

SESSION WEEKLY

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Reflections



Eighty-eight-year-old Rep. Willard Munger returned to the House chamber on March 29, after a bout with cancer. Once the roll was taken, Rep. Dave Bishop rose to give him a warm and affectionate welcome return, noting that his light on the voting board had been dark since Feb. 11. Lawmakers and staff present gave him one of the longest standing ovations and cheers that anyone has received.

Senior members get to choose where they sit in the chamber, so Munger, the Legislature's senior member, acknowledged the ovation by rising from his same seat of 20 years to thank the body.

He recognized staff members Betty Goihl, John Helland, and Cecil Underwood for their dedication and Rep. Harry Mares who gave Munger one of his homemade walking sticks "for special friends." Munger used it to help get himself to the House floor.

Rep. Munger is Minnesota's elder statesman. He is the only House member to hold office longer than any other. Rep. Walter E. Day, served almost as long, for 36 years. Three other lawmakers who served in both bodies hold a record of 44 years in the Legislature. Munger has served under 12 governors and 16 speakers. He was elected when Dwight D. Eisenhower was U.S. president, a year after Queen Elizabeth II was coronated in 1953.

A local elected official whose record may never be reached is Carl Peterson who served 61 years as a council member in the town of Roosevelt (population 180).

In 1964, Munger ran for Senate and lost. Thus, in 1998, he completed 21 nonconsecutive terms in the House. This 81st legislative session is his 22nd.

Rep. Munger is adorably called "Mr. Environment." He chaired the House Environment & Natural Resources Committee for 21 years, and he strongly believes that man should not interfere with the creative nature of the Earth. "Embrace and protect it so that it will last long after we are gone," he said.

He is honored for the multi-use Willard Munger Trail that runs from his hometown of west Duluth, all the way to the Twin Cities. Also, the Willard Munger Award honors a worthy environmentalist each year.

Munger is known for cleaning up and conserving the St. Louis, Minnesota, and Mississippi rivers and for preserving the wetlands, among other successful projects. He authored the Environmental Trust Fund law in the late 1980s to receive funds from the Minnesota Lottery.

Rep. Munger planned to retire in 1997, but before Frances, his wife of 33 years, died, she told him to stay. "So I am not leaving until the good Lord thinks I've had enough and have sponsored enough good legislation," he said.

Those who challenge Munger's issues are likely to get a long and passionate speech from him. The word among other "old-timer" legislators in the House of Representatives is, "When Munger speaks, everyone listens."

The House chamber is once more complete. All members are present.

— LeClair Grier Lambert

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On the cover: Flags flew during a rally for tax cuts on the Capitol steps March 27.

Photo by Andrew Von Bank

First Reading

Light-rail transit . . .

Mass transit plan's long, strange trip continues

By Sarah Hallonquist

Before Gov. Jesse Ventura realizes his dream of riding a light-rail transit train by 2002, he still has some convincing to do in the House.

The House Transportation Finance Committee on March 31 considered arguments for and against a planned light-rail transit system in the Hiawatha corridor in south Minneapolis. But the likelihood of lawmakers approving a funding plan for that project remains uncertain.

Beginning in downtown Minneapolis and ending at the Mall of America in Bloomington, the proposed 12.2-mile rail line would have 18 stops along its route, including ones at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the University of Minnesota.

In 1998, the Legislature appropriated \$40 million for the light-rail proposal. That same year, the U.S. Congress allotted \$120 million in federal funds for the project, which could be completed as early as 2003.

However, the life of the project is contingent on whether the state contributes a final piece of funding — about \$60 million — needed before construction, slated to begin in 2000. The state funds could also leverage additional federal start-up dollars for the Hiawatha corridor project.

But citing future cost concerns and facing budgetary targets that curb spending growth, House lawmakers appear hesitant to fund light-rail transit this year.

Ventura recommended the \$60 million in state funding for light-rail transit in his proposed biennial budget.

And earlier in the week, he proposed dedicating 5 percent of the motor vehicle sales tax fund to transit projects. That would generate about \$25 million per year in capital funds for transit. However, that plan is not currently in the governor's budget, which has some lawmakers leery of changing course this session because the 5 percent would be taken from other programs in the state's general fund.

Metropolitan Council Chair Ted Mondale joined Elwyn Tinklenberg, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), appeared at the transportation finance committee hearing to urge lawmakers to go along with the governor's request.

Tinklenberg said a light-rail line is only one piece of solving congestion in the metropolitan area. However, he said, it is a step in the



Lawmakers are considering a \$60 million appropriation for a light-rail transit project along the Hiawatha corridor in south Minneapolis, as depicted in this photo illustration.

Photo illustration by Tom Olmscheid

right direction. MnDOT estimates that by 2020 there will be 2.3 million more daily commuter trips on Twin Cities-area freeways, with a population increase of 650,000 people.

"It is not the only thing we need to do," he said. "No one piece will solve all our problems."

Tinklenberg said aggressive action should be taken to keep the light-rail project going in the Twin Cities.

Mondale agreed, and he added that forecast increases in highway congestion will slow down other transit options already available, such as bus travel. Mondale said light-rail lines take cars off the roads and allow for the bus system to keep working.

"As congestion worsens, the rail would be much faster," he said.

Rep. Bill Kuisle (R-Rochester) asked Mondale if the current budget request for light rail would lead to future funding requests. Worried that light rail could rob other transit initiatives of funding, Kuisle said he hopes it "isn't going to be a cactus that's going to prick this Legislature for years to come."

Mondale said the plan to use motor vehicle sales tax for transit is not intended to take money away from projects or to use it solely for light rail.

"The bus system is the backbone of our transit system," Mondale said.

Business leaders from Minneapolis and

St. Paul also told the committee they support light-rail transit plans and that they would work with downtown businesses to come up with long-term financing ideas for the project.

Some groups, however, recommended that lawmakers not fund the Hiawatha project.

David Strom, legislative director for the Taxpayers League of Minnesota, said light-rail transit is too expensive and is essentially an effort to curb urban sprawl.

"We are not going to get rid of congestion with light-rail transit," Strom said.

Earlier in the week, committee members discussed a bill sponsored by Rep. Phil Krinkie (R-Shoreview) that would limit land acquisition for light-rail projects.

Krinkie's bill (HF1886) would abolish the regional railroad authorities in the metropolitan area that are charged with planning and acquiring land for light-rail corridors. Under the bill, individual counties would take over responsibilities handled by the rail authorities.

He said the measure would "stop the mad rush to rail" in Minnesota. Krinkie said he thinks the price tag is too high on light-rail projects and they would end up being too costly for the state in the long run.

Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin argued against the bill, saying it would jeopardize the ability to receive federal funding for the project.



The proposed Hiawatha corridor light-rail line would run from downtown Minneapolis to the Mall of America in Bloomington.

Map courtesy of Minnesota Department of Transportation

"This action would, in my view, hobble us," McLaughlin said.

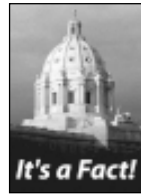
In an amendment that was not adopted, Krinkie proposed repealing the dollars allotted last year by the state for light-rail transit. The amendment also would have prohibited any city or county from studying light-rail transit as a transit option for the metro area.

On top of light-rail transit, the transportation department is also studying the possibility of a commuter rail system to serve outlying regions. Commuter rail lines use existing railroad tracks to carry passengers. The estimated cost for six rail lines plus a Minneapolis-St. Paul downtown connector route is about \$1.4 billion.

The transportation finance panel will be hearing additional testimony on light-rail transit. However, Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska), who chairs the panel, noted that there does not appear to be a high level of support among committee members for the governor's proposal. The panel also will consider Krinkie's bill later this session for inclusion in the omnibus transportation funding bill.

The Senate Transportation Committee has already approved \$60 million in funding for light-rail transit in a license tab fee reduction bill. 🐾

Architect defended the cost of the Capitol



It's a Fact!

When the new state Capitol was nearing completion in 1903 and the final price tag was nearing a sum 50 percent more than estimated, architect Cass Gilbert was called before the Legislature to justify the added expense.

In fact, the final costs were only \$1.5 million over the original estimate, but because \$1.5 million was almost one-fifth of the state's entire budget that year, lawmakers wanted answers.

So Gilbert appeared before the Committee on Public Accounts and Expenditures in March 1903 to explain the increase.

He told lawmakers that some of the higher costs were due to changes in the project before construction. The Legislature had authorized enlarging the proposed building to reflect the growing needs of state government.

But lawmakers also grilled the St. Paul architect concerning his own compensation, which was also higher than originally proposed.

When the Board of State Capitol Commissioners initiated the building process in 1893, it set the architect's compensation at 2.5 percent of the total building cost. The architect was also expected to serve as superintendent of the construction to make sure the building conformed to plans and specifications.

A design competition was held in 1893, but the board rejected all of the designs that were submitted. According to a report issued by the board, the best architects in the country did not enter the competition because the compensation did not reflect the cost of their services.

In that competition, 20 designs were selected for detailed consideration. One of the best overall designs was rejected for what the board called a major flaw—the dome had been placed on the rear wing of the building instead of on the main axis. Another design had the Supreme Court Chamber in a different area and on a different floor than the Clerk of the Supreme Court, which would have caused justices to walk through the main corridors to get to the courtroom.

After the board had rejected all 20 designs, the Legislature authorized a different rate for compensating the architect and called for a second design competition to

be held. The new rate would pay the architect in three phases: 5 percent of the first \$500,000 spent on the building, 4 percent of the second \$500,000, and 2 percent for the remaining costs of the building.

Some precedent for those rates had been established by similar projects, such as the Agriculture Building at the World's Fair in Chicago, built in 1893 by McKim, Mead and White of New York.

Of the 41 designs submitted in the second competition, a committee narrowed the choice to 20. Five finalists were chosen before Gilbert was selected the overall winner. Among his design's best features were the committee rooms near the legislative chambers, the retiring rooms behind the House speaker's and Senate president's chairs, and the lantern on top of the dome, according to the judging results.

So when lawmakers questioned Gilbert in 1903 about the added costs, he assured them that his compensation was far from extraordinary. He said that he had served on the jury selecting the design for the New York Public Library and that the costs for that project had also been adjusted during the construction process.

Gilbert attributed much of the \$1.5 million increase to higher labor costs. When the Capitol was built, the prevailing wage for construction workers was \$5 to \$7 per day for an eight-hour day, he said, whereas they had been paid \$2.50 per day for a 10-hour day 20 years earlier.

Gilbert also said his costs associated with any project are about 60 to 75 percent of his compensation. On the Capitol project, that meant some of his staff members earned more than he did.

And lawmakers apparently appreciated Gilbert's professional judgement. A legislative resolution dated March 12, 1903, stated that the Capitol was "without exception the most perfectly executed piece of building in all details ever erected in the state of Minnesota."

The resolution also stated that Gilbert's compensation was less than the prevailing market price and that Gilbert had "performed his duties in every detail with the utmost fidelity, honesty, ability, and skill, and that the state has received full value for the money it has expended on the state Capitol, and that the building promises to be an object of pride and satisfaction to the state of Minnesota." 🐾

Highlights



AGRICULTURE

Not high on hemp

An effort to study whether industrial hemp could be a viable commercial crop in Minnesota appears to have burned out.

Members of the House Crime Prevention Committee rejected the proposal March 30. The vote was 10-7.

The measure has generated some controversy because hemp is in the same family as marijuana, an illegal controlled substance in the United States since 1937.

The bill (HF1238/SF122*) would have authorized the Department of Agriculture to issue a permit allowing the University of Minnesota to grow and research industrial hemp.

