

SESSION WEEKLY

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Reflections

February is the time of year around the Capitol when most legislators begin to get used to cabin fever, as they spend some nine- to 12-hour days in meetings discussing and debating bills. Most forget that six months ago, back in their districts, they were outside under the hot sun shaking hands, kissing babies, smiling a lot, and sweating at festivals and parades all over the state.

During summer months, particularly in an election year, legislators attend hundreds of community celebrations throughout the state. It has been said that Minnesota has almost as many fairs and festivals as it does lakes. At least many legislators think so as they meet and greet large numbers of constituents at the events.

During a legislative interim out on "Main Street," legislators talk about farm issues, education, and tax rebates at a Turkey Days festival, a Cornfest, a Porkfest, a Strawberry Festival, the Aquatennial, WEfest, or at the 126th year of Lumber Jack Days in Stillwater. If there are no central themes for gatherings such as Sugar Beet Days, cities and towns like Afton still have a Fourth of July celebration. Other towns celebrate Woodbury Days, Delano Days, Rochesterfest, and Forest Lake holds an ice-fishing contest in winter.

One unique event takes place in the town of Whalan, located near the state's southeast corner. Its population of about 94 holds a Stand Still Parade, where bands, floats, convertibles holding town "royalty" and politicians like Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston) don't move — the observers do. But some parade-goers still bring their lawn chairs, "because you are supposed to."

Also, legislators rarely miss special events like the Spam Town USA Festival in Austin, Grand Rapids' Judy Garland Festival, a lighted pontoon boat parade at Glenwood's Waterama festival, and a block-long parade on a section of Lincoln Avenue in St. Paul which lasts only 30 minutes.

St. Paul lawmakers like Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) get another chance to be in public at the spectacular St. Paul Winter Carnival, celebrating 113 years in 1999, where the purveyor of winter, King Boreas, is annually deposed by his fire nemesis, Vulcanus Rex.

Capital city officials can participate in two carnival parades, join the search for the festival medallion — once found on the Capitol grounds — or watch the historic Bouncing Team blanket toss, a game borrowed from the Eskimos in 1886. They can also choose to sled down a 200-foot snow slide in Como Park, play broom ball on ice, or attend one of over 100 events during the two-week celebration.

It's never difficult for lawmakers to find a local annual festival at which they can view any number of Minnesota phenomena like the world's largest ice castle, the state's largest hog, or the fastest-running turkey.

— LeClair Grier Lambert

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On the cover: A light fixture at St. Paul's World Trade Center reflects participants at the governor's budget unveiling Jan. 28.

—Photo by Tom Olmscheid

First Reading

Returning Surplus Funds . . .

House goes for rebates according to income taxes paid

By Paul Wahl

The chant began from a few straggling voices when the Minnesota Legislature convened in 1997. "Give it back. Give it back," they said.

Within a few weeks, the cry reached a crescendo as legislators and the governor wrestled with what to do with unprecedented state budget surpluses.

Today, there's little in the way of public protest. It seems almost a given that taxpayers will receive a rebate just as they have in the previous two years. It's only what form the rebate will take that remains uncertain.

The House passed a bill (HF1) Feb. 4 that would provide more than \$1 billion in rebates based on income taxes paid in 1997. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka). The vote was 93-35.

After approval of a DFL-backed amendment on the floor, the bill also includes a plan for additional property tax rebates. In all, the bill would rebate \$1.55 billion to Minnesota taxpayers.

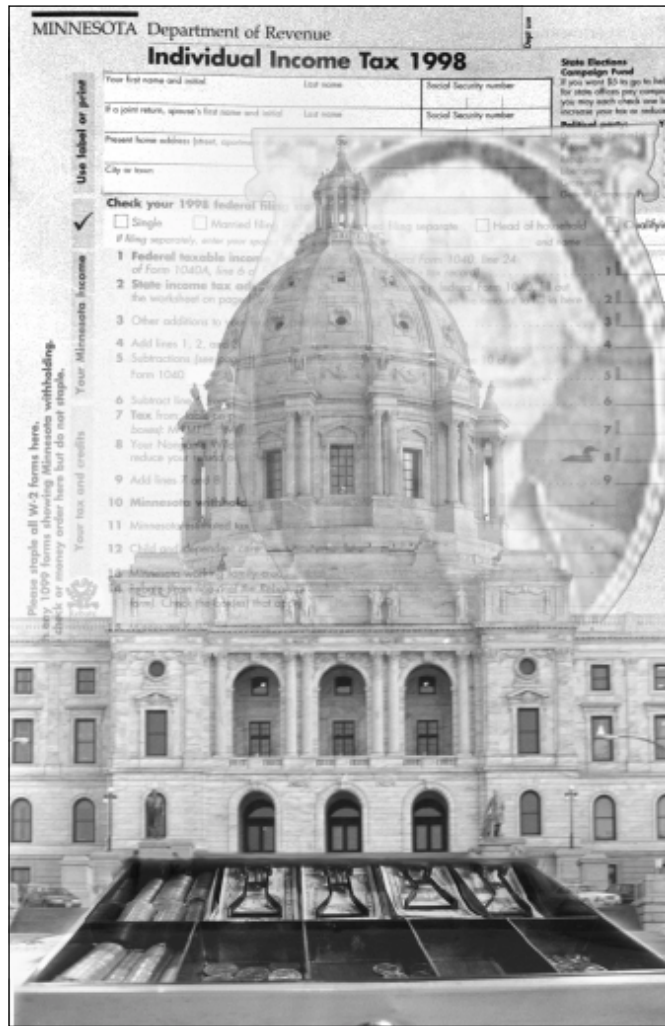
The House also reconsidered and again rejected a bill (HF209) that would have repealed a provision in the 1998 tax law requiring that \$400 million of the projected budget surplus be used to pay for projects in last year's capital projects law. House Republicans wanted to use that \$400 million to fund property tax rebate provisions included in HF1.

The bill failed 68-59. Because it dealt with bonding, the bill needed a three-fifths majority to pass.

Abrams and his Republican colleagues argued that the income tax rebate plan is preferable to other rebate proposals because it would return surplus funds proportionally to taxpayers.

"It is fair, it is more, and it is now," said Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan). "We have kept faith with our words to return all of the surplus."

Minority Leader Tom Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul) said there is broad agreement that Minnesotans deserve a rebate. The problem, he said, is figuring a way to give the money back fairly.



The House passed a bill Feb. 4 that would rebate about \$1.5 billion to Minnesota taxpayers.

"There are forgotten people in the Abrams proposal," Pugh said. "We believe the Ventura plan is a far better way of dealing with this."

The House plan will eventually have to be reconciled with a Senate rebate bill that is expected to more closely reflect a proposal from Gov. Jesse Ventura.

Under the governor's plan, rebate amounts would be determined according to estimates of average household expenditures for consumer sales tax.

While the debate between the competing plans goes on, the Minnesota economy continues to be strong.

The November 1998 budget forecast showed a projected surplus of \$1.5 billion.

Such a large surplus may hardly seem real

for legislators and other state officials who were around from 1989 to 1992. During that period, forecasters at one point said revenues would be down \$700 million and the scramble was on to find cuts that would help stem a projected budget shortfall.

The last forecast shortfall was issued in February 1992. But during 1996 and 1997, the state saw surpluses total more than \$2 billion.

In November 1996, a forecast of revenues almost \$800 million ahead of the previous projection was released.

It was with that figure clearly in mind that former Gov. Arne Carlson presented a plan to return surplus revenue directly to taxpayers. His \$20 billion budget for the current biennium initially called for a modest \$261 million to be returned as rebates, ranging from \$50 per person to \$250 per person.

By the end of the 1997 session, a rebate fashioned on property taxes paid had been adopted. Homeowners got back 20 percent of their 1997 property taxes paid, while renters received 18 percent of the portion of their rent that constituted property tax payments. Nearly \$500 million was allocated for the rebate.

Heading into the 1998 session, Carlson and the Legislature once again embarked upon a plan for rebates. With a \$1.9 billion projected surplus, the cry to return more money than the previous year was deafening. In the end, another \$500 million was provided for rebates.

The 1998 rebate was similar to the one adopted in 1997; however, a maximum rebate of \$1,500 was written in.

If passed into law, any of the versions of the rebate on the table this session would be the largest in the state's history — nearly \$1 billion — and among the largest tax rebates ever distributed in the country.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, rebates are being talked about in only two other states this year — Missouri and

Colorado. Oregon handed out a rebate in 1998 and has in five of the last seven biennia.

Missouri, Colorado, and Oregon are all constitutionally required to refund excess revenues.

The Colorado rebate is part of that state's 1992 Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, which limits state revenue growth to the sum of inflation and population growth. Money over that must be rebated to taxpayers.

The Colorado refund is based on sales tax and is paid according to incomes revealed on


income tax returns. Ventura has also called for rebates to be automatic when certain surplus levels are reached.

The federal government is expected to run a budget surplus of nearly a trillion dollars in the coming years, but as yet there is little call for returning it to taxpayers in the form of a rebate.

During debate on the House floor, an amendment was passed that would make rebates automatic at the end of each fiscal year if a sufficient surplus remains in the state's cof-

fers. The amendment was offered by Rep. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope).

While the rebates are popular with taxpayers and voters, they come at a cost. Over the two years rebates have been approved, the Department of Revenue has spent about \$3 million for the special processing required.

When this year's rebate plan is hammered out, it's expected to require about \$1.5 million to cover costs. 

National study shows Minnesota government is making the grade



Report cards are out, and Minnesota's state government is doing better than average and, in some ways, better than its neighbors. But there is room for improvement.

The February issue of *Governing* magazine features a study that grades each of the states for government performance in five different areas. Minnesota gets an average grade of B from the magazine. Wisconsin and Iowa also get B grades, while the Dakotas both receive B- marks.

No state is given a perfect A for an average grade, but Missouri, Utah, Virginia, and Washington all scored A- marks. Alabama's D is the worst average grade of any state.

The grades are drawn from a research project conducted by *Governing* and Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. The project, which began in 1997, was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

The study, which was constructed through surveys sent to all 50 states, focuses on government performance in five specific areas: financial management, capital management, human resources, information technology, and "managing for results," which is an umbrella term covering efforts in long-term planning and performance measurement.

Minnesota gets an A- for financial management, and the study concludes that the state "nearly always handles fiscal matters responsibly."

Wisconsin, considered by some to be a model of efficiency in state government, gets only a C+ for financial management, and the study concludes that, following commonly accepted accounting principles, the state has been "running a budget deficit for years."

Iowa, credited for correcting "misleading accounting practices" that caused trouble in the early 1990s, gets an A- for financial management. South Dakota gets a B+, and North Dakota gets a B.

Minnesota also scores high for capital management, receiving an A- grade and praise for its capital planning process. The study lauds Minnesota for requiring state agencies to assemble six-year capital plans and to prioritize their requests. Minnesota "balances the need to maintain and reuse existing assets with demand for new facilities," the study concludes.

Wisconsin matches Minnesota's A- for capital management, while Iowa's B- is the lowest in the region.

Minnesota's lowest grade is a C+ for its human resources system, which the study calls "rigid, centralized, and antiquated." The state is criticized for placing too much authority in the Department of Employee Relations, rather than allowing individual agencies more of a role in deciding whom they hire and how quickly vacancies are filled. However, the study credits the state for moving toward a "brand-new hiring system to replace one that's seriously out of date."

All bordering states score better for human resources except South Dakota, which matches Minnesota's mark.

Minnesota gets a B grade for information technology, for which the study credits the state for providing Web access to a wide variety of resources and for maintaining "reasonably up-to-date" information systems.

The state's information technology grade is matched by Wisconsin and South Dakota, but North Dakota and Iowa lag behind.

Minnesota also gets a B in managing for results. The study credits the state for taking "notable steps" in measuring per-

formance in education and environmental programs, but the study knocks the Legislature and former Gov. Arne Carlson for failing to strongly support Minnesota Milestones, an ongoing, goal-oriented planning initiative.

Managing for results seems an unfamiliar concept in the Dakotas, where governments in both states receive D grades for their efforts and South Dakota is ripped for having "no performance-based budgeting at all."

Wisconsin gets only C in managing for results, but Iowa gets a B+ and is praised for having a solid overall strategy into which agency and program planning efforts all feed.

Poor Alabama appears to be a model of government inefficiency and ineffectiveness. The state gets an F for its planning and performance-measurement systems, and it breaks out of the D range only in human resources, for which it scores a C-. Study results show that the state has no master plan for capital projects and fails to even maintain a statewide inventory of capital facilities. The Alabama Legislature passes an annual "financial emergency resolution," which allows lawmakers to sidestep legal obligations and leave the state's rainy day fund empty.

Missouri, on the other hand, has a government that looks like a poster child for Midwestern thriftiness and thoughtfulness. The study finds a state that "is careful not to make decisions that will get it into trouble in the future" and that is performing above average in every area.

Overall, the study shows state governments across the nation to be doing fairly well. When 50-state averages are calculated, the high mark is a B for financial management and C+ scores for information technology and managing for results are at the low end.

Highlights



AGRICULTURE

Disease hitting hogs

A bill that would provide \$1.5 million to help combat a statewide outbreak of pseudorabies in Minnesota's swine population was approved Jan. 2 by the House Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Committee.

The money would pay for a vaccine needed to stop the spread of the viral disease, which can make pigs sick and, in severe cases, kill them but poses no threat to pork eaters or other members of the public.

Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont), whose district includes a number of herds infected with the disease, is sponsoring the bill (**HF414**).

Dr. Tom Hagerty, head of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, told committee members that prior to last fall, the state was on pace to complete a federal pseudorabies eradication program.

The program began in 1989 with a goal of total eradication by 2000. Less than 150 herds were left untreated.

Then in December 1998, the number of infected herds began to multiply exponentially.

