

SESSION WEEKLY

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Reflections

After committee work is completed, legislators meet in session on a daily basis as bills are debated in the House chamber. By law, amendments may be introduced, which opens the possibility of the introduction of additions or deletions to policy changes. Thus, the number of bills and the number of attempted changes make for longer working hours in the chamber, from 7 a.m. to 7 a.m. (24 hours) as a full session day.

Session debate may get quite "testy" or vocal as advocates and critics discuss issues they strongly believe in or strongly oppose.

History teaches us that such battles of will are not a 20th century invention. In Roman times, the statesman Cicero utilized the spoken word as an ideal for universal discourse; he expertly used his oratorical qualities to address the testiness of his peers as he called for unity.

Sometimes, House debate seems to break down to a battle of "Them" vs. "Us." Although the members/debaters may be friends, their banter has, on occasion, dissolved into disagreements viewed as a discourse on what is good or bad for humanity.

Interestingly, lessons or parables that newly elected legislators hear from leadership consultant Dr. Robert Terry during a new members' orientation are lessons about unity, authenticity, ethics, and responsibility as related to political discourse.

As a reminder, it is worth sharing some excerpts from Terry's lecture. In "The Story of Strangers," Terry teaches a parable about Us and Them.

When large numbers of Them moved next to Us, "... a few of Us convened a council. What to do was paramount on the agenda. ... [A]fter serious, intensive and often fear-filled debate ... a few of Us, selected for our insight and strength, would attempt to meet Them. Warnings accompanied the investigative party: 'Be careful.' 'Be always on guard.' 'Return immediately if in danger.'"

After some time had passed, and Us and Them maintained their separateness, "a new strategy to deal with Them emerged from a community dialogue. 'Why don't we,' said one of Us, 'make agreements with Them ... to recognize each others' existence.'"

"Finally, after much debate, the only common ground and the basis for the initial agreement was that the community of Us and Them were equal in their claim to supremacy. Once it became necessary to share power, "a new word entered into the vocabulary of discourse. Us and Them was replaced by We ... [and] self-righteousness found no home in this dialogue."

As session begins to wind down and stress may build up to testiness, it is well to be mindful that laws are for the good of all people. Thus, what Terry calls a "deepest level of responsibility" may lie in striving to be aware that Us and Them are We.

—LeClair Grier Lambert

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On the cover: High school students from the metropolitan area rally at the Capitol for increased K-12 education funding. The March 9 event was organized by members of the Concerned Advocates for Reforming Education (CARE), a program founded and run by students from Cooper High School in New Hope, Minn.

—Photo by Laura Phillips

First Reading

Omnibus tax bill . . .

House bill features property tax rebates and reforms

By Matt Wetzel

It took about 11 hours of painstaking debate, but the House passed its 1998 omnibus tax bill in the early morning hours of March 12. The bill includes some \$740 million in property tax rebates and reforms and other tax cuts.

The bill now goes to the Senate, which has already passed a tax bill that includes only \$400 million in rate reductions and no rebates. Differences likely will be worked out in a conference committee.

The House bill (**HF3840**) passed on a 93-40 vote. Republicans introduced numerous amendments calling for deeper, more permanent cuts in income and property taxes, but those amendments were rejected.

The omnibus bill emerged from the House Taxes Committee March 6 and was approved by the House Ways and Means Committee March 9.

forms and one-time rebates. They urge caution on the idea of permanent tax cuts, saying that if the booming economy goes sour, the projected surplus could become a shortfall.

House Minority Leader Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) submitted a minority report of the tax bill on the floor Tuesday, one that called for reducing income tax rates by half a percentage point and the elimination of the "marriage penalty," which requires married couples filing jointly to pay more tax than unmarried couples filing single returns. That minority report was tabled by the House on a 65-63 vote.

"You've got a five-second sound bite, but it's not responsible government," said Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Bovey).

The omnibus bill is sponsored by Rep. Dee Long (DFL-Mpls), chair of the Taxes Committee.

In accordance with 1997 legislation, the bill

and they've been greater and greater and greater," Van Dellen said. "State government needs to go on a diet. Minnesotans can make better use of their money than government."

Long defended the effort to provide property tax rebates while being cautious about permanent tax cuts.

"This is one area where I think the governor is right on," Long said. "The governor learned from the experiences of the Legislature in the early 1980s."

After a variety of tax cuts were enacted in the late 1970s, the state was hit with a budget crisis in the early 1980s, and the Legislature was forced to pass surtaxes and a series of new taxes.

Here are some highlights of the bill:

Property tax rebates

The bill would provide a rebate for homeowners and renters equal to 20 percent of the property taxes they pay in 1998, which is similar to the rebate in effect for property taxes paid in 1997.

Under the bill, the maximum rebate would be \$1,500. It would be allowed as a refundable income tax credit claimed on the 1998 tax return, filed in 1999.

The bill also calls for a so-called "no-wait rebate." The proposal would provide an extra 1997 property tax rebate, which would be 50 percent of the regular 1997 rebate. The maximum would be \$750. That payment would go out as soon as possible after July 1, but no later than Oct. 15, 1998.

Property tax reform

Several provisions in the bill aim to reduce the property tax burden on homeowners, businesses, and others.

Under the House proposal, the general education homestead credit — which provides savings to homeowners — would increase from 32 percent to 52 percent — to a maximum \$290 — of property taxes paid, beginning with taxes payable in 1999.

The bill also would decrease the property classification rate on homes valued at up to \$75,000 from 1 percent to .875 percent, and the classification rate of houses valued higher would go from 1.85 percent to 1.619 percent.

A total of \$55 million would go to the Department of Children, Families and Learning beginning in the year 2000, and every year



The omnibus tax bill approved by the House calls for a "no-wait rebate" to go to homeowners and renters before Oct. 15, 1998.

Photo illustration by Tom Olmscheid

The struggle to decide how much money to return to taxpayers and when to do it is a product of economic forecasts that show a \$1.9 billion surplus in the state's budget.

House Republicans have said Minnesotans have been overtaxed and that six consecutive budget surpluses prove it. The minority caucus leadership has sought permanent tax cuts and reform in property and income taxes.

DFLers, who are in the majority, and the governor, have agreed to more modest re-

would put \$873 million in the state's property tax reform account and would return \$1.2 billion to taxpayers in the form of rebates this year and next.

"This bill is in balance," Long said.

Rep. Todd Van Dellen (R-Plymouth) submitted several amendments on the floor during debate on the tax bill. All were rejected, including one that would have cut income taxes.

"Six years ago we started having surpluses

after, to decrease the education property tax levy.

Farmers also would get a break. Class rates on their land valued up to \$115,000 would decrease from .4 percent to 0.33 percent. The rest of the property that doesn't exceed 320 acres would go from .9 percent to 0.78 percent.

There also would be decreases in commercial and industrial property class rates. The lower tier of market value (the first \$150,000) would go from 2.7 percent to 2.36 percent, and the remainder would go from 4 percent to 3.5 percent.

Owners of apartment buildings with four or more units would see their class rate go from 2.9 percent to 2.5 percent. Those with buildings with two or three units would see their class rate go from 2.1 percent to 1.7 percent, and owners of buildings with just one rental unit would see that class rate go from 1.9 percent to 1.25 percent on the first \$75,000 of market value, and from 2.1 percent to 1.7 percent on the rest.

The bill also includes a provision that would exempt "distressed homesteads," in which dilapidated homes in marginal neighborhoods are being rehabilitated by the owner. Those homeowners would get a maximum five-year exemption from property taxes if their homes need at least \$20,000 in repairs. The measure would include only owner-occupied, single-family homes in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth.

An amendment offered by Rep. Bob Milbert (DFL-South St. Paul) would exempt all property owners from having their property value for tax purposes increase by more than the rate of inflation, as determined by the Consumer Price Index, or 5 percent, whichever is less.

The limit would not include improvements in the property. The provision would end in 2002.

Savings, seniors, and studies

Under the bill, senior citizens with an annual income of \$40,000 would qualify for the senior property tax deferral program, increasing the maximum from \$30,000.

Also, the bill calls for the state's budget reserve to increase from \$522 million to \$582 million.

Finally, the bill calls for creation of a tax study commission. The commission — made up of state, county, and local officials and members of the public — would study the financial relationships between state and local governments in Minnesota. 🐾



By Grant Martin

Ray O. Pleasant compares his experiences in the Minnesota House of Representatives to an advanced education.

"It's like getting a master's degree," Pleasant said. "When you're an elected official you're force-fed information and you learn very quickly. You have to — you're going to vote on it later that day."

Pleasant was the second African-American to be elected to the House. The first, J. Francis Wheaton, was elected in 1898. Pleasant was elected in 1972. Both served districts in the Bloomington area, and both served as Republicans.

Pleasant, who worked as an engineer for 31 years, first got involved in local politics when he was appointed to a Bloomington city advisory council working with environmental issues.

"The city was developing rapidly at that time and there were certain areas we wanted to maintain in their natural state," he said.

Pleasant was elected to the Bloomington City Council in 1969. He was successful in securing federal grants to preserve park areas in the city.

After serving three years on the city council, Pleasant decided to run for the House seat. He was successful in his first bid for the House and served eight years until 1980. He chaired the House Local and Urban Affairs Committee in 1979.

"It was a good experience, but I wouldn't want to go through it again," he said. "It was sort of like the Army in that way."

Pleasant readily admits that his thoughts on the Legislature are influenced by the last session he served. After the 1978 elections, the party division in the House was a tie, 67-67. The two parties were forced to negotiate a bipartisan leadership, with a Republican speaker and a DFL majority leader.

Pleasant says that it was an unproductive and contentious period for the House.

"You had to raise your hand three times just to get a pencil," he said.

Pleasant says that after that experience he decided leave politics up to his wife, Gene, who is currently serving on the

Pleasant likens House service to Army; continues active community life

governor's judicial selection board. The board is responsible for interviewing potential judges for appointment.

Since his time in the Legislature, Pleasant has continued his active community involvement. Most recently, he has been donating his talents to a Normandale Community College advisory board. Six years ago, he helped start an annual golf tournament that raises \$17,000 each year for student scholarships.

Pleasant, who has worked for the Richfield Bank and Trust Company since he left the Legislature, says that he plans to retire at the end of this year. But retirement does not mean inactivity.

"I stay active. I'm not one to just stay home and watch TV," he said.

Pleasant said he will continue to do the things he loves: fishing, traveling, golf, and most important, community involvement.

Pleasant has recently been appointed to serve on a voluntary advisory board for a



Former Rep. Ray O. Pleasant was the second African-American elected to the House. He served from 1973 to 1980.

residential group home in Eden Prairie. The home, operated by a Baptist church organization, provides services to boys ages 12 to 18 who are experiencing emotional or behavioral problems.

"We've had quite a success," Pleasant said. "One of our students is now the manager of a KFC [restaurant]."

The group home seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment for the boys so they can eventually return to their families.

Pleasant says that he is very excited about the opportunity to serve the organization.

"That's my new agenda," Pleasant said. "That's my next thing to be educated on."



Highlights



BONDING

Bonding bill passes House

The much-anticipated bonding bill — complete with \$65 million in funds for the St. Paul RiverCentre hockey arena — was approved by the House March 12. The vote was 96-37.

The bill (HF3843), sponsored by Rep. Henry Kalis (DFL-Walters), was approved by the House Capital Investment Committee March 10 and by the House Ways and Means Committee March 12.

This year's House bonding bill focuses on transportation, higher education, environment, and economic development projects statewide.

If passed in its current form, the \$945 million proposal would be the largest bonding appropriation in state history. The bonding bill passed in 1994 holds the current record at \$711 million.

The St. Paul RiverCentre project has become the most talked-about provision of the House bonding bill, mainly because the Senate's version of the bonding bill would not fund the widely publicized project.