Rep. Steve Dehler (R-St. Joseph), the bill's sponsor, said that under current law the university can do some research on its own but political pressures prevent the school from taking the initiative.

"I think it's best that the state of Minnesota and the representatives here at the Legislature give them that authority," he said.

Dehler's bill would have directed the U of M to study possible uses for the plant — including paper, oil, and building materials — and ways to remove the narcotic chemicals from the plant.

But Tim McCormick, an agent with the U. S. Drug Enforcement Agency, said his agency sees no difference between industrial hemp and the marijuana sold on the street. He said any legalization of the industrial plants would make law enforcement more difficult.

Critics also said that the bill would send mixed signals about marijuana at a time when illegal use of the drug by adolescents is on the rise.

Dehler's bill follows several attempts in recent years to study the possibility of making industrial hemp a commercial crop in Minnesota.

A hemp legalization bill was introduced in 1997 but was rejected by a House agriculture panel. Another proposal to study the issue stalled on the House floor that year.

In 1998, both the House and Senate approved a measure to go forward with a study, but that bill was vetoed by then-Gov. Arne Carlson.

Farm aid

With financial pressures rising, the number of farmers and family members needing mental health counseling is going up, according to supporters of a plan to help provide assistance to those in need.

Rep. Tim Finseth (R-Angus) is sponsoring a bill that would commit \$2.6 million to funding mental health outreach, support, intervention, assessment, treatment, and emergency services for farm families and individuals affected by the crisis some farmers face.

About half of that amount would go to 11 northwestern Minnesota counties most impacted by the hard times in agriculture, Finseth told the Health and Human Services Finance Committee on March 29.

A support program in that area has received some state funding since 1997, but it would be able to expand under Finseth's proposal.

But Dan Wilson, coordinator of the Northwestern Mental Health Center in Crookston, said the need is statewide. Under Finseth's bill, services in other areas of Minnesota would be developed and provided by local network partners.

Wilson's agency, along with the Rural Life Outreach Program, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the University of Minnesota at Crookston, and the Northwest Regional Development Commission would provide coordinated support to farm families.

Farm families would be able to access the program by calling First Call Minnesota. All calls would be free and confidential.

Wilson said nearly every farm family may be in need of some form of help. Federal sources indicate that about 1,000 Minnesota farmers are currently delinquent and at-risk of losing their farms. In most cases, farmers don't have insurance that will cover mental health counseling.

The bill (HF910) was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus health and human services finance bill.

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BUDGET

Budget resolution passed

The House passed a budget resolution March 29 that sets the maximum spending over the next two years.

The resolution states that the total expenditures approved by the House for the 2000-01 budget cycle will not exceed \$24.4 billion. That figure amounts to a 4.8-percent increase over the 1998-99 budget.

The governor's budget request calls for a spending level of \$24.5 billion, a 5.5 percent increase over the 1998-99 budget.

The House resolution also would maintain the budget reserve account — the state's rainy day fund — at \$622 million. The governor's budget request would increase it to \$667 million.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), the sponsor of the resolution, said the plan does a good job balancing the needs of the state with a strong desire to control the size of the state government.

"We want to set a reasonable level of spending that we can afford," he said.

Bishop said the budget reserve account recommendations would be more than sufficient to keep the state afloat in tough financial times and to maintain the excellent fiscal ratings the state receives from national bond rating firms.

One day later, the House Ways and Means Committee approved individual spending limits for each finance committee. Those figures will dictate the size of the omnibus finance bills for major budget items such as K-12 education, transportation, and the judiciary.



CHILDREN

Anti-gambling plan

Funding for programs aimed at keeping children away from drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are common, but efforts to steer youths away from gambling addiction are relatively rare.

That does not mean anti-gambling programs are any less needed, Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) told the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee on March 29.

Huntley is sponsoring a bill (HF948) that would use \$300,000 from the state's lottery

prize fund to expand a statewide compulsive gambling prevention and education project for adolescents.

The money would go to the Minnesota Council on Compulsive Gambling.

Betty George, the group's executive director, said research has revealed that youths have twice the risk of adults for developing a gambling problem. Many young people start gambling before age 11, earlier than they report experimenting with alcohol or drugs.

The centerpiece of the council's program is a Web page (www.wannabet.org) that presents a variety of resources children can use to help them avoid troubles with gambling. The site gets about 250 hits a week.

Also included is a classroom curriculum and a "train the trainer" program that George said has helped spread the anti-gambling message more quickly and effectively.

George said that the proposed funding would ensure two-thirds of all middle school students in the state would hear the council's message within the next two years.

Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester) questioned how children come to have a gambling problem, considering they must be 18 to enter a casino.

George said many children first experience gambling in poker or pool games played for money. Other common avenues of exposure are betting on sports games and playing computer poker and blackjack games.

Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie) said a common rite of passage for teens turning 18 is a visit to a casino where, on some occasions, much of their savings can be gambled away in an evening.

Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Fairbault) said one solution might be raising the legal gambling age to 21. George said that possibility had been discussed in previous years and rejected, but she said it would be a step in the right direction.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus health and human services funding bill.



CRIME

Traps protect drug labs

Lawmakers have triggered a plan that would toughen penalties for setting booby traps to protect illegal drug labs.

The House Crime Prevention Committee approved a bill March 26 that would make setting a booby trap in such cases a felony. Penalties would depend on the actual harm caused by the trap.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Henry Todd Van Dellen (R-Plymouth), defines booby trap

to include "firearms, ammunition, or explosive devices attached to trip wires or other triggering mechanisms, sharpened stakes, nails, spikes, electrical devices, lines or wires with hooks attached, and devices for the production of toxic fumes or gases."

Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji), who serves with a volunteer fire department, said public safety officials throughout the state have seen increases in drug labs and booby traps to protect those labs. He said tougher measures are needed to protect officials while they are doing their jobs.

"It's becoming more prevalent, and it's a danger for all public safety personnel," he said.

Pat Diamond, a prosecutor with the Hennepin County attorney's office, told the committee of a situation in Minneapolis where a person rigged an elaborate booby trap to protect his drug lab. He said the person had even created back-up power sources for the trap in the case that police officers cut off the power.

"Frankly, it was a miracle that the bomb squad was able to defuse everything in that building," he said.

Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove), chair of the committee, amended the bill to remove all references to the word "booby." He said the word "trap" would be sufficient and probably less controversial.

D.A.R.E. review



Eleven-year-old Katherine Hellings, who attends Crooked Lake Elementary School in Andover, gives a review of her school's D.A.R.E. program to lawmakers considering funding a grant for the anti-drug abuse program. Hellings testified March 29 before the House Judiciary Finance Committee.

The measure also would make theft of anhydrous ammonia a felony-level crime. Anhydrous ammonia is used in the manufacture of methamphetamine.

The bill (HF1055) now goes to the House floor.

Guns for sale

The House passed a bill March 30 that would allow sheriffs and police chiefs to sell confiscated firearms. The vote was 104-23.

Current law requires that those agencies destroy all forfeited weapons that they cannot use, including firearms, ammunition, and firearm accessories.

The bill (HF70), sponsored by Rep. Roxann Daggett (R-Frazee), would give agencies the authority to either destroy those weapons or to sell them to federally authorized dealers.

The bill also would require local agencies to sell any antique guns they seize. But semi-automatic, military-style assault weapons would continue to be destroyed, under the bill.

Under current law, local law enforcement agencies keep 70 percent of the proceeds from the sale of any forfeited property, county attorneys and other prosecutors get 20 percent of the proceeds, and the state receives the remaining 10 percent.

Some lawmakers expressed concern that the bill would put guns back on the streets to be used illegally.

"We're going to recycle the guns around and around and around," said Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls). "These guns are going to end up in the hands of criminals."

The bill now goes to the Senate.

Protecting callers in crisis



A measure signed by the governor March 29 clarifies an existing law frequently used to prosecute domestic assault offenders.

Under a 1997 law, prosecutors can charge a person who interferes with a phone call to a 911 dispatcher with a gross misdemeanor crime. The law is often used against domestic assault offenders who try to prevent their victims from calling the police for help.

The new law, effective March 30, expands the existing law to include all emergency calls to police, ambulance services, or fire departments, not just calls placed through 911.

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) and Sen. Jane Ranum (DFL-Mpls) sponsored the measure.

HF193/SF255*/CH24

Railroad trespassing

A bill that would make trespassing on railroad tracks a misdemeanor level crime was rejected by the House March 25. The vote was 114-17.

Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove), the bill's sponsor, said he was seeking to address an oversight first made when the Legislature rewrote the state's trespass laws in 1989.

He said that trespassing on tracks had been a misdemeanor level crime under previous law and that his bill would have simply returned the law to the way it was prior to the rewrite.

Critics said the bill would have gone too far and that it would have criminalized an action that most people agree is relatively harmless.

Under a standard motion, lawmakers later reconsidered and tabled the proposal, so Stanek's bill (HF1120) may come up for consideration later.

Assault by laser

If you intentionally aimed a laser pointer into someone's eye, you would be guilty of a crime, under a bill approved March 30 by the House Crime Prevention Committee.

Bill sponsor Rep. Betty McCollum (DFL-North St. Paul) said that laser pointers intended for office presentations can cause serious damage to the retina if aimed directly at the eye.

She said the devices are being misused by some children. For example, students are taking them to high school hockey games and flashing the light at players to distract them.

McCollum's bill would create the gross misdemeanor level crime of laser assault. A person who intentionally points the beam of a laser device at another person's eye would be guilty of the crime and could be sentenced to prison for up to a year.

Eye doctors using lasers to treat eyes would be exempt from the crime, under the measure.

The bill (HF1737/SF1120*) now goes to the House floor.



EDUCATION

Keeping classrooms safe

Persons convicted of criminal sexual conduct would not be allowed to teach in Minnesota's classrooms, under a bill passed by the House March 25. The vote was 128 to 5.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji), would require the state Board of Teaching to revoke or refuse a teaching license

to any person convicted of criminal sexual conduct in the first to fifth degrees.

Criminal sexual conduct can range from rape (first degree) to exposing genitals in the presence of a minor (fifth degree), as defined by state law.

The measure would exempt individuals with non-felony convictions for fifth-degree offenses.

Under the bill, courts would be required to notify the Board of Teaching once they discover a convicted sex offender is a licensed teacher. The board would then revoke the teacher's license and notify the school board that employs the teacher.

The bill (HF14) also would allow the state board to refuse to issue or renew licenses to applicants convicted of criminal sexual conduct.

A similar measure already exists for school bus drivers.

Fuller said he is sponsoring the legislation because of recent publicized incidents in which teachers were found to have sexually abused their students or other children.

The bill now moves to the Senate.

Crisis volunteer



Mary Hepakoski, Golden Valley, urges lawmakers on the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee on March 26 to continue funding for Crisis Nurseries. Hepakoski, holding one of the infants helped by the organization, has been a volunteer with Crisis Nurseries for six years.

Education mandates eyed

A bill that would lower the age until which schools are required to provide special education instruction was approved recently by two House committees.

Rep. John Tuma (R-Northfield) is sponsoring the measure. It was approved March 25 by the House Education Policy Committee and March 30 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

In 1998, lawmakers approved a new set of laws governing special education policies to make them consistent with federal law. Tuma said his bill essentially wraps up that process by tying up some loose ends of certain state laws that exceed federal requirements. The 1998 law left those provisions to be examined by lawmakers and special education officials to determine which ones should still exceed federal law.

Under that law, Minnesota requires special education services to be provided until a student is 22 years old. Under federal law, that requirement is 21 years old.

The bill (HF483) would change the state law to age 21 and require a school district to provide instruction until July 1 after the student turns 21.