Hagerty said the outbreak was partially due to larger herds and a swine flu epidemic — the worst in the state's history — that reduced the immunity of many hogs to the virus.

As the prices for hogs began to plummet, cash-strapped farmers scaled back their vaccination programs, and unusually mild fall weather created an ideal environment for the spread of the disease, which is also known as Aujeszky's disease.

Hagerty said he suspects farmers also didn't react as quickly as they normally would have because they've grown complacent over the years as the threat from pseudorabies declined.

If the disease isn't stopped, Hagerty added, foreign markets may begin refusing to purchase Minnesota-grown hogs. South Dakota has already implemented a ban on the state's hogs, fearing additional outbreaks there.

Hagerty said this is the first time the state has proposed purchasing vaccine, which would be handled by veterinarians in the infected areas at no cost and administered by individual producers.

The federal government has already appropriated \$80 million for the purchase and slaughter of infected hogs.

About \$300,000 of the state money would go for blood testing and the remainder for the vaccine, which is best administered in the spring. About three million doses will be needed.

The vaccine would be targeted toward hogs within a two-mile radius of infected herds, where the danger of spreading the disease is greatest.

The bill moves to the House Ways and Means Committee.



BANKING

A town without a bank

Residents of the tiny community of Outing, located in southern Cass County, may soon have their first local bank branch, under a bill approved Feb. 1 by the House Commerce Committee.

Current state law prohibits banks from setting up shop in townships without special approval.

The "home office protection law" allows banks to establish branch offices in cities with populations of less than 10,000 only with consent from all banks that have their home office in that city. Banks are also prohibited from getting around the law by opening in townships just outside city limits.

But **HF248**, sponsored by Rep. Kris Hasskamp (DFL-Crosby), would allow First National Bank of Crosby to establish a branch in Outing, an unincorporated community in Crooked Lake Township. The community is on the northern tip of Roosevelt Lake and its population includes many senior citizens.

Rep. Gregory Davids (R-Preston) said he would hesitate to support the bill if other banks had expressed interest in opening an office in Outing. But Hasskamp said other banks have not been interested, and residents have generally been supportive of the bank opening in their community.

The bill now moves to the House floor.

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CRIME

Loophole in sex crime law

Unless lawmakers act, Roger Lloyd Zimmerman will slip through the cracks of the state's sex offender registration law.

In July 1996, Zimmerman broke into a Wayzata home and raped a 13-year-old girl who was babysitting for her neighbor. Diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, he had stopped taking his medication and was living in a hole dug in the side of a hill.

Zimmerman told an investigator that he thought the sun was getting closer to the earth, and that the only way to cool things down was to have sex with a woman.

In 1998, Zimmerman was found to have committed the crime, but was found "not guilty by reason of mental illness." He is currently being held at the St. Peter state hospital.

Under the current registration law, Zimmerman is not required to register when released because he was found "not guilty" of first degree criminal sexual conduct, and wasn't committed as a "sexually dangerous person."

Zimmerman was committed for being "mentally ill and dangerous to the public," which does not fall under the notification law.

A bill (**HF228**) that would close that loophole in the state's sex offender registration law was approved Feb. 4 by the House Crime Prevention Committee.

The bill would change the law to specifically state that offenders who are charged with crimes listed under the offender registration law but are found not guilty by reason of mental illness are to be registered.

"Offenders like Roger Lloyd Zimmerman are exactly the type of offenders that this law was meant to address in the first place," said Daryl Coppoletti of WATCH, an organization that monitors violent crime cases in the Hennepin County courts.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), the bill's sponsor, said the current law's loopholes were brought to his attention by Coppoletti and WATCH.

Will Alexander, director of community notification for the Minnesota Department of Corrections, said he supports the bill. He said that although the change in the law would affect only a few offenders, it is necessary.

"It's the right thing to do, whether it's two or 200 people," he said.

The sex offender registration law, passed in 1991, requires that offenders register their address with law enforcement officials for 10 to 15 years upon release from prison or commitment.

The bill now goes to the House floor.



EDUCATION

Sex offenders out of schools

Persons convicted of criminal sexual conduct would not be allowed to teach in Minnesota's classrooms, under a bill approved Feb. 2 by the House Education Policy Committee.

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

Under the bill (HF14), courts would have 10 days to notify the Board of Teaching once they know 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 would also allow the state board to refuse to issue or renew licenses to applicants convicted of criminal sexual conduct.

A similar measure exists for school bus drivers.

"Our children are safe on the way to school," said Fuller, who added that his bill would keep children safe in the classroom. He said he is sponsoring the bill because of recent publicized incidents.

Kathy and Tim Schilla of Duluth testified that their daughter had been sexually molested by her third grade teacher in 1984. Kathy Schilla said the teacher, who had molested five other girls, pleaded guilty to two felony counts of criminal sexual conduct. However, she said, he never served his 26-month sentence.

In September 1997, the couple found out that the man was teaching at an elementary school and had taught in other schools since his conviction. He currently teaches at a technical college.

"This is a very important law that needs to be passed so this doesn't happen again," Kathy Schilla said.

Other issues brought up during the hearing included the frequency of criminal background checks of teachers, the types of crimes in-



Kathy and Tim Schilla tell members of the House Education Policy Committee Feb. 2 about their daughter, who was sexually assaulted 15 years ago by her third-grade teacher. The Schillas testified in favor of a bill that would make people convicted of criminal sexual conduct ineligible for a teacher's license.

volved in license revocation, and whether court officials should testify about the bill.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) also asked if any research had been done about criminal rehabilitation and if offenders' teaching licenses would be revoked permanently despite rehabilitation.

Fuller said that was his intention.

"I am preferring to play on the safe side," he said.

While committee members overwhelmingly approved the bill, many requested that it also be reviewed by the House Crime Prevention Committee before going to the House floor.

Rep. Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul) said it would be best to clear up any questions about criminal law now in order to avoid problems later.

If not, "they'll be chasing down the chief author and asking why your bill doesn't work," Entenza advised Fuller.

The bill now moves to the House Crime Prevention Committee.

Profile of Learning defended

Representatives of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning defended the Profile of Learning to lawmakers Feb. 4.

Commissioner Christine Jax told members of the House Education Policy Committee that problems with the profile don't necessarily require a legislative fix.

"I'm finding that a lot of the concerns and criticism that our department is getting are based on things that aren't true," Jax said.

Since districts began implementing the Profile of Learning in 1998, some teachers, parents, and legislators have criticized the plan for being too rigorous and time consuming.

Now, Rep. Tony Kielucki (R-Lester Prairie) is sponsoring HF15, a bill that would pare down the profile's requirements.

The Profile of Learning is one part of the state's Graduation Standards initiative, and requires students to complete various learning packages in at least nine areas. Standardized tests comprise the second part of the Graduation Standards.

One of the main problems associated with the Profile of Learning concerns performance packages that students must complete to demonstrate their knowledge of subject matters. The department published several packages to serve as example curriculum for teachers. However, many educators were given the impression that use of the packages is required and have voiced opposition to what they perceive as state-mandated teaching styles.

While Jax said the department never required teachers to use the packages, she did say there has been a lot of miscommunication about profile implementation between her agency and teachers.

"We've not communicated well," she said. "That's something we can change without legislation."

Jax gave an example of a simple chemistry assignment her ninth-grade daughter completed to demonstrate that the profile's requirements might not be as overwhelming as some people have indicated.

"My favorite performance package is one page," she said.

Several legislators expressed skepticism of the profile's record-keeping plans, which have been called burdensome by its critics.

And Rep. Bob Ness (R-Dassel) called the profile an "indictment" of public education and said he's not convinced it is the right plan to help students excel.

"We as legislators are hearing from thousands of people who say this system is not workable," he said.

Department representatives said the Profile of Learning needs time to take effect because schools have not even used the plan for a full year. In addition, 100 percent of school districts chose full implementation of the plan over a phased-in alternative, which they said makes the adjustment period longer.

"I believe it's fixable," Jax said. "It's a new day; it's a new administration."

The Education Policy Committee is expected to take action on Kielkucki's bill soon.

District seeks retroactive OK

Students in Milaca saw their summer come to an early end when state officials authorized their school district to begin classes on Aug. 24, 1998.

The early start date, which violates state law dictating when districts can begin the school year, was requested because the district plans to begin hazardous construction in May, forcing an early end to the school year.

Although the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning granted permission last summer for the early start, the district is still technically in violation of state law because the Legislature did not approve the early date.

But a bill (HF58) approved Feb. 2 by the House Education Policy Committee would rectify that problem.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton), would retroactively authorize the Milaca district to begin its school year any day before Labor Day.

Erickson said she was unable to introduce a proactive bill because the district passed its bond referendum for the construction project after the Legislature adjourned from its regular session last year.

But committee members took issue with the bill for two reasons. Some said passing it would set a precedent for retroactive legislation, and others said the Legislature should not even be taking up what they thought should be a local issue.

"I really resent that our state entity has to deal with piddly little matters that really should be under local control," said Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville).

During the 1998 session, Rep. Ken Wolf (R-Burnsville) sponsored legislation that would have repealed any state-mandated start dates. That measure failed partly because of heavy opposition from state tourism groups. Instead the Legislature repealed a law that allowed school districts to start only after Labor Day and moved the earliest start date up to Sept. 1 for the 2000-01 school year.

The bill now moves to the House floor.



ELECTIONS

Increasing election eligibility

Should an 18-year-old be eligible to hold an elected office?

That question would be posed to Minnesota voters on the 2000 ballot, under a bill (HF122) discussed Feb. 3 by the House Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Committee.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), sponsor of the bill, advocates amending the Minnesota Constitution, which requires people to be 21 to hold public office.

He said 18-year-olds can vote, serve in the military, get married, borrow money from a bank, and smoke cigarettes — and they should also be able to be a city councilor or a state legislator.

Several committee members expressed support for the bill. Rep. Mike Osskopp (R-Lake City) said serving in the military is the "ultimate test of adulthood." Three of his friends were drafted at age 18, and all three were killed in the Vietnam War, he said. And he added that if people are old enough to die for their country at that age, they should also be old enough to help set public policy.

Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) pointed out that even if Minnesota voters approved the constitutional amendment, they would still have other opportunities to vote on whether a person younger than age 21 is mature enough to hold public office.

"If they don't think the 18-year-old can do the job, they would vote for the other candidate," she said.

The bill was referred to an elections subcommittee.



ENVIRONMENT

Feedlot enforcement criticized

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) could do a better job of enforcing animal feedlot regulations, according to a report released Jan. 28 by the Office of the Legislative Auditor.

The agency needs to improve the feedlot regulation program to better serve the interests of both the environment and the livestock industry, the report states.

Among the findings, the auditor concluded that the MPCA needs to draft adequate rules for the program, to make more site visits to inspect proposed feedlots and lagoon construction projects, to provide oversight of manure application practices, and to offer its services in a more timely fashion.

In remarks to the Legislative Audit Commission, Legislative Auditor James Nobles said there are strengths and weaknesses in the agency's performance where feedlots are concerned.

He said one key goal should be getting MPCA staff members out of St. Paul and into the field where the feedlots are located. He also said the agency has to be more flexible and sensitive in dealing with farmers.

One of the major deficiencies in the feedlot regulation program is the lack of administrative rules, said John Yunker, the staff researcher for the auditor who coordinated the report.

Current rules were last updated in 1978 and do not adequately address many important regulatory issues, including land application of manure, manure stockpiling, standards for manure storage structures, the responsibilities of counties participating in the feedlot program, and the locating of feedlots in environmentally sensitive areas.

Yunker said that in an effort to protect the environment, the MPCA has dealt with some of these issues on a case-by-case basis and developed informal practices. Dealing with issues in this manner, however, has burdened the permitting and environmental review processes and caused considerable delays for farmers seeking permit approval.

Yunker also told of one case in which the agency had been inflexible in considering solutions to an odor problem. In that case, a feedlot in the northeastern part of the state used sunflower husks, instead of the legally required straw, to cover a manure holding area.

Although the sunflower husks — which formed a protective layer several inches thick — had the intended effect, the farmer was still fined because he didn't use straw as required.

In her response to the report, Lisa Thorvig, acting commissioner of the MPCA, acknowledged there is "room for improvement" in the agency's performance. She agreed the agency needs more presence in the field and suggested the primary role in feedlot siting and regulation may one day rest with counties.



More guards for "The Body"

Gov. Jesse Ventura would receive beefed-up security protection under his two-year funding proposal for the Minnesota State Patrol.

Col. Anne Beers, State Patrol chief, reviewed the portion of the governor's budget proposal that would finance her department before members of the House Transportation Finance Committee Feb. 3.

The proposal includes funding for four state troopers assigned to protect the governor, his family, and his personal residence in Maple Grove. An additional six Capitol Security guards would also be paid to protect the governor's mansion in St. Paul.

A one-time appropriation of \$200,000 in 1999, and appropriations of \$576,000 and \$546,000 in 2000 and 2001, respectively, would cover the proposed security officers.

But some lawmakers questioned the need for heightened security, recalling that former Gov. Arne Carlson installed an electronic security system in his personal residence while in office rather than having security personnel stationed at the location.

"It seems like we're doing a huge amount of expenditure on his personal residence," said Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska), who chairs the committee.

Beers said Ventura's residence differs significantly from past governors' homes. Ventura's 34-acre ranch in Maple Grove consists of multiple buildings and is surrounded by trees, which requires stepped-up security efforts.

Under the proposed budget, the State Patrol would also receive \$694,000 each year to fund new radio equipment. The equipment currently used by troopers is 14 years old, and the contract has run out on part replacement for those radios.

The money would provide for the implementation of a new equipment system over several years as the state moves to an 800-megahertz network.

In addition to new radio equipment, the State Patrol would receive \$1.6 million to replace a helicopter. The state has three helicopters that it uses to aid other law enforcement agencies in pursuits, traffic control, surveillance, searches, and rescue missions.

