

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION ★ ★ ★

SESSION Weekly

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

MARCH 10, 2000
VOLUME 17, NUMBER 6



In this issue:

JUVENILES IN ADULT COURT,

UNICAMERAL DEBATE & COVENANT MARRIAGE

HF4030-HF4088

Session Weekly

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of the Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Office. During the 1999-2000 Legislative Session, each issue reports daily House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and upcoming committee meeting schedules, and provides other information. The publication is a service of the Minnesota House. No fee.

To subscribe, contact:
Minnesota House of Representatives
Public Information Office
175 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298
(651) 296-2146 or
1-800-657-3550
TTY (651) 296-9896

Director
LeClair G. Lambert

Editor/Assistant Director
Nick Healy

Assistant Editor
Michelle Kibiger

Art & Production Coordinator
Paul Battaglia

Writers
Mike DeLarco, Jon Fure,
David Maeda, Chris Vetter

Chief Photographer
Tom Olmscheid

Photographers
Laura Phillips, Andrew Von Bank

Office Manager
Nicole Wood

Staff Assistants
Christy Novak, Laurel Waldoch

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

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



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On the cover: Members of the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance and Family and Early Childhood Education Finance committees tour the Simpson Shelter in South Minneapolis on March 6, where mats await the arrival of homeless people for the night.

—Photo by Tom Olmscheid

Should juvenile offenders face adult punishment?

The future is uncertain for a bill that would require juveniles accused of certain violent crimes to be charged as adults

By CHRIS VETTER

There is trouble for a plan that would require 16- and 17-year-olds to automatically be treated as adults if they used a gun while committing certain criminal offenses.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park), stalled March 9 in the House Judiciary Finance Committee, just days after having won approval in the House Crime Prevention Committee.

Members of the Judiciary Finance Committee expressed concern about the bill's potential fiscal impact, which is estimated to be \$987,000 in fiscal year 2002 and \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2003.

"This is one of the bills that sound really good at first," said Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville).

Holberg and other members of the Judiciary Finance Committee voted to table the bill, but the measure is expected to resurface this session.

The driving force behind the bill (HF2939) is concern among some legislators about a trend toward violence among teens, specifically using firearms while committing crimes.

Under Rhodes' proposal, the teens would be treated as adults in state court if a firearm was used in a violent crime. The crimes would include offenses such as murder, manslaughter, and kidnapping. They would also include drive-by shootings, aggravated robbery, arson, and harassment or stalking.

"The message is simple and straightforward," said Bob Johnson, Anoka County attorney, in March 3 testimony before the crime prevention panel. "It says if you are 16 or older, you will be tried as an adult."

The bill is seen as a reaction to the proliferation of crimes committed by teens, Rhodes said. Currently, a person must be 18 years old to automatically be treated as an adult in court.

"We're sending a message that we won't tolerate this type of behavior," Rhodes said. "Using a firearm at that age is not appropriate."

Rhodes, who in the past has backed many school safety initiatives, said he was asked by attorneys throughout the state to carry this bill.

Johnson said county attorneys began discussing the idea last year.

"What we've been seeing, juveniles are becoming increasingly sophisticated, increasingly violent," Johnson said. "The things we're seeing now we couldn't have imagined seeing 20 or 30 years ago."

In a recent case, a juvenile — 16 years, 10 months old — fired a series of shots into a car

with several passengers, Johnson said. Amazingly, no one was injured in the shooting.

A judge placed the offender in Extended Juvenile Jurisdiction, rather than sending the case to an adult court. But Johnson said this offender should be in an adult prison rather than a juvenile facility because of the dangerous nature of the crime.

Extended Juvenile Jurisdiction is a state program for teens who have committed serious crimes. They are placed in a center for juveniles rather than being sent to prison. The program stresses teaching and rehabilitation. Teens can be placed in the program until they are 21 years old.

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom spoke against the bill, saying it is vastly different from a proposal that county attorneys drafted during the interim. Backstrom said he would prefer that any decision to prosecute a 16-year-old juvenile as an adult be left to the prosecuting attorney.

Backstrom noted that county attorneys, too, are directly elected and they have a responsibility to the public to decide what is best for the juvenile and the community.

While Backstrom prefers the option of sending the case to adult court, the bill would automatically send the teen-ager to adult court, regardless of circumstances in the case or the juvenile's prior history.

As it is currently written, the bill would allow no flexibility to prosecute teens accused of these crimes in juvenile court.

Susan Gaertner, Ramsey County attorney,

Juveniles and firearms

Juveniles incarcerated by the Department of Corrections, 1986	135
Number under 18 certified as adults	3
Juveniles in Corrections system, 2000	131
Number under 18 certified as adults	27
Juveniles in Corrections system, 1996 (peak population)	248
Number under 18 certified as adults	31
Current juvenile population at Red Wing	128
Number of juveniles currently in Red Wing facility for firearms offenses	23
Number of juveniles in Red Wing who have committed more than one firearms offense	5

Source: Minnesota Department of Corrections

said the bill is poor policy because it would not allow judges and attorneys to make decisions they feel might be in the best interest of the children and families involved.

The bill does not have the support of the Minnesota County Attorney Association, Gaertner said.

"We believe the flexibility should remain to keep them in juvenile jurisdiction," Gaertner said. "It doesn't take into account certain circumstances."

The attorneys who oppose the bill gave examples about a variety of possible actions by teens that would send them to adult court.

Take, for instance, a teen who has a gun in a public place while contemplating suicide, who winds up having a standoff with police. Even if the juvenile has no prior record, the child would be treated as an adult under this bill.

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) questioned if attorneys would lose some of their plea-bargaining power when these cases are automatically sent to adult court.

Prosecuting attorneys would not have to send juveniles to adult court if they did not want to, argued Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls). Skoglund said county attorneys could still determine what charges are filed, and lesser charges could put the offenders in juvenile court. And prosecutors would still have the freedom to make sentencing recommendations to the judge.

While county attorneys could intentionally "undercharge" these juveniles before the court, Gaertner said, that would set a bad precedent.

"We have worked hard to not undercharge cases, and I don't want to do that because of this bill," she said.

Gaertner noted that all the crimes in the bill feature a minimum sentence of at least three years. Judges can depart from minimum sentences, Gaertner said, but they are often criticized for such decisions.

Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove) said legislators should not lose sight of the seriousness of these crimes.

"You may call them kids," Stanek said. "But if they're carrying a gun, they'll probably use it at some point."

Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls) suggested the Crime Prevention Committee change the bill to make the use of a gun an automatic adult crime on the second offense, but the proposal was rejected. 🐷

IT'S A FACT



Still fighting for Floyd

Gov. Olson's friendly wager started a tradition that continues today

Gov. Floyd B. Olson is remembered for many things. Foremost among them, he was the first member of the Farmer-Labor Party elected governor and he was an energetic leader who invigorated Depression-era Minnesota.

A statue of Olson's likeness stands on the Capitol grounds, but it's far less famous than another statue tied forever to Olson.

Every fall victorious college football players hoist on their shoulders a statue that commemorates one of Olson's acts — a 1935 wager involving a pig and the football rivalry between the University of Minnesota and the University of Iowa.

That's right, sports fans, Floyd of Rosedale, the bronze trophy awarded to the winner of the Minnesota-Iowa football game each fall, is named after the 22nd governor of Minnesota. Sort of.

Olson hailed from Minneapolis, not Rosedale or Roseville or anything of the sort. So how did that pig get his name?

It all started in the fall of 1935. Fans in both Minnesota and Iowa were bracing themselves for the annual gridiron contest, and preparations were proving to be a little more tempestuous than normal.

The year before, a halfback for Iowa named Ozzie Simmons had been roughed up in the contest. Fans were preparing for potential payback in the 1935 game, which took place in Iowa City.

Many thought Iowa Gov. Clyde L. Herring condoned unruly behavior when he was quoted before the 1935 contest as saying, "If the officials stand for any rough tactics like Minnesota used last year, I'm sure the crowd won't."