Other changes included in Tuma's bill deal with discipline procedures for students of special education and state reimbursement for litigation costs incurred by school districts.

The bill moves to the House floor.



ENVIRONMENT

Cleaning up wetlands laws

A bill aimed at simplifying laws regarding public drainage systems got bogged down March 30 in the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee, but after hours of testimony lawmakers narrowly approved it.

One provision of the bill (HF1493) would require the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to follow the same guidelines for delineating wetlands as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), sponsor of the bill and chair of the committee, said local units of government already follow those guidelines but the DNR uses a different standard that refers to the "ordinary high water mark."

The different standards mean landowners sometimes need two different permits for a drainage project that impacts a wetland, Ozment said. The bill would remove references to the "ordinary high water mark" from the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991.

Some committee members objected to other provisions of the bill that refer to public drainage systems and how they impact those wetlands. For example, current law requires that if flood-control structures or road projects destroy wetlands, the wetlands must be drained and replaced with new wetlands established elsewhere.

Some of the controversy surrounds questions such as who should pay for that process and who should be responsible when ditches or drainage systems destroy a wetland due to a lack of maintenance or repair.

Those and other questions often result in litigation between landowners and government bodies that have jurisdiction in those situations, including the DNR, counties, and local watershed districts.

One of the bill's provisions would require a public waters work permit for certain repair or maintenance projects to a public drainage system. A permit would be required if the project destroys a wetland that has existed for at least 25 years. Another provision would exempt some projects from requiring replacement of a wetland, unless the wetland has existed for 25 years.

Opponents of those provisions said that in some instances the lack of maintenance to the drainage system created the wetland so repairing the drainage system should not require a permit.

Several Hugo-area residents spoke against the bill, because it could affect a lawsuit regarding such a situation that has caused flooding in that area.

But Ron Harnack, executive director of the state Board of Water and Soil Resources, argued that if a wetland is created in that situation and exists for 25 years, the drainage system would have to have been ignored for 40 or 50 years. He said the affected landowners have a responsibility to petition the counties to request repair projects in those situations.

"There has to be a shared authority between landowners and the ditch authority," Harnack said.

Rep. Tim Finseth (R-Angus) proposed deleting the related provisions.

"The whole system is working fairly well considering how controversial it is," he said. "If you delete (those sections), you will be able to carry forward a bill that does some good things without getting in the middle of a battle."

Committee members voted to delete the section that would require a repair or maintenance work permit but to keep the provision concerning replacement exemptions.

The bill now moves to the House floor.

Munger returns



Rep. Willard Munger awaits the arrival of his colleagues before a House session March 30. Munger, the longest-serving member of the Legislature, was making his first appearance at the Capitol since undergoing surgery for colon cancer in January. House members welcomed him back with a rousing ovation. (See related story on page 2.)

International fishing fight



A resolution urging the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative to resolve alleged violations of international law by the Province of Ontario was signed March 26 by Gov. Jesse Ventura.

The resolution states that the Provincial Government of Ontario imposed restrictions on United States residents taking fish from Canadian waters of Rainy Lake in 1994. It also states that the province extended the restrictions to Rainy River and Lake of the Woods in 1998 and has "threatened to extend" them to the entire Minnesota-Ontario border.

Minnesota resorts have suffered due to the restrictions because Canadian residents are allowed to fish in those areas. The resolution states the restrictions are a violation of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Trade in Services under the World Trade Organization.

The resolution is sponsored by Rep. Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls) in the House and Sen. LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Thief River Falls) in the Senate.

HF544*/SF638/Res. 1



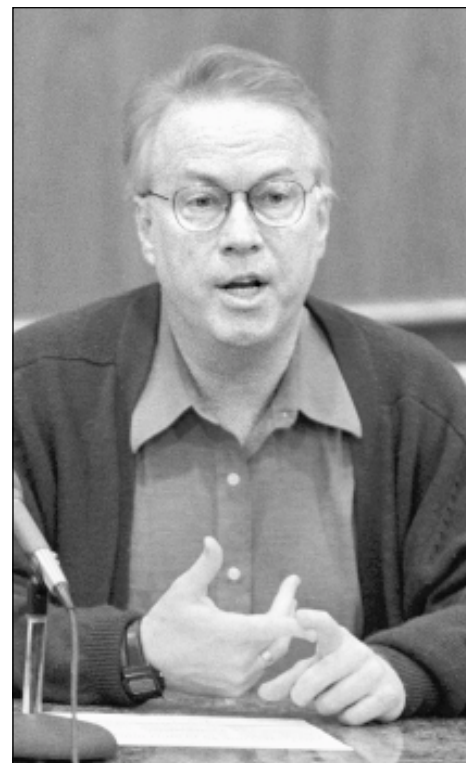
FAMILY

Get counseling, save cash

Couples who receive premarital counseling would get a deal on the cost of a marriage

license, under a bill approved March 31 by the House Civil Law Committee.

The current fee for a marriage license in Minnesota is \$70. Under the bill, couples who participate in at least 12 hours of counseling with a licensed counselor or ordained minister would get a \$50 discount.



Bill Doherty, professor of family social science at the University of Minnesota, testifies in favor of a bill that would reduce the marriage license fee for couples who receive pre-marital counseling.

"I think it is in the best interest of the state of Minnesota for people to enter into marriage very carefully with information about themselves, their relationship, and their future plans," said bill sponsor Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson).

Harder said she is considering a plan to add \$50 to divorce fees to make up for the lost revenue.

"Hopefully, that wouldn't work out," said Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls). "Hopefully, your program would be so successful that there would be fewer divorces."

The bill (HF2229) now goes to the House Ways and Means Committee.



HEALTH

Dentists on the move

Have drill, will travel. That's the motto of Apple Tree Dental, a nonprofit program that brings dental services to isolated rural communities around Hawley.

Rep. Bob Westfall (R-Rothsay) is sponsoring a bill (HF756) that would provide \$75,000 in financing for the venture.

Dr. Michael Helgeson, executive director of Apple Tree and a practicing dentist, told the Health and Human Services Finance Committee on March 26 that this is the first time the 14-year-old agency has had to ask for state money.

He said the program was expanded into Clay, Becker, Mahnommen, and Pope counties because of tremendous need. Funding had been available from a private source, but that has dried up.

Helgeson said 90 percent of the reimbursement received for services is from state-provided medical coverage. Dental care is provided to people, from children to senior citizens, who can't afford a regular dentist or who do not have access to transportation to reach a dentist.

Joe Peterson, mayor of Hawley, said that in addition to the benefit of fewer toothaches, Apple Tree has also brought economic development to his city.

"They refurbished a 100-year-old building that was formerly a hardware and implement store," Peterson said. "It was in quite a state of disrepair."

He said the city had anticipated spending \$50,000 to demolish the structure.

In addition, the program's staff is a valuable asset in the community, even beyond the payroll impact. He cited a program developed outside work time that teaches dental hygiene to children.

Peterson said the program is not seen as competition from area dentists, several of whom sit on Apple Tree's advisory board.

Helgeson said in addition to the state money to keep the program going, collaboration with other public health agencies in the area is being sought.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the health and human services omnibus finance bill.

Planning organ donation



Tissue and eyes have been added to the list of organs available for donation on the state's health care directive, under a new law effective March 17.

The new law was designed to help draw attention to the need for donated tissue and eyes — a need said to be critical by regional organ donation program officials.

Under the state's 1998 health care directive law, people can use a directive to address all aspects of advanced planning for health care by either appointing an agent to make their health care decisions or by making statements concerning how they want their health care to be handled.

Proponents of the measure said that while many people are aware of the possibility of donating organs, they do not know that tissue and eyes are organs that can be donated.

The bill was sponsored by Rep. Darlene Luther (DFL-Brooklyn Park) and Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick).

HF74/SF301*/CH14



HIGHER EDUCATION

Rochester campus proposed

Lawmakers discussed a plan March 29 that would upgrade higher education in the Rochester area.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester) pitched a bill (HF1241) that would fund the proposal to the House Higher Education Finance Committee.

Rochester, Minnesota's fifth largest city, does not have a four-year higher education institution. However, Winona State University is within commuting distance, and Rochester Community and Technical College — a two-year institution — is located in the city. In addition, the University Center Rochester offers courses to the public, and students can earn credit there toward degrees granted by the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus.

Now the U of M is proposing to add a new Rochester campus to their system. Currently, the university has four campuses, in the Twin Cities, Duluth, Morris, and Crookston.

The Rochester plan would require a permanent faculty at the proposed nonresidential campus — currently all University Center faculty members commute to Rochester to teach classes. The proposed school would continue to cater to students who live in the Rochester area and would serve a largely non-traditional and part-time student population.

Advocates of the new campus say Rochester's economy requires more higher-education options. The Mayo Clinic is the area's main employer, and IBM also supplies many jobs. U of M course offerings would focus on health professions, technology, education, and social services.

The Rochester campus would not provide the traditional liberal arts curriculum typically offered by four-year learning institutions. Instead, its programs would focus on training and developing the current work force in the area, ultimately benefiting IBM and the Mayo Clinic.

Officials at the U of M and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system agreed in February to a joint set of principles to protect both parties' assets in Rochester. The agreement states that programs will remain intact at Winona State University and Rochester Community and Technical College.

The project would cost the state an estimated \$5.7 million over the 2000-01 biennium and would be treated as a separate item from the legislative appropriations already requested by the U of M and MnSCU.

The two systems do not need permission from the Legislature to operate the new campus, but state funding would be key in developing a legitimate public education institution.

Some lawmakers were skeptical of the plan, asking for more specific details on campus design and courses.

Rep. Gene Pelowski (DFL-Winona) also said enrollment in the current Rochester facility has been declining and questioned the need for more programs.

Robert Bruininks, U of M executive vice president and provost, said the programs at Rochester are under-funded and that increased economic activity has led potential students away from school into Rochester's booming economy. However, Bruininks said the labor market will eventually require those workers to upgrade their skills, which he said makes the case for the new Rochester campus.

Lawmakers did not take action on Bishop's bill but will consider it for inclusion in the omnibus higher education finance bill.



HOUSING

Fighting real estate flipping

The House Crime Prevention Committee approved a bill March 26 that seeks to address the real estate scam known as mortgage flipping.

Mortgage flipping is a scheme to defraud home buyers and lending institutions based on a fraudulent appraisal of a house's value.

In one scheme, a buyer purchases a house at market value and has an appraiser file a fraudulent appraisal setting the value of the house higher than the market value.

The owner then re-sells the house at the inflated price, making a huge profit, and the appraiser gets a kickback.

The victim is then stuck with payments on a home much higher than the actual value. And if the victim defaults on the mortgage, the bank cannot recoup the inflated mortgage by re-selling the house.

The bill would address the problem by going after the appraiser. It would make the intentional violation of the laws governing appraisers a gross misdemeanor.

Under current law, real estate brokers and agents can be charged with a crime for intentionally violating the terms of their licenses. But appraisers are only subject to license revocation, not criminal prosecution.

Gary Levasseur, deputy commissioner of enforcement with the Department of Commerce, said the key element in the crime is the fraudulent appraisal and that tougher penalties are needed to go after these appraisers.

"In some of these cases, the revocation of license is not sufficient to stop the activity," he said.

And Lasseur said the inflated values placed on the property can distort property taxes and local school aid formulas.

Bill sponsor Rep. Gregory Gray (DFL-Mpls) said his district in north Minneapolis has been one of the areas hardest hit by the scam.

"This is a significant problem in depressed areas, and we feel this bill will go a long way toward solving the problem," he said.