Beers also detailed a \$1.6 million request to fund hiring and recruitment initiatives, a budget component she described as "absolutely critical."

The State Patrol estimates that its staff is 30



Col. Anne Beers, chief of the Minnesota State Patrol, presents her department's budget request, which includes a proposal to increase security for Gov. Jesse Ventura, before the House Transportation Finance Committee Feb. 3.

to 35 troopers short of what it should be because of retirements and resignations. Fifty-one troopers are expected to retire this year, and it often takes up to 19 months to hire new troopers, Beers said.

Historically, the State Patrol budget has not designated funds for its training academy. It is funded by not filling positions immediately after troopers retire. By estimating the number of troopers retiring, the department can plan for the cost of training a new class of troopers. But there is a long stretch of time between retiring troopers and training new ones, and that means there is often a shortage of troopers in the state.

Report seeks privatization

Minnesota's minority councils could better serve their constituencies as nonprofit groups rather than as state agencies, representatives of the Center of the American Experiment told the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee Jan. 28.

The councils — the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, the Council on Black Minnesotans, the Indian Affairs Council, and the Chicano-Latino Affairs Council — advise the Legislature and governor on issues facing their respective communities.

With the exception of the Indian Affairs Council, which is made up of tribal leaders, the members of the councils are appointed by the governor.

The report stems from a workforce and human rights task force organized by the center as a part of a larger study called Minnesota Policy Blueprint. The larger project puts state government programs to "conservative and free-market tests."

Annette Meeks, director of the Minnesota Policy Blueprint Task Force, said that the task force compared the councils to private foundations with similar missions. She said that the private foundations were successful at assisting their constituents through education and by emphasizing entrepreneurship.

"Indeed, we believe that privatizing these councils could push them a step further, making them more responsive to and valued by their constituents, so that they would seek actually to address the problems that have traditionally only been identified by the government entities," she said.

Juan Martinez of the Chicano-Latino Affairs Council said that the report is unjustified. He said that his agency is constantly seeking input from the community it serves.

"I am somewhat perplexed by the issue of responsiveness coming up as the main reason for privatization," he said.

Yusef Mgeni, president of the Urban Coalition, said that the minority councils have been effective precisely because they are state agencies.

"As a part of state government, the councils of color are able to request information from other state agencies," he said. "They are a tremendous resource, not just for people of color, but for state government."

The Center of the American Experiment is a conservative think tank based in Minnesota.

The committee took no action on the proposal.

Recourse for challenging rules

A joint House and Senate panel would be created to address concerns about administrative rules, under a bill (HF281) approved Feb. 3 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley), the proposal's sponsor, said the bicameral group would be a smaller version of the former Legislative Commission to Review Administrative Rules, which was abolished in 1996.

"I see it as a check for the public," she said. "It gives them a place to go if they have a problem with rules that have gone amok."

State agencies often promulgate rules that dictate how programs — ranging from environmental protection to health inspections — are administered.

Currently the Legislative Coordinating Commission has the power to address problems with those rules, but Leppik said it has not been involved in reviewing specific rules.

The Legislature has a responsibility to respond to those questions, she said, especially when the body is not in session. And unless a group is formed for that purpose, problems with rules will not be solved, she added.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) said she supports the bill because the proposed group would not be as large as the old commission, which she said tried to do too much.

But Rep. Phil Krinkie (R-Shoreview) disagreed, saying that forming another panel of legislators isn't necessarily going to make a difference.

HF281 now moves to the House floor.



HEALTH

No faith in autopsies

The death of an infant is a wrenching tragedy, but the real trauma for one Twin Cities family began when they attempted to make funeral arrangements.

In tearful testimony before the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee Feb. 2, Gedaliah Oppen told the story of how his daughter, Chana Malka Oppen, died unexpectedly at home in January 1998.

After bearing the initial wave of grief, the family began making plans for a funeral only

to discover to their horror that the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office had planned an autopsy.

Autopsies are forbidden in the Oppen's Jewish faith, which also teaches that a body should be buried within 24 hours of death. For the next three days, the family was caught in a swirl of court activity trying to prevent the autopsy, recover their infant's body, and get on with the funeral and ritual mourning period — *shivah* — to follow.

"Our life was in limbo," Oppen testified to a hushed committee room. "Those two-and-a-half days felt like 100 days. Our life was in ruins."

The Oppens' attorney, Arnie Frishman, told the committee the medical examiner was operating within the parameters of the law, but added that there was no standard to address religious concerns.

As a compromise, Hennepin County officials agreed to conduct MRI and CT scans of the body, both noninvasive procedures. No evidence of anything unusual was found and Frishman thought his clients' nightmare was over.

But it took one final court appearance during which Frishman argued that there was no compelling interest on the part of the state to delay release of the body.

"The Oppens were repeatedly forced to come to court when they should have been mourning," Frishman said. "They paid a real human price."

To prevent similar problems in the future,

Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park) is sponsoring a bill (**HF217**) that would prohibit dissection or autopsy from being performed on a deceased person if the procedure is against the deceased person's religious beliefs.

The bill would also establish standards for how dissections and autopsies are to be performed in such situations and create a procedure for coroners and medical examiners to seek court authorization to perform medical procedures that run against religious beliefs.

"We feel like we were stripped of our rights to act on what we believe," Oppen said. "This bill is too late for our daughter."

Garry Peterson, Hennepin County Medical Examiner, told the committee his office faces similar situations on a regular basis and added that he'll never forget this case.

He said his county has about 3,200 deaths per year and autopsies are performed in about 635 cases. He said the decision to do an autopsy is always a "balancing act," weighing the interests of families with the interests of the state.

If his department didn't do an autopsy and missed a potentially deadly disease that could spread, Peterson said no one would be properly served.

He said his fear regarding the bill is that families potentially could veto an inquiry. The medical examiner is the one best trained to make the determination, he argued.

Rep. Richard Mulder (R-Ivanhoe), a physician and county medical examiner, said he understands the situation and believes something should be done about it, but he shares Peterson's concerns.

He said he will work to find a mechanism in law that would assure the rights of the family and protect the rights of the state.

The committee took no action, but it is expected consider the matter again this session.

Spouses caring for spouses

Lawmakers are considering a measure that would allow medical professionals to receive state payment — in very specific circumstances — to care for their own spouses.

Certain qualified spouses would be allowed to provide private-duty nursing care, under a bill discussed Feb. 2 by the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin), the bill's sponsor, told committee members the story of a family in his district — a husband, wife, and three children.

Haas said the woman worked out of the home as a nurse and her husband played the "Mr. Mom" role. One day, the husband



Gedaliah Oppen, *left*, testifies about the legal mess he faced when he tried to bury his infant daughter according to the laws of his religion. He appeared before the House Health & Human Services Policy committee Feb. 2 in support of a bill that would provide religious exemptions for otherwise mandated autopsies. With him were, *from left*, attorney Arnie Frishman, Rabbi Moshe Turia Lief, and Rabbi Moshe Feller.

suffered an accident and became paralyzed, requiring nearly around-the-clock care from a registered nurse.

Because of a shortage of nurses, the firm that coordinates his care often calls his wife at the last minute and advises her that nobody is available for the upcoming shift.

Haas said the wife is forced to call in to her work at the last minute and then find drop-in day care service for the children, all under the age of four.

Because the woman cannot be paid by the care provider under state law, she loses a day of pay and incurs additional child care costs.

Haas said the couple's church has been helping out, but he said that something has to be done to make the situation more equitable.

Under provisions of the bill, the spouse would have to be a licensed nurse employed by a Medicare-certified home health agency to be paid by the state and could collect for only a limited number of hours. The spouse also would have to pass a criminal background check.

The bill was tabled to consider additional issues, including one raised by Rep. Richard Mulder (R-Ivanhoe). Mulder said a similar instance arose in his district, but the care being provided was to a child and not a spouse.

Haas was not averse to making a change, but he said he wasn't sure of the ramifications of the change.

The bill (**HF60**) is expected to come up for further discussion.

Bed rail bill advances

A bill that would spell out when Minnesota nursing home patients could have bed rails was approved Feb. 2 by the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee.

The bill (**HF40**), sponsored by Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester), aims to affirm the rights of patients and their families when dealing with nursing homes, doctors, and the state health department.

Bradley told committee members that the bill needed to be heard and acted upon quickly because people are suffering "very real injuries."

Many nursing homes limited bed rail use last year, after the state health department began fining facilities for what the department feared were improper uses of restraints. A federal law prohibits using bed restraints, including rails, in cases that put patients in "immediate jeopardy."

But some families and doctors became concerned that patients were actually being placed in more danger without the rails in place as safety devices.

Under Bradley's bill, nursing homes would be directed to follow a physician's prescription for physical restraints. The physical safety of a resident would be included as a medical symptom sufficient to warrant a prescription for bed rails.

Bradley said if the bill becomes law, there is a slight risk that the federal government may eliminate about \$2 million in payments made to the state through Medicare.

He added that he is planning to travel to Washington, D.C. soon to garner additional information on that issue.

The bill now moves to the Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

Volunteer ambulance crews

If you live in rural Minnesota and need emergency medical services, the person who responds will most likely be a highly trained volunteer.

Volunteer ambulance personnel constitute about 70 percent of all ambulance crews in the state, yet a sufficient definition of exactly who is a volunteer doesn't exist in state law.

That would be remedied under a bill (**HF214**) approved Feb. 2 by the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

Rep. Kevin Goodno (R-Moorhead), the bill's sponsor, told the committee that the need for a definition grew out of a legal debate over wage and hour laws.

A volunteer for a rural Minnesota ambulance service filed suit claiming he was an employee and not a volunteer, and thus entitled to at least minimum wage.

Under Goodno's bill, "volunteer ambulance attendant" would be a person who provides emergency medical services for a licensed ambulance service, does not expect pay, and does not depend on the provision of these services to earn a living.

However, a person could be considered a volunteer even if they receive an hourly stipend for actual services provided, as long as the amount of the stipend is not over \$3,000 annually.

O.J. Doyle, an emergency medical services consultant from Apple Valley, testified that although the bill seems technical in nature, it is very important.

"If indeed it is determined that those currently identified as volunteer ambulance attendants must be paid minimum wage and overtime, it may cause a serious financial crisis throughout rural Minnesota," he said.

He estimated that if the state's 230 volunteer services were forced to pay salaries, it would cost \$20 million annually. He said current practice is to compensate volunteers on a

per run basis, usually just enough to cover a meal or similar expense.

Volunteer emergency service workers are covered under worker's compensation programs and are also entitled to death benefits coverage.

Rep. Richard Mulder (R-Ivanhoe) stressed the importance of retaining the volunteers, adding that in his area of the state, the ambulance service can go a week or more without a call.

"You can't afford to have full-time people sitting around and waiting for a call," Mulder stressed.

The bill now moves to the House floor.

Health department budget ills

A convergence that proved to be anything but harmonic hit the Minnesota Department of Health in 1998, leaving it with a projected budget shortfall of \$5 million.

Kelli Johnson, who was at the time acting commissioner for the department, told the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee Jan. 29 that any of a number of occurrences during the year, taken separately, wouldn't have posed a problem.

"We were looking at the issues in isolation," said Johnson, who was acting commissioner prior to Jan. Malcolm assuming duties Feb. 1.

A large portion of the shortfall, which represents about two percent of the department's \$243 million budget, arose from increased overhead costs, particularly lease and relocation expenses.

Johnson explained that when a lease for existing office space in St. Paul's Midway area expired, the opportunity to lease coveted space in downtown St. Paul arose. Although it was more costly, it helped meet the department's location goals.

The increased lease expenses and moving expenses account for about \$4 million of the shortfall.

Responding to questioning by Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan), Johnson explained that department divisions formerly housed at a University of Minnesota site were also relocated downtown, which freed up space to accommodate renovation of the U of M building, which is owned by the state.

Another \$560,000 was winnowed from the department's budget to help pay for administering federal grants.

Johnson said fewer federal grants include a stipend for administration, necessitating that money to facilitate the grant must come from state revenue.

To help balance the budget, the department

eliminated 50 positions, although 21 of those were already vacant. A search for a new budget director for the department was launched and fiscal monitoring implemented.

Department official Ryan Church told the committee that none of the actions taken jeopardized any of the services or grants the department administers.

Lawmakers were particularly concerned that money appropriated for specific programs, such as breast and cervical cancer screening, was not used to plug the administrative budget.

Johnson said that was not the case.

The shortfall will probably require an appropriation of an additional \$2 million to the department's budget, and Johnson warned that the problem may not be solved.

The lack of administration money for federal grants and the challenges the state is facing in a competitive labor market will continue to be factors in the department's budget, she said.

The committee took no action on the matter.



HIGHER EDUCATION

State colleges seek hike

Morrie Anderson, chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), threw the first pitch Jan. 29 in his organization's request for an 18-percent budget increase.

Anderson presented an overview of the 53-campus MnSCU system to the House Higher Education Finance Committee as part of its upcoming biennial budget request.

MnSCU includes all of the four-year state universities and the two-year technical and community colleges. The system is governed by a 15-member board of trustees, appointed by the governor.

The merger of the three school systems was directed by the Legislature in 1991 and went into effect in 1995. Thirty-six institutions offer 3,650 programs to about 230,000 students each year.

"We have a little bit of something for almost everybody," Anderson said.

For the 2000-01 biennium, MnSCU will ask the Legislature for a \$230.6 million increase over its adjusted base budget of \$1.01 billion. If granted, the request would be an 18-percent increase of the total MnSCU budget.

State funding accounts for about 46 percent of the system's budget. Student tuition provides almost 28 percent, and various grants and investments make up the rest.

In 1997, MnSCU received a two-year budget of more than \$1 billion from the Legisla-

ture, with funds dedicated toward technology improvements, the strengthening of teacher education, and the creation of targeted industry programs to address worker shortages in the state.

