee.

This provision would have required life imprisonment for criminals convicted of three violent felony-level crimes. The provision also included language for judicial discretion in applying the new sentence requirements.

Another section left out of the conference committee's bill would have opened some juvenile court records and proceedings to the public.

For juveniles under 14 years old, the provision would have made court records available to the public if the juvenile is found guilty of a third felony or gross misdemeanor level offense. For juveniles who are 14 years old or older, the provision would have opened all court hearings to the public, regardless of the offense. The records would have been closed to the public when the juvenile turns 21.

Here are some highlights of the omnibus crime prevention bill.

Getting tough

The omnibus crime prevention bill includes several provisions aimed at lengthening penalties for certain crimes.

The bill also would increase penalties for felons convicted of violent offenses who are found illegally in possession of a firearm. Currently, the mandatory minimum prison sentence is 18 months; the bill would increase the mandatory minimum to five years.

Another provision in the bill increases penalties generally for soliciting a prostitute or receiving profit from prostitution. This provision also increases the penalties for engaging in prostitution in a school zone.

Charging burglars

A provision of the omnibus crime bill would make it easier to prosecute people who illegally enter a property by expanding the definition of burglary to include accomplices.

Prosecutors said the new language would make the law more explicit and allow them to bring charges against anyone who illegally enters a dwelling, even if they don't actually break in or steal something.

Prosecuting gangs

Prosecutors also told legislators that they are having difficulties bringing gang members to trial and making the penalties stick. Several provisions in the omnibus crime bill seek to address such concerns.

One provision would expand a current law that provides increased penalties for crimes done for the benefit of a gang to include crimes motivated by "involvement with" a gang. This provision also increases these enhanced penalties.

The bill would increase penalties for witness tampering and would add witness tampering to the list of crimes that can receive enhanced penalties if done for the benefit of a gang.

The bill also seeks to get people to show up for court, both offenders and witnesses. One provision would increase the penalty for failure to appear in court if charged with a felony level crime.

Another provision would increase penalties for individuals who knowingly and willingly defy a court subpoena to appear in relation to a violent crime.

Fighting drugs

The omnibus bill would increase the penalties for manufacturing, possessing, or selling methamphetamine. Law enforcement officials said that Minnesota is seeing a dramatic increase in use of the drug.

The bill would raise the drug to the same status as cocaine and heroin and would make the manufacture of any amount of methamphetamine a first-degree controlled substance offense.

The bill also makes the drug ephedrine a controlled substance, to be dispensed only by prescription in most instances. The targeted over-the-counter products containing ephedrine are reportedly taken by teenagers and others looking to achieve a legal high.

Drive-by shootings

A provision in the omnibus bill makes murder committed during a drive-by shooting a first-degree murder crime, increasing the prison sentence for the offense.

The crime bill would also raise the maximum penalty from a five-year prison term to a 10-year term for firing into an occupied vehicle.

Murder-kidnapping

Another provision in the bill would classify murder committed in the course of a kidnapping a heinous crime. A person convicted of such a crime could be sentenced to life without parole, Minnesota's toughest sentence.

Protecting police officers

Several provisions in the bill seek to make it easier and safer for police officers to do their job.

One such provision comes as a result of an incident where two Richfield police officers were accused of sexual assault. Although the allegations were proven false, the incident greatly disrupted the criminal justice process, not to mention the lives of the two officers involved.

The provision would make it a criminal violation to harass police officers because of the performance of official duties. This provision would also add police officers to a list of judicial officials who are protected from retaliatory harassment under current law.

Another provision would authorize officers to conduct pat-down searches on juveniles taken into custody.

Under current law, pat-down searches can be performed only on adult offenders. Proponents of the change argued that police officers need to be protected from juveniles, as well as adults, carrying concealed weapons.

Financing justice

The bill contains \$7.9 million in supplemental appropriations, a majority of which would go to the Department of Corrections, the Department of Public Safety, and the state courts.

Of the total amount, \$3 million would be recouped in revenue from increased criminal justice fees and criminal fines.

The Department of Corrections would receive \$2.1 million, much of which would go to reducing the caseload for probation officers. Grant programs which fund community corrections would also be funded through these dollars.

The Department of Public Safety would be appropriated \$1.6 million. Of these funds, the office of the Crime Victim Ombudsman would receive \$300,000 to fund its services; the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension would receive \$133,000 to add forensic scientists to its crime lab; and the department would get \$750,000 for law enforcement and community crime prevention grants.

The state fire marshal would receive \$170,000 of public safety money for the creation of an arson data system. The database would contain only basic information at the state level but would provide links to local criminal justice agencies for more detailed information on specific cases of arson.

The bill would appropriate \$1.1 million to the state courts for law clerk salaries. The state public defender would receive \$1 million for defense attorney salaries. Another \$375,000

would be given to Legal Aid to provide legal service to low-income individuals.



DWI

Legal blood-alcohol limit

With surprising speed and hardly any debate, the House passed a bill April 2 that would lower Minnesota's legal blood-alcohol concentration limit. The vote was 79-46.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul), would lower the per se blood-alcohol concentration limit from 0.10 percent to 0.08 percent.

The bill (HF2389/SF2099*) now goes to conference committee where lawmakers will attempt to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

The Senate bill would apply the lower 0.08 percent limit only to repeat DWI offenders. The 0.10 percent limit would remain the limit for all other drivers.

Proponents of the lower standard for all drivers argue that the new standard is reasonable and that it will result in a reduction in Minnesota's DWI-related traffic fatalities.

The average male would have to drink four standard drinks in an hour and the average female would have to drink three standard drinks in an hour to reach that level, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.

Opponents contend that the new standard would unfairly target social drinkers and take valuable resources from the real problem, repeat DWI offenders.

Repeat DWI offenders



Effective March 26, 1998, a new law authorizes state courts to sentence repeat DWI offenders to an intensive probation program in place of mandatory jail sentences. Gov. Arne Carlson signed the measure March 25.

Intensive probation programs seek to provide alternative sentencing for those DWI offenders considered to be of high risk to the community.

These programs require a period of incarceration in a treatment facility followed by supervised home detention. Offenders are prohibited from using alcohol or drugs and are frequently tested for use throughout the probation. Offenders are also required to pay a substantial portion of program costs.

The Department of Corrections has a grant program in place to assist counties interested

in establishing intensive probation programs. Correction officials said that they received requests from 13 counties this year.

Officials from Dakota County said that an evaluation of their intensive probation program showed a recidivism rate of 11 percent. They said the rate for those incarcerated without the program was 43 percent.

The officials said it is difficult to get a repeat offender into the program voluntarily after he or she has already done jail time.

Rep. Thomas Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul) and Sen. Deanna Wiener (DFL-Eagan) sponsored the legislation.

HF2615/SF2252*/CH332



ELECTIONS

Updating voter lists



Gov. Arne Carlson vetoed a bill March 31 that aimed to make it easier for people who move to new homes to update their voter registration information.

The bill would have authorized the Office of the Secretary of State to get names and addresses of people who have given the U.S. Postal Service a change-of-address card.

The bill called for the secretary of state to then send the information to the appropriate county auditor and for the auditor to confirm the voter's new address by mail.

In his veto message, the governor said he vetoed similar legislation in 1997 and that he still has the same concerns. He then listed those concerns as follows: "1) Where a person receives their mail is not necessarily always where they reside and vote; 2) Establishing the residence of thousands of potential voters is a culmination of many factors that may not always be reflected by an automatic process for registration; and 3) The unintended outcome of this process may actually be more confusion on the part of the electorate," he wrote.

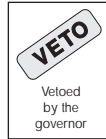
Carlson said any change in election law is too important and should have bipartisan support. The bill passed 71-61 in the House and 46-14 in the Senate.

"Even if my concerns were entirely satisfied, I could not support any changes to our election laws when only three Republican members in the House of Representatives, and relatively few in the Senate, supported the bill. Changes such as those proposed in this bill should have at least modest bipartisan support before becoming law," he wrote.

Rep. Betty Folliard (DFL-Hopkins) and Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park) sponsored the bill.

HF2387/SF2149*/CH346

Open absentee balloting



Gov. Arne Carlson vetoed a bill March 31 that would have extended Ramsey County's open absentee ballot program.

In his veto message, Carlson questioned the need for its continuation.

"The project has been in existence since 1991," he wrote. "At what point do we bring a *pilot* project to an end? What information, other than what has already been gathered, does the county hope to obtain? And what does the county intend to do when the project expires in two years? We know what the benefits and drawbacks of this program are — it's time to end it and take up the larger debate of applying it to all citizens of the state."

In 1991, Anoka, Hennepin, Polk, and Ramsey counties entered into a pilot project for open absentee balloting. The 1994 Legislature extended the pilot project in Ramsey County until this year.

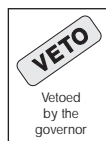
Under the pilot project, people don't need a reason to vote absentee, they just need to apply in writing at their county auditor's office. (State law dictates that people who want to vote by absentee ballot must have an acceptable reason, such as absence from the precinct, illness, disability, observance of a religious holiday, or service as an election judge.)

An absentee ballot is mailed or given to the voter, who fills it out like a regular ballot and mails it to the county auditor's office. The ballots are held until election day, then counted with the rest of the ballots.