Gray's bill also would set aside \$100,000 for an education program aimed at stopping the fraudulent practice.

Under the bill, the Department of Commerce would administer the program and would seek additional funding from private organizations also affected by flipping, such as banks, mortgage companies, and economic development groups.

The bill (HF743) was earlier approved by the House Commerce Committee and now goes to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee.

Get well soon



House members gather around a get-well card for Minnesota's first lady, Terry Ventura, following the March 31 floor session. Ventura was recently diagnosed with mononucleosis, caused by Epstein-Bar Syndrome. Signing, clockwise from top, are Reps. Rob Leighton, Tim Finseth, Steve Wenzel, George Cassell, and Leslie Schumacher.

Streamlining building code

Many different state departments develop and enforce various sections of the state building code. A bill that would partially consolidate that authority was approved March 30 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

The bill (HF1568) would transfer authority over the energy code from the Department of Public Service to the Department of Administration.

The administration department currently oversees many provisions of the state building code. However, other parts of the code are developed and enforced under the departments of health, public safety, or public service. Several state agencies and boards also have input in inspecting and reviewing building plans for public buildings.

Disagreements and poor coordination between the various state agencies and departments has caused unnecessary delays in construction, according to a January report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor.

Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Faribault), sponsor of the bill, said transferring authority over the energy code to the Department of Administration would be one small step toward a better process for implementing the building code.

The bill now moves to the House floor.

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



HUMAN SERVICES

Seniors at home

The tiny community of Rothsay may be the best spot for older Minnesotans wishing to continue living in their own homes.

The town, just north of Fergus Falls, has arguably the most active Living at Home/Block Nurse Programs in the state.

The program organizes neighborhoods to provide assistance to help older people continue living at home and to link them with support services and professionals when necessary.

Roberta Ouse, board chair, told the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee on March 26 that in addition to the obvious benefit for seniors, the program also helps build a community "where neighbors help neighbors because it is the right thing to do."

Ouse, who also heads the state board for the program, testified in support of a bill (HF424) that would expand financing for Living at Home/Block Nurse Programs throughout the state. Rep. Bob Westfall (R-Rothsay) is sponsoring the bill.

There are currently 25 programs operating in the state — 13 in urban neighborhoods in St. Paul and Minneapolis and 12 in greater Minnesota.

During last fiscal year, those 25 programs provided assistance and care to 3,300 people. Volunteers provided over 35,700 hours of direct assistance to people in their homes.

Volunteers do lawn and garden work and

minor home repairs. They arrange for meals on wheels or for a home health aid or nurse to provide services. And sometimes they simply stop by for a visit.

An estimated 471 people delayed or avoided entering a nursing home by using the program, Ouse said. That saved the state about \$6.8 million.

Westfall's bill would make available \$576,000 for the coming biennium, the bulk of which would be used to start new Living at Home/Block Nurse Program operations in several rural and urban areas.

State funding comprises about one-third to one-half of the total cost for the efforts, according to Malcom Mitchell, executive director of the statewide program.

He said the program is particularly beneficial in rural areas because once people have to move to nursing homes in other communities, they take their assets with them.

He said the typical person served by the program is an 81-year-old woman who lives alone on \$632 a month without a social support network.

Westfall, who has worked as a volunteer in the Rothsay program, said one of its unique assets is an exercise program for people in their 80s and older.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the health and human services omnibus finance bill.

Helping Hmong Minnesotans

The death of six young Hmong children last summer has resulted in a call for more help to assist Asian immigrants in acclimating to life in the United States.

Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park) is sponsoring a bill (HF1858) that would provide \$200,000 to the Council of Asian Minnesotans to operate a crisis intervention hotline for the Hmong community in the metropolitan area.

David Zander, research analyst for the council, said many Hmong immigrants face depression, gambling addiction, domestic violence, poverty, and crime at rates higher than the general population.

The council convened a task force to help identify ways of aiding Hmong people in need, and the crisis line was one item identified.

William Yang, executive director of the Hmong American Partnership, told the Health and Human Services Finance Committee on March 29 that there are many existing programs but no one-stop way to access them.

He said many Hmong people have limited English skills. Some also have more significant mental health needs and have less access to family help because they do not have relatives in this country.

Yang said he envisions a staff of bilingual professionals who could provide professional counseling and direct callers to other avenues of assistance. Callers would remain anonymous.

The council estimates there are 113,000 residents of Minnesota of Asian-Pacific heritage, representing more than 40 ethnic groups, the largest of which is Hmong. Many of them live in the Twin Cities area, but Asian populations in other communities including Worthington, Warroad, Austin, and Duluth are rising.

The bill is expected to be considered later this session for inclusion in the omnibus health and human service finance bill.



INSURANCE

Looking for competition

For whatever reason, health insurance costs for small employers keep going up.

Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin) believes the primary cause is a lack of competition, and he is sponsoring a bill (HF870) aimed at bringing more insurance providers back to the state.

Haas told the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee that a temporary waiving of state mandates is needed to see if more companies respond.

His bill would permit companies that do not already have a major presence in the state to offer alternatives to the minimum state-mandated policies for up to two years. The committee approved the measure March 26.

The bill would permit policies with different copayments and deductibles, as well as those that would pay on a basis other than medical expenses incurred, such as a flat dollar amount per day in the hospital or a flat dollar amount upon a diagnosis of cancer.

The policies would have to be sold only to companies that have 50 employees or fewer.

The bill also would waive portions of law that require insurance companies to spend a certain amount directly on health care and a lesser amount on overhead.

Under existing law, insurers and health maintenance organizations may offer only one of two policies for small employers and must maximize the amount of the premium that goes directly to paying for care.

Haas said those standards, adopted in 1992, are keeping smaller insurance companies out. He said the problem is particularly tough in rural areas. The metropolitan area has three major carriers; rural employers searching for insurance for their employees often have only one choice.

Several lawmakers expressed concern that

approving the bill would start the state down the "slippery slope" of substandard health care.

Rep. Lee Greenfield (DFL-Mpls) said the state might find itself paying more if private plans didn't cover certain vital care procedures.

He added that it would only be fair to allow all companies to offer the policies in Haas' bill.

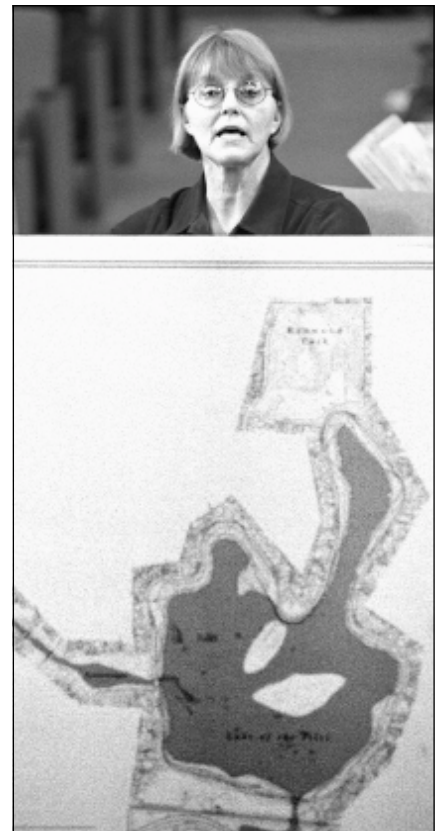
Haas argued that the small companies — whether in Minnesota or outside — need the competitive edge afforded in his bill to level the playing field. He said if the two-year pilot program works, he would be more open to Greenfield's suggestion.

The bill moves to the House floor.

Mandate plan stalls

A bill that would require health plans to cover eyeglasses and hearing aids under certain circumstances was laid over for further study by the House Commerce Committee on March 29.

Isles S.O.S.



Vivian Mason, a commissioner for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, sits behind a map of Lake of the Isles as she describes the need for funding flood mitigation programs at the lake. Mason spoke to lawmakers on the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee on March 31.

Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston), chair of the committee, said he plans to appoint an interim committee to review the effects of such mandates on the insurance industry.

"This is a very important issue," Davids said. "This isn't something we can just brush off."

The bill (HF846) would require eyeglasses to be covered for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and rely on vision for communication — either through American Sign Language or lip reading. Hearing aids would be covered if they are for children under age 18 or for adults who have a specified level of hearing loss.

Rep. Luanne Koskinen (DFL-Coon Rapids), sponsor of the bill, said health plans should consider eyeglasses and hearing aids necessary in those situations. Some hearing loss is genetic, she said, which means some families have more than one child requiring hearing aids, and those expenses cause significant financial hardship for those families.

Other bills that put mandates on health coverage have failed to become law in recent years, Davids said. A major reason is that some lawmakers and others object to passing mandates that do not affect self-insured companies.

About one-third of the people in the state are covered by self-insured companies. But state mandates cannot be applied to the self-insured companies, so the mandates and the related costs are only passed on to those who pay premiums in the private market.

Budget outline



Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer presents a portion of her office's budget request to members of the House State Government Finance Committee on March 30.

until next year, because a Senate companion bill has yet to be introduced.



SPORTS

New soccer stadium plan

The House Higher Education Finance Committee discussed a proposal March 31 to change plans for a University of Minnesota women's soccer stadium.

The U of M is set to break ground this month on a soccer stadium for which the Legislature approved funding in 1998. The site was originally planned for Falcon Heights, near the university's St. Paul campus.

Last summer, Falcon Heights residents opposed the construction, and the U of M chose a new site in the city for the stadium. That site currently is home to recreational fields that will have to be moved, and some residents are concerned that limited space for new fields would ultimately conflict with neighborhoods.

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) is proposing to dismantle that plan in favor of using the grandstand area at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. Except for 12 days a year when the fair is on, the grandstand area would be a good solution to accommodate a women's soccer field, she said.

Hausman's bill (HF2046) would appropriate \$3 million to the U of M to build the facility on the fairgrounds. It also would require the school to let municipal youth soccer teams use its soccer fields during the summer.

The committee did not take action on the bill, but lawmakers will consider it for possible inclusion in the omnibus higher education finance bill.

No stickers on antique boats



Owners of antique boats will have more leeway in displaying their boat licenses, under a measure signed March 26 by Gov. Jesse Ventura.

The new law will allow owners of restored historic boats to affix the license number and decals to a detachable device on the boat instead of to the boat itself. It will affect boats that were built before July 1, 1959, and are used solely as collector's items. The law takes effect Aug. 1.

Rep. Jim Rostberg (R-Isanti), House sponsor of the measure, said it will allow owners of those boats to participate in parades or events without having to deface the valuable crafts with license stickers.

In a letter filed with the bill, Ventura wrote that he believes the law should apply to all watercraft.



LAW

Malpractice limit extended



Gov. Jesse Ventura signed a new law March 26 that will give more victims of medical malpractice their day in court.

Current law requires that lawsuits dealing with medical malpractice must be initiated within two years of the alleged occurrence of the malpractice. The new law will allow up to four years to take legal action.

Bill sponsor Rep. Henry Todd Van Dellen (R-Plymouth) said that some cases of malpractice do not become evident within the two-year period and when the victims discover the problem, it is too late to take action.

Van Dellen said his bill will not change the standard for malpractice, it will just allow these cases to move forward.

The new law is effective Aug. 1 and will apply to legal actions commenced on or following that date.

Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley) sponsored the measure in the Senate.

HF56*/SF90/CH23



SAFETY

Fireworks bill fizzles

A plan to legalize some fireworks appears to have fizzled out, and its supporters may have to wait until next year.

The House Crime Prevention Committee laid over a bill March 30 that would have legalized smaller devices such as party poppers, sparklers, smoke bombs, snakes, and glow worms.