In his overview, Anderson told the committee that MnSCU's graduates constitute 19.5 percent of Minnesota's workforce. He detailed the system's three goals on which its 2000-01 budget request is focused: students, economic development, and competitiveness.

Attracting high schools graduates to the MnSCU system will be a top concern, Anderson said.

"We need to do a better job on that," he said.

In 1997, MnSCU institutions converted to a uniform semester system. There was a 4.3 percent decline in fall 1998 enrollment that officials partly attribute to the shift to semesters. MnSCU's budget request contains \$25.5 million to cover those losses.

MnSCU officials will return in mid-February to formally present their budget request.

Good sports



Members of the North Branch girls tennis team sign autographs for their fans. The team attended a rally along with hundreds of other Minnesota students, coaches, and teachers at the National Girls and Women in Sports Day at the Capitol Feb. 4.



HUMAN SERVICES

Demographics and new demands

The number of Minnesotans over age 65 will double between 2000 and 2030, and providing adequate services for those seniors will increasingly test the resourcefulness of state agencies.

That was the message to lawmakers from Maria Gomez, assistant commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Gomez, who coordinates the department's Aging Initiative, spoke to the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee Feb. 1.

By 2030, Gomez said, one out of every four Minnesotans will be older than 65, compared to one out of every eight today.

Those seniors will have fewer children to help provide them with support, and most of them won't have personal financial reserves because they're not saving sufficiently now.

All of that means the roughly \$1 billion spent on senior programs annually could soon be insufficient.

Gomez said the services provided are considered a "safety net." She told the committee that keeping as many people as possible from needing that help will be a key to maintaining it.

"We can't afford everyone dropping into our safety net," Gomez said. "There's not enough money in the world for that."

Of particular immediate concern is that the bulk of state funding today is spent on nursing homes. Those facilities receive about three-quarters of the state's total spending on senior programs.

Yet, Gomez said, only 58,000 of the state's estimated 600,000 seniors are served by those facilities. The state needs to spend more money trying to keep seniors in their homes or apartments and should find ways to encourage more people to purchase long-term care insurance, she said.

Rep. Jim Seifert (R-Woodbury) said those reforms would be difficult because not enough wage-earners today have a "savings attitude."

"There's no way we can regulate that feature of a person's life," he added. "It's a huge problem."

Gomez said that the state's relatively high institutional occupancy rate is directly related to the lack of affordable housing options that provide support to older persons who can no longer live alone but who do not need medical care and 24-hour help.

"We need to think creatively about ways to combine the many funding streams available

to develop new housing options for older persons who need some supervision,” Gomez added.

The committee took no action on the matter.



LAW

Extending malpractice limits

Following emotional testimony on the effects of medical malpractice, members of the House Civil Law Committee approved Feb. 1 a compromise bill (**HF56**) that would extend the time allowed to file a medical malpractice case.

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

Bill sponsor Rep. Henry Todd Van Dellen (R-Plymouth) said that his bill wouldn't change the standard for malpractice, it would just allow cases to move forward.

“It would simply give the injured Minnesotans, and there are a lot of them, their day in court,” he said.

Mary Beth May, 21, told committee members that she started reporting headaches to her doctor as a middle school student eight years ago. Although May saw the doctor 12 times over the next three years, complaining of migraines, the doctor simply diagnosed them as tension headaches and prescribed anti-inflammatory medication.

After May moved to Colorado, doctors discovered and removed a lemon-sized brain tumor. She spent the next six months in rehabilitation, but doctors have told her that she may never fully recover. May currently has difficulty speaking and has to use a wheelchair.

Because the alleged malpractice occurred well beyond the boundaries of the two-year statute of limitation, May doesn't have a case against the Minnesota doctor who misdiagnosed her illness.

May didn't hide her anger at the physician. “Every day is a difficult day,” she said. “And so much of it could have been avoided if he had done his job. I gave him everything that he needed, and he should have realized something was wrong. Because of that I am stuck in a chair. Something should happen to him.”

Michael Miller of Minnetonka told the committee that if doctors had caught his wife's breast cancer in time she might still be alive.

His wife had a malignant lump removed in 1992. Doctors misread a lab report, and didn't

prescribe further radiation or chemotherapy treatment. When the cancer returned in 1996, Miller and his wife sought a second opinion about a prescribed bone marrow transplant, and discovered the error made in 1992. She passed away last year.

Miller said the lesson he learned was that you need to get several opinions if you want to guard against malpractice. He said without some way to recover for malpractice, everyone will realize that they have to guard themselves.

“If we stay the way we are, the costs are going to skyrocket when patients realize the price they have to pay to get an accurate report,” he said.

Initially, Van Dellen's bill would have set the deadline to file a case at two years from the discovery of the malpractice, not from the occurrence of the malpractice as with the current law. The bill would have placed a six-year limit from the occurrence of the malpractice.

But Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester) offered and the committee accepted a compromise amendment that simply extends the current two-year law to four years.

Several medical organizations that initially opposed the bill said that they could live with the compromise.

Rep. Betty Folliard (DFL-Hopkins) — who is also sponsoring a bill (**HF42**) to change the statute of limitation for medical malpractice — spoke in favor of Van Dellen's bill.

Last year, two bills extending the malpractice deadline were approved by the House Judiciary Committee, but both stalled before reaching the House floor. Both Van Dellen and Folliard were involved in last year's efforts.

Members of the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee approved the bill Feb. 4. The bill now goes to the House floor.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Government taxing government

Minnesota cities and counties collect property taxes, a portion of which is in turn used to help pay state sales taxes on some purchases made by the municipal governments.

Ending that practice was the topic of discussion Jan. 29 when the House Taxes Committee considered a bill sponsored by Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin).

Haas' proposal (**HF52**) would exempt sales to all local governments from sales tax. It would scrap a laundry list of items that are specifically exempted under current law and replace it with a blanket exemption.

Purchases by state agencies would still be

subject to sales tax.

Haas, who said he's been working on this legislation for five years, told the committee that the Legislature initially approached the cities and counties with the idea of making them subject to sales tax in 1991 when the state was desperately trying to balance its budget. Haas was mayor of Champlin at the time.

In exchange, the state would establish a local government trust fund with a portion of the revenue collected.

Haas said the sales tax was particularly onerous in disaster situations, such as those faced by several cities and counties last year after storms ravaged many communities.

Sales taxes paid annually range from thousands of dollars by small cities to hundreds of thousands of dollars by larger cities and counties.

If the bill passes, the state would lose about \$175 million in revenue over the next biennium.

Rep. Loren Jennings (DFL-Harris) said he supports the idea but voiced concerns about how the cities would use the windfall. He said he believes the money should be rebated directly to residents and not “lost in the shuffle” of city and county finances.

Haas said that most likely the amounts saved would be absorbed directly by the local bodies, allowing them to hold the line or reduce property tax levies.

The bill received support from a host of entities that represent cities and counties, but not from committee chair Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka).

Abrams said local government bodies were given the choice of paying income tax or taking a steep cut in state aid and they chose the former.

He said a number of other groups were harmed when the state was short of revenue in the early 1990s and that nothing has been done to make them whole.

He hinted that he would support expanding the existing exemptions to include bonded projects, such as water towers and other essential services, but not projects that compete directly with the private sector.

Haas said he would also like to see certain equipment, such as snow plows, included in the exemptions, if his proposal fails.

The bill will be considered for inclusion in this year's omnibus tax bill.

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.



TECHNOLOGY

Tax computers need upgrade

Replacing the outdated computer system used at the Minnesota Department of Revenue would not only increase the department's efficiency, it would benefit taxpayers as well.

That's what Bev Driscoll, assistant commissioner of the department, told the House Taxes Committee Jan. 28.

In an age when information travels at light speed, the department is using programs developed nearly three decades ago for keeping track of income taxes and taxpayers.

Driscoll told the committee that can lead to annoying problems. For instance, when a taxpayer makes an error or an apparent error on his or her Minnesota income tax return, it can take up to three years to identify it and contact the taxpayer for more information.

And if the department determines that a taxpayer owes additional taxes, the individual must pay interest and penalties, as well.

Several lawmakers said they believe that is unfair and asked about waiving interest and penalties. Driscoll said it isn't within the power of the 1,230-employee department to do that, but that it would be within the power of the Legislature.

Once a tax return arrives, Driscoll said, it takes 70 days or more for it to be entered into the department's system. The actual work time involved is less than 10 minutes, however.

She also said that at any given time, the department has as many as a half-million invalid Social Security numbers in its system.

The age and low level of sophistication of the computer programs means the state may not be collecting all the money owed. Driscoll estimated there are "hundreds of millions of dollars" in unpaid income taxes, mostly due to unreported income. That estimate comes from federal figures and a study completed in 1994-95 by the University of Michigan.

Additionally, the department's income tax audit program netted only \$30 million in assessments in fiscal year 1997, a figure the department believes to be low.

Driscoll said the department would receive approximately \$8 million for technology upgrades under Gov. Jesse Ventura's proposed budget. Ventura has requested \$85 million in new funding for state agency information technology initiatives, including \$22 million to enhance state agencies' basic information infrastructure.

Ventura's budget also defines a goal of improving online connections between Minnesota's citizens and its government.

Driscoll said the department encourages

taxpayers who are eligible to use the telephone-based filing system, but she said that online filing will not be available for some time. Online or other alternative filing formats would spare the department from having to open the 5.7 million pieces of mail it receives each year now.

The committee took no action on the matter.



TOURISM

Little road on the prairie

A road named after one of Minnesota's most famous authors might be changing its ways.

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway near Rochester would be rerouted from a U.S. highway to a county highway, under a proposal approved Feb. 4 by the House Transportation Policy Committee. The bill (HF157) is sponsored by Rep. Bill Kuisle (R-Rochester).

Currently the specially designated route runs through a mostly commercial area on heavily traveled U.S. highways 14 and 52. If rerouted, it would use a county road and pass by the Olmsted County Historical Society, which is planning to develop exhibits about the famed pioneer author.

The historical center has a log cabin that resembles the one in which the Ingalls family lived. Plans for a prairie restoration project are underway, and the historical society would name the prairie in the author's honor.

The family did not live in the Rochester area, but Pa Ingalls once worked in Olmsted

County harvest fields. And Laura Ingalls Wilder is known to have traveled through the city many times on her trips to neighboring states.

"If you happen to come down to Rochester and drive the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway, I hope you see what a wise decision you've made," David Pennington, president of the historical society's board of directors, told committee members.

The bill now moves to the House floor.



VETERANS

License plate plan passed

A bill that would allow surviving spouses of war veterans to continue purchasing special veterans license plates was passed by the House Feb. 2. The vote was 125-1.

The bill (HF77) had stirred enough debate on the House floor the previous day to be taken off of the Consent Calendar, a spot reserved for non-controversial bills.

At that time, Rep. Betty McCollum (DFL-North St. Paul) had questioned whether the bill had the support of veterans' groups, as did a few other House members.

Rep. Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul) also questioned whether spouses who remarry would still be eligible for the plates.

And when the House eventually passed the bill, it included an amendment, offered by sponsor Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring), that would take away the license plate privileges if a veteran's spouse remarries.

The bill now goes to the Senate.

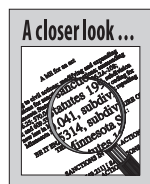
Displaced workers



David Olson, *left*, of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, tells the House Jobs & Economic Development Finance Committee Feb. 3 that he wants the elimination of the tax on businesses that funds the state's dislocated workers program. Teamsters official Don Gerdesmeir, *center*, and Bill Peterson, of the AFL-CIO, call for the program to remain intact. All three disagree with the governor's plan to transfer the program's funds to the state's general fund.

Plan would cut Minnesota taxes, spending, and class sizes

By Grant Martin



Like a line of wrestling fans standing outside the old St. Paul Civic Center, Minnesotans have been anxiously waiting to see the shape and moves of their new governor's administration.

And the first good look came Jan. 28 when Gov. Jesse Ventura delivered his much-anticipated budget proposal.

During a press conference at St. Paul's World Trade Center, Ventura called his plan a "taxpayer's budget."

"I come into today's budget (press conference) feeling no apprehension," he said. "We did a darn good job putting it together."

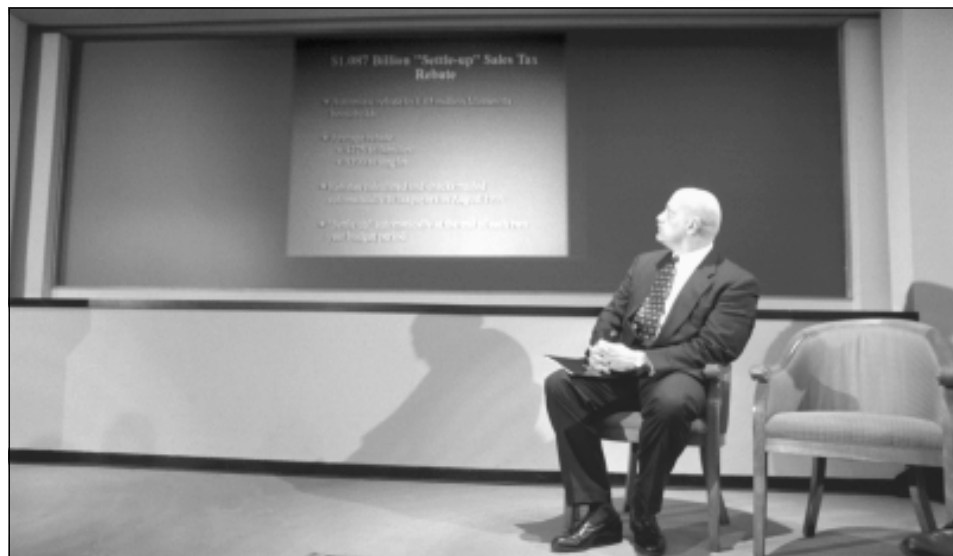
The governor's budget reflects his three priorities — reducing taxes, improving public education, and limiting increases in state spending.