Minnesota Attorney General H.H. Peterson wired Herring that his remarks were unsportsmanlike and contrary to his

duties as governor. As tensions rose, officials expected police protection would be necessary for the game.

In light of this swirling controversy,

Olson said publicly that he thought Herring had been misquoted. Then, he offered to bet Herring a Minnesota hog against one from Iowa on the outcome of the game.

The bet worked to diffuse the situation. Herring accepted the offer in good humor, the game

went off without a hitch, and subsequent contests became friendly rivalries.

And annual battles continue to be fought over a pig.

Minnesota won the 1935 game 13-6. Herring delivered a pig to Olson at the State Capitol in St. Paul. The pig came from Rosedale Farms near Fort Dodge, Iowa, and the prize was named Floyd after Olson. Thus the animal became "Floyd of Rosedale."

So what became of the living, breathing Floyd of Rosedale? According to the archives at the University of Minnesota, he was sold shortly after the contest for \$50 to J.B. Gjerdrum, a breeder who lived in Mabel, Minn., which is, appropriately enough, on the state's border with Iowa.

Gjerdrum had the pig about a year before the animal met its death.

Meanwhile, a bronze likeness of Floyd the pig was made for contests in 1936 and after. And each year, the two teams still battle it out for possession of Floyd of Rosedale.

The statue, which is 15-and-a-half inches high and 21 inches long, resides today in a trophy case at the University of Minnesota. The U of M beat Iowa last fall 25-21.

(M. KIBIGER)



Iowa Gov. Clyde Herring and Minnesota Gov. Floyd Olson pose with the original Floyd of Rosedale, Olson's prize for winning a wager on the Minnesota-Iowa football game in 1935.

★ CHILDREN

Violent video game bill stalls

Rep. Mary Jo McGuire (DFL-Falcon Heights) wants to do something about video games that teach children to be violent.

Many games today teach children how to shoot and how to kill, she said in March 2 testimony before the House Commerce Committee.

McGuire is sponsoring a bill (HF3180) that would make it a misdemeanor for people to sell or rent restricted video games to children under age 17. A restricted game would be a game that has an adults only (AO) or mature (M) rating according to the Entertainment Software Rating Board.

"We regulate movies, cigarettes, and drinking," McGuire said. "There are certain types of behavior that we think is bad for youths, and we regulate it."

McGuire's bill appears to have stalled for this year. The committee did not vote on the measure and is not expected to take it up again this year. McGuire said she hopes to have further discussions on the matter next year.

The Senate version of the bill failed in committee the same day.

The House committee heard from Lt. Col.



Lt. Col. David Grossman, a military psychologist and author critical of media violence, speaks before the House Commerce Committee on March 2 in favor of a bill that would prohibit the sale of violent video games to children under 17. The bill also would prohibit displaying those games in public places.

David Grossman, who wrote a book on video game violence titled *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie and Video Game Violence*.

Grossman wrote in his book that video games not only teach kids violence, they teach them marksmanship. He contends that Michael Carneal, a boy who fired shots on his classmates in Paducah, Ky., in 1997, learned to shoot from playing video games.

The bill would forbid store owners from showing, displaying, or exhibiting restricted games. McGuire said her bill focuses on stores and not games available on the Internet because those games would be difficult to regulate.

Staff troubles in day care

Day care providers say they are struggling to retain staff and to pay decent wages. In response, several legislators are pushing bills to help these providers attract and keep employees.

The House Family and Early Childhood Education Finance Committee considered several day care bills March 6. No action was taken on the bills.

Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior) is sponsoring one such bill (HF2959), which would allow aides with at least two years of child care experience to supervise children for a portion of the day. Currently, aides with no formal training cannot monitor children without being directly supervised by a teacher.

Under the bill, aides with 4,160 hours of experience with children would be allowed to directly supervise 25 percent of a child's day at the center.

Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka) spoke in favor of the bill, saying aides with this level of

experience would likely be the kind of people parents are already trusting to be babysitters for their kids.

The committee added an amendment to the bill that would require the child care centers to submit an annual report to the state on how many aides qualify under the bill.

Rep. Mary Jo McGuire (DFL-Falcon Heights) spoke against the bill, saying it does not address the main problem, which is low wages.

McGuire said the committee would not think of supporting a bill that would lower standards for elementary teachers.

Sykora responded by saying she wants to expand the pool of child care services and her intention is not to reduce quality of care.

McGuire is sponsoring a bill (HF3730) that would create a supplemental payment to child care providers who meet certain criteria.

"We have some very dedicated people in this field who don't stay in the business because of wages," McGuire said.

The bill would require a person to have one year of experience at a child care center and earn an hourly wage less than the equivalent of elementary teachers in the district. McGuire said providers who meet the guidelines would receive an annual supplement from the state between \$750 and \$3,500.

McGuire's bill does not say what the total cost to the state would be.

HOUSE
COMMITTEE
PROFILE**Family & Early
Childhood
Education Finance**

Chair: Sykora
(R-Excelsior)

Vice Chair: Nornes
(R-Fergus Falls)

Minority Lead: McGuire
(DFL-Falcon Heights)

Members: 12
(7 R, 5 DFL)

Scope: Committee accounts are divided into the broad topic headings of Children and Family Support; Community and Systems Change; Prevention and Intervention; and Self Sufficiency. Two major committee initiatives are child care and adult basic education.

★ CRIME

Farm chemical used in meth

In an effort to curb the production of methamphetamine, the House Crime Prevention Committee approved a bill March 3 that would make improper transportation or tampering with anhydrous ammonia a felony.

Methamphetamine, also known as "crystal meth" or "crank," is a powerful synthetic drug that is known to give long-lasting highs to users. The drug is made with several common household and over-the-counter products. Anhydrous ammonia, a common fertilizer used on Minnesota farms, is used in the meth-making process.

Rep. Doug Peterson (DFL-Madison) is sponsoring a bill (HF3984) that aims to keep the chemical out of the hands of illegal drug manufacturers. The Crime Prevention Committee approved the bill and sent it to the House Judiciary Finance Committee.

The chemical is valuable to farmers because of its nitrogen content. Thieves typically use small, makeshift containers to collect, store and transport the ammonia once stolen from farmers' tanks or other agricultural facilities, according to a report by the state Department of Agriculture. Anhydrous ammonia can be used both as a gas and a liquid.

Peterson said the bill is written so that it would still be legal for farmers to obtain and store the chemical.

Under the bill, illegal tampering or transporting the chemical would result in a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$50,000 fine.

Although the chemical is non-flammable, it can be extremely dangerous. Contact with the chemical can dry the skin and contact with the eye could cause blindness, according to the Agriculture Department.

Because anhydrous ammonia is corrosive, it can weaken and destroy propane tanks that were not made to store the chemical. However, thieves typically use improper storage tanks, which can lead to dangerous situations.

Creating a new information system

The House Judiciary Finance Committee considered a measure March 7 to create a system that would integrate criminal justice information statewide.

The bill (HF3346), sponsored by Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove), would first create a policy group to determine a framework for bringing together all the criminal justice information from the hundreds of law enforcement and social service agencies in the state.

According to the bill, once the policy group has determined what the criminal justice information system should do, what information it should include, who should maintain it and who should have access to it, the panel would submit a report to the commissioner of public safety.

Then, the commissioner would decide what technology to purchase in order to successfully integrate all the criminal justice information.

The bill prescribes appropriations for grants and direct spending in order to implement the program. Stanek said he deliberately left specific dollar amounts out of the bill so that the policy group could determine how much will be needed to implement their recommendations.

Of the money that the state ultimately spends on the project, the bill would distribute funds to the Supreme Court to upgrade court information systems, to the Department of Public Safety for certain fingerprint technologies, to Ramsey County and the Sentencing Guidelines Commis-

sion to establish a pilot project, and to government agencies through grants that require a local match.

The grants would allow counties and cities to integrate their probation and pre-trial release information. Some of the funds may also be used to implement the plans for the overall integration system, under the measure.

Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls) introduced an amendment that would appropriate \$15 million to implement the system. The amendment failed, because members of the committee are concerned that there isn't enough money available under Gov. Jesse Ventura's spending limits for this session.

The committee will consider including the measure in its omnibus spending bill.

Directing juveniles to facility

The House Judiciary Finance Committee voted March 7 to combine two bills dealing with the costs of confining juvenile offenders at the Red Wing correctional facility.

Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Hastings) is the sponsor of the bills (HF3422 and HF3029). Officials said both are intended to help increase the population at the Red Wing facility and, as a result, effectively reduce the per diem costs to operate it.

The bills were combined by an amendment to HF3029.

The Red Wing facility currently houses the most serious juvenile offenders in the state. According to the bill, a juvenile must be a "chronic and serious offender" with both educational and treatment needs. In addition, the county where the juvenile committed his or her offense must have already exhausted the options available to them before sending the offender to Red Wing.

However, many counties are opting to send juvenile offenders to private or out-of-state facilities because they are required to cover most of the bill and the other facilities are less expensive.

Corrections officials say the costs of housing juveniles at Red Wing is so high because they are operating at a low capacity.

HF3029 would create a 50-50 split between the state and the counties for paying the costs of incarceration at Red Wing. In addition, there would be some money available to counties through grants from the Department of Corrections to offset the costs of residential treatment.

The bill also would instruct judges that they must send offenders to Red Wing if they meet the criteria specified. The only departure from this would be if Red Wing will not sufficiently meet the needs of the juvenile or if an out-of-state facility is closer to the juvenile's home.

The last provision is specifically for cities along the borders with other states.

The committee will consider the measure for inclusion in its omnibus spending bill.

Raising fines for misdemeanors

It's been more than 10 years since the Legislature raised fines for misdemeanor offenses. Meanwhile, costs in the criminal justice have increased more than 100 percent.

But a proposal sponsored by Rep. Phil Carruthers (DFL-Brooklyn Center) would help balance those matters.

The bill (HF2503) would raise the maximum fines for petty misdemeanors from \$200 to \$300 and for misdemeanors from \$700 to \$800. The House Judiciary Finance Committee heard the bill March 7 and will consider it for inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Carruthers testified that the bill would merely be asking defendants to pay part of the costs for the large criminal justice system. He said that law enforcement and corrections costs have increased between 100 and 200 percent in the past 15 years.

Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji) asked whether judges are currently imposing the maximum fines. Carruthers said they do when dealing with repeat offenders or particularly egregious crimes. Either way, he said, the ability to levy higher fines needs to be there.

More time to report abuse

Domestic abuse victims would have more time to consider filing civil charges against a perpetrator, under a measure bound for the House floor.

The House Civil Law Committee approved a bill (HF47/SF11*) on March 8 that would extend the statute of limitations in domestic abuse cases from two years to six years.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), the bill sponsor, said the statute of limitations would



Rep. Doug Reuter (Ind.-Owatonna) has returned to the State Office Building. Last week, he was assigned to Room 567 in the building, after a short stay in a Capitol office.

Reuter was moved to a room in the Capitol after he left the Republican caucus and declared himself an independent shortly after the close of the 1999 session.

All other House members have offices in the State Office Building, and Reuter objected to being moved across the street.

begin at the point of the last incident.

"So many times domestic abuse is covered up," Bishop said. "It doesn't surface for a long time."

Bishop successfully moved to replace the House version of the bill with the Senate language, which has already passed the other chamber. The bills are not significantly different, he said.

Protecting teens from pimps

The number of teen-agers involved in prostitution is growing, and that has legislators concerned.

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) is sponsoring a bill that would expand a law that includes penalties for people who lure teens into prostitution.

Clark presented her bill (HF2830) to the House Crime Prevention Committee on March 7. The committee approved the measure and sent it to the House Judiciary Finance Committee.

Attorney General Mike Hatch said the bill is necessary because of recent cases in Minnesota, including one family that reportedly transported up to 150 Minnesota teens to other states to become prostitutes.

The current law makes it a felony to engage a person under age 16 in prostitution. The maximum penalty is 20 years in prison. The bill would raise the age portion, making it a 20-year felony to make a prostitute of anyone under age 18.

Al Hofstede, former mayor of Minneapolis, chaired a task force that looked at prostitution issues. He said there is a direct correlation between homelessness in teens and the rise of teen prostitution.

"The longer they are on the street, the more likely they will become involved in criminal activity," Hofstede told the committee.

Hofstede said there are about 1,000 Minnesota teens who are prostitutes. The average age a teen enters prostitution is 14. Boys, as well as girls, are approached to become prostitutes.



Suzanne Peterson of Pride Family and Children Services urges support of a bill that would expand a law that penalizes those who lure minors into prostitution. Peterson testified during a March 7 hearing of the House Crime Prevention Committee.

"They are forced into prostitution because it is the only way they can survive," Hofstede said. "Juvenile prostitution is a highly mobile underground crime. The targets are virtually anyone's child."

Bill Snyder, deputy with the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department, said he has seen a rise in teen prostitution, especially among the Southeast Asian community. The girls involved in the Asian prostitution range from 11 to 17 years old, Snyder said.

"Half of them don't even know what is happening to them," he said. "They call it 'getting naked for money' or 'survival sex.'"

Snyder added, "Gang members are involved because there are very little consequences and the profits are high."

★ EDUCATION

Discipline in schools

House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) is sponsoring a bill designed to allow teachers and certain other school employees to use reasonable force to discipline a student.

The bill (HF3674) would combine four

separate but related corporal punishment procedures and the legal defenses teachers and district agents have against prosecution for using force to discipline students.

It states, in affirmative language, that teachers and agents of school districts would be able to use force in a "reasonable" manner to correct or restrain a student or to prevent bodily harm or death to another.

Furthermore, school districts would be required under Sviggum's bill to indicate in school discipline policy the circumstances under which teachers, school employees, and school bus drivers could use force for discipline purposes.

The House K-12 Education Finance Committee heard the bill March 8. It will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus spending measure.

"You have to have discipline in a classroom or school setting to ensure any type of order," Sviggum said.

Speaking in support of the bill, Bob Meeks, director of governmental relations for the Minnesota School Boards Association, said the proposal would cut down on the number of teachers contacting the board with concerns about student legal action following the use of reasonable force to handle a disciplinary situation.

★ EMPLOYMENT

Workers' compensation changes

The House Jobs and Economic Development Policy Committee approved a bill March 9 that would change several provisions in the state's workers' compensation laws.

Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls), the sponsor of the measure (HF3960), said it reflects of the recommendations of the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council, which is composed of representatives from business and labor.

Beth Hartgarten, an attorney from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, said the council's proposal last session did not make it through the Legislature. She said this year's bill incorporates many of the provisions from last year's bill.

Among the bill's provisions is an increase in the maximum weekly compensation an injured worker can receive for wage loss benefits. Currently that amount is capped at \$615 per week. The bill would increase the amount to \$750. The bill also would increase the minimum amount per week from \$104 to \$130.

The bill would require an employer to provide employees a new informational sheet about the workers' compensation system.

HOUSE COMMITTEE PROFILE

Crime Prevention

Chair: Stanek
(R-Maple Grove)
Vice Chair: Anderson, B.
(R-Buffalo Township)
Minority Lead: Skoglund
(DFL-Mpls)
Members: 17
(10 R, 7 DFL)

Scope: Reviews policies related to the administration of Minnesota's criminal justice system, including sentencing practices, corrections policies, law enforcement issues, prosecution and public defender services, probation services, and the operation of the courts.

Bernard Brommer, the president of the AFL-CIO in Minnesota and a member of the council, spoke in support of the measure.

"It represents progress for injured workers and for employers. It was arrived at in good faith, although it's far from perfect," Brommer said. "It's an agreement that represents a foundation we can build upon."