Bill sponsor Rep. Henry Todd Van Dellen (R-Plymouth) said the list of devices in the bill is reasonable.

"It doesn't include anything that flies in the air or explodes," he said. "It allows safe enjoyment of freedom in Minnesota."

But Nyle Zikmund, a spokesperson for the Minnesota Fire Chiefs Association, said that legalizing fireworks would result in more fires and, consequently, more costs to local governments forced to fight those fires.

"We simply don't need fireworks," he said.

The bill (HF1896) was laid over, which means it likely will not be considered again

"It is my expectation that the Legislature will revisit this issue in a future legislative session and pass a bill exempting all watercraft from the license display requirement during any exhibit, regatta, or boat parade held in Minnesota," he wrote.

Sen. Doug Johnson (DFL-Tower) sponsored the measure in the Senate.

HF137*/SF463/CH22



TAXES

A fitness tax break

Encouraging Minnesotans who make healthy lifestyle choices is the aim of a bill that would eliminate sales tax on most health club memberships.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie), told the House Taxes Committee on March 30 that the original purpose of the tax had disappeared — and so should the tax.

Paulsen said the tax was extended to include health clubs in the late 1980s as a method of financing debt service on bonds issued to build amateur sports facilities in Blaine, a swimming pool at the University of Minnesota, and the St. Cloud State University hockey arena.

But, he noted, the tax revenue far exceeded estimates and the need for the money has gone away.

YMCA, YWCA, and Jewish Community Center memberships in the state are already exempt. Paulsen's bill would not extend that exemption to member-governed or member-controlled clubs.

Additional fees paid by members for the use of racquetball or tennis courts, gymnasiums, equipment, swimming pools, or other equipment would remain taxable.

Passing the bill would level the playing field for such firms as Lifetime Fitness, according to the company's vice president for finance Shaun Nugent.

Nugent said organizations like his are taxed twice — first when they purchase equipment to put in their health clubs and then again when they are forced to tax those who join.

Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville) questioned whether the exemption would extend to memberships sold by city-operated health facilities, such as those in Chaska and Shoreview.

Paulsen said that was his intent; however, cities that contract with private companies to run their facilities, such as Plymouth, may not be exempt.

The bill (HF1597) was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Boosting deductions

Some say those who are allowed to deduct a charitable gift are more likely to give and to give more. So why not offer everyone the opportunity to deduct their gifts, regardless of their federal tax-filing status?

Three bills outlined by House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan) before the House Taxes Committee on March 26 aim to do just that.

Pawlenty said there's an increasing need for the measures as government looks more to nonprofits to provide essential human services.

Roughly 60 percent of Minnesota taxpayers do not itemize, choosing instead to use the standard deduction. Pawlenty believes that's an inequity that should be fixed.

Pawlenty said taxpayers generally begin to itemize deductions when their income reaches \$75,000 annually. Those who make less give in significant amounts, but their contributions are not recognized by the state tax code.

The three bills offer varying strategies for implementing the overall plan.

HF25 would allow taxpayers who claim the federal standard deduction to subtract a portion of charitable contributions from taxable income in calculating their state income tax. The subtraction would be 50 percent of contributions that exceed \$500.

HF108 would allow a non-refundable tax credit equal to 75 percent of contributions to charities that provide direct services in Minnesota to people with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

And HF109 would allow a non-refundable tax credit equal to 50 percent of contributions to any qualifying charities in Minnesota, with a cap of \$100 for married couples filing joint returns and \$50 for all other taxpayers.

Pawlenty said HF108 would mean considerable work for the Department of Revenue, which would have to determine which charities would qualify. However, it would be the least costly of the measures.

The tax credit idea had strong support from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and several of the council's members who testified.

"People give because they believe in the causes that they support," said John Pratt, executive director of the council. "Once people decide to contribute, the amount they donate can be influenced by the charitable tax deduction."

Tax provisions similar to Pawlenty's proposals were passed by the House last year but did not become law.

The Taxes Committee will consider the measures for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Effort to spur housing

Creating low-income housing opportunities in Minnesota should be a priority, according to Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul).

Dawkins unveiled a proposal before the House Taxes Committee on March 25 that he says would spur creation of such housing. His bill (HF584) would create a low-income housing tax credit similar to one already provided by the federal government.

By replicating the federal program, Dawkins said, additional housing could be built without adding more bureaucracy.

About 1,500 new housing units, mostly apartments, are built annually in the state with money from the federal tax incentive program. Dawkins believes that number could double if his bill passes.

Under the federal law, tax credits are sold at auction and investors purchase them, creating a pool of money for housing developments targeted to those in need. The money is made available to developers to build the projects. An independent company is often hired to run the housing complexes.

Robert Ewanika, president of Eloigne Company, a subsidiary of Northern States Power, told the committee his firm has invested \$182 million in 3,285 apartment units across Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

The bulk of the units have been built in the Twin Cities area. One of the firm's more successful projects, he said, was Central Towers in St. Paul. About \$5 million provided by Eloigne was used to renovate the building, constructed in the 1960s. Today it is managed by Presbyterian Homes and is 100 percent occupied.

Dawkins said encouraging private sector participation appears to be a good way attain low-income housing goals. Past moves by the Legislature to lower taxes on apartment properties have not had a great deal of impact.

Several lawmakers said they had concerns about the quality of the management of the apartment complexes that are created. Others expressed concerns about the complexity of the tax credit program, which, by requiring lawyers and accountants for interpretation, could mean less money would be available for direct financing of housing projects.

Dawkins agreed the plan is not perfect, but he said the alternative would be pumping more state money directly into financing housing projects.

If passed, the bill is expected to cost the state about \$5 million annually.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.



TRANSPORTATION

Emissions testing opposed

The House passed a bill March 26 that would repeal the state's motor vehicle emission testing program. The vote was 93-40.

The program would end Jan. 1, 2000, or earlier if the state attains federal air quality standards for carbon monoxide.

"I believe we should put that money back in the pockets of taxpayers," said Rep. Barb Haake (R-Mounds View), sponsor of the bill.

Haake said carbon monoxide levels have been decreasing steadily since the emissions program was started in 1991 but that it is not clear whether the emissions program caused that decrease. She attributed part of the decrease in carbon monoxide to improvements in automobile technology.

The testing program was signed into law in 1988 by then-Gov. Rudy Perpich. It was created in response to a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finding that the seven-county metropolitan area's carbon monoxide level exceeded federal and state standards. The program went into effect in mid-1991 for all vehicles built after 1976.

In 1995, then-Gov. Arne Carlson signed a bill that exempted new cars up to five years old

from emissions testing. That measure cut by one-third the number of vehicles required to undergo inspection each year.

Emissions inspections cost \$8 per vehicle and are assessed as part of vehicle registration.

Gov. Jesse Ventura's biennial budget proposal also calls for the repeal of the emissions inspection program, contingent upon federal approval of air quality standards. Under the governor's plan, the program would be repealed as of Aug. 1.

The earlier version of Haake's bill had called for the program to end July 1, 2000, but that date was moved up in anticipation of the state's compliance with air quality standards.

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) said the state's air quality problems are not over. A recent EPA study has identified seven types of air pollution, four of which are from motor vehicles, she said.

"When the (emissions) test picks up cars that are not performing and you tune up your car, it also eliminates 11 million pounds of hydrocarbons per year," she said.

Other lawmakers pointed out flaws in the emissions tests and said the state should find other ways to improve air quality.

"This program has never had a significant impact," said Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), chair of the House Environ-

ment and Natural Resources Policy Committee. "If we really wanted to do something for the environment, would we have left so many loopholes in it? The public doesn't support it, and it's time to get rid of it."

The bill (HF7) now moves to the Senate.

Easing plate application



A new law effective Aug. 1 reduces the steps required to obtain disability license plates.

The law will apply to anyone who applies for a set of disability license plates for a vehicle that has been modified for permanent use by a person with a disability.

It will do away with the current requirement that people must provide additional proof of their disability by a physician's statement or other means to obtain the special license plates.

Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring) and Sen. Michelle Fischbach (R-Paynesville) sponsored the legislation.

HF165/SF460*/CH25

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Frequently called numbers

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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

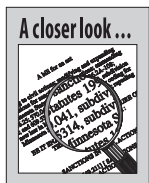
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TTY, House 296-9896

Toll free 1-800-657-3550

Lawmakers contend with stubborn feedlot concerns

By Paul Wahl



The debate over animal feedlot regulation has wafted into the Legislature in each of the past three sessions, fueled by concerns over potential health hazards of air and water quality affected by the facilities and their manure lagoons.

Last year a House-approved moratorium on new or expanding feedlots was rejected by the Senate, but a two-year moratorium on construction of certain swine waste lagoons did make it into law.

And lawmakers directed the Office of the Legislative Auditor to study the issue, resulting in a report released in January that criticized the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for not acting quickly enough to produce rules for feedlot operation.

This session, the House has debated only a handful of feedlot proposals, but the most contentious appears to be a bill (HF1235) that would exempt operators from standards for ambient hydrogen sulfide emission levels on days manure is being removed from barns or storage facilities and handled for application on land or other disposal.

Rep. Howard Swenson (R-Nicollet), the bill's sponsor, said it is a common-sense measure that would assure farmers won't be punished for actions they cannot avoid. The House Agriculture Policy Committee approved the measure March 29.

A feedlot is a lot or building or combination of lots or buildings used to feed, breed, raise, and hold animals. They are designed as confinement areas, and manure often accumulates in basins.

Although the basins are covered with a thick odor-stopping crust most of the time, it occasionally must be removed so the manure solids can be extracted. The byproduct is often spread on nearby land as a natural fertilizer.

The air can get rather pungent during those times. Hydrogen sulfide levels often rise above what is allowed by regulators.

Jenny Ward, environmental manager for a dairy operation near St. Peter, told lawmakers that city sewage lagoons, landfills, and breweries have a similar problem at various points in their production cycles.

"For farmers, it's like road weight restrictions in the spring," Ward said. "We work with it because we know it's just a matter of time until it's over."

She said suggestions that feedlot operators



Olivia resident Julie Jansen brought buckets of liquid manure and a device that measures airborne hydrogen sulfide amounts to demonstrate to lawmakers the noxious nature of the substance. Although she was not permitted to the uncap the buckets for a demonstration, she testified against a bill that would exempt livestock feedlots from ambient hydrogen sulfide standards on certain days.

would use the exemption as an excuse to allow smells to rise unabated year-round was ludicrous, considering that the emptying process must be done at very specific times of the year.

She said most farms must rent the equipment involved, paying by the day. The sooner the process is over, the less it costs, and the sooner the smell is controlled again.

But opponents argue that any exposure to hydrogen sulfide can be harmful, causing headaches, nausea, and upper-respiratory problems.

Former candidate for lieutenant governor Julie Jansen, who lives near a large feedlot in the Olivia area, told lawmakers she has spent the past four years battling with the owners and regulatory agencies.

She brought several covered buckets of liquid hog manure and a metering device to the hearing to demonstrate her point, but she was not allowed to uncap the buckets.

She said hydrogen sulfide is an asphyxiating gas that is absorbed into the lungs.

"Because it is cumulative in your system, no level is safe," Jansen said.

If the bill becomes law, she said, "the state will take the only protection we have and mandate we have to breathe this 14 to 28 days a year," she said.

Some lawmakers said they are still interested in looking at alternative solutions to the feedlot problem.

Rep. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls) said feedlot operators should look more closely at using chemical additives that he believes would reduce the amount of hydrogen sulfide released during the stirring process.

But Jim Sullivan, feedlot air quality manager for the MPCA, said he does not believe enough commercial testing has been conducted on those additives.