Spending, the governor emphasized, must be tied to the citizens' ability to pay.

The proposed 2000-01 budget would hold increases in state spending to 3.6 percent in the first year and 3.9 percent in the second year. When these numbers are adjusted to account for a proposed vehicle registration tax reduction, increases in state spending would only amount to 2.8 percent the first year and 3.1 percent in the second year.

At the same time, the governor reports, personal spending is projected to increase 4.4 percent the first year and 4.6 percent the second.

While the governor proposes to hold the line on state spending, he also recommends reductions on the revenue side. The budget includes a one-time \$1.1 billion tax rebate plan for 1999, and would provide \$1.37 billion



Gov. Jesse Ventura listens as his commissioner of revenue, Matt Smith, explains a portion of the new administration's budget Jan. 28.

The mechanism for payment would be the 1997 homeowner or renter property tax rebate, which most people filed with their 1997 returns but is available until April 1, 1999, to those who haven't yet filed. The Department of Revenue would send the rebates to taxpayers in Aug. 1999 based on tax data already available — separate tax forms wouldn't be required.

The governor's permanent tax reduction plan would eliminate the so-called "marriage penalty" by altering the tax brackets for married filers.

The budget would also reduce the lowest income tax bracket from 6 percent to 5.8 percent the first year and to 5.75 percent the following year. And the budget would boost the top end of the lowest tax bracket. Overall,

the initial registration. Under the plan, 45 percent of Minnesota passenger vehicles would see a reduction in registration tax.

And as promised in Ventura's campaign, K-12 education would get a boost under the governor's budget. While his plan would increase overall spending by only 3.6 percent in the first year, K-12 spending would be increased by 5.3 percent.

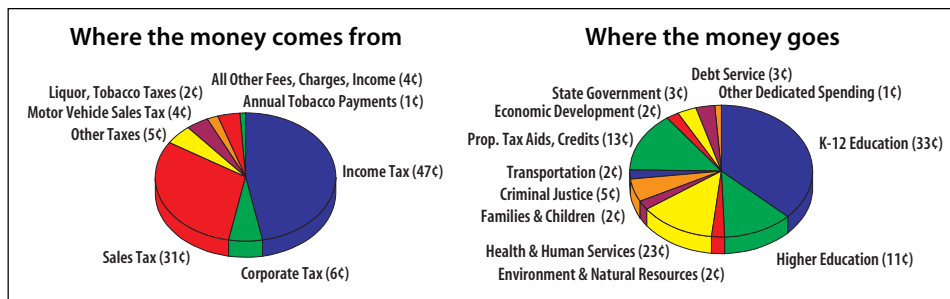
The total K-12 budget would be \$7.7 billion over the 2000-01 biennium, an increase in funding of \$560.6 million.

Of that amount, class-size reduction efforts would see an additional \$150 million on top of the \$87 million in annual spending already dedicated to reductions. The governor wants to see one teacher for every 17 students in kindergarten through third grades. School districts would be required to report their progress in this area.

The governor would also include \$6 million to fund a breakfast program for elementary students and \$4 million to provide for additional instruction time either during or outside of school.

The governor's plan would provide \$258 million to increase the general funding formula by 2.5 percent each year of the budget. The increase would mean an additional \$88 per student in 2000 and \$182 per student in 2001.

With the increases in K-12 funding, the governor's plan would boost the state's share of education funding, relieving pressure on local property taxes. Laws passed in 1998 will increase the state's share from 66 percent in



Source: Executive Budget summary, 2000-01, Office of the Governor.

in permanent and one-time tax cuts over the next two years.

Ventura's sales tax rebate plan would return approximately 35 percent of consumer sales tax paid by households during 1998 and 1999. The average rebate would be \$390 for a single filer and \$775 for a joint filer.

the plan would lead to an average income tax reduction of 6 percent.

The governor's budget also calls for a motor-vehicle registration tax cut. The plan would place a \$75 cap on yearly renewals following

Plan to scrap emissions testing gathers momentum

A closer look ...

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Rep. Barb Haake (R-Mounds View) is sponsoring a bill (**HF7**) that would end

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



Carroll said he doesn't think air quality has been improved enough yet, and that the growing population and increasing congestion in the metro area will only worsen the carbon monoxide levels in the air, especially if the emissions testing program is repealed.

The bill now moves to the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee. 🗣️

Three parties, three visions, and hopes to find consensus

By Grant Martin

If you were expecting “The Prairie Home Companion,” you might have been disappointed.

Although known worldwide as the spot where Garrison Keillor delivers the news from Lake Wobegon, St. Paul’s Fitzgerald Theater was ground zero of the state budget debate on the evening of Feb. 1.

In a forum sponsored by Minnesota Public Radio, the leaders of the state’s tri-partisan government — Gov. Jesse Ventura, Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe (DFL-Erskine), and House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) — discussed the two-year budget.

In his opening statements, Ventura called his proposed budget “reform and centrist.” He said his goal is to limit the growth of government.

“We realize that there’s a place for government, but we realize that we shouldn’t be expanding its role in our lives,” he said.

Sviggum said that the governor’s budget has too little in the way of tax cuts and too much in the way of spending. But he said House Republicans are committed to finding common ground.

“We are willing to work with you,” Sviggum said.

As the topic moved to tax rebate plans, Ventura criticized the House Republican plan outlined in HF1. Under that plan, Minnesota taxpayers would get a rebate based on income tax paid in 1997.

“In an income tax rebate, you are going to hit 300,000 less families who would participate in the sales tax rebate,” Ventura said. He argued that under the House Republican plan, rebates would be taxed by the federal government. He also said that the Republican plan would provide a rebate to non-Minnesotans who receive an income in the state.

“I just think that the sales tax rebate is the smarter way to go,” he said.

and would be returned.

The governor’s \$1.1 billion plan, however, would not count these payments as surplus. Instead, his plan calls for the repeal of 1998 law that uses \$400 million of surplus funds for bonding projects. A cash-to-bonding plan (HF209) failed on the House floor Jan. 28. Without that piece of legislation, Sviggum said, the Ventura plan would fall considerably short.

Moe said he favors the Ventura sales tax rebate. He said that it would benefit middle-income earners, that it would affect a broader range of taxpayers, and that the rebate caps are reasonable. Moe also supports the governor’s proposal to use the tobacco payments to create endowments. Under the Ventura budget, \$1.3 billion from the tobacco settlement would be set aside in an endowment to fund health and community initiatives.

Ventura believes that these endowments would be a wise investment of a one-time windfall.

“The principal of that money will always be there,” he said. “We will only spend the interest.”

Sviggum disagreed. He said that the basis of the lawsuit was that the taxpayers were forced to shoulder the health care cost of smokers; therefore, taxpayers should be repaid.

“It just seems to me to make common sense that the dollars go back to the premise,” he said. “It goes back to the taxpayers who overpaid.”

Sviggum also said that the settlement includes \$202 million that must go to programs that assist smokers. He wants the state to see how it will handle those funds before committing even more.

Fitting to the venue, a member of the audience asked the panel about proposed funding cuts for public radio contained in the governor’s budget.

Under Ventura’s budget plan, subsidies for public radio and public television would be phased out over the next three years.

Moe and Sviggum agreed that the governor’s plan might be too sweeping. Both said it would leave some areas of the state without radio or television service.

Addressing the audience member, who said she is “addicted” to public radio, Ventura said that the burden of public radio should fall upon those who use it, not the entire state.

“If you love public radio, then contribute,” he said. That comment prompted an audible response from several in the audience.

“We do!” they replied.

“Well, then contribute a little more,” Ventura responded. 🐼



House Speaker Steve Sviggum, second from left, emphasizes a point on one aspect of Gov. Jesse Ventura’s proposed budget during a Minnesota Public Radio-sponsored forum at St. Paul’s Fitzgerald Theater Feb. 1. Ventura, right, and Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe also participated. Gary Eichten, left, of Minnesota Public Radio, moderated the event.

Ventura said that lobbyists and special interests were not included in budget considerations. He said that his proposal aims at creating a streamlined state government.

“We wanted to do what was necessary, not necessarily what was nice,” he said.

Moe said the governor and the Senate DFLers are “on the same page.” However, there are some points of disagreement, specifically the \$10 million in the governor’s proposal to assist farmers and Ventura’s plan to repeal last year’s law that spends surplus cash for bonding projects.

“Certainly, we don’t think there’s adequate resources for the farm crisis we are facing,” Moe said. “And we don’t think we should be spending the bonding money.”

Sviggum said that under the income tax rebate, 150,000 more people would collect a rebate than under Ventura’s plan. He also said that two-thirds of taxpayers receiving rebates under the Republican plan would not be taxed by the federal government because those people do not itemize their federal tax returns.

And Sviggum said that the income tax rebate plan is more fair because the rebates are more proportional to amounts paid.

“It does seem to be fair to get the dollars to the people who paid,” he said.

Sviggum challenged the total amount of the governor’s rebate. Under the Republican \$1.1 billion rebate plan, the first tobacco settlement payments would be counted as surplus,

Lawmakers hear Microsoft exec. describe the road ahead

By Jon Fure



Advances in computer technology will make businesses more efficient and more profitable in the near future, according to a Microsoft executive.

Jon DeVaan, vice president of Microsoft's desktop applications division and a former Minnesota legislative intern, said that same technology can

dramatically improve how governments operate.

DeVaen spoke to lawmakers and staff at the Minnesota History Center Feb. 3 as part of this year's Capitol Forum series, sponsored by the McKnight Foundation and Minnesota Technology, Inc.

DeVaen made several predictions related to the use of technology and its potential effects on government in the next five years.

His predictions focused on how increased performance of computer hardware and software will lead to reduced costs of doing business.

Among the benefits to businesses will be more opportunities to purchase products directly from producers, instead of through "middle people," he said. Small businesses will be able to expand, creating opportunities for growth and new jobs.

Internet infrastructure will improve, he said, with dramatically higher speed capacity. Telephone and cable television companies will soon be introducing technology that will accommodate more users on the Internet, and information will be accessible faster. He described wireless high-speed connectivity as a "dark horse" technology set to develop rapidly.

Business on the Internet will increase by 500 percent, DeVaen predicted, and the number of personal Internet users will double, bringing the number of households with Internet access to 80 million.

One reason some companies or people do not use the Internet is because of the paradox between easy access and privacy. While shopping or banking on the Internet is convenient, many fear it also creates opportunities for hackers to gain access to personal or corporate accounts. DeVaen predicts those issues will be resolved.

Also, computer prices will continue to drop, he said, which will enable more and more



Microsoft's Jon DeVaan apprises lawmakers and staff of potential benefits from anticipated advances within the computer industry. DeVaen spoke at the Minnesota History Center Feb. 3 as part of the 1999 Capitol Forum series.

people to afford the new technology. High performance personal computers are now available for less than \$500, he said, and he expects those prices to continue to drop. DeVaen said personal computers will soon be able to do all tasks necessary for business, including those that are now done by larger computers.

Software capability will also continue to grow, DeVaen said. He said he could not describe all the advances we will see in the next five years, comparing it to looking at the first "horseless carriage" in the early 1900s and trying to imagine freeways.

One example he showed was an "e-book," which is about the size of one hardcover book but contains five books using only a fraction of its capacity. DeVaen took several thick books from behind the podium, slammed them on a table.

"You can choose to have your information

here or," he said, holding up the e-book, "here."

The effects of technology on government, particularly for legislators, will be an "amazing access to information and low-cost publishing," DeVaen said.

He recommended that every legislator have an official Web site because it will enable them to get their message directly to constituents. The effects will include new levels of public participation and improved service to constituents.

DeVaen described legislators as "power knowledge workers," who have to communicate with a large number of people every day.

After the presentation, several audience members asked questions about DeVaen's predictions and other technology issues. Rep. Phil Carruthers (DFL-Brooklyn Center) asked if prices of laptop computers will drop along with those of desktop computers.

DeVaen said higher-end features tend to be added to laptop computers, which keeps the prices higher than desktop models, but prices are dropping. When they were first developed, some laptops cost more than \$10,000, whereas now they are available for \$1,500 to \$6,000.

When another audience member asked if DeVaen could predict the outcome of a pending anti-trust lawsuit against Microsoft, DeVaen replied, "I predict that I shouldn't answer that question."

However, he added that there will probably be an appeal regardless of the outcome and that the matter will ultimately be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Michael O'Keefe, newly appointed commissioner of the Department of Human Services, said the improvements in software have required constant learning and relearning, and he asked, "Is it ever going to stop?"

"Our potential is limited only by our imagination, and I hope you can appreciate that we haven't imagined everything yet," DeVaen said. "It is our work to be improving (software) all the time. One of the things that drives us is to make it simpler to allow more people to use it."

He later addressed legislators in the audience and said, "We'll stop changing software when you stop passing laws." 🐼

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

Mahoney working for bright future on the East Side

By Sarah Hallonquist

A self-described “street fighter,” Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul) said he is getting to know some different rules to work in the Legislature.



Rep. Tim Mahoney

“The East Side kid in me sometimes has to learn to shut the door and take a deep breath,” said Mahoney, 45, who was born and raised in St. Paul’s East Side neighborhood. He has lived there all but nine years of his life.

A seat in the Legislature is a switch for Mahoney, a union pipe fitter with the St. Paul Pipefitters Local 455. After graduating from Harding High School in 1971, he attended St. Paul Technical College. He has done work in all kinds of buildings, from nuclear reactor sites to apartment complexes to the Judicial Center in the Capitol complex.

He said he’s prepared for a lot of on-the-job-training as a lawmaker.

“There’s no road map for this kind of job,” said Mahoney, who acknowledges that working behind a desk — rather than carrying a tool box — each day is something different.