David Olson, president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and a member of the council, also spoke in support of the measure. Olson said that members of the council have agreed that the bill should be considered as a whole and that the sponsors of the legislation have agreed to pull the bill if any amendments to the agreement are made.

The bill now goes to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Limits on mosquito spraying

Most Minnesotans would agree that mosquitoes are annoying, but some lawmakers are supporting limits on the efforts to control the pesky insects, especially in wildlife management areas or state parks.

Under current law, a landowner can refuse to allow the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District to spray his or her land with insecticides, but that same courtesy is not always given regarding publicly owned land.

The Mosquito Control District would need the approval of the commissioner of natural resources before spraying state lands, under a bill approved March 7 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee.

The bill (HF3134) also would extend that right to township boards and city councils regarding land owned by those entities.

Much of the debate on the bill focused on the Mosquito Control District's spraying at Fort Snelling State Park in July 1999. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had objected to the spraying, partly because it would disrupt the food chain of wildlife in the area.

One of the DNR's responsibilities is to enhance wildlife habitat, and Kathleen Wallace, director for the DNR's metro region, said the chemicals that kill mosquitoes also kill midges, insects that are the main food source for ducklings.

Mosquito Control District employees sprayed at Fort Snelling after the DNR had said not to, Wallace said. Also, research done by the DNR disputes the assertions that Fort Snelling was the breeding ground for mosquitoes that led to complaints in the surrounding suburbs.

Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), chair

of the committee and sponsor of the bill, said the DNR should have jurisdiction over the decision to spray chemicals in wildlife management areas, because the DNR has the expertise in the chemicals' effects on vegetation, water quality, wildlife habitat, and related issues.

The bill now moves to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

Spending for the environment

Several state agencies and departments would receive additional money for the current biennium under a deficiency spending bill considered March 6 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

The committee considered the environment-related portions of the overall bill (HF3450), sponsored by Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester). Other finance committees will consider other parts of the bill, which will then be forwarded to the House Ways and Means

Committee.

The bill would spend \$4 million for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), \$410,000 on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and \$400,000 for the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

The money for the DNR would pay for costs related to a U.S. Supreme Court decision that upheld the hunting and fishing rights of the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians and others.

The court found that an 1837 land-sale treaty allows those groups to hunt and fish without state regulation. Under the decision, the state must pay the plaintiffs' legal fees and court costs.

The \$410,000 to the MPCA would cover costs of the Wastewater Treatment Fund grant program for small communities that do not have sewer systems. Agency staff evaluate the environmental aspects of the wastewater infrastructure systems that are to be built through the grant program.

The \$400,000 to water and soil board would pay for professional and technical services re-



Back in class

Maryland brings back retired teachers to help solve shortage

With a record 53 million students populating the nation's K-12 classrooms, the problem of finding enough qualified teachers is facing school districts throughout the nation.

While many states including Minnesota are looking for solutions, Maryland has moved ahead with a pair of new programs.

To help address the state's acute teacher shortage, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law in 1999 permitting local school systems to rehire retired teachers, who can then earn a full salary while still collecting their pensions.

Maryland limits the retirees to teaching only in school systems identified as having low test scores and shortages of teachers in specific areas, such as math and science.

According to the *Washington Post*, rising student enrollments combined with a large number of teachers reaching retirement age over the next few years will require Maryland to hire 9,000 to 11,000 teachers in 2001.

Traditionally, Maryland has been forced to seek a large supply of its new teachers from colleges in other states. In 1997 and 1998, Maryland schools needed a total of 6,033 new teachers, but the state's teacher education programs produced only 2,683 teachers. And only 1,826 of those graduates became teachers in Maryland schools.

Maryland also has established the Sharon Christa McAuliffe Memorial Teacher Education Awards, named after the Maryland teacher who was killed in the 1986 space shuttle Challenger explosion.

The program provides up to \$10,000 annually toward tuition, fees, room, and board for teaching students who agree to teach one year in Maryland schools for each year they earn an award.

(D. MAEDA)

lated to the replacement of wetlands. Some of the work is done by state employees and some is done by consultants. Costs are related to reporting, monitoring, and maintaining a database that keeps an inventory of wetlands in the state.

A cut in garbage taxes

A bill that would modify the state's Solid Waste Management Tax was approved March 3 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee.

The tax is levied on solid waste services that are purchased by households, businesses, and government agencies. The tax applies to disposal of materials, so it is designed to give incentives for recycling.

A 1997 law established the tax with three basic rates — 17 percent for commercial garbage service, 9.75 percent for residential garbage service, and 60 cents per cubic yard for medical, industrial, and demolition debris.

The bill (HF2949), sponsored by Rep. Mark Holsten (R-Stillwater), would reduce those to 15 percent, 8.5 percent, and 57 cents per cubic yard.

Ultimately, those taxes are passed on to customers through hauling rates.

The bill is in response to a one-time "excess revenue adjustment" provision in the 1997 law. The tax was intended to generate about \$44.5 million per year, which pays for various pollution cleanup programs, block grants to counties through the governor's Select Committee on Recycling and Environment (SCORE), and related administrative costs.

Cathy Moeger, of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's policy and planning division, said the current rates have created an excess fund balance and the bill would reduce the rates to comply with the original intent of the law.

The bill was sent to the House Taxes Committee and could be included in the committee's omnibus tax bill.

★ ETHICS

Complaint filed in Rostberg case

Two House leaders filed a formal ethics complaint with House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) March 6 in reference to the recent arrest of Rep. Jim Rostberg (R-Isanti).

The letter, submitted by Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan) and Assistant Minority Leader Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul), requests that the House Ethics Committee conduct an investigation of Rostberg's conduct.

Rostberg was arrested March 2 at the State Capitol. He was charged March 3 with three

counts of felony criminal sexual conduct, involving a girl who was under 16 at the time of the alleged offenses, according to the criminal complaint.

The alleged illegal contact took place over the course of five years. The victim is a girl who is now 14.

According to the Permanent Rules of the House, a complaint may be brought regarding a member's conduct "that violates a rule or administrative policy of the House, that violates accepted norms of House behavior, that betrays the public trust, or that tends to bring the House into dishonor or disrepute."

Such a complaint must present specific factual evidence. It must be submitted in writing and signed by two or more members of the House.

Within seven days of receiving the complaint, the speaker of the House must refer the complaint to the Ethics Committee for processing.

The Ethics Committee consists of four members — two from each party — and two alternates. All proceedings of the ethics committee are open to the public, unless a majority vote of the committee moves discussion into executive session, in order to protect medical or health records of the member or to otherwise protect a victim's identity.

Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson) is the chair of the Ethics Committee.

Committee members recommend disciplinary actions to the full House, and the action must be supported by clear and convincing evidence. According to the Minnesota Constitution, the House may expel a

member with a two-thirds majority vote.

Rostberg's is not the only pending complaint currently in the House. Four DFL house members, including Entenza, asked Feb. 28 for an Ethics Committee investigation of Rep. Arlon Lindner (R-Corcoran).

During a debate about the opening prayer on the House floor Feb. 23, Lindner described Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) as having "irreligious" views.

The Lindner complaint is at the stage where it is awaiting preliminary hearing.

Ethics law clarification

As far as state ethics laws are concerned, Gov. Jesse Ventura and other constitutional officers would be treated just like other state employees under a bill approved March 3 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

Rep. Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul), sponsor of the bill (HF3623), said it would clarify the traditional interpretation of those laws.

Former governors have considered themselves to be subject to state ethics laws, Entenza said. In particular, he referred to a section that specifies guidelines for the use of state property or resources and lists several examples of conflict of interest.

"Our state ethics law should be fair, and it should apply to everyone," Entenza said.

The bill would not affect past allegations that Ventura has inappropriately used state resources to boost his personal income, Entenza said. Also, it would not prevent the governor from writing books or doing any-

BOTTLED UP



Ruth Odegard of Coon Rapids wears earrings made from bottles used for drugs prescribed to treat her high blood pressure. Odegard took part in a March 7 rally in the Capitol rotunda to call attention to the high costs of prescription drugs.

thing else that would create personal income — unless it presents a conflict under state law.