Rep. Betty McCollum (DFL-North St. Paul) and Sen. Charles Wiger (DFL-North St. Paul) sponsored the bill.

HF2567/HF2221*/CH347

Absentee ballots with 'reason'



Gov. Arne Carlson vetoed a bill April 2 that would have allowed voters to use an absentee ballot for any reason.

Current law lists a number of acceptable reasons for voting by an absentee ballot. The reasons include absence from the precinct, illness, disability, observance of a religious holiday, or election judge service in another precinct.

The bill would have stricken that language in current law and required only that voters

list their reason for needing an absentee ballot on their application.

In his veto message, Carlson said he was concerned about the party-line vote on the bill.

"Significant changes to election laws such as those proposed in this bill are too important to be entirely one-sided and lacking in bipartisanship," Carlson wrote.

The bill was widely opposed by Republican legislators.

"Changes should have at least modest support from both sides of the aisle before being signed into law, and certainly not the vociferous opposition that accompanied this and other election law bills," Carlson wrote.

Rep. Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul) and Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park) sponsored the bill.

HF2526/SF2148*/CH352



EMPLOYMENT

Essential employee status

Emergency dispatchers would become essential employees and lose the right to strike, under a bill the House passed March 30. The vote was 77-50.

Rep. Thomas Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul) is sponsoring the legislation, which he said is necessary because a strike by dispatchers could threaten public safety.

Under the bill, police, fire, and 911 dispatchers would join law enforcement personnel, health care workers, prison guards, and others who are considered essential employees.

Under that status, workers give up the right to strike, but they can still request arbitration in a labor dispute.

The Minnesota Sheriff's Association, Minnesota Professional Firefighters Association, Law Enforcement Labor Services, and several 911 dispatchers testified in support of the bill at an earlier hearing before the House Labor-Management Relations Committee.

Because the proposal was supported by employees, employers, and the union, many lawmakers said they would support it at that time.

But Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) urged his colleagues to oppose the bill, which he said could lead to more employees losing their right to collectively bargain.

"It is at times essential for people to go on strike and walk the picket line so that their fellow workers can benefit," he said.

The League of Minnesota Cities and the Association of Minnesota Counties also opposed the bill.

On the House floor, Rukavina offered an unsuccessful amendment that would have required employers who offer workers anti-union information during work hours to also offer equal time to union organizers.

"This is a matter of equal time," Rukavina said. "It doesn't hurt any employer who is a good employer — and I believe most of them are."

Lawmakers who said they are wary of imposing any new restrictions or mandates on employers defeated the amendment.

The bill (HF1693/SF1074*) now goes to the governor.

Hibbing workers' benefits

About 20 workers temporarily laid off from the Hibbing Taconite Co. in St. Louis County would receive extended re-employment benefits under a bill the House passed March 30. The vote was 74-52.

The workers were laid off between July and September 1997 because of lack of work. The company says it expects to have them back to work by the end of May, but the employees' regular unemployment benefits ran out over the winter.

HF3465, sponsored by Rep. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), would allow the Hibbing workers to receive up to 13 additional weeks of benefits.

Current law grants those additional benefits to workers who are affected by a large, permanent layoff in a county with a high unemployment rate.

Tomassoni's bill would exempt the Hibbing workers from three requirements: that the layoff be of a certain size, that it be permanent, and that it occur in a county where the unemployment rate is more than 10 percent. The workers would still have to meet requirements specifying that they be otherwise eligible for unemployment and that they have exhausted all other rights to benefits.

Tomassoni said the average benefit of the affected workers is \$331 per month, and the total extra benefits would be about \$128,000. He also said that the company, since it is still in business, would end up paying for most of that amount in tax.

Workplace breast-feeding

The House gave final passage to a bill April 2 that would require employers to make "reasonable efforts" to provide adequate private space and unpaid breaks for new mothers to pump breast milk. The vote was 106-23.

The bill (HF3459/SF2751*) had gone to a

conference committee after the House added a provision specifying that businesses could not be held liable if reasonable efforts to comply with the potential law had been made.

The Senate bill did not contain such language, but the provision was approved by the conference committee and remains in the final bill.

The bill would require employers to provide "a room or other location, in close proximity to the work area, other than a toilet stall," where a woman could privately pump breast milk.

Under the bill, the break times would run concurrently with any other provided breaks. Employers would not have to provide the breaks if doing so would "unduly disrupt the operations of the employer."

The bill also contains a provision that clarifies that breast-feeding would not be considered indecent exposure under the law.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville), now goes to the governor.



ENVIRONMENT

Personal watercraft operation

A bill that aims to regulate personal watercraft operation on Minnesota lakes was approved by the House April 1. The vote was 75-52.

"It would provide people with some relief and still allow for courteous operation of personal watercraft," said Rep. Kris Hasskamp (DFL-Crosby), sponsor of the bill.

The bill would reduce the hours for legal operation of personal watercraft, expand the no-wake zone on all lakes, and set up procedures for citizens to lodge civil complaints against personal watercraft operators who violate the law.

The April 1 debate was the third time the bill had come up on the House floor in two weeks. In the face of opposition to her proposal, Hasskamp had twice delayed a vote to allow time for changes meant to appease critics.

Under the bill, personal watercraft operation would be permitted only between 9:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. or one hour before sunset, whichever is earlier. Current law allows personal watercraft use between 8 a.m. and sunset.

The bill would add another 50 feet to the no-wake zone, making it illegal to operate a personal watercraft at full speed within 150 feet of shoreline, docks, swimmers, or other boats. However, it still would be permissible to pull water-skiers behind personal watercraft.

Another provision would prohibit "tricksters," as Hasskamp referred to them, from operating personal watercraft while facing backwards.

The provision that drew the most criticism would allow individuals to lodge citizen complaints with law enforcement representatives against operators who violate personal watercraft laws. Such a complaint would have to include a sworn statement or a videotape. Peace officers could then, in turn, issue a civil citation to the personal watercraft owner.

The citizen reporting measure was designed around language in current littering and trespassing laws, Hasskamp said.

"I believe if we can provide the citizens with some sense of justice — access to law enforcement — then we can say we've done something significant this year," she said during floor debate March 31.

Critics objected to the citizen citation clause because of the potential for frivolous complaints.

"If the individual were frivolously bringing [the complaint] forth, they could be guilty of perjury," Hasskamp said.

"If you don't think perjury is serious, you just have to talk to Monica Lewinsky," said Rep. John Tuma (R-Northfield).

The bill (HF1351/SF1169*) now heads to a House-Senate conference committee because, among other differences, the Senate version of the personal watercraft bill does not contain a citizen complaint clause.

Lottery revenue dedication



A new law effective Aug. 1, 1998, will allow voters to extend the duration of the dedication of state lottery revenue to the Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Under the law, voters in the 1998 general election will decide the following question: "Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to extend to the year 2025 the dedication of lottery proceeds to the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund and to maximize the long-term total to the fund?"

The fund was established by a constitutional amendment in 1988. At the time, the state was allowed to earmark 50 percent of the lottery proceeds for the environmental fund.

A second constitutional amendment in 1990 reduced to 40 percent the portion dedicated to the environmental fund. That dedication expires in 2001.

The amount appropriated each year of a biennium under the constitutional amend-

ment could be up to 5.5 percent of the market value of the fund on June 30 one year preceding the start of the biennium.

The fund's current value is about \$210 million. About \$22 million was dedicated for projects in the current biennium.

Rep. Willard Munger (DFL-Duluth) and Sen. Steven Morse (DFL-Dakota) sponsored the new measure. Gov. Arne Carlson signed it into law March 27.

HF113*/SF76/CH342



FAMILY

Family, early childhood bill

Minnesota's families would receive \$14.9 million in state dollars under the omnibus family and early childhood education spending bill that won final passage in the House April 1. The vote was 81-47.

The bill (**HF2803/SF2532***), sponsored by Rep. Tony Kinkel (DFL-Park Rapids), would appropriate money for programs such as Head Start and Early Childhood Family Education, fuel assistance, and drug and violence prevention programs.

The bill now goes to the governor.

Here's a look at some of the major provisions that were agreed upon by a House-Senate conference committee.

Child care assistance

The bill would appropriate \$5 million for a program that helps low- and moderate-income working families pay for child care using an income-based, sliding-fee scale. Another 1,700 families who are on a waiting list for the Basic Sliding Fee program could be covered, Kinkel said. Also, a portion of the money would ensure that parents who are on a welfare-to-work path continue to receive child care assistance.

Under the bill, an additional 17,000 families could qualify for the Minnesota dependent care tax credit program. The bill would raise the maximum income threshold from \$31,000 to \$38,000 at a cost of \$4.9 million to the state. The average dependent care tax credit is \$317 per year.

Investing in the family

A proposal that would allow low-income families to contribute money to a "family asset account" and receive matching dollars from the state or a private organization would receive \$775,000.

The family assets for independence initiative was the top-ranked program to be approved by the Family and Early Childhood

Education Finance Division of the House Education Committee, Kinkel said.

To qualify, a family must have an income level at 200 percent of the federal poverty level or less (or \$26,700 for a family of three) and assets of \$25,000 or less.

The matching funds would be kept in a separate account, and the family would not get the money until they have finished an economic literacy course and achieved their goals for one of three approved purposes — buying a home, paying for an education, or starting a business.

Other states are considering similar programs and similar legislation is pending in Congress.