Unlike pipe fitting, he said, legislative work doesn’t always allow him to know what his day will entail. So far, Mahoney said his new job has met and exceeded his expectations. While overwhelming at times, he’s not intimidated.

“This isn’t supposed to be rocket science,” he said.

Mahoney’s legislative priorities reflect his strong connection to his district. During his

campaign, he championed causes such as neighborhood and school safety, affordable housing, public education, and economic development. Many of those issues are key to the East Side, where many low- and moderate-income families live.

“It warms your heart to think you can have an impact,” he said. “Very few people get to say that.”

In the House, Mahoney wants to work on efforts to reduce youth crime and increase economic development in areas throughout the state. He also wants to help the growing community of Southeast Asian immigrants in his district.

The East Side includes Swede Hollow, an area that was home to many immigrant groups over the years. First, European immigrants including Swedes and Germans lived in the area. Later immigrant groups to live in Swede Hollow came from Mexico and Central America.

The ramshackle housing was cleared from the hollow years ago, but Mahoney sees the example of those earlier immigrant groups as an indication of what is possible for current newcomers to his district. He said today’s immigrant groups must have at least the same chances for success as their predecessors.

“It’s now the Southeast Asians’ turn to march through the East Side,” Mahoney said.

He serves on the House Civil Law, Family & Early Childhood Education, and Crime Prevention committees. He has not introduced any bills on his own yet because he wants to learn the process in full “before jumping in with both feet.” However, he is co-sponsoring nearly a dozen bills.

When the chance came up last year to run for the seat being vacated by former Rep. Jim Farrell, Mahoney jumped at it, knowing it was a rare opportunity.

“I made the decision to step in and see if I could help people from my side of town,” he said.

Farrell, who lost the race for Ramsey County attorney in November 1998, held the historically DFL-friendly District 67A seat for four terms. Mahoney knew the primary race would be the toughest part of his campaign; he faced three other Democrats in September 1998.

“I didn’t have any clue I was going to win until September 15 at about 8:15 p.m.,” he said of his victory.

Mahoney’s door-knocking, neighborhood work, and many endorsements paid off in the general election, too. He beat out the Republican and Reform Party candidates with 59 percent of the vote.

Mahoney is a single parent with two daughters, ages 11 and 19. During his spare time, Mahoney keeps busy with home improvements, baking, and reading. He said he’s somewhat of a history buff, with a particular interest in the Civil War.

District 67A

1995 population: 32,769

Largest city: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Location: inner city

Top concern: “Youth crime, chemical dependency, child care, and economic development are really big issues that affect the East Side.”

— Rep. Tim Mahoney

Continued from page 14

1999 to 68.4 percent in 2000. The governor’s budget would increase that share to 69.6 percent in 2000.

The governor makes several recommendations concerning the state’s tobacco settlement money. Between this year and 2003, the state will receive \$1.31 billion in one-time settlement payments and \$574 million from annual payments.

The governor wants lawmakers to view the settlement payments aside from the normal state budget considerations, not as general revenues.

Under the Ventura budget, the \$1.31 billion in payments would be divided for a non-profit

foundation and three health-related endowments. The funds would be invested so that the principal would never be touched.

A Minnesota families foundation would be founded with \$600 million of the settlement money, and would provide grants to organizations promoting independence from government programs.

Another \$450 million would create two endowments to fund medical education and research, one at the University of Minnesota and one for statewide institutions. The remaining \$260 million would fund an endowment that would provide financial assistance to the state’s 49 community health boards.

In his letter accompanying the budget, Ventura promises voters that his administration will only grow stronger and its moves more spectacular as it gets more comfortable in the political ring.

“This proposal reflects only the initial budget,” he said. “The differences in this administration’s approach to governing will be even more evident in future budgets when I’ve had two years, instead of two months, to review programs.”

Whirlwind campaign helps Storm touch down in House

By Jon Fure

When new Rep. Julie Storm (R-St. Peter) began campaigning for the 1998 House election, she told people she had "more energy than a spring thunderstorm."



Rep. Julie Storm

She couldn't have known that soon tornadoes would cause major destruction throughout her district, but after those disastrous storms in April 1998, she wondered if her words would come back

to haunt her.

"I was fearful that it would work against me, but it worked for me," she said.

She said she attended as many public meetings and events as possible and knocked twice on every door in her district — which includes parts of Nicollet, Le Sueur, and Blue Earth counties. She said several people she met on the campaign trail made comments such as, "Storm — from St. Peter — I can remember that."

The destruction in Storm's district attracted media attention from around the country. Many volunteers helped the communities clean up the damage, and state and federal governments sent millions of dollars to help pay for rebuilding efforts.

The publicity also brought a few onlookers to check out evidence of the power of Mother Nature. At least one visitor decided that a Storm campaign sign would make a good souvenir.

Storm said she received one telephone call

from a man who wanted a new yard sign because he had given his to a passerby who asked for it. Although Storm was happy to replace the sign, she told the man if anyone else asked for the sign, he should ask if they wouldn't mind waiting until after the election.

The outside assistance and the residents' working together were among the positive outcomes of the disaster, Storm said. The neighborly climate was apparent in many ways, including two churches — one Lutheran and one Catholic — sharing a sanctuary while repairs were made to one of the buildings. Neighbors were often seen talking and lending each other a hand.

"It really brought the town together," Storm said.

Many homeowners have been repairing their houses with an eye for restoring historic character, Storm said. Open front porches and other vintage features are re-appearing on homes that have been modernized over the years. Storm predicts St. Peter will soon look better than ever.

Her love of historic architecture is apparent in her business, the Engesser House bed & breakfast. The Victorian-style home was built in the 1880s by Joseph Engesser, she said. The Engesser family came from Germany to start a brewery, which they operated in St. Peter from 1857 to 1942. Storm and her husband restored the home and converted it into a bed & breakfast in 1994.

Storm has been active in the St. Peter Chamber of Commerce and served three years as chair of the area's tourism bureau.

Gustavus Adolphus College is St. Peter's

main attraction, and the city also includes the Treaty Site History Center, where the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and other historic treasures are on display.

Storm has also been president of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance, a group made up of volunteers and local government representatives that promotes sites along much of the river valley. The river scenery includes everything from rolling farmlands in southern Minnesota to rocky areas near Granite Falls, and there are many tourist attractions and recreational areas, she said.

Before moving to St. Peter, Storm owned and operated her own interior design business in Florida for 10 years.

Her business background led to her being chosen as vice chair of the House Jobs and Economic Development Committee. In that role, Storm said she hopes to advocate tourism as a way to promote jobs and economic development, especially in Greater Minnesota.

Her primary concerns include returning the state tax surplus to residents, reducing class sizes in elementary schools, and increasing state assistance for agriculture.

District 24B

1995 population: 34,922

Largest city: St. Peter

Counties: Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Nicollet

Location: south-central Minnesota

Top concern: "Returning the tax surplus to residents and increasing the budget for agriculture at a time when it is needed so much."

— Rep. Julie Storm

Frequently called numbers

(All numbers are area code 651)

Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol 296-0271

Voice mail/order bills 296-2343

Chief Clerk of the House

211 Capitol 296-2314

Index, Senate

110 Capitol 296-2887

Index, House

211 Capitol 296-6646

Information, Senate

231 Capitol 296-0504

Information, House

175 State Office Building 296-2146

Committee Hotline, Senate 296-8088

Committee Hotline, House 296-9283

Sergeant at Arms, Senate

Senate Chamber 296-7159/6-1119

Sergeant at Arms, House

45 State Office Building 296-4860

Legislative Reference Library

645 State Office Building 296-3398

Revisor of Statutes

700 State Office Building 296-2868

Governor's Office

130 Capitol 296-3391

Attorney General's Office

102 Capitol 296-6196

Secretary of State's Office

180 State Office Building 296-9208

Capitol Security

B-4 Capitol 296-6741

Emergency

..... 296-2100

TTY*, Senate

..... 296-0250

Toll free

..... 1-888-234-1112

TTY*, House

..... 296-9896

Toll free

..... 1-800-657-3550

House chaplain offers spiritual support for lawmakers

By Paul Wahl

When the Rev. Lonnie E. Titus of Apple Valley was named House chaplain, he had only a passing familiarity with the position. But he certainly didn't expect it to be controversial.

However, just three days into the legislative session, a debate over new House rules included the passage of an amendment to require that prayers offered by the chaplain and visiting chaplains be "nondenominational" and "reflect the diversity of the House."

The controversy was sparked by repeated references to Jesus Christ in a song included in opening-day ceremonies. Several House members said the song did not fit the occasion and they expressed concerns about future religious references.

Titus, an ordained Assemblies of God minister, said he doesn't have a problem with abiding by the wishes of the majority who supported the rule change.

"If I do use 'Jesus' in a prayer, it will certainly be unintentional," said Titus, adding that it's difficult to undo a lifetime of training in a few short weeks. "Some things you say by default."

An official letter, containing a reminder to be circumspect, will be sent to all visiting House chaplains.

Beyond the issue of prayer content, Titus said his overriding goal is to be a friend to House members.

"Those in high positions have high pressures," Titus said. "Often they don't know who their friends are."

Titus said he believes that eventually everyone needs God.

"Then people look for a friend, someone who has expressed selfless friendship, who doesn't push his religion but is ready and willing to be there in time of need," he said.

Titus first heard of the House chaplain position last fall after he resigned his position as executive outreach pastor at Mount Olivet Assembly of God in Apple Valley to begin his own independent ministry — called Reaching Entrepreneurs and Politicians or REAP.

He said his interest in politicians goes back to his early years pastoring in his native North Dakota.



Newly appointed House Chaplain Lonnie E. Titus leads the prayer to open a House floor session.

One day, when reading a passage in 1 Timothy that encourages Christians to pray "for all that are in authority," he felt a twinge of guilt.

"I was pretty good at criticizing, but not too good at praying," Titus said.

He began a daily routine of praying for city, county, and state officials and began learning their names and taking an interest in the political scene.

"Things began to happen," Titus said, noting that opportunities to interact with public officials arose, including relationships with two North Dakota governors — one a Democrat and one a Republican.

Titus grew up in Mohall, N.D., and earned an associate's degree in business accounting at North Dakota State University-Bottineau prior to attending Trinity Bible Institute in Ellendale, N.D., which is operated by the Assemblies of God.

He served as youth pastor at an Assemblies of God church in Moorhead, then as senior

pastor for churches in Mott, Kulm, and Williston, N.D.

He returned to Minnesota in 1994 and served as the national crusade director for Lowell Lundstrom Ministries in Burnsville before joining Mount Olivet.

He has also served several volunteer hospital and police chaplaincies, as an adviser for a battered women's council, and as a National Guard chaplain, among other community positions.

Before the session began, Titus submitted his name to a committee that advanced chaplain choices to House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon). He had strong recommendations from members of his community, politicians, and business associates.

"I think they liked my desire to be supportive of all the legislators," Titus said. "I'm not a political person. I can work with both sides of the aisle."

Titus said the work is ideal for him because he doesn't have commitments to a church and congregation.


REAP is an independent ministry outreach dedicated to reaching leaders in the community with a message of hope and support, Titus said.

He attends a Wednesday morning Bible study conducted by Rep. Arlon Lindner (R-Corcoran) and is open to starting additional Bible studies at different times to serve the needs of legislators and staff.

In the Minnesota House, the chaplain is elected — along with other officers — by the full body.

A chaplain has been a part of the House since its inception in 1857. John Penman was the first to serve in that capacity.

Today, the chaplain is paid \$1,500 for his service during the legislative session. Visiting chaplains, often pastors recommended by House members, are paid \$25. If the House chaplain offers the prayer, he is paid the \$25.

The practice of paying a chaplain with public funds has been challenged in the courts on several occasions. Most recently, in 1983, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a legislative body retaining a chaplain didn't violate the establishment of religion clause of the Bill of Rights and contended that the opening prayer was "a part of the fabric of society." 

Bill Introductions

HF386-HF529

Monday, Feb. 1

HF386—Erickson (R) **Education Policy**

State Board of Teaching member confirmation process modified.

HF387—Skoglund (DFL) **Crime Prevention**

Retailers required to record serial numbers of goods purchased with a credit card.

HF388—Nornes (R) **Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Office of Tourism appropriated money.

HF389—Nornes (R) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Fergus Falls tax increment financing district expenditures authorized.

HF390—Davids (R) **Commerce**

Credit union tax exempt provisions eliminated.

HF391—Seifert, J. (R) **Civil Law**

Punitive damages limited in cases involving Food and Drug Administration approved products or devices.

HF392—Solberg (DFL) **Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Office of Tourism promotional activities funded and money appropriated.

HF393—Finseth (R) **Taxes**

Lawful gambling tax rates reduced.

HF394—Greiling (DFL) **Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Lobbyist reporting requirements modified and conduit funds regulated.

HF395—Dawkins (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Municipalities required to request a primary design from the state designer selection board for certain projects.

HF396—Howes (R) **Taxes**

Clothing repair and alterations sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF397—Knobloch (R) **Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

State legislator election provided without party designation.

HF398—Howes (R) **Environment & Natural Resources Policy**

Hubbard County authorized to sell tax-forfeited land bordering public water.

HF399—Kielkucki (R) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Home rule charter and statutory cities authorized to establish sidewalk utilities.

HF400—Winter (DFL) **Agriculture Policy**

Pork producer emergency support payments provided and money appropriated.

HF401—Mulder (R) **Taxes**

Agricultural land general education levy exemption provided and general education aid increased.

HF402—Finseth (R) **K-12 Education Finance**

Secondary vocational program funding restored and money appropriated.

HF403—Ness (R) **Education Policy**

Uniform minimum school year length established.

HF404—Erickson (R) **K-12 Education Finance**

Advanced placement and international baccalaureate programs funded, and money appropriated.

HF405—Johnson (DFL) **K-12 Education Finance**

School district deferred maintenance equalized discretionary aid and levy created, and money appropriated.