Sullivan also said that so far no feedlots have been cited for exceeding emission standards and that his department's rules regarding the subject are still being rewritten.

The slow pace of the rulemaking process was specifically criticized in the report by the legislative auditor, which also stated concerns that the entire feedlot issue may overwhelm department staff.

There are 45,000 feedlots in the state. The rules were last updated in 1978.

Rep. Doug Peterson (DFL-Madison) said it may not be advantageous to write an exemption into law when rules have not been adopted.

And others said the issue should not be approached only from an agricultural or environmental perspective.

Don Dame, a mechanical engineer from Woodbury, told lawmakers on the agriculture panel that the feedlot problem would be best solved by engineers. He said in three years time with about \$10 million in funding, a team of engineers could devise a solution that would be acceptable to everyone.

"But no one is working on it from that direction," he said.

Swenson's bill was amended to include a provision to require five days notice to neighbors of pending stirring activity.

The measure moves to the House floor. 🐷

Grams describes goals of new era in government

By Sarah Hallonquist

Borrowing from another famous Minnesotan, U.S. Sen. Rod Grams told state lawmakers in the House chamber March 29 that “the times, they are a-changin.”

Two years ago, Hulk Hogan was the world’s best-known wrestler, Grams said. And the best-known Monica was found on the NBC sitcom “Friends.”

But a lot has changed in two years, said Grams, whose term is up in 2000. He joked to lawmakers that his re-election campaign slogan is “Rod the Bod for Senate in 2000.”

But some things have not changed, including the Republican senator’s political beliefs. In a 25-minute speech, he described a set of conservative governing principles that he said guide his work as a federal lawmaker, and he urged Minnesota legislators to use them, too.

Those principles include lowering the tax burden, avoiding duplication of government services, and respecting states’ rights by supporting local control.

“Washington should never intrude on your right of doing what’s right for the people of Minnesota,” Grams told lawmakers.

House Republicans applauded his suggestion to scrap the federal tax code and rebuild it from scratch. He urged a reduction of other kinds of taxes and commended lawmakers for working on a rebate for taxpayers. And in light of state and federal surpluses, Grams said the time is right for a reduction of income tax rates.

On the subject of education, the senator said the federal government requires too much paperwork, which he views as wasteful. He said the ins and outs of education are best solved at the home-town level, and not in Washington, D.C.

“Let’s put more money into educating our kids and quit lining the pockets of bureaucrats,” he said.

Grams warned his colleagues not to take the contributions of citizens — fiscal or otherwise — lightly. He offered his cooperation to work with state officials, and he seemed optimistic about his job.

“Together, we can make the most of our service,” he said.

Another theme of Grams’ speech was the size and scope of government, which, he said repeatedly, is too far-reaching.

“In case you haven’t noticed, government is everywhere today,” he said.

Grams told a technologically enhanced



U.S. Sen. Rod Grams tells lawmakers to be wary of big government during a March 29 address in the House chamber.

version of the biblical tale of Noah’s Ark to illustrate his views on government regulation. He told of Noah needing a building permit. Then he said Noah had to hire an engineer to redesign the ark specifications to meet code requirements, which delayed the date that the ark could be ready.

After the installation of a sprinkler system to meet fire safety rules, Noah then handled an Occupational Safety and Health Administration complaint and had to make sure he reported his expenditures correctly to the Internal Revenue Service. And when the ark was finished, it rained so hard that the federal government declared the earth a wetland.

While government regulations can exist to help people, Grams said sometimes they are unnecessary.

“Government can’t be everything to everyone,” he said.

Grams said some government programs and policies have caused citizens to adopt more cynical attitudes toward the political process. However, he said, government does have the potential to positively affect people’s lives.

“It ought to encourage success, not block it,” he said. “It ought to always be there for those in need.”


The audience, consisting of most of Minnesota’s Republican legislators and a number of their DFL colleagues, reacted favorably to Grams’ speech. Rep. Howard Swenson (R-Nicollet) said the senator spoke about many issues on which the two agree.

“I agree with this philosophy that government should provide for people,” Swenson said.

But he added that often lawmakers get caught up in policy-making and forget whose money they are handling. Swenson added that officials should be careful about taking too much money away from citizens, a point also stressed by Grams.

Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) said she did not agree with some of Grams’ anti-government statements, but did find some common ground in the rest of his remarks.

“It’s not a partisan issue to do what’s right with the people’s money,” she said.

Grams spoke to the Legislature in 1997, as did his Democratic colleague Sen. Paul Wellstone. Although his appearance is not yet scheduled, Wellstone has also been invited by House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) to address lawmakers this session. 

Where to find information

House Public Information Office

175 State Office Building
(651) 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>

New headquarters . . .

Revenue department at home in Capitol complex

By Paul Wahl

Minnesota taxpayers who stop in at the new Department of Revenue headquarters this year will be greeted in an expansive sun-drenched lobby at the new office building in the Capitol complex.

But they won't be able to follow their tax returns beyond the lobby area and onto the giant sparkling floor where the processing is done. The new \$74.5 million building is secure — meaning no visitor goes unescorted or unaccounted for beyond the reception area.

"People tend to think that's either to protect money — in fact we have very little cash in the building — or else they think it's to protect workers from terrorists," said John Lally, assistant commissioner at the revenue department.

And although concern over a possible terrorist attack has been cited as one reason the department does not yet have a permanent sign identifying its new location, Lally said it is really an unlikely possibility — or at least one that won't be minimized by the absence of a sign.

"If taxpayers can find us, terrorists can find us," he said. "We're in the phone book. And terrorists rarely drive around with bombs in their cars just in case they run across a tax building."

Lally said a completed sign is in storage waiting for the new commissioner of the Department of Administration to give the go-ahead to put it up.

But despite having only a temporary banner to announce the new offices at the corner of Robert and 12th streets in St. Paul, the revenue department's new home is fully operational. It opened for business in October 1998 — just 14 months from the time a construction contract was signed.

Lally said the speedy building process was made possible by using a design-build concept.

"You start building before you know what it's going to look like," he said. "You make decisions real fast. It worked remarkably well."

Lally has been working on the revenue department's latest relocation since 1994. It had been the tenant of a building on St. Paul's riverfront since 1988, but that space didn't allow for growth or technological updates.

And since 1995, Lally said, it's been obvious



The first stop for Minnesota tax returns is the document processing room in the Department of Revenue's new building in the Capitol complex.

that a bigger space was needed for the 900 year-round department workers and the up to 400 additional tax-season employees. After study, a team of designers proposed a building with a \$130 million price tag, which Lally called "totally irrational."

The Legislature turned down that idea and another consultant was hired. This time the proposal was a design-build structure in suburban Inver Grove Heights, with an estimated cost of about \$45 million.

But the idea of moving the Department of Revenue outside of the capital city was opposed by many members of the Legislature. Eventually the department received approval to build

within view of the Capitol for \$74.5 million or to purchase and refurbish the building it already occupied. Moving to Inver Grove Heights was at the bottom of the list, despite the potential savings.

By the time all of the negotiation and deliberation had taken place, two years had passed and the department was facing a deadline to be out of its existing building after lease negotiations failed. To assure the work would be completed on time, a \$6.7 million penalty clause was inserted in the construction contract.

"It was built in record time," Lally said.

"Instead of four years, it took one. And it cost less because there weren't inflated construction dollars to deal with."

What resulted was an ultra-modern and spacious office building.

Foot-friendly carpeting covers nearly all of the floors. And all flooring except that in the storage areas of the basement is raised to allow full access for an advanced fiber-optics network that connects the entire facility.

It has state-of-the-art ventilation, cooling, and heating systems. And office walls are easily removed and replaced.

Lally said most of the growth space is in the public areas. Customer service was high on the design priority list.

The department collects \$11.4 billion in gross state tax receipts annually, much of which is from electronic transfer payments from businesses. That's the reason the public is kept out of the work centers, Lally said.

"We have an enormous amount of highly confidential data all through the building," he said. "We have to protect that information from unauthorized eyes."

By all evaluations, the building is serving its purpose well. Lally said one of the more noticeable benefits has been the attitude of the people who work for the department.

Some of them had begun their careers working at U.S. Army surplus desks in cubicles with one tiny light bulb overhead.

"The people who work in this building take

Continued on page 20

New building by the numbers

- 381,000 square feet of high-tech office space
- 902-stall parking ramp
- 350,000 person-hours of construction labor
- 3,200 tons of structural steel and reinforcing steel
- 14,000 cubic yards of concrete
- 30,000 square feet of exterior glass
- 20,000 light bulbs
- 123 miles of electrical wiring
- 10 miles of pipe
- 450 tons of ventilation ductwork

Governor's Desk

CH1-CH26

Bills await governor's action

Once a bill has passed both the House and the Senate in identical form, it's ready to be sent to the governor for consideration. The governor has several options when considering a bill. The governor 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 results in the bill becoming law in the first year of the biennium. The timing of these actions is as significant as the actions themselves.

In the first year of the biennium, the important thing to remember is that the

governor has three days from the time of "presentment" to veto a bill. If the governor doesn't sign the bill within this time frame, it will become law with or without his signature. (Sundays are not counted in the three-day time limit, but holidays are.)

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 objects. As with all vetoes, the governor must include a statement listing the reasons for the veto with the returned bill. Here, too, the timetable is within three days after the governor receives the bill.

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.mainserver.state.mn.us/governor/>
(Select "It's a New Day" and then click on "Legislative Logs")

Key:

CH=Chapter; HF=House File; SF=Senate File

CH	HF	SF	Description	Signed	Vetoed
Res. 1	544*	638	Resolution for Minnesota/Ontario border lakes trade agreements violation resolution.	3/26/99	
Res. 2	719	757*	Resolution to prohibit federal recoupment of state tobacco settlement recoveries.	3/29/99	
1	88	139*	Campaign finance and public disclosure board member qualifications specified.	2/17/99	
2	29	26*	Mississippi education center previous grantee changed to the city of Grand Rapids, and condition imposed.	2/17/99	
3	107	133*	Minneapolis and St. Paul residency requirements repealed.	3/4/99	
4	40	6*	Snowmobile metal traction device use restrictions modified and recreational vehicle rulemaking authority modified.	3/4/99	
5	121*	171	Health-related licensing board licensees infection control.	3/8/99	
6	424*	370	Nonregistered pesticide distribution permitted for certain uses outside the state.	3/8/99	
7	324	248*	Crooked Lake detached banking facility.	3/15/99	
8	241	214*	Emergency medical services volunteer ambulance attendant definition.	3/15/99	
9	464*	536	Carisoprodol classification as controlled substance effective date delay.	3/15/99	
10	73*	356	Consumer support program for persons with functional limitations financial eligibility criteria modification.	3/15/99	
11	343*	382	Real estate provisions modifications.	3/15/99	
12	162	49*	Peace officers or firefighters killed in line of duty spouse health insurance coverage.	3/16/99	
13	579	302*	Ambulance services shared service purchasing.	3/16/99	
14	301*	74	Health care directive form modification.	3/16/99	
15	416	453*	Minneapolis skilled workers and apprentices deferred compensation plan participation.	3/18/99	
16	379	157*	Laura Ingalls Wilder historic highway route modification.	3/18/99	
17	564	454*	Nursing home administrators sharing authority expansion.	3/18/99	
18	610	649*	Safe drinking water act public water supply definition modification.	3/25/99	
19	812	914*	Legislative Electric Energy Task Force membership modification.	3/25/99	
20	434	593*	St. Cloud paramount arts district regional arts center grant recipient change.	3/25/99	
21	48	50*	Public utilities performance based natural gas purchasing plans sunset repeal.	3/25/99	
22	137*	463	Collector watercraft license numbers and display requirements exemption.	3/26/99	
23	56*	90	Health care provider actions statute of limitations modification.	3/26/99	
24	193	255*	Emergency telephone (911) calls interference crime expansion.	3/29/99	
25	165	460*	Special disability license plates for modified motor vehicles.	3/29/99	
26	438	407*	McLeod West School District #2887; secondary educational facility grant.	3/29/99	

Bill Introductions

HF2292-HF2346

Monday, March 29

HF2292—Sviggum (R) **K-12 Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 2172, Kenyon-Wanamingo, technology grant provided, and money appropriated.