The program would be administered by the Department of Children, Families and Learning.

Helping the homeless

The Department of Children, Families and Learning estimates that there are 21,000 homeless children in Minnesota. The spending bill would appropriate \$900,000 for emergency services grants to provide shelter, medical care and other assistance to the homeless. Another \$1 million would be spent on transitional housing programs.

Right to polka



Albert Clouse brought his baritone horn to the Capitol March 27 to demand his right to polka. Since the Legislature is considering putting a constitutional amendment protecting Minnesotans' right to hunt and fish on the ballot next November, a group of citizens rallied in the rotunda for equal protection for their recreational activities.

Gang prevention

The bill would appropriate \$200,000 for gang prevention and intervention.

The funding would be available for local organizations to reach children and young adults who are either at risk for criminal gang involvement or who have expressed interest in terminating their gang affiliation.

After-school activities, job skill training, and counseling are among the services that would be offered to the young people.

Lead contamination

The bill would appropriate \$200,000 for the clean up of lead-contaminated residential sites around the state. Of this amount, \$50,000 would be earmarked for the city of St. Louis Park to complete a lead abatement project in a residential neighborhood surrounding an industrial site.

A call for help

First Call For Help is a social services information and referral telephone hotline that was developed 50 years ago by the United Way of Minneapolis.

In 1997, the program received 350,000 calls — a 20 percent increase over 1996.

The bill would appropriate \$100,000 to expand the successful First Call for Help into "First Call Minnesota," a statewide computer system database of health services, social services, educational programs, housing information, and employment services.

Child care projects

The bill also would transfer approximately \$5 million in federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds to the Department of Children, Families, and Learning for several child care projects.

Among the provisions is a plan to make available more nonstandard-hour care. The number of parents seeking child care during evening and overnight shifts is projected to increase dramatically with the recent overhaul of the federal and state welfare system.

The department would receive \$500,000 for grants to public and private agencies to provide child care during these nonstandard working hours and to research the changing face of child care in the age of welfare reform.

Under the bill, \$2.2 million would be appropriated for child care service development grants to child care providers for business and licensing assistance and multicultural outreach.

The outreach would include providing informational brochures on licensing and child care options in all of the predominant non-English languages in Minnesota.

The bill also would direct \$300,000 toward an education loan forgiveness grant program for child care workers. The child care industry considers low wages to be one of the biggest challenges in the field. It is often difficult for child care workers to afford continuing education or pay back student loans.



GOVERNMENT

State government finance bill

Although the baseball stadium controversy has received little attention from lawmakers this year, the Metrodome turned up at the heart of opposition to the omnibus state government finance bill that won final passage in the House April 1. The vote was 71-56.

Calls to send the bill back to conference committee came from Republicans and DFLers alike, who were upset that Senate conferees defeated a provision from the original House bill that would have prohibited the Metropolitan Sports Facility from contracting with a professional sports team to play in the Metrodome for less than a seven-year period.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), who moved to send the bill back to conference, said she was frustrated because she felt senators had rejected "out of hand" provisions that House conferees considered essential.

She said the stadium lease agreement would be the only way to ensure that a repeat of the 1997 stadium debate doesn't dominate future legislative sessions.

"We thought we should be able to debate [stadium funding] without the threat of the team leaving," she said.

Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) agreed with Kahn, and said the lease clause would be the only way "to protect the people of Minnesota from yet another stadium debate that will consume the 1999 session."

But other lawmakers, including Rep. Mike Osskopp (R-Lake City), urged colleagues to keep government out of baseball, and Kahn's motion was defeated.

Osskopp also argued that a bill with the stadium-lease provision would almost certainly elicit a gubernatorial veto. That, Osskopp said, would punish the Office of the Attorney General the most, because its 1999 operating budget, vetoed last year, is in this year's bill.

Here's a look at key provisions of the state government finance bill (HF3137/SF3354*), which now goes to the governor.

Attorney general's budget

The bill would provide \$24.1 million for the attorney general's 1999 expenses. That's just \$100,000 more than was in the House bill that

went to conference committee, but \$331,000 less than requested by the office and earlier approved by the Senate.

The extra \$100,000 is earmarked for a fund that would educate senior citizens about telemarketing fraud. The original House bill would have directed that such a program be set up, but would not have provided funding.

The rest of that office's budget would be distributed as follows: \$23 million for general functions, \$500,000 for legal services to state agencies, \$250,000 for gaming enforcement, and \$250,000 to assist counties with felony prosecutions, community notification of sex offenders, and related tasks.

The office's budget was in question because Gov. Arne Carlson used his line-item veto authority to strike its proposed 1999 funding from the 1997 state government omnibus finance bill, citing what he called unnecessary and excessive growth in the office.

This year's bill also calls for a task force to study the availability, effectiveness, and cost of legal services provided by the attorney general.

Community-based planning

A much debated plan to extend a state advisory council on community-based planning was voted out of the omnibus state government bill in conference committee.

The House version contained a proposal to expand membership on an existing advisory council and to extend the life of the council for six months until Dec. 31, 1998. The council helps communities set up long-range land-use plans on a voluntary basis.

But several Greater Minnesota lawmakers have said throughout the session that they don't believe such a program would remain voluntary for long — and that they don't want metropolitan-area help for rural planning.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), House sponsor of the omnibus bill, said on the House floor that he was not sorry to see this provision go in conference committee.

"I tried to give some assurance to those of us who live in rural Minnesota that this voluntary program would not become mandatory," he said.

No small gifts

Also stripped in conference committee was a provision that would have allowed lawmakers to receive gifts worth less than \$5 from lobbyists.

The earlier House version of the bill would have exempted those small gifts from the current ban on public officials accepting anything of monetary value from lobbyists or others with a stake in a government decision.

Rukavina said the ban should be relaxed

because it limits lobbyists' access to legislators by making even a cup of coffee an illegal gift.

Senators who opposed the provision said they did so because they felt it was slipped into the House bill without sufficient debate and was never brought up in the Senate.

Studying feedlots

The final version of the bill also would give \$1.3 million to the Office of Strategic and Long-range Planning to fund a three-year study of the effects of the livestock industry on the state's economy and environment.

A committee would be required to submit an environmental impact statement to the Legislature and could consider factors such as government regulation of feedlots, potential ownership arrangements, and the impact of current feedlots.

Perpich's portrait

Another part of the bill would direct that the state must accept a portrait of former Gov. Rudy Perpich and wife, Lola, if a private donor provides funds for one, and that the new portrait would be substituted for the portrait of Perpich currently hanging in the Capitol.

Near the end of his time in office, the former governor pushed to have his wife included in his portrait, and the matter became the subject of significant controversy.

Portraits of each former Minnesota governor hang throughout the corridors of the Capitol, and each of the governors is pictured alone. The portrait of Perpich now found on the ground floor of the Capitol shows the former governor standing alone with an iron ore mine in the background.

Settling border disputes

Also remaining in the final bill is \$25,000 that would go to the Council of State Governments to set up meetings between Minnesota and Canadian lawmakers to discuss boundary disputes, including fishing laws.

Fiber-optics plan remains

A House plan that would have delayed implementation of a controversial fiber-optics contract is no longer in the omnibus bill.

The contract in question was signed in January, giving exclusive rights to one company to lay fiber-optic cables along the state's highway system. The House proposal would have delayed the contract until a report on its legality was completed.

The stripping, in conference committee, of this provision was — along with the loss of the stadium-lease provision — the reason Kahn said she wanted to send the bill back to conference.

"Many people believe this contract is anti-competitive," she said.

Administration

Under the bill, the Department of Administration would receive the following appropriations:

- \$4.3 million to help update government computer systems to address problems associated with the year 2000;
- \$315,000 to Pioneer Public Television to build a tower in Otter Tail County, currently the only part of the state that does not receive a public television signal;
- \$150,000 to coordinate the Minnesota Alliance with Youth initiative;
- \$44,000 to make the state register and guidebook to state agencies available on the Internet free of charge; and
- \$20,000 for a portrait of Carlson to hang in the Capitol.

Donating 'distressed' foods



Food handlers will be able to donate "distressed" foods to local governments or to the state, under a new law effective Aug. 1, 1998.

Food is considered distressed when it cannot legally be sold but is still deemed safe — unspoiled milk that has not sold before the expiration date, for example.

Currently, food handlers can donate distressed foods to nonprofit organizations who supply the food to the elderly or needy. The new law will allow them to donate these foods to units of government.

The measure, signed by the Gov. Arne Carlson March 25, will remove liability for food handlers who choose to donate the distressed food, except in instances of gross negligence or intentional misconduct.

Bill sponsor Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson) said that the idea was brought to her by county commissioners who felt that it would be a good way to defray corrections costs.

"It's food that may not be marketable, but it is still safe for consumption," Harder said.

Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm) sponsored the bill in the Senate.

HF176/SF154*/CH333

If you have Internet access, visit the Legislature's web page at:
<http://www.leg.state.mn.us>



HEALTH

Partial-birth abortions

A conference committee dropped a provision from an omnibus health and human services bill (HF2868) that would have banned "partial-birth" or late-term abortions April 2, setting up a possible showdown when the bill returns to the House floor.

Seventy-five members of the House have signed a petition stating they wouldn't vote for the \$56 million omnibus bill if it returned to the floor without the abortion language.