Entenza said the bill would make it clear that in the future when the governor could potentially be involved in a conflict of interest, he should try to resolve it by checking with the Department of Employee Relations.

“My goal is not to be bashing the governor, or calling him names, and certainly not wrestling with him,” Entenza said.

Entenza added that the reason for the bill is that Ventura has publicly stated that the laws should not apply to him and a related court case was thrown out on technical grounds.

But just like any other bill, it must pass both the House and the Senate, and then be signed or vetoed by the governor before it becomes law. And based on Ventura’s previous public opinions regarding the ethics laws, some say he is likely to veto such a measure.

The bill now moves to the House floor.

★ FAMILY

Marriage license discount

The House Ways and Means Committee considered a bill March 8 that would reduce marriage license fees for couples who obtain premarital education.

The bill (HF2229/SF884*), sponsored by Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), would reduce marriage license fees from \$70 to \$20 for couples who complete 12 hours of premarital education that includes discussion of the seriousness of marriage, the teaching of conflict management skills, and the desirability of seeking marital counseling in times of marital difficulties.

The bill also would increase the fee for dissolving a marriage from \$122 to \$172.

Harder’s bill still awaits a vote in the Ways and Means Committee.

William Doherty, a professor in the University of Minnesota’s Family Social Sciences Department, said that the bill would raise the quality of premarital counseling, which in turn would help reduce divorce rates in the state.

Doherty said he estimates 50 percent of the couples would take advantage of the discount and receive the 12 hours of education. He said that 15 percent of those couples would decide not to get married.

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Bovey) said he was concerned about the state imposing standards for what qualifies under the bill as approved premarital education. He said the bill’s establishment of criteria such as the requirement for the use of premarital inventory was similar to establishing criteria for the troubled Profile of Learning education initiative.

“This is prescribing something from the



William Doherty of the University of Minnesota’s Family Social Sciences Department urges support of a bill that would offer a reduced marriage license fee for couples who obtain premarital counseling. Doherty spoke March 8 before the House Ways and Means Committee.

state that many communities are already doing,” Solberg said.

Harder asked the committee to consider an amendment that would have incorporated another measure she is carrying enacting a covenant marriage option in the state.

That bill (HF1571) was referred to the committee by the House Judiciary Finance Committee without recommendation. It includes the premarital counseling provisions but not the license and divorce fee changes.

That fact and also the \$36,000 the amendment would cost, prompted Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), the committee chair, to move to lay the bill on the table until it is determined how the two measures should proceed.

★ GOVERNMENT

Review of state agency rules

All administrative rules would have to be reviewed by the Legislature, under a bill approved March 7 by the House State Government Finance Committee.

Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), sponsor of the bill (HF3000), said the Legislature has been derelict in its duties to oversee the administrative rules promulgated by state agencies. The bill, he said, would increase the Legislature’s scrutiny of those rules.

Seifert’s bill would establish a task force of legislators and governor’s appointees to study current rulemaking policies and recommend related policy changes to the governor.

Also, the bill would establish a schedule that

would cause administrative rules to expire unless a law is enacted to authorize specific rules to continue.

The bill also would give House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over state governmental operations the same authority as the Legislative Coordinating Commission in various aspects of rulemaking.

Under current law, the commission can formally object to an administrative rule and intervene in litigation arising from an agency’s action relating to rules. A formal objection to a rule by the commission forces the agency to establish the validity of the rule in question before an administrative law judge. The bill would give that authority to the related House and Senate committees.

Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) said he supports the concept but the volume of rules that the Legislature would have to review could prove to be overwhelming.

“I wish you would find some way to do this without creating such chaos,” he said.

The bill now moves to the House Ways and Means Committee.

No sale of state data

Minnesota government agencies would be barred from selling information about state residents, under a bill approved by a House panel.

“This bill prohibits individuals from coming to the government and buying information in bulk, then turning around and using it for commercial purposes,” said Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan), the bill sponsor, in March 3 testimony to the House Civil Law Committee. “This bill does not make (private) anything currently public.”

The committee approved the bill (HF3986) and sent it to the House State Government Finance Committee.

Pawlenty said Minnesotans are asking for this legislation, and he explained how people receive mailings with information they believe is private and personal. Pawlenty said if the state wants businesses to stop invading people’s privacy, the government should lead the way.

“We have an opportunity with this bill to lead by example,” Pawlenty said. “Let’s get our house in order.”

Don Gemberling, information and policy analysis with the Department of Administration, gave an example of a woman who had failed to pay her property taxes. The woman soon received a letter from a credit card company offering her help to pay her taxes. The woman was angry that this information was available to the company, Gemberling said.

In another instance, sporting goods stores

buy lists of people who purchase hunting or fishing licenses. The sporting good stores then contact those people to sell their merchandise.

The committee removed language in the bill that would have barred the selling of public information for political or election purposes. Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls) said he feared that the way the bill read only a handful of people would be able to access voter information.

"Only the police (would) get to look at voter registration lists," Skoglund said. "That is a scary, scary thought."

Currently, voter registration information is public and available free for political and election purposes.

Kent Allin, assistant commissioner with the Department of Revenue, said the Minnesota Bookstore, which sells some state information, depends on those sales to make a profit. Allin said it would be bad public policy to make information available for one use but not another.

"This information would be open to everyone but the Minnesota business owners, which is strange to me," Allin said.

The loss of revenue to the state would be about \$8 million, Allin said.

Data practices bill advances

After weeks of hammering out details, the House Civil Law Committee approved a data practices bill March 8 and sent it to the House floor.

The bill (HF3615) incorporates several other bills the committee has heard in the past five weeks.

Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) is sponsoring the bill, which opens some data to the U.S. Immigration Naturalization Service (INS) or the police, while making other information, such as health status or financial numbers, private.

"It's all the noncontroversial stuff," Holberg said. "I don't see it having any major changes."

The Immigration and Naturalization Service sought the right to receive non-public data, such as wage information, from the Department of Economic Security to investigate employers and employees. The bill would allow the agents to obtain the information from the department without the consent of the employee or company.

Another portion of the bill would allow law enforcement to share juvenile records for police purposes.

The bill includes provisions of a separate proposal (HF2672) sponsored by Rep. Andrew Westerberg (R-Blaine). The measure would allow school districts to share information in good faith about students. The districts would

be immune from liability if they acted in good faith, under the bill.

The bill would clarify that financial information, such as credit reports, business plans, statements, customer lists, and income projects, are private.

A review team would be allowed to collect and analyze private information on domestic violence, according to the bill. Members of the team would be forbidden to discuss the information with people outside of the group setting.

The domestic review portion comes from a bill (HF2919) initially introduced by Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove). Stanek said the task force could learn more about how and why domestic homicides occurred. The bill would exclude information about ongoing cases.

Rep. Phil Carruthers (DFL-Brooklyn Center) offered a successful amendment that would make Bureau of Criminal Apprehension records on all convicts open permanently. Currently, the BCA makes conviction records private information 15 years after a conviction.

Murderers or pedophiles could slip through the cracks with the current law, said Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls).

★ HEALTH

Abortion bill heads to floor

The House Ways and Means Committee approved a bill March 8 that would require a woman to meet "informed consent" requirements before having an abortion.

The bill (HF178), sponsored by Rep. Lynda

Boudreau (R-Faribault), was sent to the House floor.

The bill would require that a woman receive specified information at least 24 hours before the procedure and be told of the availability of printed material on the subject.

Consent would not be required in medical emergencies. The bill would establish civil penalties against a woman, or the parents of a minor, when an abortion is performed without meeting the consent requirements.

Boudreau said the measure is a women's health issue and that it is important to provide information to women before they make a decision that will "affect them physically and emotionally for the rest of their lives."

Pati Maier, assistant director of Division of Family Health in the state Department of Health, said that the cost of the bill would be \$167,000 for fiscal year 2001 and \$152,000 each following year.