HF2293—Dorman (R) **Agriculture Policy**

Minnesota grown agricultural promotion program expansion and administration appropriation provided.

HF2294—Ozment (R) **Transportation Policy**

State transportation bond issuance authorized to match federal funds and replace or rehabilitate local bridges, and money appropriated.

HF2295—Wenzel (DFL) **K-12 Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 482, Little Falls, and Morrison County cooperative facility grant provided, and money appropriated.

HF2296—Bishop (R) **Capital Investment**

Transitional housing provided for felons, report required, bond sale authorized, and money appropriated.

HF2297—Murphy (DFL) **Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Local police and paid fire consolidation account member contribution rate revised, and certification procedure for coverage expansion eliminated.

HF2298—Dawkins (DFL) **Taxes**

Notification required for compromised tax liabilities, and certain farm property capital gains tax deduction provided.

HF2299—Schumacher (DFL) **K-12 Education Finance**

Young inventors program expansion appropriation provided.

HF2300—Bishop (R) **Taxes**

Mayo Civic Center construction materials sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF2301—McElroy (R) **Taxes**

Time limit provided for denial of tax refunds.

HF2302—Entenza (DFL) **State Government Finance**

Public radio funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF2303—Finseth (R) **Taxes**

East Grand Forks redevelopment project grants provided, and money appropriated.

HF2304—McElroy (R) **Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Affordable housing demonstration project established, and money appropriated.

HF2305—Broecker (R) **Taxes**

Income tax checkoff provided for the children's trust fund for the prevention of child abuse.

HF2306—Rhodes (R) **Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Redevelopment account appropriation provided.

HF2307—Hilty (DFL) **State Government Finance**

Senate appropriation provided for production and distribution of an educational tape on the legislative process.

HF2308—Milbert (DFL) **Taxes**

Green acres property taxation definition expanded.

HF2309—Milbert (DFL) **Taxes**

Certain items exempted from sales and use tax including books, sheet music, personal hygiene products, and veterinary prescription drugs.

HF2310—Larsen, P. (R) **Health & Human Services Policy**

Sexually transmitted infections report required, and money appropriated for prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, HIV prevention initiatives for greater Minnesota and HIV and substance abuse prevention.

HF2311—Winter (DFL) **K-12 Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 417, Tracy, levy authority provided.

HF2312—Winter (DFL) **K-12 Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 417, Tracy, grant provided, and money appropriated.

HF2313—Westfall (R) **Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Wolverton City Creek restoration project appropriation provided.

HF2314—Lenczewski (DFL) **Taxes**

Bloomington obligation to fiscal disparities areawide tax base eliminated under certain conditions.

HF2315—Wenzel (DFL) **Taxes**

Certain cities provided increased government aid.

HF2316—Huntley (DFL) **Taxes**

Property tax treatment clarified for certain property owned by utilities and leased for residential or recreational purposes.

HF2317—Larson, D. (DFL) **Taxes**

Property tax increases prohibited for taxes payable in 2000, limits imposed on later increases, study required, and money appropriated.

HF2318—Trimble (DFL) **Jobs & Economic Development Policy**

Demonstration projects created for economic and community development through telecommunications technology, regional electronic commerce incentives funded, and money appropriated.

Tuesday, March 30

HF2319—Abeler (R) **Education Policy**

Phonics education required in elementary school, staff development provided, and phonics instruction required for teacher licensure.

HF2320—Abeler (R) **Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Public employee military duty reimbursement time period redefined.

HF2321—Mulder (R) **Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Pipestone County Historical Society economic development grant provided.

HF2322—Dorman (R) **Taxes**

Property tax credit for debt service and referendum levies on agriculture property provided, and money appropriated.

HF2323—Gray (DFL) **Education Policy**

Parent definition modified for compulsory education and reporting, county and state agency reporting permitted, at-risk student needs development structure provided, advisory council created, and money appropriated.

HF2324—Peterson (DFL) **Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Madison historic preservation and downtown redevelopment program grant provided, and money appropriated.

HF2325—Solberg (DFL) **Taxes**

Business incubator property tax exemption requirements modified.

HF2326—Finseth (R) **Taxes**

Counties provided aid for flood-related market value losses, and money appropriated.

HF2327—Fuller (R)
Crime Prevention

Inmates required to apply assets toward incarceration costs, impoverishment of innocent spouse prevention provided, certain transfers of assets permitted, certain transfers prohibited and criminal penalties provided.

HF2328—Opatz (DFL)
Higher Education Finance

St. Cloud State University teacher training program to increase urban teachers of color appropriation provided.

HF2329—Peterson (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Madison provided grant for infrastructure for the Madison historic preservation and downtown redevelopment program, bond issuance authorized, and money appropriated.

Wednesday, March 31

HF2330—Rhodes (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy

Administration provisions modified relating to public lands, procurements, easements, designer selection, parking facilities, and other matters, and state archaeologist authority modified.

HF2331—Hasskamp (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Watercraft license fees modified, and personal watercraft surcharge repealed.

HF2332—Knoblach (R)
Capital Investment

Beaver Island Trail in Stearns county grant matching requirements modified.

HF2333—Seagren (R)
K-12 Education Finance

Jan. 5 deadline for settlement of teacher contracts repealed.

HF2334—Holsten (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Resident and nonresident hunting and fishing license fees modified.

HF2335—Howes (R)
Health & Human Services Finance

Park Rapids nursing facility contract payment rate increased.

HF2336—Sviggum (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) member appointment provisions modified.

HF2337—Larsen, P. (R)
Civil Law

Year 2000 failure civil action liability limited.

HF2338—Haas (R)
Transportation Finance

Pedestrian bridge over Highway 169 construction required, and money appropriated.

HF2339—Dehler (R)
Higher Education Finance

International technology acquisition and transfer system development appropriation provided.

HF2340—Westfall (R)
Agriculture Policy

Usefulness of developing a revolving loan fund to support value-added activities associated with short rotation of woody crops provided, and report required.

HF2341—Molnau (R)
Transportation Finance

Trunk highway bonds issued for bridge repair, construction, and reconstruction and for acquisition of right-of-way, and money appropriated.

HF2342—Wagenius (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Development Policy

Office of strategic and long-range planning directed to create state development strategy, and money appropriated.

HF2343—Molnau (R)
Transportation Finance

Commuter rail plan adopted, design plan approval process established, coordination committee created, and regional rail authority provisions modified.

HF2344—Rhodes (R)
Health & Human Services Finance

Nonprofit agency appropriations restored.

HF2345—Bishop (R)
Ways & Means

Legislative Commission on Planning and Fiscal Policy forecasting and budgeting standards developed.

HF2346—Kubly (DFL)
State Government Finance

Compulsive gambling treatment and education appropriation provided.

Continued from page 17

a great deal of pride in it," Lally said.

While he's convinced the Inver Grove Heights location would have worked fine, Lally said this spot is more convenient for taxpayers and for those who have to run back and forth to the Capitol.

The department isn't connected to the underground tunnel that links several buildings around the Capitol, but there are plans to make the connection soon. There is a tunnel that connects the building to the adjacent parking ramp. 🐾



Evidently, fear of pie-throwers is escalating around the Capitol after Sen. Carol Flynn (DFL-Mpls) was hit in the face with a pie thrown by a protester March 30.

Ted Mondale, chairman of the Metropolitan Council, tried to dissuade possible assailants during a March 31 meeting of the House Transportation Finance Committee.

"I just want to clarify if anyone has a pie here this morning they should go after the guy with the beard," Mondale said of his colleague Elwyn Tinklenberg, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The two attended the committee meeting to urge lawmakers to fund light rail transit initiatives.

Where to find information

House Television Services

216C State Capitol (651) 297-1338

House Television Services is responsible for live coverage of House floor sessions and some committee hearings. Such coverage is aired in the Twin Cities area on KTCI-TV, Channel 17. The House also broadcasts via satellite statewide. Outstate residents should check with local cable operators for time and channel information or the office's Web site at: <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/htv/htv.ssi>

All televised floor sessions and committee hearings are close-captioned for people with hearing impairments.

Committee Schedule

Schedule is subject to change.

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MONDAY, April 5

**The House will not meet in session.
Committees will not meet.**

TUESDAY, April 6

10 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: HF350 (Tuma) Cannon River Valley watershed district protection provided, trail and joint powers planning funded, and money appropriated.

HF495 (Howes) Nonpaved alternative trails developed adjacent to the Heartland Paul Bunyon State Trails, and money appropriated.

HF1667 (Westrom) Design and engineering appropriation provided for Minnesota River trail from Appleton to the Milan Beach on Lake Lac Qui Parle.

HF1252 (Murphy) Money appropriated for a snowmobile trail to connect the Willard Munger state trail and the North Shore state trail.

HF1539 (Davids) Olmsted County regional trail appropriation provided.

HF2245 (Westfall) Whiskey Creek restoration project appropriation provided in city of Barnesville.

HF2076 (Peterson, D.) Chippewa County; recreational trail resurfaced from Milan to Lac Qui Parle Lake and money appropriated.

HF1774 (Bakk) Gitchie-Gami trail constructed along Lake Superior in Lake and Cook counties, and money appropriated.

HF955 (McCollum) Ramsey and Washington counties regional trail development around Silver Lake funded, and money appropriated.

12 noon

JUDICIARY FINANCE

Basement Hearing Room

State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Sherry Broecker

Agenda: Construction of the judiciary finance omnibus bill.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Bob Ness

Agenda: HF479 (Westrom) Agricultural producer contract advisory task force established; livestock, agricultural commodity, and specialty crop contracts studied; and money appropriated. HF808 (Ness) Bovine paratuberculosis diagnosis data classification provided, Board of Animal Health executive secretary name changed to executive director, and sale of cattle limitations repealed.

HF978 (Harder) Agricultural water quality and quantity management initiative funded, and money appropriated.

HF447 (Winter) Livestock price discrimination prohibited and civil penalties provided.

HF816 (Peterson) Feedlot and manure management advisory committee composition modified.

HF543 (Peterson) Cooperatively owned livestock processing plant development program established and money appropriated.

HF486 (Bakk) Riparian landowners and aircraft operators allowed bulk delivery of nonoxygenated gasoline.

Note: Bills not heard in this meeting will be added to the end of the April 7 committee meeting agenda.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Jim Knobloch

Agenda: HF1123 (McCollum) St. Paul flood mitigation holding pond grant provided.

Overview of magnet school proposals for Woodbury and Edina.

HF1547 (Bishop) Minnesota State Colleges and Universities capital improvements authorized, and money appropriated.

TAXES

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: To be announced.

2:30 p.m.

The House meets in session.

30 minutes after session

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF539 (Huntley) MFIP face-to-face orientation exemption provided for minor parents.

HF615 (Bradley) Nursing facility provider training and education program established, and money appropriated.

HF1392 (Jennings) Minnesota Family Investment Fund, MFIP, provisions modified relating to earned income disregard, food stamps, and employment services; food assistance to legal noncitizens continued, and TANF administrative cap proposed.