The version of the omnibus bill earlier approved by the House included the ban on late-term abortions. The Senate version of the bill had no abortion reference.

The conference committee deadlocked 5-5 on a vote that would have included in the bill a provision banning partial-birth abortions and making it a felony offense for anyone to perform such a procedure. The measure would have allowed the procedure only if it were performed to save the mother's life.

More than half the states have either passed bills or injunctions against partial-birth abortions.

The conference committee also debated a portion of the House bill that would require clinics and doctors to complete extensive forms to report abortions. Those provisions are still pending a vote of conference committee members.

The omnibus bill also carries provisions for welfare reform, efforts to address the problem

of fetal alcohol syndrome, and various other human services initiatives, including food stamps for 8,000 to 10,000 legal immigrants and pay raises for nursing home workers.

The House bill is sponsored by Rep. Lee Greenfield (DFL-Mpls).

Improper use of DEA numbers



The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) uses a numbering system that was established to identify medical professionals and others who are authorized to engage in business activities involving controlled substances.

But the insurance industry and health plan companies have sometimes used DEA numbers for other purposes, such as tracking the drug prescription practices of health care providers.

That will no longer be allowed under a law signed March 23, which will not take effect for at least two years. Its effective date is 24 months after a unique, alternative health identifier is adopted.

The identifier would be adopted under the federal legislation dealing with health insurance portability and accountability. The status of that identifier is pending.

The DEA has tried to get national health insurance associations to find an alternative to the industry use of DEA numbers and has asked its registrants to refuse to furnish DEA numbers to insurance providers for reimbursement purposes. The DEA claims misuse could



Supporters from both sides of the abortion debate brought their signs to the hallway outside the House chamber April 1. Later, the health and human services conference committee removed from a bill a provision that would have legally limited so-called partial-birth abortion procedures.

weaken the registration system, and the agency has sought to restrict the registration numbers to use for drug enforcement purposes.

The new state law will limit the use of DEA numbers for law enforcement purposes, and thus prohibit insurance providers or health plan companies from monitoring the prescribing practices of a practitioner.

The law also stipulates a prescription that is not a controlled substance does not have to bear a DEA number.

Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) and Sen. John Hottinger (DFL-Mankato) sponsored the measure.

HF2401/SF2207*/CH316



INDUSTRY

New area codes

A last-ditch effort to keep St. Paul from losing its 612 telephone area code seems to have stalled.

After hearing testimony March 31 from Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Chair Edward Garvey before the House Regulated Industries and Energy Committee, Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) said he would discuss the issue with his St. Paul colleagues, but he essentially conceded the matter was over.

"My position is that the decisions are made," Paymar said. "I do not think this will be helpful for St. Paul. I'm not satisfied, but there comes a time when you have to see the writing on the wall and throw in the towel."

Paymar's aim is to keep the 612 area code for the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. He wants the new 651 area code to go to the outlying suburbs.

Paymar said St. Paul businesses would incur considerable cost in making the change and all government-related numbers in St. Paul would be involved as well.

Shortly before the March 31 House committee meeting, the PUC voted unanimously to stick with its plan to split the area code in the metropolitan area along municipal boundaries.

The hearing on Paymar's bill (**HF3191**) marked the second time in less than a month he had tried to halt the PUC's planned July 1998 switch of St. Paul and other eastern metropolitan area cities to a new 651 area code.

Paymar earlier tried to amend separate legislation on the House floor to include language that would halt the change. That amendment failed.

Frontier Communications officials have also protested the change because about 5,000 of its customers in the southern suburbs of Apple Valley and Lakeville will be assigned entirely

new telephone numbers because of technical issues.

Frontier officials say switching the customers to new phone numbers is inconvenient and costly and that the software the company will require in the change is untried.

Some legislators have questioned why certain alternatives couldn't be sought, but Garvey explained a new area code is inevitable and a geographic split by municipal boundaries was the best solution.

The option preferred by U.S. West and by Garvey was for all existing numbers to remain the same, with new numbers assigned the 651 area code. But that would mean all numbers dialed in the metropolitan area would be 10-digit numbers. Also, a residence or business could have both 612 and 651 area codes.

Other legislators wondered why cellular phones, pagers, and fax machines could not be assigned the new area code. Garvey explained the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) forbids that. The FCC has decided it is discriminatory to give new area codes to just one set of telecommunications providers.

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) said that prefixes are assigned in blocks of 10,000 and asked why unused prefixes allotted to an exchange or company can't be distributed elsewhere. Garvey said current technology does not allow this, although it is expected to be possible in the future.

Garvey said the PUC decided after seven public meetings to go with a geographic split. One option under that plan was to give either Minneapolis or St. Paul a new area code. The other option was to give the suburbs ringing the two cities a new area code and keep Minneapolis and St. Paul in the 612 area. That would have been in line with Paymar's bill.

But PUC projections suggested the outer ring of cities would exhaust all its numbers no later than 2003, and the inner ring in mid-2007. Garvey said history indicates the numbers would be exhausted before then.

In addition, Garvey said the PUC currently believes it will have to add a 952 area code in the western suburbs around 2001. Regardless of the plan, he said two new area codes will be needed in the metropolitan area within the next few years.

Garvey said the PUC decided to give the east side of the metropolitan area the new area code this summer because it will inconvenience fewer people because that side has fewer residents. But, more importantly, the PUC did not want some people to be forced to change area codes twice in a short period of time, he said.

Because the PUC knows some portion of western metropolitan area customers will need the 952 area code, if the west side were as-

signed the new area code some western customers would have to change to the 651 code this summer, then to 952 within three or four years.

If St. Paul and the eastern suburbs get a new area code now, no customer will have to change again in the foreseeable future, he said.

The new area codes are effective July 12, 1998, with "permissive dialing" until Jan. 10, 1999. Permissive dialing means a call between the old 612 area code and the new 651 area code will connect even if seven rather than 10 numbers are dialed. The permissive dialing period allows customers to get used to the change.

The committee took no action on the bill.

Electric industry study

The House passed a bill March 30 that would direct the existing Legislative Electric Energy Task Force to complete a comprehensive study of certain aspects of the electric industry. The vote was 117-9.

HF3654, sponsored by Rep. Loren Jennings (DFL-Harris), would require the task force to study potential benefits and costs of restructuring the electric industry to rural, low-income, residential, small business, and commercial and industrial energy consumers.

The study would include the ability of these consumers to participate in and benefit from restructuring. The task force also would examine various issues such as safety and maintenance concerns and would analyze laws and regulations that could prevent Minnesota utilities from competing fairly in an open market.

The Legislative Electric Energy Task Force consists of 10 House members and 10 Senate members. It currently analyzes issues relating to the deregulation of the electric industry and makes recommendations to the Legislature.

The bill would stipulate that while conducting the review and analysis of restructuring, the task force would have to consult with affected and interested parties.

The Clinton administration, in March, unveiled a proposal to bring competition and consumer choice to the electric industry.

Among other directives, the Clinton proposal would require states to decide by Jan. 1, 2003, if they would open retail service to competition, require utilities to disclose information on a standard consumer label, and provide matching funds to states for low-income assistance, energy efficiency programs, and use of renewable energy sources.

The Clinton administration claims its proposal would save American consumers \$20 billion a year and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But there are concerns. One is that unless the average consumer is consulted and has a chance to voice an opinion, industrial users will reap the benefits of deregulation and small electric customers could possibly wind up subsidizing the cost of the effort.

Some believe the Clinton proposal will help protect the environment and help low-income customers but that too much authority will be concentrated at the federal level.

Jennings said on the House floor that if the states don't address restructuring issues, the federal government will do it for them.

The bill now goes to the Senate.

Protecting telephone customers



A measure designed to protect Minnesota telephone customers from unauthorized switching of long-distance telephone carriers was signed into law March 31.

"While most long-distance providers conduct their business in an ethical, above-board fashion, there are some that unfortunately do not," Gov. Arne Carlson said in a news release. "In signing this legislation, we are now able to give Minnesotans protection from unscrupulous carriers."

A new provision, effective July 1, 1998, will require long-distance providers to give price information on specific calling patterns to consumers and will forbid the providers from the practice of "slamming," or switching customers without their knowledge.

The long-distance providers will have to provide proof that a customer authorized a change in carriers. If the provider is unable to produce a written statement or a tape recording indicating the customer authorized the change, the carrier will have to pay the cost of returning the customer to the original service and the cost of any of the customer's long-distance calls during the unauthorized period.

Long-distance companies also will have to provide upon request — or when soliciting customers — information on the price range of services, minimum volume requirements, termination charges, and other fees.

A separate provision effective April 1, 1998, provides an exemption to requirements of biomass-fueled power plants. Examples of biomass power sources are sawdust or wood chips, agricultural residues, and the organic portion of the solid waste stream.

Previous law provided that biomass-fueled power plants can use non-biomass fuels for up to 25 percent of their fuel. The new law provides an expansion so that when biomass fuel sources are not reasonably available to the facility because flood, fire, drought, disease or other acts of God, the power facility can ex-

ceed the exemption without penalty or a charge against its normal 25 percent exemption.

Rep. Loren Jennings (DFL-Harris) and Sen. Steven Novak (DFL-New Brighton) sponsored the legislation.