The House bill would provide \$65 million to the city of St. Paul to build the hockey arena to be incorporated into the civic center complex in downtown.

Included in the governor's capital recommendations to the Legislature, the facility would be used mainly by the Minnesota Wild, the new NHL franchise granted to the city.

The RiverCentre may not even be the biggest point of contention between the two bonding plans. The Senate bonding bill, passed by the full Senate March 5, would pay for most of the projects with cash from the general fund. The House version would issue general obligation bonds for most of these projects, borrowing money to finance the improvements.

The differences between the House and Senate proposals will have to be reconciled in conference committee.

Here are some other highlights of the House capital improvement bill.

Light rail transit

The prospect of a light rail transit (LRT) system in the Twin Cities moves closer to reality with the House proposal. The bonding bill would provide \$56 million toward transit way development.

The bill would provide \$49 million of this amount to build a transportation line from downtown Minneapolis to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America. The line is being called the Hiawatha Avenue Corridor.

The state's contribution would be matched with federal transit capital funds that should be made available by Congress.

The remaining \$7 million for LRT in the bonding proposal would be used to study expansion of the LRT into St. Paul and other corridors and to study commuter rail development.

LRT typically serves urban-suburban markets with short distances between stations. Commuter rail primarily serves the suburban market, typically providing links from outlying areas to the LRT. Commuter rail uses existing rail lines and is characterized by longer station-to-station distances of approximately 2.5 miles.

The bill calls for \$24 million to be available in fiscal year 1999 for the Hiawatha Corridor project and \$25 million for the project in each of the subsequent three fiscal years.

Higher education spending

The largest portion of the bonding bill — \$238.5 million — would go to improvements to the state's higher education facilities. Of that amount, the University of Minnesota would receive \$115 million for projects across the state.

The Twin Cities campus would receive funding for several improvements, including \$35 million for the Walter Library, \$2.5 million for renovations to Amundson Hall, Murphy Hall, and Ford Hall, and \$6.4 million for improvements to Peters Hall.

Other projects in the university system include \$22.3 million for improvements to the science and mathematics facility at the Morris campus, \$21.2 million for the construction of a new library at the Duluth campus, and \$4.4 million for university-operated agriculture stations statewide.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system would receive \$124 million for statewide improvements, including \$13.6 million at the North Hennepin Community College, \$9 million at the St. Paul Technical College, and \$14 million at Hibbing Community and Technical College.

K-12 education projects

The Department of Children, Families and Learning would receive \$49 million for projects, under the bill.

Of that amount, \$10 million would go to Youth Enrichment Grants. Communities could apply for the funds to develop after-school community facilities.

The department would also receive \$3.5 million for the development of state residential academies. The governor had requested \$12 million for the creation of three academies for at-risk students; the House bill provides a grant to a state agency or political subdivision for the development of one facility.

The bill would also provide \$8.5 million for the renovation of facilities at the state academies for the deaf and blind in Faribault.

Recreation and conservation

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would receive nearly \$110 million for a myriad of projects, including \$12 million to acquire and maintain state trails and \$3 million for improvements to the state park system.

Other projects overseen by the DNR would include \$15 million for grants to local governments to prevent or control flood damage, \$9 million to improve trails in the metropolitan area park system and to connect them with existing state and regional trails, \$8 million to establish and maintain metropolitan-area green space and natural areas, and \$1.8 million for safe harbors on Lake Superior.

The Board of Soil and Water Resources would receive \$12.8 million. Of that figure, \$10 million would target wetlands for protection under the Reinvest in Minnesota program. Under the program, landowners are paid to retire certain lands from agricultural production or place wetlands into conservation.

Convention centers

Consistent with the governor's proposal, convention centers also receive a good deal of attention in the House bill. Along with the St. Paul RiverCentre, the city of Minneapolis would receive \$87 million to help finance the completion of the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Duluth would receive \$10 million for the expansion of the Duluth Entertainment and

Convention Center. Other convention center funding would be provided to the cities of Fergus Falls, Hutchinson, and St. Cloud.



BUSINESS

Omnibus liquor bill

Drinking among college students is a high-profile issue, so it wasn't surprising when House floor debate on the omnibus liquor bill March 11 centered on a provision that would grant temporary liquor licenses for events on state university campuses.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Jim Tunheim (DFL-Kennedy), passed on a 115-13 vote.

The bill would allow the issuance of temporary on-sale liquor licenses to state universities, but not for fraternity or sorority parties or other functions aimed at students. Legislators also were told the bill would not pertain to sporting events.

The temporary licenses would allow on-sales for up to four consecutive days in conjunction with a social event. Approval of a temporary license would also have to come from the university president.

Tunheim said during floor debate the sales were not to be directed at students, but were for social functions such as plays held on campus, for example, where wine sales were requested.

Tunheim also said that because the campuses belong to communities sometimes community functions are held on these sites. Some of the organizations sponsoring such events have requested the ability to sell liquor.

"But this still doesn't prohibit use by students," said Rep. Sherry Broecker (R-Vadnais Heights). She expressed concerns that there is too much drinking on campuses and that the bill would send a signal to younger people that alcohol is a vital part of social functions.

The bill also would allow temporary licenses to be issued for liquor sales within 1,500 feet of state universities. A current law generally prohibits such sales.

Another provision of the bill would allow cities to issue up to 12 one-day temporary intoxicating liquor licenses during a 12-month period. The current limit is set at three four-day licenses, four three-day licenses, or two six-day permits.

The bill (**HF2695/SF2274***) now goes to the governor.

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Business on Sundays

A new law will make it easier for Minnesota's boat, snowmobile, and all-terrain vehicle dealers to do business on Sundays.

Previously, boat, snowmobile, and all-terrain vehicle trailers were considered "motor vehicles" under state law, which prohibits the sale of motor vehicles on Sundays. That meant customers without their own trailer had no way to transport their purchases on Sundays.

Effective March 6, the new law fixed the impractical glitch in state law by exempting certain trailers from the Sunday sales ban.

A second provision in the new law also aims to make life easier for trailer dealers.

Prior to the passage of the law, it was necessary for an individual to hold a franchise license in order to sell a motor vehicle. The new law exempts trailers from the franchise requirement.

Rep. Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls), sponsor of the measure, was alerted to the problems with trailer sales by a small marine dealer in his district. Originally, Anderson said, he considered doing away with the Sunday motor vehicle sales ban entirely.

But that idea opened a "hornet's nest," he said. Some dealers support Sunday sales; many do not.

During a Feb. 17 committee hearing, Scott Lambert of the Minnesota Auto Dealers Association, said that his organization has no problem with exempting trailers from the Sunday sales ban, but the automobile dealers Lambert represents are not interested in doing regular business on Sundays.

Sen. Bob Lessard (DFL-Int'l Falls) sponsored the measure in the Senate.

HF2425/SF2170*/CH267



CONSUMERS

Getting extended area service

A telephone call to a child's school can mean a long distance charge for some rural Minnesota parents.

A 1997 law eased the process for phone customers within a school district to petition for extended area service, which would ensure calls made within school district boundaries would be local calls.

The House passed a bill March 9 that would alter that law to make it even easier to petition the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for extended area service. The vote was 121-8.

Under the 1997 law, a majority of all telephone company customers in each exchange

must vote in favor of extended area service, which could mean an increase in monthly telephone charges.

Under **HF3644**, only a majority of customers who cast a vote would be needed to extend the service.

The legislation would make the voting criteria for extended area service within a school district the same as when a community wants to extend its phone service, such as the possible move by Northfield to petition to become part of the metropolitan area for local-call service.

The original language of this year's bill, sponsored by House Minority Leader Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon), would have made the change in voting criteria retroactive to April 27, 1997, the original effective date of the 1997 law. This could have had an effect on elections held since that date.

But an amendment offered on the House floor by Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Bovey) changed the proposed effective date to the day following enactment.

Some legislators argued that extended area service can lead to doubling or tripling of a private phone bill.

A spokesperson for the PUC said a significant monthly increase per line can happen when a comparatively tiny exchange, such as Northfield, petitions to join an exchange with an enormous customer base, such as the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

But circumstances would be different when a petition seeks only to waive long-distance charges within a school district.

The PUC spokesperson said the commission has not yet seen any of the proposed rate increases that resulted since enactment of the 1997 law. But the spokesperson said the cost per residential line would be mitigated because the additional expense is distributed evenly among the new exchanges and school district extended area service does not have to meet a minimum call traffic requirement.

According to the PUC, the anticipated residential increase for extended area service within school districts would probably be only a few dollars monthly per residential line.

The bill now heads to the Senate.



EDUCATION

Omnibus K-12 education bill

Schools would receive an extra \$61 per student for new computers and they would also be allowed to take up to three years to phase in the state's new graduation standards, under the omnibus K-12 education bill approved by the House March 6.

HF2874 passed on a vote of 102-26 after hours of debate over whether to delay implementing the new "Profiles in Learning" portion of the state's graduation standards or to stick to the current schedule, which calls for having the new program in place next fall.

The standards aim to incorporate more workaday skills and projects into traditional academic areas. Some critics say they would undermine rigorous scholarship and some teachers say they haven't had enough time to prepare for the change.

But Rep. Becky Kelso (DFL-Shakopee), chair of the K-12 Education Finance Division of the House Education Committee and the omnibus bill's sponsor, said she doesn't want to see the state back away from its commitment to tough new standards.

"If we don't stick with these standards we might as well never use the words 'education reform' in this state," she said.

The compromise approved by the House would allow districts to stick to the current schedule or choose a gradual, three-year implementation plan. Districts would have to report to the state by July 1, 1998, regarding their choice.

More technology funding

The omnibus bill also includes \$59 million targeted for putting a computer in every classroom in the state. That funding was added to the bill March 2, after Gov. Arne Carlson announced an increase in the state's forecast budget surplus.

Districts could use the \$61 per student to buy computer hardware, software, or related equipment. Schools that already have full computer access could use the money for textbooks.

Kelso said the state was recognizing that technology is going to continue to play an increasing role in education, and it's going to require an increasing amount of money.

"It's going to be an incredibly cruel, hard world for kids who graduate without computer skills," she said. "In this year of surplus, if we can ensure that there's a computer in every classroom, that's a big step."

The one-time technology funding would be in addition to \$63 per student targeted in the bill for graduation-standard implementation.

The bulk of that money would go directly to schools for staff training, with the rest earmarked for districts to reduce class-size and improve gifted and talented programs.

Special education

The bill also contains provisions designed to limit what some lawmakers say are spiraling increases in the state's special education costs.

Under the bill, the state would pay a percentage of the legal costs incurred by districts who win in court against parents suing for increased special education services for their children. That plan also includes incentives for working out problems through mediation instead of litigation.

A controversial provision that would prohibit state special education requirements from exceeding federal standards also remains in the House-approved bill.

Other key provisions

Other provisions included in **HF2874** include:

- exempting school districts from the current law which caps school superintendent salaries at 95 percent of the governor's salary;
- allowing school districts to establish criteria and compel students in danger of failing to attend summer school;
- adding \$500,000 to expand existing all-day kindergarten programs to certain schools;
- giving schools \$4 per day for each suspended student placed in an in-school or alternative suspension program instead of being sent home; and

Frosty gaze



Chris Lechner, a sixth-grader at Discovery School in St. Cloud, peers through a frosted school bus window to get a glimpse of the Capitol as his class arrives for a tour March 11.

- allowing public groups to receive grants to help build state-run boarding schools for at-risk teens. About \$12 million to build three such schools is currently being considered for inclusion in the House omnibus bonding bill.

The education omnibus bill now moves to conference committee. The Senate-approved version would provide \$18 million less in overall education funding and would not allow for the three-year phase-in of graduation standards. The Senate bill also does not call for removing the superintendent salary cap, but does call for eliminating the State Board of Education.