HF406—Howes (R) **Crime Prevention**

Firearms; right to keep and bear arms for certain purposes not abridged, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF407—Skoglund (DFL) **Crime Prevention**

Misdemeanor prosecution pilot grant program established at Minnesota law schools to enhance education and training, and money appropriated.

HF408—Goodno (R) **Health & Human Services Policy**

Practice of pharmacy definition modified and patient counseling defined.

HF409—Skoglund (DFL) **Crime Prevention**

Criminal gang definition expanded.

HF410—Entenza (DFL) **Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Correctional employees retirement plan service credit provided.

HF411—Tomassoni (DFL) **Commerce**

Steel; President requested to ban imported steel products from certain countries.

HF412—Schumacher (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources Policy**

Deer and elk hunting allowed in shooting preserves.

HF413—Mulder (R) **Health & Human Services Policy**

Physician, acupuncturist, and athletic trainer licensing and registration requirements modified.

HF414—Gunther (R) **Agriculture Policy**

Swine pseudorabies control program extended and money appropriated.

HF415—Rhodes (R) **Taxes**

Gold and silver coins and bouillon sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF416—Rhodes (R) **Commerce**

Local telephone service interference investigation and improvements required.

HF417—Hasskamp (DFL) **Taxes**

Resort improvement construction equipment and materials sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF418—Hasskamp (DFL) **Taxes**

Temporary and seasonal resorts property tax classification requirements modified.

HF419—Wenzel (DFL) **Transportation Finance**

Northstar corridor extension from St. Cloud to Little Falls feasibility studied and money appropriated.

HF420—Haas (R) **Jobs & Economic Development Policy**

Brooklyn Park; housing improvement area established.

HF421—Haas (R) **Environment & Natural Resources Policy**

Hennepin County authorized to convey tax-forfeited land bordering public water.

HF422—Clark, K. (DFL) **Taxes**

Vitamin, mineral, and whole food supplement sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF423—Daggett (R) **Civil Law**

Independent motor vehicle contractor income withholding for child support purposes clarified.

HF424—Westfall (R) **Health & Human Services Policy**

Living-at-home/block nurse program expanded and money appropriated.

HF425—Stanek (R) **Judiciary Finance**

Northwest Hennepin Human Services Council community law enforcement project funded and money appropriated.

HF426—Rukavina (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources Policy**

BWCA and Superior National Forest; President and Congress memorialized to expedite state and federal land exchange for the purpose of enabling proper discharge of each government's management duties.

HF427—Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Computerized voting studied by the secretary of state and money appropriated.

HF428—Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Volunteer firefighter pension association and retirement fund created, reports required, and money appropriated.

HF429—Bradley (R)**Health & Human Services Policy**

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.

HF430—Kahn (DFL)**Commerce**

St. Paul authorized to issue a temporary license to sell beer on State Capitol grounds in connection with the Twin Cities Marathon.

HF431—Howes (R)**Environment & Natural Resources Policy**

Tax-forfeited land sale and rental proceeds apportionment provision eliminated.

HF432—Orfield (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Minneapolis Teachers Retirement Fund Association members permitted to designate a supplemental needs trust as an optional annuity beneficiary.

HF433—Howes (R)**Environment & Natural Resources Policy**

Cass County authorized to exchange and sell tax-forfeited land bordering public water.

HF434—Opatz (DFL)**Capital Investment**

Paramount Arts District Regional Arts Center previous appropriations grant recipient name corrected.

HF435—Milbert (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

MSRS; service credit purchase authorized for a certain member.

HF436—Mares (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

State Patrol Retirement Fund and Public Employees Retirement Association early retirement provisions modified, and certain consolidations provided.

HF437—Abrams (R)**Taxes**

Taxes and tax administrative provisions modified, and Internal Revenue Code conforming changes provided.

HF438—Swenson (R)**Capital Investment**

Independent School District No. 2887, McLeod, previous grant provision modified.

HF439—Orfield (DFL)**Commerce**

Minneapolis authorized to issue an on-sale liquor license to Dudley Riggs Theatre.

HF440—Abrams (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Teachers Retirement Association sabbatical leave service credit purchase authorized for a certain member.

HF441—Knobloch (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Campaign finance provisions modified.

HF442—Reuter (R)**Transportation Policy**

Freeway metered ramp study required and money appropriated.

HF443—Greenfield (DFL)**Health & Human Services Policy**

Nonprofit health care trust defined, agreements and transactions with noncharitable entities regulated, and financial statement information specified.

HF444—Stang (R)**Environment & Natural Resources Policy**

Sauk River Watershed District administrative funds levy authorized.

HF445—Abrams (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Minnesota Federation of Teachers retired employee benefits election permitted, and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System required to pay increased costs.

HF446—Kuisle (R)**Transportation Finance**

Passenger automobile registration tax depreciation rate decreased, and motor vehicle sales tax revenue allocated.

Tuesday, Feb. 2**HF447—Winter (DFL)****Agriculture Policy**

Livestock price discrimination prohibited and civil penalties provided.

HF448—Seifert, J. (R)**Civil Law**

Intrusion upon seclusion, appropriation, and publication of private facts actions two-year statute of limitations established.

HF449—Broecker (R)**Judiciary Finance**

Ramsey County All Children Excel (ACE) project start-up funded and money appropriated.

HF450—Jaros (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Duluth tax increment financing district pooling authorized.

HF451—Broecker (R)**Judiciary Finance**

Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted, Arrowhead regional, and Ramsey County community corrections agencies productive day initiative programs expanded to include juveniles, and money appropriated.

HF452—Koskinen (DFL)**Health & Human Services Policy**

MinnesotaCare eligibility requirements exemption provided for persons terminated from continuation coverage.

HF453—Koskinen (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Minneapolis required to enroll trades and electrical workers, stagehands, production technicians, and apprentices in the deferred compensation plan.

HF454—Seifert, M. (R)**Health & Human Services Policy**

Nursing home administrator requirements modified.

HF455—Biernat (DFL)**K-12 Education Finance**

Secondary students public transportation grants provided to school districts and money appropriated.

HF456—Juhnke (DFL)**Transportation Policy**

Trunk Highway No. 12 reconstruction between Delano and Wayzata included in the statewide transportation plan and improvements program.

HF457—Solberg (DFL)**Health & Human Services Finance**

Senior citizen drug program appropriated money.

HF458—Skoe (DFL)**Education Policy**

Rural teacher loan forgiveness program established and money appropriated.

HF459—Carlson (DFL)**Transportation Policy**

High-occupancy vehicle lanes prohibited on I-394 and reversible one direction lanes designated.

HF460—Smith (R)**Civil Law**

Custodial parent child support and public assistance accounting required upon request.

HF461—Smith (R)**Civil Law**

Child support, custody, and visitation orders six-month review required.

HF462—McGuire (DFL)**Civil Law**

Seat belt and child restraint system use civil action evidence admissibility provisions clarified.

HF463—Davids (R)**Health & Human Services Policy**

Ambulance services and first responders review provided.

HF464—Jaros (DFL)**Jobs &****Economic Development Policy**

Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center bonds refunded.

HF465—Ozment (R)
Crime Prevention

Firefighter training and education board created, training reimbursement program established, and money appropriated.

HF466—Schumacher (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Zimmerman wastewater treatment facility repair funded and money appropriated.

HF467—Goodno (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Medicare certification exemption allowed for nursing facilities under certain circumstances and criteria specified.

HF468—Dorn (DFL)
Health & Human Services Finance
Emergency medical services fund appropriation automatic inflation adjustment provided.

HF469—McGuire (DFL)
Crime Prevention
DWI; maximum allowable blood alcohol level lowered for operation of a motor vehicle, recreational vehicle, aircraft, and while hunting or handling explosives.

Wednesday, Feb. 3

HF470—Larson, D. (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Term limits imposed on legislative and constitutional offices, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF471—Knoblach (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
St. Cloud Police Consolidation Account special one-time postretirement adjustment provided.

HF472—Harder (R)
Taxes
Windom Multipurpose Center construction materials and supplies sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF473—Harder (R)
Education Policy
High school diploma warranty coverage exception provided for students refusing to repeat a grade.

HF474—Vandever (R)
Taxes
Property tax rebate for senior citizens made permanent and money appropriated.

HF475—Stang (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Costs and legal fees reimbursement provided for defense against criminal charges arising from performance of duties by town officers or employees.

HF476—Juhnke (DFL)
Health & Human Services Policy
Ambulance services and first responder standards modified; emergency medical technicians, medical response units, and emergency medical technician instructor certification and training program approval required; and penalties imposed.

HF477—Carruthers (DFL)
Education Policy
Virtual school district created and money appropriated.

HF478—Haas (R)
Commerce
Structured settlement payment rights protected related to tort or workers' compensation claims.

HF479—Westrom (R)
Agriculture Policy
Agricultural producer contract advisory task force established; livestock, agricultural commodity, and specialty crop contracts studied; and money appropriated.

HF480—Workman (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Carver County intermediate care facilities for persons with mental retardation (ICF/MR) reconfiguration project authorized.

HF481—Marko (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Washington County; Grey Cloud Island State Park plan proposal required.

HF482—Pelowski (DFL)
Education Policy
K-12 supervisory personnel required to teach at least one one-term course per school year as a condition of licensure.

HF483—Tuma (R)
Education Policy
Special education provisions modified and rulemaking provided.

HF484—Paulsen (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Initiative and referendum implementation act adopted, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF485—Tomassoni (DFL)
K-12 Education Finance
School district declining pupil unit aid established and money appropriated.

HF486—Bakk (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Riparian landowners and aircraft operators allowed bulk delivery of nonoxygenated gasoline.

HF487—Storm (R)
Agriculture Policy
Foreign ownership of agricultural land used for poultry production allowed.

HF488—Greiling (DFL)
Education Policy
Special education provisions modified and rulemaking provided.

HF489—Carruthers (DFL)
Civil Law
Civil commitment standards and procedures clarified, and mentally ill and dangerous person commitment procedures modified.

HF490—Tuma (R)
Family & Early Childhood Education Finance
Child guide prevention program appropriated money.

HF491—Rukavina (DFL)
K-12 Education Finance
Secondary student technical training program funded at the Mesabi Range Community and Technical College, and money appropriated.

HF492—Dorn (DFL)
Higher Education Finance
Mankato State University authorized to construct the Taylor Center multipurpose facility.

HF493—Greiling (DFL)
K-12 Education Finance
School district teacher training and experience revenue restored, and money appropriated.

HF494—Howes (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Emergency deer feeding funds disposition modified.

HF495—Howes (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Nonpaved alternative trails developed adjacent to the Heartland Paul Bunyon State Trails, and money appropriated.

Thursday, Feb. 4

HF496—Hilty (DFL)
Commerce
Farm winery sales regulations modified.

HF497—Rest (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Runoff election created for congressional, state legislative, or constitutional offices if no candidate receives a majority of the votes; and money appropriated.

HF498—Erhardt (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Patient services definition clarified for the purpose of the MinnesotaCare provider tax.

HF499—Seifert, J. (R)
Health & Human Services Finance
Health care provider reimbursement and nonadministrative staff pay increased, and money appropriated.

HF500—Mulder (R)
Health & Human Services Finance
Nonmetropolitan county prepaid medical assistance (MA) and prepaid General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) program contract rates increased.

HF501—Davids (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Nursing home licensed bed inactive status provided, and moratorium on facility monetary penalties established.

HF502—Osskopp (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Wabasha County authorized to sell tax-forfeited land bordering public water.

HF503—Anderson, I. (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Little Fork community center, recreation complex, and grandstand constructed; and money appropriated.

HF504—Skoe (DFL)
K-12 Education Finance
White Earth Reservation Pine Point School Facility and community center provided, and money appropriated.

HF505—Swenson (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Sporting license subagents authorized to retain a sales commission.

HF506—Greiling (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Special primaries and elections required to be conducted by mail under certain circumstances, and election schedules modified.	HF512—Koskinen (DFL) Health & Human Services Policy Senior citizen drug program eligibility expanded, funding cap removed, and money appropriated.	HF519—Sykora (R) K-12 Education Finance School district cost of living index created, general education formula allowance modified, and money appropriated.	HF524—McCollum (DFL) Jobs & Economic Development Finance Maplewood; historic farm buildings relocated, and money appropriated.
HF507—Daggett (R) Taxes Lawful gambling, pull-tabs, tip-boards, and combined receipts tax rates reduced.	HF513—Mares (R) Environment & Natural Resources Policy Ramsey and Washington counties regional trail land acquisition and development around White Bear Lake provided, and money appropriated.	HF520—Pelowski (DFL) Higher Education Finance Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) Winona State University capital projects funded, and money appropriated.	HF525—Westerberg (R) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Anoka County; city administration of dangerous dog registration system provided.
HF508—Van Dellen (R) Taxes Unimproved real estate bordering public waters property tax class rate reduction provided.	HF514—Chaudhary (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Real property alternative description method authorized by counties.	HF521—Seagren (R) K-12 Education Finance Minnesota Valley and Synergy residential academies provided facility and operating funding, and money appropriated.	HF526—Mullery (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board employee appointment provided.
HF509—Swenson (R) Agriculture Policy Manure digester technology demonstration project shared loans provided, manure waste methane recovery system energy purchase required, rebates provided, and money appropriated.	HF515—Koskinen (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs County recorders provided alternative document numbering.	HF522—McCollum (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Education benefits program established for resident members of federal armed forces reserves, tuition and textbook reimbursement grants provided, and money appropriated.	HF527—Clark, K. (DFL) Jobs & Economic Development Finance Learn to earn summer youth employment and community initiative programs funded, and money appropriated.
HF510—Biernat (DFL) Civil Law Child and medical support order administrative process repealed, family law magistrates appointed, and money appropriated.	HF516—Opatz (DFL) K-12 Education Finance School finance system provided increased equity, general education formula allowance increased, and money appropriated.	HF523—Rest (DFL) Education Policy State investment in children program created for post-secondary education, health care, or housing-related expenses.	HF528—Westrom (R) Transportation Policy Fiberglass and steel underground fuel storage tank specifications required.
HF511—Erhardt (R) Taxes Hospital district truth in taxation hearings required.	HF517—Skoe (DFL) Taxes Proposed property tax notification date modified.	HF518—Seifert, J. (R) Civil Law Uniform correction or clarification of defamation act adopted.	HF529—Anderson, I. (DFL) Health & Human Services Policy State employee medical clinic access improved through health plan contracting requirements.