HF3042*/SF2797/CH345



METRO AFFAIRS

Met Council 'service redesign'

The Metropolitan Council would carry out a plan known as "service redesign" to reduce its costs, under a bill the House passed March 30. The vote was 82-43.

The bill, which would set up a pilot project, was initiated by the Metropolitan Council to allow it to sell some of its services to either the private or public sector to generate revenue.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville), would require the council, when performing services such as wastewater treatment, to develop plans in which performance and cost can be measured objectively. The plan would be effective in the seven-county metropolitan area.

The council could improve efficiency of its operations for a particular project by selling the capacity to another government entity or a service provider in the private sector.

The Metropolitan Council was created in 1967 and is responsible for regional planning in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It's one

of the largest regional governments in the country and oversees the regional bus system, wastewater treatment facilities, and Metro Mobility, a transit operation that serves disabled people.

An amendment relating to airport projects and offered by Rep. Geri Evans (DFL-New Brighton) was approved on the floor. It would require that the council review proposed airport projects and not approve them unless the council sees that the Metropolitan Airports Commission has given the nearby communities a chance to discuss and participate extensively in the decision-making process.

HF680/SF525* goes to the Senate.



TAXES

Property tax rebate



Effective March 19, 1998, a new state law ensures homeowners who prepaid their 1997 property taxes can claim a rebate allowed under a law passed last year.

The 1997 Legislature, flush with a projected \$2.3 billion budget surplus, passed a one-time tax rebate to give some of that surplus back to homeowners and renters. The rebate was linked to property taxes paid in 1997.

However, that created a problem for those

Asking for action



Allyson Hartle, a lobbyist for the Special Transportation Services Association, studies the names of agencies and organizations written on a petition set up outside the House Chamber April 2. The petition is an attempt to convince members of the Legislature to pass an omnibus health and human services spending bill, regardless of a controversy over abortion-related provisions.

who paid their 1997 property taxes before Jan. 1, 1997. Homeowners sometimes pre-pay their taxes to claim an itemized deduction for the previous year's income tax.

Under the 1997 law, people who prepaid were out of luck, because the measure limited payment of the rebate to those who paid their property taxes in 1997.

The new law allows the property tax rebate to be paid to all taxpayers who paid their 1997 property taxes before Jan. 1, 1998.

The rebate is available to both homeowners and renters. For homeowners, it comes to 20 percent of their property taxes, and for renters, 3.6 percent of their rent paid. Although the rebate is a property tax rebate, it is claimed on the state income tax returns filed this year. The rebate is separate from the regular property tax refund that many renters and homeowners get in August of each year.

Rep. Dee Long (DFL-Mpls) and Sen. Douglas Johnson (DFL-Tower) sponsored the new measure.

HF2294/SF2041*/CH304



TRANSPORTATION

Omnibus transportation bill

There would be fewer new state troopers on the road than the governor requested under the \$51 million omnibus transportation and transit bill that won final passage in the House April 2. The vote was 119-9.

However, conference committee members did find a compromise in funding for additional staff for the state patrol. The bill would appropriate \$2.7 million for 29 new troopers and add \$200,000 for additional state patrol helicopter flight time to enhance law enforcement efforts.

The governor had requested 47 additional state troopers at a cost of \$5.25 million.

Maj. Gene Halverson, of the state patrol, told conference committee members that local television stations have more helicopters than Minnesota law enforcement agencies. He said that's difficult to understand when "there is no greater advantage we get when those helicopters come and light up the scene."

The state patrol flies its helicopter patrols only on Friday and Saturday nights to support officers on duty. "But if I had my druthers," Halverson said, "we'd fly every night."

Halverson said the helicopters have heat-sensing devices that not only help in criminal matters but also have located missing people. One flight in northern Minnesota even saved the lives of some snowmobilers.

Another 29 state troopers would bring the allowable full-funded complement to 564.

Currently, there are 488 state troopers on the road in Minnesota and another 39 in training.

In 1996, the governor sought funds to hire 46 additional troopers, but only four additional state patrol dispatchers were hired.

Even with the additional funds for flights, about \$1.5 million was shaved from the original House state patrol funding request. The original House bill called for an overall appropriation of \$52.5 million and the Senate bill called for \$45 million.

The final bill includes \$40 million that would be appropriated from the state trunk highway fund for road construction in fiscal 1999.

A Senate provision that would allow preparation for light rail transit also made its way into the final bill.

The provision would establish an 11-member planning board for the Lake Street corridor in Minneapolis from the western city limits to the Mississippi River. The board would plan and coordinate economic development, transportation, and residential renewal in conjunction with affected neighborhood, government, and business entities.

The bill (**HF3057/SF3298***), sponsored by Rep. Bernie Lieder (DFL-Crookston), now goes to the governor.

Making vehicles available



Nonprofit organizations that sell or lease inexpensive cars no longer need to apply for a motor vehicle dealer's license, under a new law that took effect March 17.

Certain charitable organizations repair and recondition older vehicles that are donated to them. These groups then sell the vehicles at low prices to people moving off public assistance or to other low-income people.

The new law exempts these organization from needing a dealer's license.

Under the law, the cash value of the vehicle being sold must be less than \$1,000 and the organization must meet the requirements of a nonprofit charitable group under the tax code to get the exemption.

The law could make more vehicles available for people at a time when welfare recipients are being encouraged to find employment under welfare reform measures that took effect in 1997. Many of these people do not have transportation, according to Rep. Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan), who sponsored the measure in the House.

Sen. David Knutson (R-Burnsville) sponsored the legislation in the Senate.

HF3028/SF2163*/CH285

No more fingerprint checks



Those with direct management responsibility for a company's hazardous waste transportation no longer must submit a full set of fingerprints to determine if the person has a criminal record under a law effective March 24.

Ward Briggs, of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, said the hazardous waste transportation industry objected to the requirement, calling it a nuisance. He also said the background check involving fingerprints had been part of a national pilot program that had expired.

Briggs said the fingerprint checks were not proven to be the best method of evaluating the background of those involved with the intrastate transport of hazardous waste. He said some with a criminal record were slipping by despite the checks.

Briggs said other methods of accomplishing better background checks are currently under study, and a national system for such a process is expected soon.

Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar) and Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing) sponsored the measure.

HF2665/SF2316*/CH310

Correction

A story on pages 7-8 of the March 27 issue of *Session Weekly* titled "Voter registration list update" misquoted Rep. Betty Folliard (DFL-Hopkins), who was the sponsor of a bill that aimed to make voter registration easier for Minnesotans who move to a new home. The quote should have read: "The bill brings us into the 20th century before the start of the 21st century. This is a bill whose time has come." Folliard also said that the bill would use technology to simplify the process. We regret the error.

Need a copy of a bill?

Call the Chief Clerks Office at
(612) 296-2314

Local man, saved from disaster, serves term in House

By Sandy Donovan

When former House member John Pillsbury Snyder died in 1959, his obituary touted the fact that he had bowled a perfect 300 game at the Minneapolis Athletic Club in 1942.

The obituary, which made the front page of the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, also praised Snyder for his successful automobile business and his leadership of several mining corporations and noted that he was the grandson of former Minnesota Gov. John Sargent Pillsbury.

It was not until near the end of the article that a 1912 event that had put Snyder on the front page of newspapers around the country was mentioned. In April of that year, he and his wife, Nelle, were among the 705 survivors of the Titanic disaster.

The newly married couple had honeymooned in Europe in early 1912, traveling mostly through Italy to study how Fiats were made. Snyder's luxury-car dealership, Snyder Garage Inc. of 407 S. 10th St. in Minneapolis, was just beginning to sell the new brand of Italian cars.

For their return trip, the Snyders booked a first-class stateroom on the maiden voyage of the luxury liner Titanic. Those exclusive cabins cost up to \$5,000 for the six-day trip.

Nelle Snyder, who was only 20 at the time, later told reporters that she had been reluctant to travel on the highly touted but untested Titanic.

Soon after boarding the ship April 10, Snyder must have sat down to write a thank-you note to a London cigar merchant. His correspondence, on Titanic stationery, was among the few surviving letters from the doomed voyage. It was handed overboard at the dock before the ship sailed.

Today Snyder's grandson, Stevenson Miller, of Montana, owns the letter. He told the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* that he received it along with "a bunch of stuff nobody in the family wanted."



John Pillsbury Snyder

Three days after he wrote that letter, Snyder and his wife were walking along one of the liner's upper decks, about to return to their stateroom for the night, when they felt a crash. They later said they were told that there was no danger, and they retired to their cabin. It would have been just before midnight, April 13.

Within a few minutes, the Snyders later said, a steward knocked on their door and told them they should get up on deck. Snyder said there was general concern but not panic, and his wife, complaining of the cold, went back to the cabin to get warmer clothing and her jewelry box.

Snyder said the crew was by then telling people to get in the lifeboats, but most were resisting.

"The women, after looking over the rail into the water, refused to change their seeming safe position for the more precarious one in a lifeboat," he told reporters. "An officer pleaded, then ordered them into the boat. But still they refused to go."

While most newspaper stories at the time praised male passengers and crew as heroes for obeying the rule of the sea — and sacrificing their own lives to save women and chil-

dren — Snyder's accounts stressed that few people wanted to get in the lifeboats and that he was practically shoved into the first one to be lowered from the sinking liner.