HF1645 (Knobloch) Truancy prevention pilot program provided, and money appropriated.

HF1593 (Mulder) Loan forgiveness program established for certain pharmacy students established, sole community pharmacy financial assistance authorized, and drug therapy management pilot project established.

HF1436 (Greenfield) University of Minnesota Medical School primary care physician training initiative appropriated money.

HF1596 (Goodno) Planning and transition grant program established for providers of older adult services, and money appropriated.

WEDNESDAY, April 7

8 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF1193 (Nornes) First Call Minnesota federal reimbursement claims processed by the Department of Human Services.

HF1190 (Harder) Westbrook Care Center hospital and clinic improvement grant provided, and money appropriated.

HF468 (Dorn) Emergency medical services fund appropriation automatic inflation adjustment provided.

HF215 (Howes) Comprehensive advanced life support rural medical personnel training program established, and money appropriated.

HF1837 (Fuller) Automatic external defibrillators purchase and study funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF1840 (Fuller) Emergency medical services complaint investigations appropriated money.

HF2161 (Olson) Traumatic brain injury demonstration project appropriated money.

HF2152 (Otremba) Cancer awareness and prevention funded, health data classification provided, and money appropriated.

HF169 (Mulder) MinnesotaCare provider tax exemption provided for free of charge services.

HF217 (Rhodes) Chana Malka Oppen provision for least invasive procedure; mandated autopsy religious exemption created.

HF500 (Mulder) Nonmetropolitan county prepaid Medical Assistance (MA) and prepaid General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) program contract rates increased.

HF952 (Mulder) Health care providers authorized to designate credential verification entities.

HF789 (Goodno) Annual health care provider rate adjustments provided for the purpose of medical assistance, and inflation index modified.

HF1745 (Knobloch) Adult foster care provider respite care supplementary payments provided.

Note: If necessary, this meeting will continue from 12 noon to 2 p.m., and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy

Agenda: To be announced.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

500S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Sherry Broecker

Agenda: Construction of judiciary finance omnibus bill.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: K-12 education omnibus bill.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau

Agenda: Omnibus transportation bill.

8:30 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie

Agenda: HF875 (Bakk) Small business government contract bid preference limited to two years.

HF879 (Knoblach) Local units of government regulatory relief provided.

HF899 (Dawkins) Spanish-American War corrective historical information plaque commissioned and displayed in the state capitol; and money appropriated.

HF1124 (Smith) Bleacher safety requirements provided, penalties provided, and money appropriated.

HF1206 (McGuire) Data access procedures published, data practices compliance required in privatization contracts, model policies prepared, historical director required to assist in records management; information policy training program appropriated money.

HF1654 (Osskopp) Open competition provided for state telecommunications services, state competition with the private sector prohibited, and other conforming changes provided.

HF2101 (Hilty) Government training service provided an exemption from the solicitation process and money appropriated.

10 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: To be announced.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

300S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik

Agenda: To be announced.

TAXES

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: To be announced.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

500N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness

Agenda: HF1083 (Swenson) Crop or revenue insurance assistance, and feedlot manure processing and odor control technology development assistance provided; and money appropriated.

HF1088 (Westfall) University of Minnesota crop

disease research funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1528 (Skoe) Wheat and barley scab disease research funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF1091 (Westrom) Minnesota Marketplace grant provided and money appropriated.

HF1200 (Harder) State agricultural experiment stations appropriated money.

HF1204 (Rostberg) Commissioner of agriculture appropriation provided for the county agriculture inspection program.

HF1269 (Ness) Urban agricultural high school created, planning grant provided, and money appropriated.

HF1270 (Finseth) Urban agricultural high school created, planning grant provided, and money appropriated.

FAMILY & EARLY

CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Omnibus finance bill.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peg Larsen

Agenda: To be announced.

Property Tax Division/ TAXES

300S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: HF2219 (Hasskamp) Property tax market value increases limited.

HF2314 (Lenczewski) Bloomington obligation to fiscal disparities areawide tax base eliminated under certain conditions.

HF2265 (Lenczewski) Bloomington fiscal disparities obligation eliminated under certain conditions, and Mall of America tax revenue study authorized.

HF2133 (Finseth) East Grand Forks and Warren provided temporary local government aid increases, and money appropriated.

HF2153 (Gray) Property tax and state aid special taxing districts expanded to include the middle Mississippi River watershed management organization.

1:30 p.m.

Subcommittee on Salary and Budget/ Legislative Coordinating Commission

400N State Office Building
Chr. Sen. Roger Moe

Agenda: Review/approve budget proposals for commissions and joint agencies.

2:30 p.m.

Legislative Coordinating Commission

400N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Steve Sviggum

Agenda: Report of the Subcommittee on Salary and Budget (budget proposals for commissions and joint agencies).

3 p.m.

RULES & LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION

400S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Tim Pawlenty

Agenda: Calendar for April 8.
House budget.

4 p.m.

WAYS & MEANS

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dave Bishop

Agenda: To be announced.

6 p.m.

FAMILY & EARLY

CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Omnibus finance bill.

JOBS & ECONOMIC

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy

Agenda: To be announced.

7 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

500N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness

Agenda: HF1586 (Swenson) Certain land authorized to be enrolled in more than one state or federal conservation program.

HF1747 (Westfall) Agricultural chemical response reimbursement eligibility expanded.
HF1759 (Juhnke) Turkey respiratory disease control and prevention research funded, and money appropriated.

HF1815 (Fuller) Beaver damage control program authorized activities clarified and money appropriated.

HF2012 (Harder) Veterinary practice requirements modified and procedures clarified.
HF1558 (Westfall) Board of Grain Standards provisions and duties modified, rulemaking authorized, and definitions clarified.

HF2251 (Cassell) Temporary permit provided for producers of Grade A or manufactured grade milk for adulterated milk.

HF2293 (Dorman) Minnesota Grown agricultural promotion program expansion and administration appropriation provided.

THURSDAY, April 8

8 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF177 (Mulder) Partial-birth abortions prohibited, and criminal and civil penalties provided.

HF178 (Boudreau) Abortion informed consent required and civil remedies provided.

HF377 (Goodno) Abortion notification data reporting required and civil penalties imposed.
HF807 (Howes) Rural hospital improvement grant program expanded, Medical Assistance coverage of telemedicine conferences and critical access hospital outpatient fee cost-based system provided, uniform billing established, and money appropriated.

HF990 (Mulder) Health care purchasing alliances development grants provided to local organizations and money appropriated.
HF1023 (Haas) Employer-subsidized health coverage program established.

HF1620 (Greenfield) Community health clinic grant programs appropriated money.

HF1688 (Bradley) Adult mental health day treatment and consolidated chemical dependency treatment fund requirements modified.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
Agenda: To be announced.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

500S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Sherry Broecker
Agenda: Construction of judiciary finance omnibus bill.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau
Agenda: Omnibus transportation bill.

9 a.m.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren
Agenda: K-12 education finance omnibus bill.

10 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten
Agenda: To be announced.

TAXES

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: To be announced.

10:30 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie
Agenda: House of Representatives budget presentation.
Legislative Coordinating Commission budget presentation.
Children's Museum budget presentation.
Bills may be added to the agenda.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness
Agenda: HF1203 (Kubly) University of Minnesota farm safety and health program appropriated money.
HF2054 (Wenzel) Dairy farming task force created and money appropriated.
HF2291 (McElroy) Relating to agriculture; repealing the weather modification regulatory laws.
HF1370 (Rostberg) Organic agriculture promotion and funding provided, advisory task force expiration date extended, and money appropriated.
HF1496 (Kubly) Family farm advocates and agriculture information centers appropriated money.
HF1530 (Finseth) Potato aphid research appropriation provided.

HF1531 (Finseth) Seed potato inspection appropriation provided.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Knoblach
Agenda: To be announced.

FAMILY & EARLY

CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FINANCE

500N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora
Agenda: Omnibus finance bill.

2:30 p.m.

The House meets in session.

30 minutes following session

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno
Agenda: Continuation of morning meeting.

6 p.m.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
Agenda: To be announced.

FRIDAY, April 9

8 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno
Agenda: HF1071 (Rifenberg) Persons with developmental disabilities crisis intervention project carryforward authorized.
HF1449 (Wilkin) Persons with mental retardation day training and habilitation rate variance criteria modified.
HF1650 (Greenfield) Day training and habilitation providers reimbursed for days the provider was closed due to severe weather.
HF429 (Bradley) Programs for persons with developmental disabilities alternative licensing system pilot project duties transferred to the Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission, federal waiver request required, and money appropriated.
HF1127 (Abeler) Noncertified boarding care homes provisions, Medicaid reimbursements, and client records for assisted living home care providers modified.
HF1562 (Bradley) Developmental disabilities provisions modified, consolidated standards intent clarified and expanded to include respite sites, medication administration clarified, and family support program provisions modified.
HF1784 (Goodno) DeafBlind Services Minnesota appropriated money.
HF1794 (Greenfield) Peoples, Inc. deaf and hard-of-hearing services grant provided, and money appropriated.
HF1655 (Greenfield) Minnesota commission serving deaf and hard of hearing people appropriation provided.
Note: Meeting will continue at 12 noon, 10 State Office Building.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
Agenda: To be announced.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

500S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Sherry Broecker
Agenda: Construction of judiciary finance omnibus bill.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren
Agenda: K-12 education finance omnibus bill.

10 a.m.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

300S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik
Agenda: To be announced.

TAXES

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: To be announced.

10:30 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

400S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie
Agenda: To be announced.

12 noon

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno
Agenda: Continuation of morning meeting.

SATURDAY, April 10

9 a.m.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

500S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Sherry Broecker
Agenda: Construction of judiciary finance omnibus bill.

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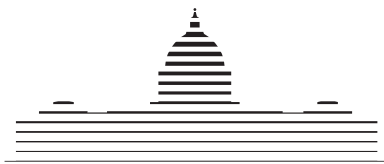
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Majority Leader: Tim Pawlenty
Minority Leader: Thomas W. Pugh

MINNESOTA INDEX

Farming in Minnesota

Farms in Minnesota in 1997	87,000
States with more farms than Minnesota in 1997	4
Acres of Minnesota farmland in 1997, in millions	30
Total acres of land and water in Minnesota, in millions	87
Average number of acres per Minnesota farm, 1997	343
Average per acre value of farmland and buildings in Minnesota, 1997	\$1,040
National average	\$942
Average state and local taxes paid per acre of farmland in Minnesota, 1994	\$7.86
In Rhode Island	\$56.75
In Alabama	\$1.32
National average	\$5.86
Minnesota's net farm income in 1997, in billions	2.2
As percent of net national farm income	4.3
Acres of Minnesota farmland planted in 1997, in millions	20.5
National rank	6
Acres of Minnesota farmland harvested in 1997, in millions	20.1
National rank	5
Acres of soybeans harvested in Minnesota in 1997, in millions	6.7
National rank	3
Acres of grain harvested in Minnesota in 1997, in millions	6.5
National rank	4
Acres of corn harvested in Minnesota in 1997, in millions	4.6
National rank	5
Dairy cows in Minnesota in 1996	598,000
National rank	5
Hogs and pigs in Minnesota in 1997, in millions	5.4
National rank	3
Chickens in Minnesota in 1997, in millions	47.5
National rank	20
Eggs produced in Minnesota in 1997, in billions	3
National rank	9

Sources: CQ's State Fact Finder 1999, Congressional Quarterly Inc.; State Rankings 1998: A Statistical View of the 50 United States, Morgan Quitno.

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