ENVIRONMENT

Environmental spending

Several controversial issues — a moratorium on feedlots, personal watercraft restrictions, a ban on snowmobile studs, and lakeshore lease lot sales — remain alive in the House omnibus environment, natural resources, and agriculture spending bill.

The \$9.4 million bill (**HF3799/SF3353***), sponsored by Rep. Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul), passed the House after a lengthy debate March 5. The vote was 68-62.

"For some reason, the opposition would like to consider this bill anti-agriculture and anti-tourism," Osthoff said. "The fact of the matter is, [this bill] could be categorized as pro-Minnesota."

The bill now heads to conference committee, where the House and Senate will attempt to reconcile the differences in their environment, natural resources, and agriculture spending proposals.

Here's a look at some of the key provisions of the House bill.

Living with livestock

An amended version of Rep. Doug Peterson's (DFL-Madison) so-called "living with livestock" bill (**HF3441**) was rolled into the omnibus bill.

Most notably, the bill would impose a moratorium on new construction or expansion of feedlots at the level of 750 animal units. (An animal unit is a measurement of waste produced by certain species. One animal unit is equal to one steer or heifer, 2.5 hogs over 55 pounds, or 100 chickens.) The moratorium would expire June 30, 2001.

Many representatives vehemently opposed the moratorium provision.

"It only stops rural economic development and growth for three years," Minority Leader Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) said.

The bill also would prohibit the issuance of permits to construct or expand clay, earthen, or flexible membrane (plastic-lined) waste lagoons. Dairy operations under 750 units would be exempt from this provision.

After March 1, 2000, those who commercially manage and apply animal wastes would have to hold valid animal waste technician licenses issued by the Department of Agriculture. Most family farmers would be exempt from the provision.

The bill would clarify the power of counties to adopt feedlot ordinances that are more stringent than those of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

The agency would be authorized to deny permits to feedlot operators who have bad environmental records in other states.

Personal watercraft

Portions of the proposed "personal watercraft courtesy and safety act" backed by Rep. Kris Hasskamp (DFL-Crosby) also have been folded into the environment finance bill.

The personal watercraft language in the omnibus bill would require that personal watercraft operators pass a mandatory safety course and pay a \$10 fee for a certificate.

Also, a \$30 fee for a three-year personal watercraft license would be established. The fees would be earmarked for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for personal watercraft law enforcement costs.

A nuisance clause in the bill would prohibit the operation of a personal watercraft in one specific area for more than 30 consecutive minutes.

Hasskamp said she was encouraged to include the nuisance provision after receiving numerous complaints from "people who say they have been emotionally pushed over the edge at times by individuals wanting to show off and ride around in the same spot for hours."

The bill also would mandate a DNR study on the impact of personal watercraft on loons and loon nesting areas.

Hasskamp is sponsoring a separate bill (**HF1351**) that calls for a personal watercraft ban on lakes of 200 acres. That bill awaits a vote on the House floor.

Snowmobile studs

Under another provision of the omnibus bill, no snowmobile with a track equipped with metal studs could be operated on public lands, roads, or trails after July 1, 2000.

Although many claim that studs make for safer riding, proponents of the measure say paved snowmobile trails are being destroyed by studs.

"Of the 212 miles of state paved trails, 103 [miles] have been damaged," Osthoff said.

Originally, the proposed ban would have taken effect immediately, but Rep. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook) offered a successful amendment that would give the snowmobile industry two years to develop a product to replace metal studs.

Approximately 80,000 snowmobilers in Minnesota have invested \$400 to \$500 for the studs, Bakk said.

"Snowmobiling is very important to the winter tourism economy in Minnesota," he said. "They're going to take their snowmobiles to Wisconsin and Michigan because they feel that strongly about the safety factor."

Bakk's amendment received bipartisan support.

"How is a snowmobiler from Wisconsin who happens to have studs on his or her machine and who has no intention of riding on our paved trails supposed to come here and spend money in our hotels and restaurants?" asked Rep. Tim Finseth (R-Angus). "The answer is they won't."

Lakeshore lease lots

A provision of the omnibus bill that would authorize the DNR to sell 546 lakeshore lease lots that are part of the Permanent School Trust Fund was unsuccessfully challenged by Rep. Willard Munger (DFL-Duluth).

The trust fund consists of approximately 2.5 million acres of land owned by the state and managed by the DNR. The money that the DNR receives from five-year leases on the land is earmarked for educational spending.

Over the next 20 years, Munger said, the state would earn an additional \$3 million from leasing the land rather than selling it.

"Why should we sell the land and allow private owners to reap these profits?" he said.

Some people who lease the trust fund properties have complained of erratic appraisals and sharp increases in the amount they are charged for the use of the land, Bakk said.

"Even if all the land was sold, we're talking 426 acres," he said. "These are tiny pieces of land that people have been on for decades."

Whitewater rafting on the Mississippi

One provision included in the bill would explore the possibility of harnessing the water power of St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis for recreational pursuits.

The DNR would receive \$100,000 to conduct engineering and hydraulic research into the possible development of a whitewater park for kayaking, rafting, and canoeing at the falls.

Deformed frogs

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency would receive \$375,000 for research into the cause of deformities found in frogs across the state.

Currently researchers are speculating that groundwater contamination or possible ultraviolet radiation may be the cause of the deformities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also has begun to examine the issue.

Minnesota Zoo shortfall

The Minnesota Zoological Gardens would receive \$500,000 for operating costs to make up for a serious shortfall in gate receipts last summer.

The Apple Valley zoo was forced to ask the Legislature for help after a string of bad luck, bad weather, and bad press, Kathryn Roberts, the zoo's director, said during a Jan. 28 hearing.

The bill would require the zoo to address its attendance forecasting methods to avoid a problem in the future.

Less transport packaging waste

A bill that aims to reduce the amount of transport packaging waste created by the soft drink industry is headed for the governor's desk.

HF2696/SF2402*, sponsored by Rep. Willard Munger (DFL-Duluth), passed the House March 9 on a 105-23 vote.

The soft drink industry in Minnesota is considering a \$15 million investment in reusable, recyclable plastic merchandise pallets. During a Feb. 17 committee hearing, Dave Locey, of the Minnesota Soft Drink Association, said the plastic pallets would cost about \$32 each, compared to \$5 to \$7 each for the wood pallets the industry currently uses.

Currently, there is a system in place, Locey explained, where third parties collect used pallets from retail sites and then resell them to soft drink companies.

Under the bill, third party collectors would be prohibited from taking plastic pallets that are labeled as private property. The pallets would belong to the soft drink companies, and the companies' investment in the plastic pallets would be protected.

Some House members questioned the need for special legislation to protect plastic pallet owners and wondered where the responsibility would lie if pallets were accidentally lost in the course of doing business.

"If Pepsi wants to use plastic pallets, it's a good idea, but I don't think a grocer should get

in trouble if one of them is missing." Rep. Tom Workman (R-Chanhassen) said. "This is a good concept, but I don't believe it should be a law."

In 1995, 22 percent of municipal solid waste consisted of transport packaging such as wood pallets and corrugated cardboard, Munger said.

Underground petroleum tanks

Eleven years after the establishment of the Petroleum Tank Release Cleanup Fund, a bill that aims to help the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) finally bring all underground petroleum storage tanks into compliance passed the House March 9. The vote was 122-8.

HF2722*/SF2756, sponsored by Rep. Betty McCollum (DFL-North St. Paul), would allow the MPCA to "red tag" underground petroleum tanks that are in violation of current regulations.

A red tag on the cap of a tank would prohibit delivery of petroleum until the violations have been corrected.

"The purpose of this bill is to address the problems of underground storage tanks," McCollum said.

Petroleum from leaking tanks can seep into the groundwater supply and lead to extensive soil and groundwater cleanup work and costly litigation.

"The petrofund in this state has cleaned up thousands of leaky underground tanks since 1987," McCollum said. "This bill attempts to reduce the number of future leaky tanks."

Gas station owners and other petroleum-dispensing facility operators would have until Dec. 31, 1998, before the red tag provisions take effect.

The bill now goes to the Senate.

privilege will be managed by law and regulation."

While previous hearings on the matter had focused on the reasoning behind the constitutional amendment and its potential financial implications, much of the March 11 discussion revolved around the specific wording of the amendment.

HF3808 would submit the following constitutional amendment to voters in the 1998 general election: "Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to declare that the taking of game and fish is a valued part of our heritage, which shall be forever preserved, and that this privilege shall be managed by law and regulation for the common good?"

Milbert assured committee members that it

0.08 Test



Kerri Anderson takes a sip of wine as State Patrol Lt. David J. Graham keeps an eye on her and five other female volunteers who participated in a controlled test March 6. The test demonstrated that petite women could have two 6-ounce glasses of wine in two hours without exceeding a blood-alcohol level of 0.08 percent. Opponents of a bill that would reduce the legal blood-alcohol limit for drivers from 0.10 percent to 0.08 percent claim the legislation would target casual drinkers and negatively affect alcohol sales at bars and restaurants.

is not his intention to interfere with American Indian treaty rights, current gun control laws, or the ability of the Department of Natural Resources to impose license fees or protect game and fish by placing limitations on harvest seasons.

"There is nothing in here that would allow an individual to take game and fish under any method other than those prescribed by law," he added.

Professor Howard Vogel, of the Hamline University School of Law, voiced concerns over the phrase "shall be forever preserved."

"That language is stated in what we call affirmative terms," Vogel said. "When stated in those terms, courts tend to expand the understanding of the right, and it creates the possibility, contrary to what was said here, that there may be a duty upon the part of Minnesota to ensure and guarantee the supply of fish and game."

"I can imagine, for example, big litigation involving environmental groups on one side, animal rights people on the other, hunters and fishers in the middle of that, and the Legislature wondering what happened."

A similar bill (**HF326**) sponsored by Rep. Mark Holsten (R-Stillwater) was heard earlier this session by two House committees. Holsten is a co-sponsor of **HF3808**.

The bill now moves to the full Judiciary Committee.



HEALTH

Prenatal alcohol abuse

A bill that would authorize the voluntary reporting of prenatal alcohol abuse passed the full House March 10 without provisions requiring mandatory treatment.

The bill (**HF3184**) would permit health care workers, counselors, and others working with pregnant women who may be abusing alcohol to report such instances of abuse to the local welfare agency.

The bill would require that the local welfare agency then conduct an assessment and offer necessary services to the pregnant woman.

An earlier version of the bill would have made prenatal abuse of alcohol grounds for civil commitment and required local welfare agencies to petition for commitment in cases where the woman fails to follow treatment recommendations.

The civil commitment process is used to require individuals to accept health care when, because of mental illness or other reasons, they do not realize the need for treatment. Civil commitment usually prompts hospital-



GAME & FISH

Hunting, fishing privileges

A bill that aims to amend the Minnesota Constitution to protect hunting and fishing privileges was approved March 11 by the Civil and Family Law Division of the House Judiciary Committee.

"I think that there are organized groups throughout the country who are attempting to extinguish lawful taking of game and fish," said Rep. Bob Milbert (DFL-South St. Paul), the bill's sponsor. "I think, in Minnesota, many people place a very high value on their ability to take game and fish, and this is an attempt to make sure that ability is preserved and that the

ization, which allows the individual to be monitored and effectively treated.

Provisions requiring commitment in these cases were removed from the bill by the House Judiciary Committee before the legislation reached the House floor.

Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls), sponsor of the bill, said that he wanted to get tough responses to prenatal alcohol abuse on the table.

"The bill as introduced was a commitment bill," Skoglund said. "I wanted to get the idea before the Judiciary Committee. It's now a reporting bill, and it's voluntary reporting, not mandatory."

The bill was passed on a 130-0 vote and now goes to the Senate.

Hepatitis B vaccinations

All children who enroll in kindergarten would need to be vaccinated against hepatitis B beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, under a bill headed for the governor's desk.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood), passed the House March 12. The vote was 107-15.