The bill would require the department to distribute information and materials and to develop licensing arrangements with the state of South Dakota, which has a pamphlet that would meet information standards established in the bill.

Members questioned the department's inclusion of \$30,680 in its estimate for printing information in Spanish. Maier said that there is a requirement that printed material be made available in a language that is the primary language of two percent or more of the state's population, which state demographers say Spanish nearly is.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), committee chair, offered an unsuccessful amendment to strike the \$30,860 provision out of the bill.

DIABETES RESEARCH



Sheila Schlangen wipes a tear from her eye March 3 while she listens to her son, Alex, as he reads a statement to the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee in support of a bill that would provide funds to the University of Minnesota for research on diabetes.

Training for care providers

Sharon Morrissey and husband Don Baierl of St. Paul know all too well the pain a person experiences after losing a child.

In May 1996, Morrissey gave birth to twin daughters, Lillie and Adrian. Both girls came into the world with a medical condition referred to as Cornelia de Lange Syndrome, a blood-oxygen disease that requires intensive monitoring.

The children required respite or temporary care during the day while the parents were away at work. About a year after the birth, Lillie died. She had been left with two care providers filling in for a weekend while the children's regular care providers vacationed.

Testifying before the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee on March 7, Morrissey blamed the death on the substitute providers limited knowledge of equipment used to monitor Lillie's heart rate and blood-oxygen saturation level.

"What has happened to our Lillie should never, ever happen to any other child or adult," Morrissey said.

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) agrees. He is sponsoring a bill (HF3342) that would require foster and respite care providers to have training or experience with a child's medical equipment before being allowed to care for the child.

The bill also would require that agencies placing children in homes, even if it's only on a temporary basis, ensure that the care provider has the necessary training before being entrusted with the child's care.

Committee members expressed support for the bill and were quick to approve it.

"It's terrible that a situation like this would have to occur before we look at legislation to address the problem," said Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka). "I hope we can all work as one to

get this bill on its way so, hopefully, a situation like this won't happen again."

The bill would require that the Department of Human Services create a training form for foster care providers. Otherwise, Mariani said, there would be little fiscal impact to the department.

The bill was referred to the House floor.

Improving long-term care

A bill that aims to increase the level of care that nursing facilities can provide patients was approved March 7 by the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls), the bill (HF3226) would allow nursing facilities to employ resident attendants to assist residents with eating and drinking. Under the bill, resident attendants could not be counted in a nursing facility's minimum staffing requirement.

Concerned about the quality of care at certain nursing facilities, children and spouses of patients testified before the committee out of fear that loved ones are, at times, unable to properly feed or replenish themselves. Aid to patients struggling to eat or drink, they said, is often unavailable due to staffing shortages plaguing many facilities.

"I certainly sympathize with the nursing home industry's dilemma of short resources and long demands, but rather than lowering standards of care, I favor increasing the support to the level necessary to treat our long-care residents right," said registered nurse Myra Starkenburg, daughter of a patient who spent four years in a nursing home before dying in 1998.

Nornes' bill also would require the commissioner of the Department of Health to examine

state and federal regulations governing nursing facility care and to implement alternative procedures for the nursing home survey process.

Burnsville resident Virginia Oberpriller also spoke in support of the bill.

"You and I may be there (in a nursing facility) one day, and I would think we would want a better quality of life than what is currently provided at



Janice Laulainen, whose father lives in a nursing home, testifies March 7 before the House Health and Human Services Committee in favor of a bill that would allow nursing facilities to employ resident attendants to assist residents with eating and drinking.

some of these facilities," Oberpriller said.

The commissioner of health would also be required under the bill to develop a proposal to decrease regulations that impede direct care of nursing facility residents.

The committee referred the bill to the House floor.

Indigent care compensation

A person who goes to a hospital emergency room has the right by federal law to be treated. While the law is essential for those who need treatment but are unable to pay, it causes financial burdens for hospitals.

A bill (HF3469) proposed by Rep. Henry Todd Van Dellen (R-Plymouth) would continue compensation for hospitals that provide unusually high levels of uncompensated care.

Last year the Legislature provided a one-time appropriation of \$10 million in 2000 to help pay the costs for providing medical care to individuals who are indigent and who do not reside in the county. Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis and Regions Hospital in St. Paul provided most of that care.

Van Dellen's bill would make the aid program permanent with an annual appropriation of \$10 million per year.

Dr. Michael Belzer, medical director for Hennepin County Medical Center, said the hospital's financial stability is threatened by undercompensated and uncompensated care.

In 1999, Belzer said, the medical center provided about \$34 million in uncompensated care, an amount that has increased more than 53 percent since 1997.



Sharon Morrissey and her husband Don Baierl speak in favor of a bill that would require foster and respite care providers to have training or experience with a child's medical equipment before caring for the child. Morrissey and Baierl explained that their infant daughter Lillie died in May 1997 because her care provider did not know how to use the special equipment the child needed.

In 1998, the medical center served more than 17,000 patients from the state's other 86 counties. Many of those patients, Belzer said, were referred there because of the hospital's trauma expertise.

Jill Larson, from Regions Hospital, said that Regions provided approximately \$16 million in charity care in 1999. That level of care, she said, cannot be sustained without additional financial assistance.

Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville) expressed concern over whether the issue was a health and human services or tax issue.

Van Dellen said that the appropriation was included as part of last year's omnibus tax law, and because the program has an impact on property taxes, he said it is a tax measure.

The committee also discussed a potential amendment that would expand the program to include community clinics for indigent care and removed the \$10 million cap for the program.

No action was taken on either the amendment or the bill, but both will be considered for inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

★ HIGHER EDUCATION

Input on college buildings

Representatives of higher education institutions would have greater participation in selecting the designs for new buildings, under a bill approved March 3 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

Currently, contracts for designing state buildings are awarded through the state Designer Selection Board.

The five board members are appointed by the commissioner of the Department of Administration. Three organizations nominate people to serve on the board — the Consulting Engineers Council of Minnesota (with input from other professional engineering societies in the state), the Minnesota Society of Architects, and the Minnesota Board of the Arts.

Also, the agency that is going to use the new building has a non-voting member on the board.

But the bill (HF3195) would require the board to include two additional voting members when considering designs for higher education buildings — one would be from the University of Minnesota and the other would be from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system.

Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley), sponsor of the bill, originally advocated exempting the university and MnSCU from the

designer selection process, so that each would have its own process regarding buildings on their campuses.

But opponents of that proposal said those buildings use state funds and they should be subject to the same selection process as other state buildings.

The bill was modified so that the university and MnSCU would each have a voting member on the board when it considers proposed building projects for any higher education institution in the state.

The bill now moves to the House floor.

★ HOUSING

Affordable housing funds

The House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee heard a proposal that would transfer \$54.5 million from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to create more affordable housing.

The committee took no action on the bill but will consider it later for inclusion in an omnibus funding measure.

"The access to affordable housing is a very important component of moving a welfare recipient towards self-sufficiency," said Tonya Orr, legislative liaison from the Housing Finance Agency.

The bill (HF3589), which is a governor's initiative sponsored by Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville), the committee chair, would transfer the funds from the Department of Human Services to the Housing Finance Agency. A total of \$15 million would be used as a loan to Habitat for Humanity, which provides home ownership opportunities for low-income families.

Orr said the funds would be allocated to the various Habitat chapters located around the state according to the number of Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) households in a chapter's service area. She said Habitat could build about 260 homes with the money.

The bill also would provide \$39.5 million for the affordable rental investment fund program, which is the agency's main program for the production of rental housing.

Orr said that the units produced would carry average rents of \$400 a month or less and would be required to remain affordable for 30 years. The units would go to families who currently receive MFIP aid or who have recently lost their eligibility for that aid due to increased employment income.

Rep. Steve Trimble (DFL-St. Paul) said he was concerned about the length of time families could stay in the units.

He said the funds may be better used to train

people to get better paying jobs.

"These apartments are so good a deal it's almost worth losing a job to get one," Trimble said.