"Somebody . . . called out that families should keep together in getting into the boats," he told the *Minneapolis Journal*. "The people were reluctant to get into the boats at first. Those in front stepped back."

"Some of them looked over the side of the vessel into the darkness of the night and were loath to trust themselves to the frail-looking boats swinging on the davits."

Snyder also said that people were calling for brides and grooms to get in the first boat.

"When the crowd in front turned aside, my wife and I were left at the front," he said. "The first thing we knew we were both assisted into the lifeboat. At that time there were not many men or women on the deck ready to go into the lifeboats."

"Those that did get into the boats felt that it was merely a measure of precaution — that they would be able to return to the ship within a couple of hours at the outside, when whatever damage that had been done had been remedied."

Snyder's version of events is likely close to the truth. When his lifeboat was lowered at about 12:45 a.m. it contained only 28 people, although it could have carried 65. After about five hours at sea in the leaking lifeboat — Nelle Snyder reported that she used her hat to bail out water — they were rescued by the *Carpathia*, the first ship to answer the Titanic's distress calls.

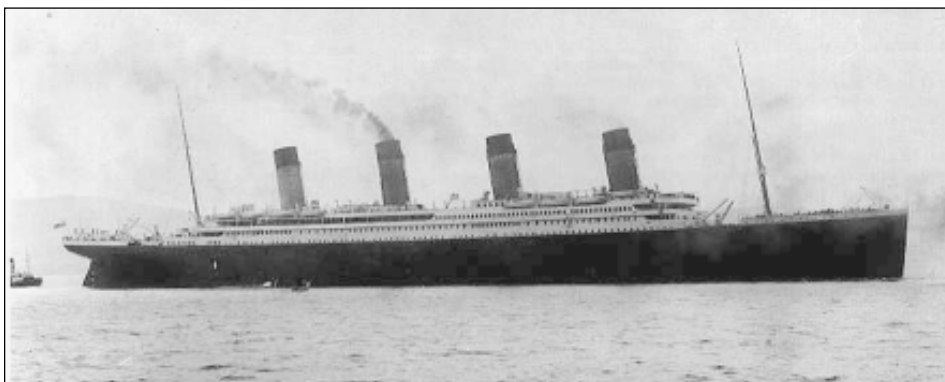
But whatever the circumstances, Snyder undoubtedly felt somewhat sheepish after surviving the tragedy. Following initial conversations with the press, neither of the Snyders discussed their rescue for several decades.

Upon landing in New York, they checked into a hotel, contacted family, and returned soon to Minneapolis. Once home they settled into Minneapolis society, had three children, and watched Snyder Garage flourish. During World War I Snyder served as a major in the infantry.

When he was elected to the House in 1926, Snyder was following family footsteps into public life. Not only had his maternal grandfather been governor, his father had also served in the House for one term in 1897-98.

Snyder represented part of Minneapolis in the state's 34th district and served on six House committees: civil administration, motor ve-

Continued on page 21



The Titanic on April 10, 1912, as it prepares for its maiden voyage.

Photo from Eng Klat's Titanic HomePage at <http://web.singnet.com.sg/~ektcompq/>

Spring tornadoes hit St. Peter and

The historic river city of St. Peter was the largest town hit by a string of tornadoes in south-central Minnesota March 29. Winds reached 200 mph over a 140-mile long stretch in south-central Minnesota.

About 90 percent of the homes in St. Peter were damaged or destroyed. A command center was set up in the basement of 116-year-old Nicollet County Courthouse — one of 13 buildings in the town listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Gov. Arne Carlson and legislative leaders pledged quick support to help rebuild St. Peter and other storm-ravaged towns and farms.



From the roof of his garage, now in his neighbor's backyard, Gardell Harms surveys the damage to his property on North Washington Street in St. Peter, Minn.



Tom Miller, of Restoration Unlimited, makes his way through the rubble. The church was due to be restored this summer but



Joan Walter, left, points out a family valuable to her daughter Nancy Brey as they pick through the rubble of what was their garage on Madison Street in St. Peter, Minn.

and surrounding area



out of St. Peter's Catholic Church after assessing the damage. Some fear it may now be impossible to salvage the structure.



With broom in hand, Carol Langsjoen stands in the living room of her home on North Fourth Street. The north wall of her house was ripped away by the March 29 tornado in St. Peter, Minn.



The Maas family begins to pick through the rubble on the first floor of their home on Madison Street in St. Peter, Minn., searching for any family valuables left behind by the March 29 tornado.

—Photos by
Tom Olmscheid

Historians to celebrate laying of Capitol cornerstone

By Nicole Wood

State Capitol historians are gearing up for a milestone celebration this summer. July 27, 1998, marks the 100th anniversary of the laying of the Capitol cornerstone.

The 1898 cornerstone laying ceremony was a grand event with plenty of pomp and circumstance (and long-winded orators), according to *Laying of the Corner Stone of the New Capitol of Minnesota*, a commemorative book published by the Pioneer Press Co. in 1898.

The festivities began with a parade through St. Paul, complete with marching bands, mounted police, and a 36-by-20 American flag handled by 18 men from the Fifteenth Minnesota Infantry.

Several carriages carried government officials and dignitaries, including U.S. Sens. Knute Nelson and Cushman K. Davis, Archbishop John Ireland, Capitol architect Cass Gilbert, and Mr. and Mrs. A.L. Larpenteur, who had originally homesteaded the land upon which the Capitol was constructed.

While the band played "Stars and Stripes," several thousand invited guests and citizens gathered on the Capitol lawn.

It was a day to marvel at how far the state had come since 1849 when, in the words of Davis, "[t]here were no courts, no legislature, no executive, and it was doubtful if there were any laws. . . . Minnesota was a political derelict upon the sea of Time."

The population had grown from 4,940 in 1849, the year the Minnesota Territory was organized, to nearly 1.6 million in the 1895 census.

Alexander Ramsey, first governor of the

Minnesota Territory and second governor of the state of Minnesota, was chosen to set the cornerstone in place.

"The corner stone has always conveyed a mystical and symbolic meaning, even in divine utterances," Davis said. "The hand that laid the ideal foundation of this state 50 years ago, in the dining room of a frontier tavern, now lays the corner stone of this, the capitol of the completed commonwealth."

Ramsey was presented with a silver trowel adorned with a border of moccasin flowers. The trowel's handle was made of tamarack wood from the old Central House, a hotel that hosted the first Territorial Legislature and served as the unofficial Capitol in 1849.

In acknowledging the gift, Ramsey demonstrated a sense of humor previously absent from the day's speeches.

"[The trowel has] relieved me of serious embarrassment, for, being new to such functions, I had neglected to provide myself with the necessary implements and have been somewhat perplexed as to how I should perform them," Ramsey said.




The Capitol cornerstone, laid nearly 100 years ago, is located near the southeast ground level door, close to the *porte-cochere* entrance beneath the front steps.

The cornerstone is inlaid with a sealed copper box containing many significant historical documents and objects.

The articles include: a Bible; a Minnesota Historical Society publication titled "How Minnesota Became a State"; a two-volume set of Minnesota Statutes; a book titled *History of Minnesota Volunteers in the War of Rebellion*; portraits of Ramsey and Henry Sibley, Minnesota's first governor; photographs of Minneapolis and other Minnesota cities; copper plate etchings of the Capitol floor plans; and copies of the St. Paul and Minneapolis newspapers.

"Minnesota has been last of all her sisters of the West in building a statehouse commensurate with the dignity and suitable to the uses of a great state," said C.H. Graves of Duluth, a member of the State Capitol Commission. "May this building be the birthplace of wise laws, enacted by honest and incorruptible legislators, interpreted by a fearless and learned court, and administered by loyal officers of the state."

The Minnesota Historical Society will host a celebration in honor of the cornerstone centennial on Saturday, July 25, 1998, at 1 p.m. in the Capitol rotunda. Visitors will witness a re-enactment of a portion of the ceremony. Also, objects similar to those sealed within the cornerstone will be displayed. 



Former Gov. Alexander Ramsey spreads mortar with a silver trowel as the Capitol cornerstone is hoisted into place July 27, 1898. The sea of onlookers sang the national anthem as the stone descended.

Photo from *Laying of the Corner Stone of the New Capitol of Minnesota*, The Pioneer Press Co., 1898.

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (612) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

Rep. Dee Long . . .

Ten-term legislator seeks secretary of state position

By Grant Martin



Rep. Dee Long (DFL-Mpls) said in a recent interview that she learned valuable political lessons from the good sisters of the St. Stephen's Convent in South Minneapolis.

"The nuns were activists," she said.

Long said that she had been volunteering in the civil rights and antiwar movements years ago and felt she should attend her precinct caucus, which happened to be at St. Stephen's Church.

"The nuns took my hand and said, 'Would you like to be a delegate?' I said, 'Yeah, how do I get in?' And they said, 'Well, we'll help you.' So, I guess, I really learned my grass roots political involvement from the St. Stephen's Convent nuns," Long said.

In fact, the nuns completed a long political education that began with her politically active parents, Long said.

"I was raised with the thought that you owe something to your community and to society as a whole," she said. "You have an obligation to try to leave things better when you leave this place."

Long's father was very involved in politics and would take her to both parties' headquarters on election night to watch the returns. Long recalls being introduced to people from both sides of the aisle who were very passionate about their political involvement.

"I was left with the impression that politics was something that was an appropriate involvement and fun," she said.