The freedom to assemble sometimes requires a permit

Even though the state Capitol belongs to the citizens of Minnesota, they often need permission to speak their minds on its premises.

Organizers of the nearly 175 public demonstrations, concerts, and other events held annually at the Capitol must first secure a permit granted by the Minnesota Department of Administration.

Bernie Steele, complex services manager for the department's Plant Management Division, said his office receives about 200 requests a year, but only about 85 percent of those groups actually complete their applications and hold events.

Steele said he rarely denies a permit to a group. Often, he said, groups are surprised by the amount of paperwork and the restrictions involved with planning a Capitol event and decide not to complete the application.

Some of the restrictions include prohibitions on candles, balloons, and sound systems. Also, participants may not move any Capitol furnishings and must keep noise below 85 decibels. Additionally, groups are responsible for their own cleanup.

And during the final six weeks of each legislative session, noise restrictions become even tighter. For example, choirs are not allowed inside the building during those final weeks.

"It's truly so we don't disrupt the occupants," Steele said.

The Capitol also rents out equipment such as chairs, tables, coat racks, risers, podiums, public address systems, televisions, and videocassette recorders. Permits are granted only for public events, which means that weddings, commercial events, or other private gatherings are not allowed.

Even with these restrictions, Minnesota's policy is liberal compared to other states, Steele said. In addition to the rules, Capitol security monitors the events for safety precautions. Of his 29 years at the Capitol, Steele said the enthusiasm levels at the Twins World Series rallies caused them to be the most dangerous events.

"We actually pride ourselves on the non-violent type of situations," he said.

Under its Rules Governing Public Rallies, the department requires a permit application to be filed with the Plant Management Division at least one week before the scheduled event. However, if time and staff availability allow, permits might still be granted for events past the filing deadline.

To obtain a permit application, call (651) 296-6404.

Committee Schedule

Schedule is subject to change.

For information updates, call

House Calls at (651) 296-9283.

All meetings are open to the public.

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MONDAY, Feb. 8

8 a.m.

GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS & VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICY

500S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: HF136 (Rostberg) Persian Gulf War veterans bonus application period extended. HF55 (Tomassoni) Trained force of firefighters maintained by the commissioner of natural resources, and public employee definition expanded.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF40 (Bradley) Nursing facility residents allowed to request the use of restraints. HF188 (Kuisle) Nursing homes' immediate jeopardy fines imposed by the Department of Health waived.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy

Agenda: training for members and staff on using budget books, Department of Finance; budget presentations by the Boxing Board, Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals, and World Trade Center Corporation.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau

Agenda: budget presentation by Department of Public Safety continued; overview of federal funds, Frank Ahrens, Office of Fiscal Administrative Services; Katherine Burke Moore, Driver and Vehicle Services; Kathryn Swanson, Traffic Safety; Ron West, Pipeline Safety; Janet Cain, Office of Technical Support.

10 a.m.

CIVIL LAW

Basement Hearing Room

State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: HF74 (Luther) Health care directive suggested form modified.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: Department of Natural Resources performance report.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

300S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik

Agenda: allocation formulas, Laura King, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: Gov. Ventura's K-12 budget.

Property Tax Division/ TAXES

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: HF102 (Osskopp) Local government aid base increased for certain cities.

HF104 (Hackbarth) Local government base aid increased for certain cities.

HF235 (Hackbarth) Agricultural property tax classification extended to include property used for insect sales production.

HF220 (Solberg) Property tax penalties and interest distribution modified.

HF125 (Erhardt) Noncommercial seasonal residential recreational property second tier property tax class rates reduced.

HF211 (Abrams) Noncommercial seasonal residential recreational second-tier property tax class rate reduced.

12:30 p.m.

FAMILY & EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: budget overview; testimony by Commissioner Christine Jax, Department of Children, Families and Learning; Stephanie Andrews and Deb Bednarz, Department of Finance.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Peg Larsen

Agenda: HF371 (Stang) Local government historical work contribution limit removed; and public or private, nonprofit senior citizen center contributions authorized.

Subcommittee on Regulated Industries/ COMMERCE

Basement Hearing Room

State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ken Wolf

Agenda: presentations concerning telecommunications and deregulation issues by the Minnesota Telephone Association, Minnesota Association for Rural Telephones, AT&T, and AT&T Wireless.

1 p.m.

Outdoor Recreation Task Force

500S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: discussion on trail damage due to snowmobile carbide studs continued.

2:30 p.m.

The House meets in session.

TUESDAY, Feb. 9

8 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES POLICY

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Fran Bradley

Agenda: discussion of mental health issues.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Arlon Lindner

Agenda: HF134 (Erickson) Marketing and infrastructure changes due to Ontario waters and Mille Lacs Lake limitations funded, and money appropriated.

Discussion on affordable housing issues continued.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

300S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Sherry Broecker

Agenda: budget request presentations, Department of Human Rights and Sentencing Guidelines Commission.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Tom Workman

Agenda: presentation on commuter rail feasibility study phase II by Railroads & Waterways Director Al Vogel, Department of Transportation.

8:30 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie

Agenda: budget presentation continued, Department of Employee Relations.

10 a.m.

CRIME PREVENTION

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek

Agenda: HF112 (Bishop) Fraudulent use of another's personal identity provided felony penalties, and civil forfeiture of property authorized.

Community notification law and civil commitment study group overviews.

EDUCATION POLICY

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Harry Mares

Agenda: Education Minnesota and Minnesota School Board Association report on survey results of the Profile of Learning; Profile of Learning, Executive Vice President and Provost Robert Bruininks, University of Minnesota; HF15 (Kielkucki) Graduation standards advisory panel recommendations implemented, Profile of Learning requirements modified, state performance packages eliminated, and advisory group established.

Note: meeting continued at 2:30 p.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: HF59 (Bakk) Snowmobile trail grants-in-aid provisions modified to include maintenance of Voyageurs National Park trails. HF288 (Rostberg) Pollution Control Agency Mississippi River emergency spill response equipment and training provided, and money appropriated. HF137 (Rostberg) Collector watercraft licensing requirement exemption provided.

TAXES

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: HF378 (Daggett) Individual income tax long-term care insurance credit increased. HF190 (Harder) S corporations federal tax treatment conformity provided.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness

Agenda: Gov. Ventura's agriculture budget; Department of Agriculture and Department of Finance.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Knoblach

Agenda: to be announced.

2:30 p.m.

EDUCATION POLICY

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Harry Mares

Agenda: graduation standards hearing continued. HF15 (Kielkucki) Graduation standards advisory panel recommendations implemented, Profile of Learning requirements modified, state performance packages eliminated, and advisory group established.

ETHICS

400S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Elaine Harder

Agenda: committee and staff introductions; ethics overview, House Research; adopting committee procedures.

WEDNESDAY, Feb. 10

8 a.m.

GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS & VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICY

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: Indian gaming in Minnesota overview by executive director John McCarthy, Minnesota Indian Gaming Association.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF35 (Haas) Tobacco settlement money transferred from the general fund to the health care access fund, and MinnesotaCare premium and provider taxes repealed. HF311 (Goodno) Health Care Access Fund abolished, health maintenance organizations and nonprofit health service plan corporations insurance premiums tax repealed, and health care taxes phased out.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy

Agenda: budget presentations by Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board and Minnesota Technology.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau

Agenda: Department of Transportation budget presentation.

10 a.m.

CIVIL LAW

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: HF183 (Buesgens) Civil commitment; minor chemical dependency treatment parental consent provisions modified.

HF92 (Carruthers) Driver's license revocation for chemical test implied consent violations judicial review petition content requirements modified, and scope of discovery limited.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: Department of Natural Resources federal funds review.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

University of Minnesota
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik

Agenda: bus tour of University of Minnesota campus.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: Gov. Ventura's K-12 budget.

Property Tax Division/ TAXES

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: to be announced.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE POLICY

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Tim Finseth

Agenda: animal feedlot regulation report, Office of the Legislative Auditor.

FAMILY & EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: budget overview of prevention programs continued.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peg Larsen

Agenda: HF36 (Erickson) Onamia permitted an extension for commencement of tax increment financing district activities.

HF37 (Erickson) Milaca authorized tax increment financing district expenditures outside the district.

HF17 (Hasskamp) Nisswa tax increment financing district duration extension authorized.

Subcommittee on Regulated Industries/ COMMERCE

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ken Wolf

Agenda: industry overviews concerning telecommunications and deregulation issues by US West, Frontier Communications, MCI Worldwide, Media One, and Sprint.

1 p.m.

Outdoor Recreation Task Force

500S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: discussion on trail damage due to snowmobile carbide studs continued.

3 p.m.

RULES & LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Tim Pawlenty
Agenda: to be announced.

THURSDAY, Feb. 11

8 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES POLICY

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Fran Bradley
Agenda: member bills.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Arlon Lindner
Agenda: presentation on corporate subsidies by executive director Greg LeRoy, Good Jobs First.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

300S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Sherry Broecker
Agenda: budget request presentations by ombudsman for corrections and ombudsman for crime victims.

8:30 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie
Agenda: budget presentations by Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Military Affairs.

10 a.m.

CRIME PREVENTION

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek
Agenda: HF142 (Pawlenty) Subsequent controlled substance conviction definition expanded to include convictions subsequent to a stay of adjudication.
HF143 (Pawlenty) Domestic assault enhanced penalty provisions expanded to include malicious punishment of a child convictions.
Camp Ripley adult work program overview.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dennis Ozment
Agenda: to be announced.

TAXES

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: HF379 (Erhardt) Mortgage registry and deed taxes technical corrections provided.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness
Agenda: agriculture education.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Knoblach
Agenda: Higher Education Asset Preservation and Renewal Account presentation by representatives of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

COMMERCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Gregory M. Davids
Agenda: agency overview and presentation by the Office of the Attorney General.

2:30 p.m.

The House meets in session.

4 p.m.

Hennepin County Delegation

118 State Capitol
Chrs. Rep. Ron Abrams,
Rep. Linda Wejcman,
Sen. Linda Higgins,
Sen. Martha Robertson
Agenda: mandate reform.

FRIDAY, Feb. 12

8 a.m.

GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS & VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICY

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Rhodes
Agenda: HF279 (Westfall) Veterans preference act modified.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno
Agenda: revenue maximization presentation.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
Agenda: budget presentations by Board of Accountancy; Board of Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design; Barber Examiners Board, and Bureau of Mediation Services.

10 a.m.

CRIME PREVENTION

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek
Agenda: HF14 (Fuller) Persons convicted of criminal sexual conduct considered ineligible to be a licensed teacher.
Youth experience at Camp Ripley overview.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

300S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik
Agenda: presentation by executive budget officer Lisa DeRemee, Department of Finance.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren
Agenda: Gov. Ventura's K-12 budget.

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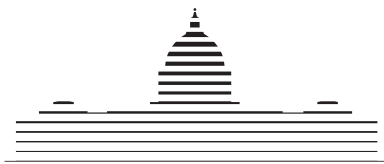
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MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota's budget

November 1998 forecast surplus for 1998-99 biennium, in billions	\$1.5
Amount of that surplus already allocated under current law, in millions	\$609
Amount of that surplus to be spent on sales tax rebate, as proposed by Gov. Jesse Ventura, in billions	\$1.1
November 1998 forecast surplus for 2000-01 biennium, in billions	\$1.8
November 1990 forecast deficit for 1992-93 biennium, in billions	\$1.2
Tobacco settlement payments slated to come into state coffers in 2000-01 biennium, in millions	\$727
Total income tax cuts proposed by governor for 2000-01 biennium, in millions	\$844
Total motor-vehicle registration fee cuts proposed by governor for 2000-01 biennium, in millions	\$287
Governor's proposed maximum annual vehicle registration fee	\$75
Forecast annual increase of state revenue for 2000-01 biennium, in percent	9.3
Projected annual inflation for 2000-01 biennium, in percent	2.5
Governor's proposed increase in spending from fiscal year 1999 to 2000, in percent	3.6
From fiscal year 2000 to 2001	3.9
Percent of spending increase from fiscal year 1989 to 1990	12
From fiscal year 1991 to 1992	3.3
Percent of new spending targeted for education in governor's proposed 2000-01 budget	70
Governor's proposed annual increase in total K-12 spending for 2000-01 biennium, in percent	5.3
Then-Gov. Arne Carlson's 1991 proposal for annual increase in total K-12 spending for 1992-93 biennium, in percent	7
Ventura's proposed increase in state funding aimed at reducing class sizes for 2000-01 biennium, in millions	\$150
Annual amount dedicated to class-size reduction under current law, in millions	\$87
Number of new foundations and endowments to be funded by tobacco settlement money, as proposed by governor	4
Governor's proposed funding for proposed Hiawatha corridor light-rail project, in millions	\$60
Current average annual state funding for public television and radio, in millions	\$4
Percent of that funding governor proposes to eliminate within four years	100

Sources: *Executive Budget Summary, 2000-01*, Gov. Jesse Ventura, 1999, Office of the Governor; *Minnesota Financial Report, Nov. 1998 Budget Summary*, 1998, Department of Finance; *1992-93 Proposed Biennial Budget*, 1991, Office of the Governor.

For more information



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