Orr said the agency is continuing to work on guidelines for the program that would establish criteria for continued eligibility.

Housing built by at-risk youth

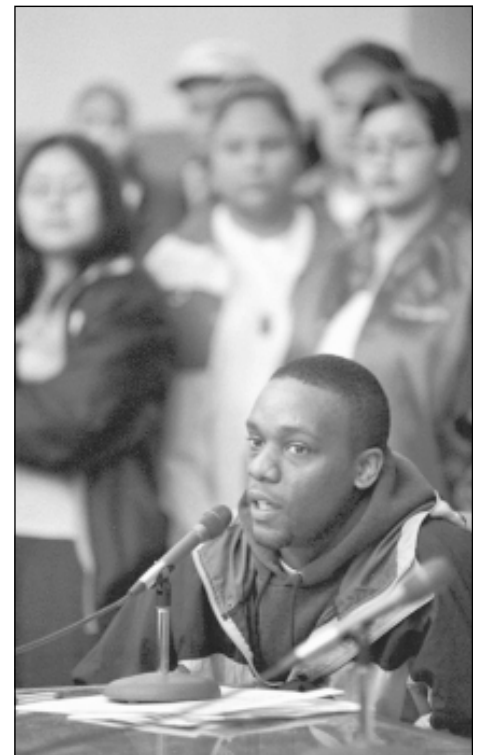
The House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee considered a bill March 2 that would use workers from an at-risk youth program to build and rehabilitate affordable housing.

The committee took no action on the measure (HF2568), sponsored by Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls), but will consider it for inclusion in an omnibus finance bill.

The workers would come from the state's YouthBuild Program, which provides specialized training in construction and the building trade fields for youth at risk of not completing high school.

Clark said that the state has appropriated \$1.5 million over the current biennium to fund the program. However, federal matching funds are no longer available.

The bill would require the Department of Economic Security to develop and administer a demonstration project using the YouthBuild program to build or rehabilitate



Farji Schaheer, a graduate of Summit Academy who now instructs rookies in the YouthBuild Program, asks the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee for continued support March 3.

affordable housing in Minnesota. And the bill would require that the demonstration project target deteriorated housing and blighted areas in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Latoya Banks, a student from the YouthBuild Summit Academy, said the program has given students who have fallen through the cracks another opportunity.

Joyce Eissinger, from the Carver Scott Education Co-op, also testified about the benefits of the program.

"I can't think of a program that has had more of an impact," she said. "More and more students are getting into high school and losing their way. They have to feel they being connected to an adult, and they're not getting that in high school."

Marlon Fletcher, a student from YouthBuild, agreed with Eissinger that the program helps students find adult role models. Fletcher said he came here from Texas without his family and the program has given him an alternative to living on the streets.

"It's been my family," he said.

★ HUMAN SERVICES

Enforcing work requirements

State welfare recipients could be forced to forfeit their entire welfare checks if they fail to comply with work rules tied to Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) eligibility.

Before benefits would be cut off, however, parents would have to violate program requirements for a sixth time. Parents also would have an opportunity to meet with a judge and county caseworkers before a decision to fully take away aid could be made.

The sanctions are in a bill (HF3128) that was discussed March 8 by the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee. The proposal, sponsored by Rep. Kevin Goodno (R-Moorhead), will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus spending measure.

Goodno reminded the committee that the first wave of parents participating in the program will soon be halfway to their five-year limit for welfare benefits. He said the state should get serious about helping people who are wrongfully sanctioned and crack down on those who disregard MFIP rules. The program is the state's welfare reform initiative.

Not all agree, however, that stiffer sanctions will clear up problems that seem to plaguing the current sanction system.

"Sanctions are not helping people go to work, they are keeping people from working,"

said Chili George, a disabled welfare recipient who testified against the bill before the Health and Human Services Policy Committee last month.

Brian Rusche, a lobbyist for the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, said tightening sanctions is "like calling a guillotine a health-care device."

Others expressed concern that full sanctions are not fair for parents of children with disabilities, would leave children hungry, and would lead to parents being evicted from their homes.

Goodno's bill, however, would allow parents of disabled children to qualify for an exemption from work rules and require a greater examination of families being sanctioned.

The bill also proposes spending a \$160 million surplus in federal funds earmarked for an overhaul of the state's welfare system for programs to prevent teen prostitution and to aid hard-to-employ parents.

The measure also suggests tightening work rules for welfare recipients by shortening the amount of time parents can spend educating themselves.

Verification of citizenship

Minnesota may soon be among the many states that take part in a federal program to verify the citizenship status of people seeking public assistance.

In the late 1980s, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service developed an automated Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program to verify the immigration status of applicants for assistance.

Minnesota is one of five states that received a waiver from participating in the program.

Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Faribault) is sponsoring a bill that would require the commissioner of the Department of Human Services to use the SAVE program to verify the immigration status of applicants for various forms of public assistance.

The bill (HF2837) calls for the state to begin using the program by Jan. 1, 2001.

The bill also would require that the commissioner report to the chairs of the legislative committees that deal with human services policy issues about the usage and costs of the SAVE program during its first two years of implementation.

The House Health and Human Services Finance Committee heard the bill March 8. It will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus spending measure.

States are required under the 1996 federal welfare reform law to verify the citizenship or immigration status of all people who apply for

an assistance program that delivers federal public funds.

The verification requirement is intended to ensure that federally funded benefits are provided only to citizens and qualified noncitizens.

Under Boudreau's bill, all cases of undocumented people identified through application verification procedures would be reported to immigration agents.

Newborn drop-off program

A program that would allow mothers to leave unharmed newborns at hospitals without criminal consequences now heads to the House Crime Prevention Committee.

The bill (HF2945), sponsored by Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior), was approved March 8 by the House Civil Law Committee.

There already is a system in place at Twin Cities hospitals where mothers can drop off babies, but the law still makes it a gross misdemeanor to abandon the child. This bill would remove the criminal penalties, Sykora said.

The mother or another person with the mother's consent could leave a baby, no more than 72 hours old, at any hospital statewide. The bill would forbid the local welfare agency from attempting to contact or investigate the mother.

The bill would require the hospital to inform the welfare agency within 24 hours of the child's arrival, but the call could not be made until the person leaving the newborn has vacated the hospital.

Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul) attempted to attach the Senate version to the bill, which already passed unanimously through that chamber. Dawkins said the Senate bill is more simple.

The committee rejected Dawkins' amendment, with some arguing that the House bill has more family-friendly language.

Homeless housing project

Rep. Jim Seifert (R-Woodbury) is sponsoring a bill that would fund a housing and managed care pilot project for homeless people in two separate counties in and outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The bill (HF2553) would appropriate \$3 million of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for the project and would also make a general fund appropriation for project services that cannot be paid for with TANF funds.

"We are expecting great things if this project is funded," Seifert said.

The House Health and Human Services

Finance Committee discussed the bill March 8. It will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus spending measure.

The planning phase of the pilot project previously received authorization, but no funds have been allocated for implementation.

Seifert's bill calls for an annual report to evaluate the project with respect to certain goals. The report would address whether project participants lead more productive and stable lives and whether system-wide costs and the inappropriate use of emergency or crisis-oriented services have been reduced.

The bill also clearly specifies who is eligible to participate in the pilot project. For instance, families or pregnant women who are receiving or meet income guidelines for the Minnesota Family Investment Program would qualify, as would employed families whose household income falls below 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines.

Liability for unsafe day care

The House Civil Law Committee on March 8 scrapped a plan to give counties immunity from prosecution for licensing a child care operation when there is reason to believe it could be unsafe.

The provision was included in a bill that would permanently prohibit some convicted felons from working in day care centers.

Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior) is sponsoring the bill (HF3103), which would permanently eliminate people with a felony child endangerment or a felony prostitution conviction from positions that allow direct contact with children. Currently, those felons are barred for 15 years after their conviction.