Elected to the House in 1978, Long announced this year that she will be leaving the Legislature to run for secretary of state.

"I have spent 20 years in this position," she said. "I think sometimes you just feel it's time to move on and, intuitively, now is the time."

Long said she is excited about the possibility of tackling the secretary of state job. She sees the job as key to securing public participation in the political process.

"I have been concerned for a number of years about the sense of disengagement from public life and community in general," she said. "We need to get back to more of a feeling that we are a part of a neighborhood or a community — part of a city or a town. That was one of the things that inspired me to run for [the secretary of state] office."



Veteran legislator Rep. Dee Long has seen many changes since she was elected to the House in 1978. She's hoping to take what she has learned into her campaign for secretary of state.

In many ways, Long's legislative career illustrates the advances made by women in politics. Long was the first woman to chair the House Taxes Committee and the second woman elected as DFL majority leader. In 1993, she became the first woman elected speaker of the House.

Long said that women tend to bring a different and valuable perspective to lawmaking.

"I do think women bring somewhat different experiences," she said. "And I do think women's style of leadership can be somewhat different. I think women don't, as much, need the feeling that they have personal power. They tend to be much more conciliatory."

Long said women have brought important issues to the table, including child care and child support. She said that these concerns are now much more prevalent in society.

"I have noticed a difference in the younger male members — the greater appreciation of the role of working wives and mothers," she said.

Long resigned the speaker position in the fall of 1993 amid criticism of her response to the "phonegate" controversy.


"I certainly could have handled the situation better," she said. "I learned a lot from mistakes that were made."

Since 1993, Long has mounted what political insiders have been calling a major comeback. She was named chair of the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee in 1995. In 1997, she regained the chair of the powerful Taxes Committee, and she has been spending a good deal of her time working on tax issues.

However, for Long, other legislative accomplishments stand out.

"What I feel best about is the environmental legislation," she said. "That will make a difference 50 or 100 years from now. Changes in tax law are interesting to work on, but I don't think that they have that same durability."

Long said that she will miss the times when legislators can rise above differences in party and local interests.

"What I will remember with great fondness are the times when you have members from both parties working together to accomplish some real policy goals," she said. "That, to me, is the Legislature at its best." 

Pinstripes 'n cell phones . . .

Technology has positive impact on legislative process

By Matt Wetzel

Walk down a hallway in the State Office Building during the legislative session and chances are you'll see several well-dressed lobbyists talking into thin, flat devices seemingly attached to the sides of their heads. Cellular phones, no less.

Ten years ago, they might have been lined up at the pay telephones, awaiting their turn.

When a legislator returns to St. Paul after a long weekend, he or she might have more than 200 e-mail messages waiting to be read. Or that person might have 20 voice-mail messages waiting to be heard.

Lawmakers have the option of returning those messages by e-mail, which is available to them on the laptop computers issued to all House members.

Legislators and their constituents also can go on the Internet and look up any bill or bill summary, and during a floor session, all amendments offered that day.

Technology has made its mark on the legislative process, and most legislators and lobbyists agree it has improved it. But some legislators caution that the people who don't have personal computers with Internet access shouldn't be forgotten.

Tom Newcome, who served in the House from 1965 to 1975 representing the White Bear Lake area, said he had seen many changes at the Capitol in those years. Since then, he's been a lobbyist, now with the firm of Leonard, O'Brien, Wilford, Spencer and Gale Ltd. of St. Paul.

"I do think [the process is] better in the respect that everybody has the information to make a decision," Newcome said.

Sarah Janecek of the firm Spano & Janecek agreed. "With all the technology we have to make the information available instantaneously, I think it's great," she said.

Newcome recalled serving on a conference committee in the early 1970s before technology and other forces made the process more open and accessible.

"We went out to the governor's mansion for two weeks. It was like electing the pope. We came out and announced we'd made our decision," he said.

House Minority Leader Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) agreed that technological advances have improved the legislative process for members of the public.

"I think whenever you can get more information it's better," he said. "We're accessible to the public by e-mail."



Cellular phones have replaced pay phones as the communication mode of choice for lobbyists and lawmakers during session.

He finds the laptop computer regularly situated on his desk in the chamber convenient. Instead of sending an aide to get a copy of a bill he needs, Sviggum can use the computer to look it up or to find out almost anything else he wants to know about the Legislature on the House's web site (www.house.leg.state.mn.us).

Technology "makes communication a lot easier," said Jack Horner, a lobbyist with the Minnesota Multi-Housing Association.

Horner says he still gets his information, particularly on bills, the old-fashioned way, by attending committee meetings and going to the Chief Clerk's Office. But he said he has occasionally "pulled them off the Internet."

He agrees that the information explosion has improved voters' access to their legislators, and that's apparent when there is an issue that's commanding public attention. Legislators are often besieged by e-mails, voice-mails and faxes.

"The first thing I'm afraid of is an expecta-

tion of a response to every inquiry," said Rep. Tom Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul), adding that he received 497 e-mail messages over the Christmas holidays.

"They're expecting they'll get a response from everyone they wrote to. It doesn't make sense," he said.

Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul), who is in his 10th year as a legislator, said he regularly receives 20 to 30 daily messages on his voice-mail.

"I return the calls if they're in my district," he said. "It makes us keep in touch with the public, which has been good."

Pugh, who has been in the Legislature since 1989, said having the laptop is convenient to check e-mail and to check on bills and amendments.

"This way, it's just a couple punches of the key. You can read the whole bill," he said.

Lea Schuster, a consumer and economic rights advocate for the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, said she believes technology has improved accountability in the lawmaking process.

"I'd say it's changed generally for the better," she said.

Her organization's charge is that of a citizen's group working for social change on consumer rights and land use. Schuster said a problem with technological changes is that some people are left behind.

There are a lot of low-income people who don't have access to the Internet that rely on the old-fashioned methods to communicate with their legislators, and the Legislature should work to accommodate them, she said.

As for those cellular phones, some refuse to use them and others say they couldn't get along without them. Newcome said he does keep a cellular phone in his briefcase, but he rarely uses it.


Janecek said she does have one and thinks it's great.

"You don't have to have quarters," she joked.

Horner said he doesn't have one, just because he hasn't felt the need for one. But he acknowledged that he does use a pager.

Sviggum is a veteran of cellular phone use, using one for three and-a-half years.

"It just makes it a much more convenient use of my time," he said. "I spend a lot of time on the road."

He often uses that time to return telephone calls. And, if something happens to his car on the way, he can call for help. 

Continued from page 15


hicles and motor tax laws, reapportionment, reforestation, taxes and tax laws, and workmen's compensation.

He stepped down after one term in the House and turned much of his attention to the

state's iron ore resources. He and his wife made a second uneventful trip to Europe on the eve of World War II in 1938.

For the next 20 years, Snyder served as director of several mining corporations. He didn't speak publicly about his Titanic experi-

ence until a few years before he died, but spent his time bowling, golfing, hunting, and fishing.

He died on the 17th green of Orono's Woodhill Country Club golf course in July 1959. 

Tracking the Bills . . . March 27 - April 2, 1998

Governor's Desk

CH338-CH353

Bills await governor's action

Once a bill has passed both the House and Senate in identical form, it's ready to be sent to the governor for consideration. The governor, who has several options when considering a bill, can:

- sign the bill and it will become law;
- veto the bill;
- line-item veto individual items within an appropriations bill;
- or do nothing, which can have two different effects. The timing of these actions is as important as the actions themselves.

In the second year of the biennium (even-numbered years), a bill passed by the Legislature and presented to the governor before the final three days of the session will become law unless the governor vetoes it by returning it to the Legislature within three days. The governor normally signs the bills

and files them with the secretary of state, but his signature is not required.

But if a bill is passed during the last three days of session, the governor has a longer time to act on it. He or she must sign and deposit it with the secretary of state within 14 days after the Legislature adjourns "sine die" (Latin for adjournment "without a date certain"). If the governor does not sign a bill within this time frame, it will not become law, an action known as a "pocket veto." The governor is not required to provide a reason for the veto.

Only on appropriations bills can the governor exercise the line-item veto authority. This option allows the governor to eliminate the appropriation items to which he or she objects. As with all vetoes (save pocket vetoes) the governor must include a statement listing the reasons for the veto with the returned bill. Here, too, the timetable is either

14 days after adjournment for bills passed during the final three days of the session, or within three days after the governor receives the bill at any other time.

A two-thirds vote of the members in each house is needed to override a veto. But because only the governor can call a special session of the Legislature, anything vetoed after the Legislature adjourns is history — at least until the next year.

The governor's veto authority is outlined in the Minnesota constitution (Article IV, Section 23).