Children in kindergarten through seventh grade also would have to be vaccinated beginning in the 2007-2008 school term, under the bill (**HF2681/SF2372***).

The legislation would exempt families who object to the vaccination for religious or other reasons.

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus and spread by contact with an infected person's blood or other body fluids. It can also be spread by sharing washcloths, razors, or needles and by the process of tattooing.

The disease causes liver inflammation and can lead to liver failure or cancer.

Approximately 80 percent of infants are already vaccinated for the disease. Immunizing the remaining children with a series of three shots would come at no cost to the state. Slawik told legislators on the House floor the vaccinations are covered under a federal program.

From 1990 to 1995, there were 591 known cases of hepatitis B in Minnesota, with 30 of those cases occurring in children 17 or younger. But the disease can be symptom-free for years, and the exact number of carriers is unknown. Some carrying the virus do not learn they are infected until they give blood or have a physical examination.

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

'Off-label' drug use

Health plans would be required to cover "off-label" use of drugs prescribed for cancer patients, under legislation that is headed for the governor's desk.

The House passed the bill (**HF1306/SF1076***) March 10 on a 132-0 vote. The amended language cleared the Senate March 11.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul), would require health maintenance organizations and other health plans to pay for off-label use of drugs for cancer patients, as long as the drug is recognized as a treatment for cancer in standard medical literature.

Cancer specialists have reported that about 10 percent of their patients do not receive prescribed treatment even if the patient responds to that treatment. The problem occurs when the prescribed drug is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for certain forms of cancer.

Drugs often are approved by the FDA for specific treatments, and further research and clinical trials reveal the drugs are also beneficial for a broader scope of ailments than originally believed. But drug companies do not resubmit these medications for FDA approval because of the time and cost commitment.

The legislation would not cover experimental drugs used in cancer treatment, but it would prohibit all health plans, including Medicare supplemental coverage, from refusing to pay for cancer treatments involving drugs that are already on a plan's formulary.

There are 27 other states with similar laws.



HOUSING

Selling abandoned homes

A bill that aims to help Minnesota's manufactured home park owners rid their properties of abandoned homes is headed for the governor's desk.

HF3148/SF2047*, sponsored by Rep. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls), passed the House March 9 on a 121-2 vote.

The bill would authorize the owner of a manufactured home park to sell up to five used homes per year that are within the park's boundaries.

Currently, only real estate agents and licensed dealers are permitted to sell manufactured homes in Minnesota.

"The problem in the past has been that some homes have such low value that real estate agents are not interested in listing them,"

Kubly said. "Nobody likes to have a low-grade piece of property sitting in their park."

The bill would be particularly helpful to those manufactured home park owners in rural areas, Kubly said.

During a Feb. 17 hearing before the House Commerce, Tourism, and Consumer Affairs Committee, Mark Brunner, of the Minnesota Manufactured Housing Association, said his organization supports the bill because it would enable park owners to more easily upgrade their facilities.

Brunner assured the committee that park owners would still be subject to current restrictions on selling substandard housing.

Housing options for seniors

More housing facilities could be designated as elderly housing under a proposal that passed the House March 10. The vote was 132-0.

HF2779/SF2230* would expand the statutory definition of elderly housing as it applies to the human rights law, bringing state law into compliance with federal statutes. The effect would be that more facilities could classify as elderly housing exclusively.

The bill would remove the requirement that elderly housing must provide facilities designed to meet social and physical needs, such as recreation and meeting rooms.

Rep. Satveer Chaudhary (DFL-Fridley), sponsor of the bill, said that the additional services provided to tenants mean additional cost in rent.

"These types of facilities often cause rent to be \$100 to \$300 higher than other facilities," he said.

Chaudhary said that his bill would create more affordable housing options for seniors.

The Senate passed the bill Feb. 12. The measure now goes to the governor.



HUMAN SERVICES

Health & human services bill

A controversial ban on late-term abortions is included in the health and human services omnibus bill that passed the House March 9 carrying a heftier price tag than it came in with. The vote was 115-14.

Thirty-five amendments attached to the bill (**HF2868/SF3346***) on the House floor added millions of dollars to the bottom line of a piece of legislation that carried a \$59.7 million price tag when it emerged from the House Ways and Means Committee.

Of the 134 House members, 75 signed a petition March 11 indicating they would reject the

bill if the abortion language is missing when the legislation returns from conference committee. The petition was given to House Speaker Phil Carruthers (DFL-Brooklyn Center) and the bill sponsor, Rep. Lee Greenfield (DFL-Mpls).

The most controversial policy portion of the bill centers on late-term or "partial birth" abortions and the abortion reporting procedures in the state.

The bill includes language that would require the commissioner of human services to report the total number of abortions paid for with state funds. The bill also would require doctors to report to the commissioner of health the gestational age of each fetus at the time of abortion.

The reporting provisions were part of last year's omnibus health and human services bill originally approved by the House but were not included in the Senate version. The final version of the bill that came out of conference committee did not include the requirements.

This year, the Senate has again passed an omnibus health and human services spending bill without the abortion-related provisions.

This year's House bill would go further than the proposed reporting requirements. The bill would make it a felony to perform late-term abortions. The penalty would be a maximum two-year sentence and \$15,000 fine.

The bill would allow late-term abortions only if the procedure is required to save the mother's life.

An amendment offered by Rep. Richard Mulder (R-Ivanhoe), a practicing family doctor, reduced the maximum penalty from the 15-year sentence and \$50,000 fine originally included in the bill.

A separate amendment offered by Rep. Eileen Tompkins (R-Apple Valley) and included in the bill would prohibit medical clinics that counsel, refer, or perform abortions from receiving family planning grants from the state's health care access fund.

At the end of floor debate on the omnibus bill, some legislators urged Greenfield to protect the abortion language included in the measure.

"Don't bring a bill back from conference committee without this language in it," said Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake).

Greenfield responded that conference committee work is "about compromise" and he offered no guarantees.

"I generally have won more for the House than I've lost," Greenfield said.

Another amendment that would have a large fiscal impact was approved by House members during floor debate. The provision would exempt dentists from a provider tax that funds state health programs.

It is estimated that more than \$12 million in

state revenue would be lost by excluding dentists from the MinnesotaCare provider tax, which is a 1.5 percent tax on hospitals and health care providers that is used to fund the state-subsidized insurance plan.

Some estimates suggest the bill will carry a \$100 million price tag if all current provisions in the proposal survive. The bill now moves to conference committee.

Here are some other highlights of the legislation.

Any willing provider

A somewhat less controversial amendment introduced by Rep. Jim Tunheim (DFL-Kennedy) would allow any doctor or clinic to contract with a health plan if the medical provider is willing to accept the terms and conditions of the plan.

Some rural area residents have argued they can no longer see their family medical practitioners because these doctors and dentists are not included in their health plan's provider network.

Social workers rally



Santino Jenkins and Tara Peterson, intern social workers from St. Paul's Galtier Elementary School and Cherokee Heights Elementary School, respectively, join a rally in the rotunda March 12. The annual rally, sponsored by the Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, is an opportunity to talk with legislators about social programs.

Tunheim's "any willing provider" plan aims to remedy such problems. However, some argue the additional administration involved would increase health care costs, and others contend it would ultimately mean fewer people will have health care because premium costs will rise.

Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin) argued there is no need for the new language because most health plans allow enrollees to extend their options within a provider network by paying more, but few people do so.

Greenfield argued that health care costs would rise under Tunheim's plan and the change would not mean better health care.

Food safety

There is also \$3 million in the bill for a food safety initiative. This was part of the governor's budget request. The money is targeted toward state efforts to improve food safety. Some funds also would be used to study and protect against food-borne illness.

Increasingly, fruits and vegetables are imported, and roughly half of food dollars are spent in restaurants, where food can be improperly handled or stored.

Dr. Michael Osterholm, state epidemiologist for the Minnesota Department of Health, has told legislators this year that the supposed 6,000 to 8,000 annual deaths connected with contaminated food are underestimated.

Osterholm also has said that at certain times of the year nearly 100 percent of fresh fruits and vegetables available are grown in developing nations. He has said if that produce were purchased by Americans abroad, they would be advised to boil and peel it before eating.

Small town doctors

House members approved an amendment by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) that would reward medical schools that keep their graduates in the state to practice medicine.

During committee hearings earlier this session, Huntley described the difficulty of attracting doctors to rural areas. His amendment seeks a study to determine which state medical schools tend to place their graduates in Minnesota. The study would evaluate this placement over the previous 10 years.

That information would then become part of the criteria used to determine the level of state funding for the medical school.

Fighting cancer in women

An amendment by Rep. Gail Skare (DFL-Bemidji) added nearly \$400,000 to the amount in the original bill to pay for more cancer screening and diagnostic services for women, particularly women who are typically

underserved by the medical profession. The bill now requests a total of nearly \$1.4 million for that expense.

Removing employment barriers

The House passed a bill March 11 calling for a resolution to be sent asking the U.S. Congress to remove Medicaid policy barriers to employment for people with disabilities. The vote was 118-9.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Lee Greenfield (DFL-Mpls), states that current government policies, particularly those relating to Medicaid, discourage people with disabilities from working.

The resolution would urge the U.S. Congress to adopt Medicaid buy-in legislation that would allow people with permanent disabilities to retain Medicaid coverage to address unmet health needs when they become employed.

Employee-based health care and government programs such as Medicare and MinnesotaCare do not typically cover long-term support needed by disabled people.

The resolution also would ask that any Medicaid buy-in legislation require individuals to take advantage of any affordable employer-based health coverage and require individuals to purchase any needed Medicaid coverage on a sliding fee scale, which would be based on their ability to pay.

A 1995 poll indicated two-thirds of disabled, unemployed people are eager to work, and technology is making that more possible. But 74 percent of working-age adults with severe disabilities are unemployed.

The resolution seeks congressional action to remove any policy barriers to employment so more people with disabilities can reduce their dependence on government programs and become taxpayers.

The bill (**HF3258/SF2699***) now goes to the governor's desk.

sponsored by Loren Jennings (DFL-Harris), which also failed to find approval on the House floor.

Jennings' bill would have required telephone service providers who are allowed to begin serving a telephone exchange with fewer than 50,000 subscribers to offer services to everyone in that exchange within a year after serving the first customer. The proposal was an effort to keep companies from entering small service areas and plucking the choice, mainly commercial telecommunications accounts while ignoring most residential customers.

Paymar argued that the new area code for St. Paul will create difficulties and possible financial hardships for businesses, which, for instance, would have to change their phone numbers on all their published information, letterheads, and business cards.

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) said, "One reason we have this problem is not just a proliferation of phones but phone companies."

She said unused telephone numbers were assigned to each of these companies in blocks numbering in the thousands. She said if the numbers were not assigned in blocks, there would be enough numbers for the near future, which could buy time to further study the issue.

Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) argued the area code issue is the job of the PUC, which he described as a politically balanced, quasi-judicial, quasi-legislative body. He argued the PUC held numerous hearings on the subject and that it is not the job of legislators to review the work of the PUC.

As for **HF2980**, Jennings argued the legislation offered "what is good for the residential payer." He said there is concern residential rates will rise if companies can enter an exchange area and offer competitive rates to the area's larger accounts. And he said bigger companies such as U.S. West opposed the legislation, "but they are big enough to find a way to protect themselves and to be competitive."

Those companies also would have to provide coverage information to members, and upon request, prospective members.

Under the bill, companies that cover durable medical equipment would have to disclose general descriptions of their coverage, level available, prior authorizations, and a name and phone number of a staff member an enrollee can call to get proper information about things like prior authorization.

The bill goes to the Senate.



LAW

Special guardians, conservators

The House passed a bill March 9 that would make changes to the special guardian and conservator hearing process. The vote was 127-0.

Guardians and conservators are appointed by the state courts to make decisions for adults who are incapable of making decisions for themselves, oftentimes individuals in nursing homes.

Special guardianships and conservatorships differ in that they are temporary arrangements designed to respond to short-term situations.

The bill (**HF1414/SF1151***) would lengthen the time required to post notices for such hearings and would require that the hearing be held within two weeks of the notice. The bill would also require that petitioners show a clear need for the appointment. The bill would also limit these appointments to 30 days.

Rep. Rob Leighton (DFL-Austin) said he is sponsoring the bill to address concerns brought to him by families who wished to challenge such appointments.

Leighton said that members of a family in his legislative district sought to contest the appointment of a third party to make decisions for their father, who was living in a nursing home.

Leighton said that the family had to wait a month and a half for the court to hear their case. During that time, the father did not receive important pain relieving medication, and the family was powerless to do anything about it.

The bill, which the Senate approved Feb. 23, now goes to the governor.

Check your local listings to watch the House committee and floor sessions on TV.



INDUSTRY

New area code for St. Paul

An effort to stop the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) from assigning a new area code to St. Paul failed as an amendment offered on the House floor March 9.

The amendment by Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) aimed to halt the PUC from proceeding to institute a new 651 area code for St. Paul as of July 1, 1998. House members voted 75-54 against the amendment.

The amendment was offered to **HF2980**,



INSURANCE

Medical equipment, supplies

A bill that would require health plans to tell clients what medical equipment and supplies are covered by insurance passed the House March 10. The vote was 130-0.

HF2814, sponsored by Rep. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), would specify that health plans covering durable medical equipment cannot limit that coverage to equipment used in the home.



METRO AFFAIRS

Innovative bike racks

It seems bicycle riders are no different than automobile drivers when it comes to parking: They want convenience.

Legislation sponsored by Rep. Dee Long (DFL-Mpls) is designed to promote both convenience for bicycle riders and an outlet for creativity.

HF3296/SF2729* passed the House March 11 on a 122-8 vote. It would allow advertising, public art, and information signage on bicycle racks, if the placement does not create an unsafe situation.

The legislation aims to address a situation in the Uptown neighborhood of Minneapolis, where five bicycle racks have been installed and as many as four more are expected to be installed this year.

Minneapolis City Councilwoman Lisa McDonald said the city is trying to promote bicycle riding but has found bicycle riders prefer to chain their bikes close to the businesses they frequent. She said the riders feel this allows them to keep an eye on their bikes while shopping.

So the city has a goal to install innovative bike racks on each block, where riders can chain their bikes but remain close to them. However, enabling legislation was needed to allow artwork and advertising on the racks.

The Uptown area is known as a location for art house theaters, popular restaurants and

bars, and shops that cater to a young clientele. McDonald said the city wants art and advertising on the bike racks that would help the racks blend with the area's atmosphere and store fronts.

The bill now moves to the Senate.



TRANSPORTATION

Aircraft safety resolution

Some aviation experts are concerned that airplane repair facilities in foreign countries use defective parts or do substandard repair work on U.S. airplanes.

An act before the U.S. Congress aims to tighten controls on these repair facilities.

The Minnesota House passed a bill March 11 that calls for the state to send a resolution memorializing President Clinton and Congress to enact that federal legislation, called the Aircraft Repair Station Safety Act of 1997.

HF3250, sponsored by Rep. Edwina Garcia (DFL-Richfield), passed on a 130-0 vote.

The resolution would support a congressional effort to force foreign repair facilities to use the same standards that apply to domestic aircraft repair procedures and parts.

The federal legislation would apply to repair stations that service aircraft that operate in the U.S. The act would revoke certification of any repair facility that purposely uses uncertified or substandard parts.

Opponents of the federal legislation fear it

could induce aviation authorities in foreign countries to quit certifying U.S. repair stations.

HF3250 now moves to the Senate.



NOTES

"Testosterone and alcohol" are the real problems, said Rep. Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul).

Osthoff was responding to a motion made by Rep. Tim Finseth (R-Angus) during discussion of the omnibus environment, natural resources and agriculture finance bill (**HF3799/SF3353***) before the House Ways and Means Committee Feb. 27.

Finseth offered an amendment that would remove language making snowmobiles with metal studs illegal.

Osthoff told the committee that the language was necessary because state trails and roads are being destroyed by the metal studs. He said it was unfortunate that a few snowmobilers ruin it for the rest of them. And he characterized these violators as young men who use alcohol and ride their snowmobiles in illegal areas.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester) didn't miss a beat.

"Would it shorten it to just say the problem is 'studs'?" Bishop said.

Rep. Satveer Chaudhary (DFL-Fridley) sponsors a bill that calls for "youth-oriented driver improvement clinics" for traffic violators who are 25 years old and under. The bill (**HF2532**) provides for graduated driver's licenses for Minnesotans who are 15 to 18 years old.

Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring) said, during a House Transportation and Transit Committee hearing, that he didn't think drivers in their 20s need to attend clinics that would be part of a program aimed at teen drivers.

If the bill passed as written and Stang were involved in a traffic violation, it would mean Stang would have to attend one of the clinics. He's 23.

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.

This way



Three-year-old Jaley tugs her mother, Mary Beth Balzart, into the rotunda as the rest of their early childhood family education group from Stillwater arrives March 10 for the "Early Childhood Parent Rally Day" at the Capitol.

State's first lieutenant governor led balanced life

By Jim Thielman

It seems William Holcombe could slip quite comfortably into 1998 — and probably write an advice column for Americans struggling to balance their lives.

Minnesota's first lieutenant governor was a bit of an entrepreneur who didn't compromise cherished personal beliefs, or his family, for work. And much like present-day, resilient financier Donald Trump, Holcombe rose from the ashes, almost literally, to remake himself.

A sturdy Dutchman with gray eyes and chestnut hair that thinned in later years, Holcombe was born in Lambertville, N.J., in 1804. In the tradition of the times, Holcombe was bred to a profession; his was that of a carriage maker. But he didn't stay in the profession — or in New Jersey — for long.

He was married in Utica, N.Y., in 1826 and moved to Columbus, Ohio, in 1829, where he continued the carriage trade. But fire reduced his Columbus wheelwright shop to embers. He rallied from that disaster only after relocating to St. Louis, a town of about 5,000 at the time.

As a member of a firm — Strother, Holcombe & Co. — he began to make various investments, including a steamboat. Holcombe captained the boat — dubbed "Olive Branch" — and did the job his way.

He had become a devout Presbyterian, and accordingly, he refused to work from sundown on Saturday until sundown on Sunday. So when Saturday evening rolled around on his first 300-mile trip upstream from St. Louis to Galena, Ill., Holcombe stopped the boat and tied up.

The delay irritated some passengers and prompted several to switch to another steamer. When the Sabbath ended, Holcombe resumed his excursion with the remaining clients.

Eventually, the Olive Branch passed the other steamer, which had become stuck on a sandbar. Those who had abandoned Holcombe were stranded, while the Olive Branch steamed toward Galena.

Holcombe said despite his refusal to travel on Sunday, he made one more round trip to Galena than any of his rivals that first year and earned nearly enough in one season to pay for his boat.

Widowed by 1839, he moved to Stillwater, which was then a portion of the Wisconsin Territory. He became proprietor of the St. Croix Falls Lumber Company, and he dabbled in steamboats and other commercial interests. He also began to follow his ancestors into politics.



William Holcombe, Minnesota's first lieutenant governor, was a steamboat captain in the days before he entered politics.

Photo courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

Holcombe came from a long line of assemblymen, representatives to the Continental Congress, and soldiers in the Continental Army.

In 1846, after remarriage, he was a member of the First Constitutional Convention of Wisconsin. It was his first political role. He was reputed to be a sound political economist and a radical Democrat with a keen interest in education. His plan for territorial boundaries was the one adopted by the convention.


In 1848, Holcombe was Secretary of the First Convention in Stillwater, the purpose of which was to organize a new territory. He was one of five who petitioned Congress to create the Territory of Minnesota from land that had been part of the Wisconsin Territory but was not included in the state of Wisconsin.

Holcombe was a member of the 1857 convention which formed the Constitution of Minnesota, and he took an active part in deliberations. His two-year stint as lieutenant governor under fellow Democrat Henry Sibley began in 1858, but perhaps was not the hallmark of his political career.

The lieutenant governor's office existed to provide a successor to the governor should the position become vacant. It was a part-time job that also involved presiding over the upper house of the Legislature. State records show that after the first legislative session adjourned in 1858, Holcombe received \$200 for presiding over the Senate.

Holcombe's role as receiver of the U.S. Land Office at Stillwater in 1849 could be argued to have been more prestigious. The receiver's job was considered to be very important. Holcombe and his son Edwin, a clerk, recorded the original plats of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Holcombe held the receiver's job twice as long as he did the office of lieutenant governor.

Holcombe made other contributions to the public good. He helped locate the first two roads in the St. Croix Valley, and built a mission on a six-acre tract of land near Stillwater. He was largely instrumental in creating the First Church of Stillwater, where he was an elder. When he left the post of lieutenant governor, he became an active member of the State Normal School Board.

It was said Holcombe always made plenty of time for friends and family, and his home was the gathering place for them. It was at home — while mayor of Stillwater — that he died of apoplexy in 1870. He was 66. 

Where to find information

House Public Information Office

175 State Office Building
(612) 296-2146 or 1-800-657-3550

The House Public Information Office is a nonpartisan office that provides: committee meetings schedules; legislator information; and publications, including the *Session Weekly* news magazine, educational brochures for all ages, and member directories. All information is available at no charge.

Most of what this office publishes can be viewed on the Legislature's World Wide Web page. To connect, point your web browser at: <http://www.leg.state.mn.us>

Senate Information Office

231 State Capitol (612) 296-0504

The Senate Information Office is responsible for all information about the Senate, including the committee schedule, bill status, legislator information, and the distribution of bill copies.

Senate Media Services

B-44 State Capitol (612) 296-0264

Senate Media Services, a bipartisan office, produces television programs, multi-media production, scriptwriting, photography, and graphics. It offers live coverage of the Senate floor sessions and some committee hearings.

Rep. Jim Farrell . . .

Legislator exits speaking of family, friends, mentors

By Sandy Donovan



Rep. Jim Farrell (DFL-St. Paul) says eight years in the Legislature have not dimmed his East Side sensibilities.

"But that's something my mother has always worried about," he said. "She worried when I went to college, she worried when I went to law school, and she worried when I came here that I'd stop going to church every week."

He hasn't disappointed her, but he says his Irish Catholic mother is happy that her son is stepping down as a legislator this year.

"She's excited that I won't have to vote on any more abortion questions," he said. Farrell's pro-choice votes have been less than popular in his mother's neighborhood.

But while she's pleased to see him leaving the Capitol, his mother was partially responsible for his decision to first run for the House, in 1990, at age 30.

After his father died in 1989, Farrell said his mother had an incredibly difficult time securing both health insurance and her late husband's railroad pension.

Farrell came to the House hoping to make changes that would spare other families such difficult situations, and he has concentrated on advocating for working people during his four terms.

He has sponsored bills aimed at improving the state's child-protection system, at reducing violence in schools, and at increasing victims' rights.

"I am who I am," he said. "I'm a third generation East Sider."

He's also a juvenile prosecutor for Hennepin County and a former assistant public defender for Ramsey County — and the only legislator to have tried a felony trial before a jury as both a prosecutor and a public defender.

"I represent hardworking folks who, if they came down here [to the Capitol], would be angered by the lack of backbone that's shown," he said.

Backbones, or lack thereof, serve as a yard-



Rep. Jim Farrell will leave the House after four terms to run for the office of Ramsey County attorney.

stick for Farrell in assessing his colleagues.

"The saddest thing is to watch people get their arm twisted, and to see them vote against something they passionately believe in," he said.