Internet access to this information is available at: <http://www.governor.state.mn.us> (select "legislative issues" folder)

Key:
CH=Chapter; HF=House File; SF=Senate File
Res.=Resolution

CH	HF	SF	Description	Signed	Vetoed
Res. 8	3854*	3406	U.S. memorialized to resolve differences between province of Ontario and the state of Minnesota regarding Canadian waters and the taking of fish.	Filed without signature	
338	2861	3040*	Child and medical support enforcement administration process modification.	3/31/98	
339	2625	2267*	Workers' comp self insurance regulation provisions modification.	3/31/98	
340	2308*	2014	Accountant licensing provisions modified.	3/31/98	
341	3297*	2296	MERLA; statute of limitations provided for filing of actions under MERLA.	3/31/98	
342	113*	76	State lottery proceed dedication to Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund.	3/31/98	
343	2983	2966*	Minnesota Residential Mortgage Originator and Servicer Licensing Act.	3/31/98	
344	2971	2489*	Residential mortgage loans regulated, and table funding requirements established.	3/31/98	
345	3042*	2797	Long-distance telephone provider slamming and loading disclosure requirements expanded.	3/31/98	
346	2387	2149*	Voter record address change updates.		3/31/98
347	2567	2221*	Ramsey County open absentee ballot system pilot program extension.		3/31/98
348	3324	2445*	One call excavation notice system modification.	4/2/98	
349	2774	2302*	County optional forms of government adoption referendum procedure clarification.	4/2/98	
350	3070*	2847	Decorative gas lamp prohibition variance provided.	4/2/98	
351	3068*	2520	Public employee labor agreements ratified.	4/2/98	
352	2526	2148*	Absentee voting eligibility expansion.		4/2/98
353	3841	3397*	Air carriers agreements franchise law retroactive exemption application exclusions.	4/2/98	

Bill Introductions

HF3859-HF3868

Monday, March 30

HF3859—McCollum (DFL)

Judiciary

Men and women provided equality of rights under the law, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF3860—Tunheim (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Wilderness areas created in Rice, Winona, and Houston counties, and motorized equipment prohibited.

HF3861—Olson, E. (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Wilderness areas created in Rice, Winona, and Houston counties, and motorized equipment prohibited.

Tuesday, March 31

HF3862—Johnson, R. (DFL)

Ways & Means

Federal disaster relief matching funds provided for tornado and other weather damages, and money appropriated.

HF3863—Dorn (DFL)

Ways & Means

Federal disaster relief matching funds provided for tornado and other weather damages, and money appropriated.

HF3864—McCollum (DFL)

Judiciary

Gender-specific language in the state constitution changed to gender-neutral, and constitutional amendment proposed.

Wednesday, April 1

HF3865—Harder (R)

Ways & Means

Early payments of state aids to local governments affected by tornadoes allowed.

HF3866—Kahn (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Multi-tenant building smoking area designation restricted.

HF3867—Orfield (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

BWCA; motorboat use prohibited in Boundary Waters Canoe Area, and civil penalty provided.

Thursday, April 2

HF3868—Workman (R)

Ways & Means

Counties affected by tornado damage provided solid waste management tax waivers.

Committee Schedule

Schedule is subject to change.

For information updates, call House Calls at
(612) 296-9283.

All meetings are open to the public.

Sign language interpreter services:

(612) 224-6548 v/tty

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MONDAY, April 6

8 a.m.

WAYS & MEANS

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Loren Solberg

Agenda: HF3862 (Johnson, R.) Relating to public safety; providing for matching funds for federal disaster relief and appropriating money.

Additional bills may be added.

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

Legislative Audit Commission

125 State Capitol

Chr. Sen. Deanna Wiener

Agenda: Review of best practices report on 911 dispatching, Roger Brooks, deputy legislative auditor for program evaluation; Jody Hauer, project manager; Jennifer Moenck Feige, Valerie Bombach, evaluation specialists. Review and approval of program evaluation topics recommended by Topic Selection Subcommittee.

1 p.m.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Tax Bill HF3840/SF2985

15 State Capitol

Chrs. Rep. Dee Long

Sen. Douglas Johnson

*****Time to be announced*****

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Capital Investment

Bonding Bill HF3843/SF3388

123 State Capitol

Chrs. Rep. Henry Kalis

Sen. Keith Langseth

TUESDAY, April 7

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

1 p.m.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Tax Bill HF3840/SF2985

15 State Capitol

Chrs. Rep. Dee Long

Sen. Douglas Johnson

*****Time to be announced*****

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Capital Investment

Bonding Bill HF3843/SF3388

123 State Capitol

Chrs. Rep. Henry Kalis

Sen. Keith Langseth

WEDNESDAY, April 8

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

1 p.m.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Tax Bill HF3840/SF2985

15 State Capitol

Chrs. Rep. Dee Long

Sen. Douglas Johnson

*****Time to be announced*****

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Capital Investment

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123 State Capitol

Chrs. Rep. Henry Kalis

Sen. Keith Langseth

THURSDAY, April 9

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

1 p.m.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Tax Bill HF3840/SF2985

15 State Capitol

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Sen. Douglas Johnson

*****Time to be announced*****

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

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FRIDAY, April 10

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

1 p.m.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Omnibus Tax Bill HF3840/SF2985

15 State Capitol

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*****Time to be announced*****

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Order Form: *New Laws 1998*

A publication outlining the new laws of 1998 will provide brief, easy-to-read summaries of the bills that were passed by both the House and Senate and signed or vetoed by the governor. *New Laws 1998* will be available a few months after the session ends. Copies will be mailed without charge to those who order them.

Do you want to receive a copy of *New Laws 1998*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please place this form (**with the mailing label on the back**) in an envelope. Mail it by May 22, 1998, to:
Session Weekly, House Public Information Office, 175 State Office Building, 100 Constitution Ave., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298.

Readership Survey: 1998 *Session Weekly*

Please take a moment to tell us what you think about the *Session Weekly*. Your opinions will help us plan for next year.

1. Where do you live? (Please check one.)

☐ Minneapolis/St. Paul ☐ Greater Minnesota ☐ Twin Cities Suburban Metro Area ☐ Other _____

2. What is your occupation? _____

3. How often do you read the *Session Weekly*? (Please check one.)

☐ Once a month ☐ Twice a month ☐ Three times a month ☐ Every week

4. Which sections of the *Session Weekly* do you most often read? (Please check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Reflections (page 2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Features	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor's Desk
<input type="checkbox"/> First Reading (page 3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Closer Look	<input type="checkbox"/> Bill Introductions
<input type="checkbox"/> Once in the House (page 4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Member Profiles	<input type="checkbox"/> Committee Schedule
<input type="checkbox"/> Highlights	<input type="checkbox"/> It's a Fact	<input type="checkbox"/> Information (i.e., lists)
<input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota Index		

5. Do you have any comments (positive or negative) on any of the sections in Question 4? _____

6. Please rate the following aspects of the *Session Weekly* by checking one answer in each set.

Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard to understand	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat understandable	<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to understand
Story Length	<input type="checkbox"/> Too short	<input type="checkbox"/> Too long	<input type="checkbox"/> Just right
Readability (type size)	<input type="checkbox"/> Too small	<input type="checkbox"/> Too large	<input type="checkbox"/> Just right
Photographs	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	<input type="checkbox"/> Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent
Layout	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	<input type="checkbox"/> Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent

7. What do you like about the *Session Weekly*? _____

8. Do you have any suggestions for improving the *Session Weekly*? _____

9. Do you have any questions about the Minnesota House of Representatives or the legislative process that could be answered in a Q & A column? _____

Speaker of the House: Phil Carruthers
Majority Leader: Ted Winter
Minority Leader: Steve Sviggum

MINNESOTA INDEX

Public transit in Minnesota and elsewhere

Metropolitan area trips on public transit per capita in 1990	24
in 1960	44
in 1950	118
in 1920	314
Percent of daily public transit trips in the metropolitan area that began or ended in Minneapolis or St. Paul, 1990	32
in 1970	49
Rides per capita on public transit in the Twin Cities, 1995	27.4
in Tampa Bay, Fla.	10.8
in Milwaukee	46.8
in Portland, Ore.	52.8
in San Francisco	105.9
in Boston	115.7
Percent decrease in transit ridership in metropolitan area, 1987 to 1996	10
Percent increase in transit spending in metropolitan area, 1987 to 1996	11
Percent increase in ridership in Greater Minnesota, 1987 to 1996	4
Percent increase in transit spending in Greater Minnesota, 1987 to 1996	20
Percent of metropolitan-area transit operating expenses that came from passenger fares, 1996	32
in Greater Minnesota	28
Percent increase in fare revenue per Metro Transit rider, 1988 to 1995	16
Passengers carried by Twin Cities public transit in 1996, in millions	66
Percent of passengers that used Metro Transit buses	92
Percent of passengers that used Metro Mobility	2
Vehicle miles traveled, in millions	35
Operating costs for Twin Cities public transit in 1996, in millions	\$166
Metropolitan area regional property tax revenue, in millions	\$68
Fares, in millions	\$50
State appropriations and grants, in millions	\$43
Operating costs for Greater Minnesota transit in 1996, in millions	\$24
State appropriations, in millions	\$10.6
Local funding (taxes and fares), in millions	\$10.4
Percent of transit funding nationwide from passengers fares, 1995	39
from local government	22
from state government	22
from federal government	4
from other sources	13

Sources: *Transit Services*, February 1998, Office of the Legislative Auditor and *Transit Fact Book*, February 1997, American Public Transit Association.

For more information



For general information, call:
House Information Office
(612) 296-2146 or
1-800-657-3550

To obtain a copy of a bill, call:
Chief Clerk's Office
(612) 296-2314

To find out about bill introductions or
the status of a specific bill, call:
House Index Office
(612) 296-6646

For up-to-date recorded message
giving committee meeting times and
agendas, call:
Committee Hotline
(612) 296-9283



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