He's quick to point out the strong characters of the many legislators he counts as mentors and friends.

"[Rep.] Mary Murphy has been a good mentor," he said. "She taught me the importance of trusting people. And if you want real change, you've got to build consensus and trust."

Along with Murphy (DFL-Hermantown), Farrell lists Reps. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), Bernie Lieder (DFL-Crookston), and Thomas Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul) as mentors.

"And there are members that I don't think I've ever voted with but that I respect because I've watched them stand up and say what they think," Farrell said.

He says he's built friendships across both party and regional lines during his time in the House.

"But the best thing about being here has been getting to know Steve Trimble," he said. "For the last two years he's played Santa Claus at Christmas at our house, and although my two daughters don't know it's him, they've really developed a bond."

Trimble (DFL-St. Paul) represents a House district bordering Farrell's.

Farrell says he'll miss his colleagues when he leaves the House but he won't miss the lack of control over his schedule.

"Sadly, I know there are some people here that I probably won't see again," he said. "But I have a six-year-old daughter in dance who I love to watch, and I know I'll have fun just watching my four-year-old twisting dad around her little finger."

Still, it's unlikely that Farrell's schedule will measurably lighten when the 1998 Legislative Session ends. He's running for Ramsey County attorney this year, seeking the DFL endorsement in May. He has said that he will abide by the party's endorsement. 

Frequently called numbers

Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol 296-0271
Voice mail/order bills 296-2343

Chief Clerk of the House

211 Capitol 296-2314

Index, Senate

110 Capitol 296-2887

Index, House

211 Capitol 296-6646

Information, Senate

231 Capitol 296-0504

Information, House

175 State Office Building 296-2146

TTY*, Senate 296-0250

Toll free 1-888-234-1112

TTY*, House 296-9896

Toll free 1-800-657-3550

Rep. Edgar Olson . . .

Retiring member to head ag utility research institute

By Matt Wetzel



Rep. Edgar Olson (DFL-Fosston) has been in the House since 1985, and he now believes it's time to move on.

"I've learned about the process," he said. "You begin to think maybe you need somebody with a fresh sense of things, even though you're probably more knowledgeable than you were when you started."

Olson, 60, was born and raised in Fosston, in the Red River Valley, where he owns a 1,000-acre farm, raising potatoes, barley, wheat, and livestock.

He has announced he will not run for re-election this fall and that he will become executive director for the Agricultural Utility Research Institute in Crookston.

"I came here in the middle of the farm crisis [of the mid-1980s] and we did a good job with the interest buy-down and mediation programs. Those were things that were priorities then," he said.

Olson cited the lack of time for his children and his own pursuits as factors in his decision not to run again.

Besides, he said, it wasn't necessarily his idea to run for state Legislature in the first place.

"People came to me and wanted me to run," he said. "I was probably the last of eight candidates that entered."

Olson had farmed and worked for the agricultural industry as president of the American Sheep Council before he was elected in November 1984.

Over the years, Olson has worked on House committees focusing on taxes, education, transportation, and local government concerns.

He currently chairs the Property Tax and Tax Increment Finance Division of the House



Rep. Edgar Olson was first elected to the House in 1984. He will not seek re-election this fall.

Taxes Committee, which has carried a heavy workload in the days of budget surpluses and tax-cut proposals.

He also served as chair of the House Ethics Committee earlier in his legislative career.

Olson's wife, Phyllis, died seven years ago. He has two grown children, one living in New York and the other in Eden Prairie. He said he wants to see more of them in his post-legislative life.

"I'm like all the goal-dedicated people that we've had here. It seems that you're carving a big chunk of your life in here and it gets to the point where it's all-consuming," he said. "Between the sessions and everything that goes on, every time you try to plan things you've got a conflict."

Olson said he is going to miss the Legislature and the friends he has made in the House.

"I look forward to visiting them and seeing them on a personal basis," he said, adding that he counts all legislators as friends.

"If there's anything that deals with agricultural issues I'll remain in close contact," he said.

Still, Olson acknowledged that he will miss some aspects of life as a legislator.

"There are a lot of people that you have a common bond with, especially people in the agricultural areas," he said.

And that's his first love, farming. He said he has tried to devote his legislative career to serving his constituents and other rural Minnesotans and to helping farmers and farm communities.

"I've been able to support the people and their interests," Olson said.

Constitutional Officers

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130 State Capitol
75 Constitution Ave.
St. Paul 55155 296-3391

Lieutenant Governor

Joanne E. Benson
130 State Capitol
75 Constitution Ave.
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525 Park St.
St. Paul 55103 296-2551

State Treasurer

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303 Administration Building
50 Sherburne Ave.
St. Paul 55155 296-7091

More bill listings . . .

House Files incorporated into 1998 omnibus bills

If you've lost track of some of the bills you have been following during the session, you may find them on one of these pages. This is the second installment of an unofficial listing, as of certain dates, of House files that are contained in the various omnibus bills and other larger bills.

Ongoing floor and conference committee action may well alter the makeup of these bills before they reach the end of the legislative process. In many cases, the language found in the major bills may not be exactly as it appears in the original House files due to amendments that happen along the way. In addition, the House files that are listed may have been included either entirely or partially.

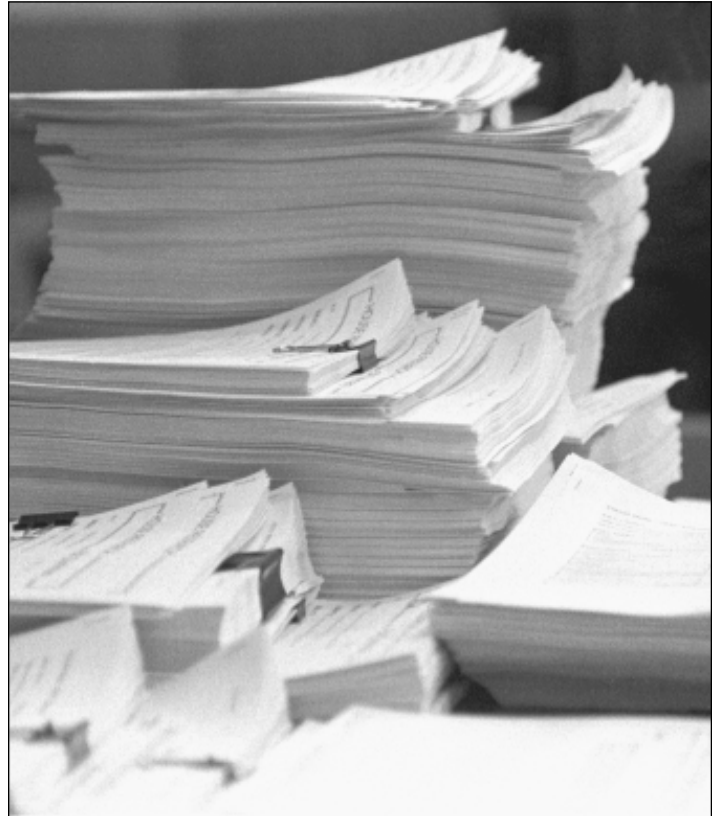
The list was compiled by the House Public Information Office from a variety of sources, including committee administrators, fiscal analysts, and legislative analysts. Each bill is accompanied by a brief description of its content.

An asterisk after a House or Senate file number indicates the version of the bill that is under consideration.

If you're interested in following conference committee action (and have access to the World Wide Web), point your Web browser to: <http://www.leg.state.mn.us>

You also can stop by the office and pick up a "Today" sheet which provides the daily meeting schedule.

If you have questions, call the House Public Information Office, (612) 296-2146 or 1-800-657-3550 or the Senate Information Office, (612) 296-0504 or 1-888-234-1112.



A total of 1,588 bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives so far during the 1998 Legislative session. The governor has already signed a few of these. Some will follow, some will not, and many others have been rolled into large omnibus bills that are awaiting their fates.

Bonding

Bonding Bill

HF3843 (Kalis)

Content as of March 12, 1998, when the House Ways and Means Committee approved the bill. (Note: The bills listed are included either entirely or partially.)

- HF2373 (Lieder) Transportation capital improvements provided, light and commuter rail funded, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF2502 (Rukavina) State government finance bonding bill.
- HF3281 (Murphy) Corrections and public safety departments capital improvement finance bill.
- HF3501 (Carlson) Omnibus education bonding bill providing public improvements of a capital nature, bond issuance authorized, and money appropriated.
- HF3701 (Kalis) Debt capacity forecasting, budget preparation, and reporting bond proceeds expenditures, bond sales, and capital improvements provisions modified.
- HF3711 (Greenfield) Health and human services bonding bill.
- HF3746 (Osthoff) Environment and natural resources bonding bill.
- HF3792 (Trimble) Economic development supplemental bonding bill providing improvements of a capital nature, bond issuance authorized, and money appropriated.

Development

Omnibus Economic Development and Housing Finance Bill HF3806/SF3367* (Trimble)

Content as of March 4, 1998, when the House passed the bill on a 74-57 vote.

Economic Development Finance Division

- HF216 (Mariani) Employment contract provisions modified.
- HF2194 (Chaudhary) Employment contract provisions modified.
- HF2257 (Chaudhary) Columbia Heights appropriated money for capital improvements, and bonds issued.
- HF2287 (Mullery) Youth intervention program grants provided, and money appropriated.
- HF2339 (Clark, K.) Circulator vehicle pilot project and grant developed to connect the Minneapolis Convention Center with other locations, and money appropriated.
- HF2340 (Clark, K.) Circulator vehicle pilot project in Minneapolis provided funding, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF2430 (Evans) Building contractor continuing education requirements and recovery fund fees increased, statutory housing warranties modified, statute of limitations extension provided for real property improvement actions.
- HF2454 (Trimble) Indian Affairs Council director provided funding

- for the 50th annual conference of the Interstate Indian Council, and money appropriated.
- HF2456 (Clark, K.) Youthbuild program funded, and money appropriated.
- HF2466 (Winter) Walnut Grove; Laura Ingalls Wilder pageant facilities provided capital improvements, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF2580 (Carlson/Carruthers) Brooklyn Center Earle Brown Heritage Center debt assumption provided by the state, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF2605 (Dawkins) St. Paul transit zone property designated as an enterprise zone.
- HF2648 (Tomassoni) Taconite mining program appropriated money.
- HF2747 (Peterson) Montevideo historic railroad depot, related parking, and facilities capital improvement grant provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF2973 (Evans) Corridor planning pilot projects established, and money appropriated.
- HF3019 (Hausman) Millennium screen writing festival planning funded, local screenwriter grants provided, and money appropriated.
- HF3036 (Jaros) Independent living centers appropriated money.
- HF3043 (Trimble) Metronet; libraries throughout the state appropriated money for a Minnesota authors video series.
- HF3054 (Paymar) Public arts St. Paul appropriated money for art projects throughout the city.
- HF3069 (Trimble) Small business owners with tanks located on their properties provided petroleum fund reimbursement eligibility, and small gasoline retailer reimbursement modified.
- HF3189 (Mullery) Summer youth employment programs appropriated money.
- HF3190 (Mullery) Neighborhood Development Center, Inc. grant provided, and money appropriated.
- HF3200 (Munger) Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad improvement grant provided, and money appropriated.
- HF3247 (Jennings) St. Croix Valley heritage center designed, prior bond proceeds canceled, and money appropriated.
- HF3274 (Kubly) McLeod County; Stewart storm sewer project design funded, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF3330 (Wenzel) Little Falls conference center and retreat site developed, and money appropriated.
- HF3447 (Mullery) Women encouraged to enter nontraditional careers, grant requirements and information provided, and money appropriated.
- HF3456 (Davids) Chatfield brass band music lending library funded, and money appropriated.
- HF3517 (Reuter) Owatonna Heritage Halls Museum project funded, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF3537 (Gunther) Department of Economic Security school to work transition assistance pilot project developed, report required, and money appropriated.
- HF3741 (Chaudhary) Council on Black Minnesotans Martin Luther King Jr. holiday observance activities planning and coordination provided, and money appropriated.

Housing and Housing Finance Division

- HF2342 (Clark, K.) Family homeless prevention and assistance program funding provided, and money appropriated.
- HF2344 (Clark, K.) Employer contribution for employee housing tax credit provided.
- HF2528 (Kubly) Community rehabilitation program funding pro-

- vided for home ownership counseling services for persons with mental retardation, and money appropriated.
- HF2555 (Rostberg) Low-income persons with chemical sensitivities provided housing assistance, and money appropriated.
- HF2745 (Evans) Housing Finance Agency's bridges program appropriated money.
- HF2963 (Clark, K.) Homeownership zones program established, and money appropriated.
- HF2991 (Long) Equity take-out loan availability extended, low-income housing tax credit allocation procedures modified, federally assisted rental housing program provisions modified, tenant relocation assistance permitted, and money appropriated.
- HF3115 (Evans) Health homes pilot project established, and money appropriated.
- HF3183 (Mariani) Housing Finance Agency nonprofit capacity building grants provided for VISTA volunteer placement support, and money appropriated.
- HF3393 (Trimble) Housing trust fund grant provided to Metropolitan State University for a student housing pilot program, and money appropriated. (Amended to be a study and incorporated into bill.)

Industry

Omnibus Regulated Industries and Energy Bill

HF3042/SF2797 (Jennings)

As of Feb. 18, 1998

- HF3037 (Kubly) Biomass fuel exemptions and power purchase contract provisions modified.
- HF3042 (Jennings) Long-distance telephone provider antislammng disclosure requirements expanded, price increase notification clarified, international toll blocking required, and power purchase contracts and biomass fuel exemptions modified.

Taxes

Omnibus Tax Bill

HF3840 (Long)

Content as of March 12, 1998, when the House passed the bill on a 93-40 vote.

Miscellaneous Subjects

- HF3702 (Solberg) Amends local mandates process and local government fiscal notes. AMENDED.
- HF3608 (Biernat) Repeals the repealer of education finance laws.
- HF2270 (Winter) Exempts air ambulances from registration tax. Airports Fund impact.
- HF2481 (Chaudhary) Reopens eligibility for "urban homesteading" income tax subtraction for homeowners who, for technical reasons, missed the June 30, 1998, deadline.
- Committee amendment. Sets 12/31/98 as the final date for accepting applications for the airport noise zone home ownership income tax subtraction.
- HF3619 (Rest) Makes certain technical changes in jobs training corporate tax credit. AMENDED.
- HF2687 (Milbert) Provides for division among counties of tax pro-

ceeds of multi-county mortgages only when principal debt exceeds \$1million.

HF2930 (Daggett) Allows small lessors of motor vehicles to opt out of the fee in lieu of registration tax. AMENDED.

HF3714 (Erhardt) Changes the definition of taxable mixed municipal solid waste regarding industrial waste being combined with mixed waste just before incineration under a PCA-approved waste management plan.

Committee amendment. Clarifies that medical supplies purchased by health care facilities or professionals to treat residents or patients are exempt from sales tax. (NO COST)

Property Tax Policy Bills

HF3041 (Johnson, A.) Changes the growth factors for municipal levy limits.

HF3342 (Kinkel) Provides for dissolution of town subordinate service districts.

HF3485 (Olson, E.) Authorizes sale of tax forfeited land in Red Lake County.

HF3534 (Abrams) Exempts abatements from levy limits, and clarifies that abatement bonds are not subject to election requirements.

HF3240 (Rest) Amends criteria for low-income housing classification; application fees to be deposited in the housing development fund, not the General Fund. AMENDED.

HF3118 (Olson, E.) Allows PILT to be used for road maintenance in unorganized territories.

HF3081 (Paymar) Increases the amount of St. Paul's general obligation capital improvement bond authority.

HF3603 (Dempsey) Allows a \$477,677 levy limit base adjustment for city of Red Wing.

HF3435 (Macklin) Allows information about transit levies to be included in Truth in Taxation notices.

HF2608 (Johnson, A.) Authorizes Anoka County to issue \$1.25 million in bonds, backed by a levy up to 0.01 percent of taxable market value for libraries; levy is outside the levy limits. Repeals current \$5 million debt ceiling.

HF2436 (Tunheim) Eliminates for pay 1999 and later years the requirement that relocated owners of homesteads abandoned due to '97 flood notify and submit information to assessor to receive class 2a treatment. AMENDED.

HF2360 (Sekhon) Increases city aid base by \$200,000 for Oak Grove.

HF1912 (Hasskamp) Establishes new class rate at 0.5 percent for certain unimproved land near water. AMENDED to require conservation easement and other conditions.

HF2284 (Kubly) Changes distance from two to four townships that noncontiguous land can be from homestead and still have homestead class.

HF3611 (Lieder) Authorizes use of the Wild Rice Watershed levy for flood mitigation projects.

HF2549 (Winter) Increases the levy limits of regional development commissions.

HF2509 (Johnson, A.) Changes Truth in Taxation hearing date for Metro special taxing districts and county dates.

HF2516 (Pawlenty) Classification of a parcel (e.g., Capone Art Park). AMENDED.

HF3283 (Tunheim) Gives all counties Economic Development Authority powers (local option).

HF3436 (McElroy) Amends definition of "transit zone"; requires new transit zone maps; removes certain prohibitions against property tax levy for transit.

HF3598 (Kinkel) Eliminates the seasonal occupancy criteria for seasonal resort property class.

HF3603 (Dempsey) Allows a levy limit base adjustment for city of Red Wing.

HF3778 (Wagenius) Exempts substandard homes in 1st class cities in below-median value neighborhoods from property tax for up to five years if restored to sound operating condition at cost of at least \$20,000, and occupied by same person. AMENDED.

HF3785 (Kinkel) Provides property tax-exempt status for certain municipally owned wastewater treatment facility that serves a privately owned potato processing facility.

HF3797 (Carruthers) Extends 1997 property tax exclusion for certain Brooklyn Center, Richfield, and St. Louis Park apartments.

HF3801 (Long) Authorizes city property tax on certain transit zone property in Minneapolis. AMENDED.

Amendment, full committee. Elderly assisted living facilities: extend moratorium; adopt rules for new properties.

Amendment, full committee. Several local governments: corrects levy limit base and/or aid base computation errors.

HF2482 (Rest) Extends 1998 property tax rebate to cabin owners.

HF3720 (Milbert) Limits increases in market value for property taxation.

HF3438 (Bettermann) Farwell-Kensington sanitary district established and levies authorized.

Local Sales Tax Authority

As amended by Sales and Income Tax Division

HF2518 (Nornes) Fergus Falls local sales tax 1/2-cent and \$20/vehicle tax for regional conference center.

HF2610 (Bishop) Rochester 1/2-cent extension of local sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax.

HF2675 (Pelowski) Winona 1/2-cent local sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax to dredge Lake Winona.

HF3101 (Skare) Bemidji 1/2-cent local sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax for regional convention center and related facilities.

HF3193 (Ness) Hutchinson 1/2-cent local sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax for civic/community center and recreational facilities for youth and seniors.

HF3496 (Reuter) Owatonna 1/2-cent local sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax for improvements to local airport and infrastructure for tourism project.

HF3546 (Opatz) St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, Waite Park, and St. Joseph 1/2-cent sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax to fund the central Minnesota events center.

HF3722 (Daggett) Detroit Lakes 1/2-cent local sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax for constructing a community center (amended to HF 3496, above).

HF3807 (Johnson, A.) Coon Rapids 1/2-cent sales tax and \$20/vehicle tax for infrastructure supporting the Riverdale regional economic development project.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

HF2821 (McElroy) State Auditor's TIF bill. AMENDED.

HF1330 (Koskinen) Coon Rapids. Allows use of increment for infrastructure for the Riverdale economic development project.

As amended by the Property Tax Division

HF2336 (Leppik) Golden Valley. Allows extension of pre-1979 district through 2010 for housing (using TIF language for income limits).

HF2416 (Kubly) City of Renville TIF.

HF2463 (Marko) Exception for property that is in green acres and within a TIF district.
 HF2504 (Sykora) Deephaven. Allows use of increment outside the district for infrastructure.
 HF2783 (Carruthers) Brooklyn Center. Establishes minimum class rates and market values.
 HF3098 (Schumacher) Foley. Allows use of increment outside the district for infrastructure.
 HF3439 (McElroy) Burnsville. Authorizes a TIF district for an amphitheatre and local admissions tax.
 HF3495 (Pugh) West St. Paul. Exemptions for housing and redevelopment districts.
 HF3602 (Long) Minneapolis Sears site. Authorizes a phased-development TIF district.
 HF3648 (Otremba) Browerville. Allows use of increment outside of the district.

Bills With Impacts on Revenues

Property Tax Rebates

Governor's Second Supplemental Budget Recommendations (Long/House) \$250 million Property Tax Rebate FY 1999 (House provisions differ).
 HF2294 (Long) Extends the 1997 property tax rebate (and subsequent rebates) to persons who pre-paid property taxes. Also clarifies eligibility of certain farm homestead land.

Federal Update, Property Tax Initiatives, Income and Corporate Taxes

HF2604 (Macklin) Governor's first supplemental recommendations, numerous provisions.
 HF2694 (Long) Governor's and departmental recommendations, numerous provisions.
 HF3777 (Long) Conform to federal treatment of corporate contributions.
 HF2492 (Daggett) Accelerate (to TY 1998) effective date for long-term care insurance income tax credit.
 HF2482 (Rest) HF2482 contains an identical provision.
 HF2542 (Rest) Charitable contributions income tax deduction for non-itemizers.
 HF2369 (Kubly) Housing assistance income tax credit.
 HF2344 (Clark) (SAME.)
 HF2804 (Slawik) Expands income eligibility for child and dependent care credit, modifies phaseout. AMENDED.
 HF2513 (Tompkins) (SAME, as introduced.)
 Floor amendment. Prohibits use of Social Security numbers on materials mailed by the Department of Revenue.

Sales and Use Taxes

HF2482 (Rest) Accelerates to 7/1/98 effective date of exemption for non-aspirin pain relievers.
 HF2494 (Long) Exempt sale of FEMA trailers — flood area (Department of Revenue request— Policy Bill amendment)
 HF3575 (Johnson, A.) Ready-mix concrete trucks sales and use tax and STMV changes.

HF2599 (Tunheim) County Fairs, exempt five days of sales.
 HF3192 (Juhnke) Phase out and exempt new farm, aquaculture, logging machinery and equipment. AMENDED: Reduce rate to 1.5 percent 7/1/98; 0 percent on 7/1/99.
 HF3273 (Seifert) (SAME, as introduced.)
 HF3802 (Skare) (SAME, as introduced.)
 HF2303 (Dawkins) Exempt library purchases.
 HF2682 (Johnson, A.) Use tax voluntary compliance line in income tax form, effective TY 1999.
 HF2644 (Carruthers) Extend de minimis use tax exemption to businesses.
 HF3160 (Bishop) Hospital sales tax exemption effective date correction.
 HF3789 (Winter) Wind energy conversion systems, exemption date.
 HF2575 (Hasskamp) Township gravel and road equipment exemption.
 HF3407 (Solberg) Exempts Long Lake Environmental Learning Center.
 HF3533 (Abrams) Clarify goods for re-sale exemption.
 HF3762 (Johnson, A.) Changes the base for sales tax (currently 65 percent of sales price) of a manufactured home to 65 percent of dealers' price. AMENDED.

Excise Taxes

HF3579 (Long) Extend SCORE moratorium.
 HF2942 (Jennings) Reduce excise tax on cider.
 HF3761 (Milbert) Parimutuel tax, extend sunset (taxes only).
 HF3024 (Milbert) Lawful Gambling — AMENDED. Cut by 5 percent: pulltabs/tipboards and combined receipts taxes effective 7/1/98. (Note: numerous additional bills were same as introduced.)

Appropriations/Property Tax Refund (PTR) Impacts

HF3595 (Long) Renters Credit — AMENDED: Increase to 19 percent of rent.
 HF3657 (Rest) (SAME, as introduced.)
 HF3790 (Rukavina) St. Louis County nursing home levy (PTR).
 HF3585 (Hasskamp) Senior deferral income increase, and technical and administrative corrections.
 HF3739 (Skare) Grant to counties for Property Tax education video: appropriation.
 HF3369 (Rest) Volunteer assistance to low income taxpayers: appropriation.
 HF3735 (Anderson, I.) Authorizes \$500,000 for enterprise zone allocation.
 HF3764 (Anderson, I.) Legislative Tax Study Commission appropriation.
 HF3815 (Olson, E.) Flood Loss Replacement Aid (at \$1.7 million, FY00; \$1.5 million, FY01)

Committee amendment. Business Activities Tax Study appropriation.
 HF2728 (Goodno) Border city enterprise zones authorized.

Source: House Fiscal Staff

Governor's Desk

CH252-CH273

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

CH	HF	SF	Description	Signed	Vetoed
Res. 5	2417*	2055	Congress memorialized to support the admission of Poland, Czech Republic and Republic of Hungary to NATO.	Filed without signature	
252	2492	2111*	Fish house restrictions and license periods modified.	2/12/98	
253	661*	663	Landlord and tenant law recodified, clarified and relocated.	2/18/98	
254	2524*	2134	Revisor's bill.	2/18/98	
255	1554	1440*	Uniform certification of questions of law act adopted.	2/19/98	
256	2372*	2017	Norman County Medical Center bid exemption.	2/25/98	
257	2550*	2261	Rural hospital flexibility program.	2/25/98	
258	2338*	2167	Gulf war vet bonus program modified.	2/25/98	
259	2499*	2156	Hennepin County Board small purchase limit increased.	2/27/98	
260	2890	2478*	Savings association act maintained.	2/27/98	
261	2828*	2345	Commissioner of Health public water supply approval authority modified.	3/4/98	
262	2390	2031*	Real property conveyance provisions modified.	3/4/98	
263	2576	2028*	Emergency vehicle signal operation modification.	3/4/98	
264	none	2379*	Local government unit aid distribution clarification in township annexation.	3/4/98	
265	2646	2621*	Reemployment insurance technical changes.	3/4/98	
266	2590*	2122	Tenant security deposit interest rate increase.	3/4/98	
267	2425	2170*	Watercraft trailers and ATVs exempt from motor vehicle sales on Sunday prohibition.	3/5/98	
268	2927	2525*	Ramsey County purchases from health care cooperatives.	3/5/98	
269	3119	2685*	Public officers contract interest authority clarification.	3/5/98	
270	2811	2315*	Director of Office of Technology membership to various organizations clarified.	3/5/98	
271	3734	2354*	Public employees insurance program expansion.	3/6/98	
272	3095*	2688	Chaplin Sunday designation.	3/6/98	
273	2866	2477*	CFL and Economic Security reorganization codified.	3/9/98	

Bill Introductions

HF3835-HF3843

Monday, March 9

HF3835—Munger (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Underwater video camera use for the purpose of taking fish prohibited.

HF3836—Erickson (R)
Health and Human Services
Abortion data reporting provisions modified, and criminal penalties imposed.

HF3837—Erickson (R)
Economic Development & International Trade
Equity take-out loan availability extended, low-income housing tax credit allocation procedures modified, federally assisted rental housing program provisions modified, tenant relocation assistance permitted, and money appropriated.

HF3838—Erickson (R)
Taxes
Lawful gambling, pull-tabs, tipboards, and combined receipts tax rates reduced.

HF3839—Skoglund (DFL)
Judiciary
Revisor's bill correcting miscellaneous oversights, inconsistencies, ambiguities, unintended results, and technical errors.

HF3840—Long (DFL)
Taxes
Omnibus tax bill and money appropriated.

Tuesday, March 10

HF3841—Entenza (DFL)
Commerce, Tourism & Consumer Affairs
Air carrier agreements retroactive exemption from the franchise law removed.

Wednesday, March 11

HF3842—Anderson, I. (DFL)
Commerce, Tourism & Consumer Affairs
Franchise definition modified relating to air carrier agreements.

HF3843—Kalis (DFL)
Ways & Means
Omnibus supplemental bonding bill providing public improvements of a capital nature, bond issuance authorized, and money appropriated.

Population shifts redefine legislative district boundaries

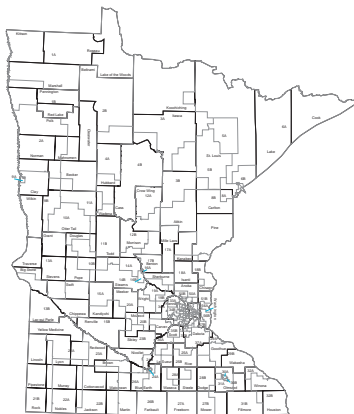
It's a fact!

In 1992, all of Minnesota's House districts were approximately equal in population, each containing about 32,650 people. By 1995, only 40 of the 134 districts were within 3 percentage points of their 1992 population.

Such population changes also could be seen in the state's 67 Senate districts and in its eight congressional districts. Variations of this sort are not unusual; they reflect the mobility of our society.

To keep the districts equal, the Minnesota Legislature must redraw congressional and legislative districts every 10 years following the census. The next round of redistricting will start after the 2000 census, and the Legislature is required to have the new districts in place before the 2002 election.

After the census establishes the population trends, the U.S. Congress and the Minnesota Legislature will reassign the number of districts in a given area based on population changes — a process called reapportionment. Areas that make significant gains in population will get new districts, and areas that decrease in popu-



Minnesota's current legislative boundaries

lation will lose existing districts.

According to predictions made by the Congressional Research Service, Minnesota will probably maintain eight congressional districts. Other midwestern states — including Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan — may have to give up districts because of decreased or negative population growth. The fast-growing sunbelt states like Arizona, Georgia, and Texas could gain as many as two congressional districts each.

State legislative districts also will need to be reapportioned. If population trends continue, the Minnesota Department of Planning predicts the central cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul each may have to give up a legislative district and the Iron Range may lose half of one district. Due to its population spurt, the suburban metropolitan area could gain as many as two and one-half districts.

The process of drawing the lines that separate districts is called redistricting. Unlike reapportionment, which is based on an agreed-upon formula, the redistricting process can be a political battle. The process can be used to ensure that one party has the advantage in elections. For example, lines can be drawn to split a neighborhood that tends to vote for one party, thereby dividing those votes between two districts and decreasing those voters' effectiveness.

In Minnesota, as elsewhere, partisanship has often accompanied redistricting. The past three attempts at redistricting in 1972, 1982, and 1992 were finally settled by the federal courts because they had not been resolved by the election deadline.

Committee Schedule

Schedule is subject to change.

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1/2 Hour After Session

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Omnibus Higher Education Bill SF3297

118 State Capitol
Chrs. Rep. Gene Pelowski
Sen. LeRoy Stumpf

After Last Body Adjourns

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Omnibus K-12 Education Policy Bill HF2874/SF3378

112 State Capitol
Chrs. Rep. Becky Kelso
Sen. Lawrence Pogemiller

THURSDAY, March 19

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

After Last Body Adjourns

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Omnibus K-12 Education Policy Bill HF2874/SF3378

112 State Capitol
Chrs. Rep. Becky Kelso
Sen. Lawrence Pogemiller

FRIDAY, March 20

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

After Last Body Adjourns

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Omnibus K-12 Education Policy Bill HF2874/SF3378

112 State Capitol
Chrs. Rep. Becky Kelso
Sen. Lawrence Pogemiller

MONDAY, March 16

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

Time and Room to be Announced

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Omnibus Tax Bill HF3840

Chrs. Rep. Dee Long
Sen. Douglas Johnson

After Session

WAYS & MEANS

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Loren Solberg

Agenda: HF2589 (Wagenius) Snowfence easements, highway closures, and signs regulated, state transportation plan revised, private carriers regulated, flexible highway account created, town highways and bridges funded, and conveyances to public bodies permitted.

HF2983 (Tunheim) Minnesota residential mortgage originator and servicer licensing act adopted.

HF2970 (Kahn) Salary increase provided for judges, and employee and employer contribution rates for certain judges retirement plans modified.

HF3314 (Anderson, I.) Tobacco litigation proceeds deposited in the general fund and subject to appropriation.

HF3167 (Slawik) Children's endowment fund established, money appropriated, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2532 (Chaudhary) Youth-oriented driver improvement clinics and graduated licensing system established, driving privileges restricted for permit and provisional license holders, and violation-free period required prior to advancement to next license stage.

HF2389 (Entenza) DWI; maximum allowable blood alcohol level lowered for operation of motor vehicles and while hunting.

Additional bills may be added.

TUESDAY, March 17

8 a.m.

Permanent School Trust Fund Advisory Council Meeting

123 State Capitol

Chr. Sen. Keith Langseth

Agenda: Island Lake land exchange approval. Legislative Audit Commission program evaluation report on school trust land. State Investment Board-report on investments.

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

After Last Body Adjourns

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Omnibus K-12 Education Policy Bill HF2874/SF3378

112 State Capitol
Chrs. Rep. Becky Kelso
Sen. Lawrence Pogemiller

WEDNESDAY, March 18

9 a.m.

The House meets in session.

After Last Body Adjourns

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Omnibus K-12 Education Policy Bill HF2874/SF3378

112 State Capitol
Chrs. Rep. Becky Kelso
Sen. Lawrence Pogemiller

Where to find information

Chief Clerk's Office

211 State Capitol (612) 296-2314

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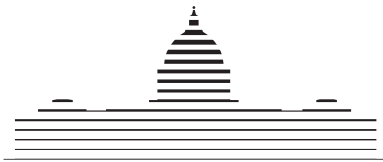
House Index Department

211 State Capitol (612) 296-6646

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MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
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ST. PAUL, MN 55155-1298

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

MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota crash facts

Licensed drivers in Minnesota, 1996	3,456,505
Registered motor vehicles, 1996	3,701,865
Traffic crashes in Minnesota, 1996	105,332
Motor vehicles involved	193,067
People involved	288,281
People injured in crashes, 1996	48,963
in 1995	47,161
People killed in crashes, 1996	576
in 1995	597
in 1968 (record high)	1,060
Males killed in traffic crashes, 1996	374
Females	202
Male drivers involved in crashes, 1996	106,420
in fatal crashes	599
Female drivers involved in crashes, 1996	69,893
in fatal crashes	223
Drunken driving arrests, 1996	38,925
Percent female	19
Drunken driving arrests, 1995	33,355
Known alcohol-related traffic fatalities, 1996	205
in 1988 (10-year high)	277
Bicyclists killed in collisions with a motor vehicle, 1996	6
Pedestrian fatalities, 1996	46
in 1995	49
in 1971 (record high)	157
Fatalities on two-lane, two-way roadways, 1996	355
on freeways and other divided highways	103
Fatal crashes in which illegal or unsafe speed was a contributing factor 1996	138
Injury crashes	6,195
Fatal crashes in which weather was a contributing factor, 1996	30
Injury crashes	2,476
Fatal crashes in which driver use of a cellular phone or CB radio was a contributing factor, 1996	1
Injury crashes	39
Motorcycles registered in Minnesota, 1996	112,551
Motorcycle crashes, 1996	1,131
Motorcyclists killed, 1996	42
Those wearing helmets	9

Source: *Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts*, 1996, Office of Traffic Safety,
Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

For more information



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1-800-657-3550

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