Felony convictions for murder, assault, spousal abuse, criminal sexual conduct, any child pornography offense, and incest are permanently barred from working in a day care under current law.

While the committee had few objections to those proposed changes, there were several questions about a section of the bill designed to give counties immunity from lawsuits for licensing day care facilities when there is a reason to believe the workers there are unqualified or unsafe. That section was deleted from the bill.

Currently, if the county had some knowledge of a possible problem at the site, the county could be held liable.

Rick and Mallery Loftus told the committee about how their son, Calvin, was shaken to death at a day care center in 1995. Calvin was five months old. The woman, who was caring for the boy, was convicted of murder and is currently incarcerated in the Shakopee women's prison.

HELPING HOMELESS KIDS



Members of the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance and Family and Early Childhood Education Finance committees stop by an Early Childhood Family Education class at the People Serving People Shelter for homeless families in Minneapolis. The committees toured several shelters in the Twin Cities area on March 6.

The Loftuses have an ongoing lawsuit with Hennepin County. The family contends the county had a reason to believe the child care center was unsafe, but gave the woman a license anyway.

"You will be eliminating the last line of defense for defenseless children," said Mallery Loftus, as tears rolled down her face.

She displayed a large photo of their deceased child during the hearing.

The Loftuses said it is too late for their child, but they want to prevent an incident like theirs from ever happening again.

"I want you to think about the vulnerability of a child who is placed in a home with one other person," said Cindy Bartell, attorney for the Loftuses. "There is no oversight."

Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul) said there should be a high standard for licensure and it should be followed.

Sykora initially opposed deleting the section, saying there are too few day care centers already and a backlog of families on waiting lists. The failure to provide immunity to counties could slow the issuance of licenses and impede qualified operators from being in the business, she said.

METRO AFFAIRS



Airport noise mitigation

When Bill and Audree Duffee moved into their Richfield house near the airport in 1965, around 50 planes a day would fly over their home. Now close to 1,500 flights fly every 24 hours.

Bill Duffee said that the noise from the increased traffic and larger-sized airplanes is forcing the couple to consider selling the only house they have ever owned — the house where they raised their children.

The Duffees spoke in favor of a measure sponsored by Rep. Dan Larson (DFL-Bloomington) that would provide some noise relief for the cities surrounding the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

"We're not fighting the airport but they are encroaching on our quality of life," Audree Duffee told the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee on March 8. "Our neighbors, many who are senior citizens, are scared. They don't know where to go."

The committee referred the bill to the House Taxes Committee without recommendation.

Larson said that in 1989 the Metropolitan Airports Commission and the Metropolitan Council began conducting dual studies to determine the airport's capacity needs. In 1996, the Legislature stopped that process and made the decision to expand the airport at its current location rather than relocate it.

Last year, the governor developed an Airport Community Stabilization Funding Task Force to help identify and recommend funding sources to implement noise mitigation measures from the expansion. Larson said the bill incorporates many of the task force's suggestions.

The bill (HF3258) would provide several funding mechanisms. It would dedicate sales tax collections at the airport that exceed

\$12 million and would appropriate \$20 million over the next 10 years from the general fund.

The bill also would authorize the establishment of tax-increment financing districts and allow the Metropolitan Council to provide general obligation credit enhancement for city bonds issued to finance noise mitigation activities.

Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) said she opposes the bill because it fails to recognize the significant economic benefits the airport has on the surrounding communities. Holberg said she is also concerned about dedicating all the sales tax revenue collected above the \$12 million threshold.

Minneapolis metal shredder

Rep. Loren Jennings (DFL-Harris) is sponsoring a bill that would require the city of Minneapolis to issue all the necessary permits for the construction of a metal shredder on the Mississippi River.

The House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee approved the measure March 3. The bill (HF3708) now goes to the House floor.

The bill would require the city to issue the permits needed, if the project has been issued a special permit to conduct specific business and an environmental assessment has been completed and it registers no negative impact.

Jennings said the issue has come before the Legislature several times before. The metal shredder — known by its brand name, Kondirator — shreds, compacts, and separates scrap metal.

In 1990, the city issued a permit to the American Iron and Supply Company but later pulled the permit to further study the environmental impacts. The Legislature passed a law in 1994 requiring the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to conduct further environmental studies of the Kondirator.

John Isaacs, the president of American Iron and Supply, said that the company has continued to meet all the requirements put in front of it.

Similar metal recyclers exist in other areas in the state, he said, including one in Anoka County next to a municipal golf course, within view of a Ferris wheel on the county fairgrounds.

"The city has never said they don't want us," Isaacs said. "They just say jump through the next hoop and the next. We have jumped through every hoop, jumped over every bar, but they continue to put obstacles in our path."

Rep. Myron Orfield (DFL-Mpls) said that in similar cases where a city issues a permit and then decides later to pull it, the Legislature has always allowed disputes to be decided by the courts.

"This is moving in and very powerfully taking away a fundamental power of a city," Orfield said. "Understand the principle you're opening up. It's a principle of local control."

Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska) disagreed and said that this particular dispute is unique. She said that the company has been at the same industrial site for 50 years and the city has abused its powers by treating American Iron and Supply differently than other companies.

★ RECREATION

New penalty for studs

A bill that would add a civil penalty for using metal traction devices, or studs, on snowmobiles was approved March 7 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee.

Rep. Andrew Westerberg (R-Blaine), sponsor of the bill (HF3555), said the civil penalty was inadvertently left out of a law that was passed last year, which required people to purchase a sticker for their snowmobiles if they intend to use studs.

That law contains criminal penalties for people who drive a snowmobile with studs on paved state trails. Westerberg's bill would establish civil penalties for people who have snowmobile studs but have not purchased the sticker.

For the first offense, the penalty would not exceed \$50. The penalty for a second offense would not exceed \$300, and for third and subsequent offenses the penalty would not exceed \$600.

The bill now moves to the House floor.

★ TAXES

Sales tax break for nonprofits

The House Taxes Committee considered a bill March 7 that would exempt nonprofit organizations from paying sales tax when they lease or purchase a motor vehicle.

Under the measure (HF3087), sponsored by Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), the nonprofit would qualify for a sales tax exemption when purchasing a vehicle only if it is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, or educational purposes. Nonprofit organizations that limit their membership to seniors or the physically disabled would also qualify for the exemption.

John Pratt, the executive director of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, said the bill would help organizations stretch their donations further and allow more money to be used for the organizations' intended purposes.

John Barker, the chief executive officer of Merrick Companies in St. Paul, agreed with Platt that the money saved under the proposal could better be used for the charitable ventures.

Merrick Companies is a nonprofit organization that provides employment and vocational training to adults with developmental disabilities.

Barker said the organization has about 45 vehicles that it uses to drive nearly 400 people to and from work. He said the organization tries to turn over about 20 percent of those vehicles every year.

Last year, it bought 10 vehicles for approximately \$246,000 — paying over \$16,000 in sales tax.

Abrams said the Department of Revenue has estimated the cost of the bill to be between \$3 million and \$5 million a year.

No action was taken on the bill, but it will be considered for inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Vending sales tax exemption

When you buy a banana out of a vending machine, part of the price you pay includes sales tax. If you walk across the street and buy a banana from a convenience store, you do not pay sales tax.

The House Taxes Committee heard a bill March 2 that would address that discrepancy.

The bill (HF2586), sponsored by Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina), would exempt certain vending machine food items from sales tax.

No action was taken on the measure, but it will be considered further for inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Erhardt said that currently all food and drink items purchased through vending machines are subject to sales tax. The bill would exempt milk, beverages

containing 15 percent or more fruit juice, fresh and canned fruit, vegetables, granola and fruit-filled breakfast bars, yogurt, pudding, cheese, and cottage cheese.

Under current law, most food items purchased from grocery or convenience stores other than candy, soft drinks, and prepared

HOUSE
COMMITTEE
PROFILE

Taxes

Chair: Abrams
(R-Minnetonka)
Vice Chair: Daggett
(R-Frazee)
Minority Lead: Rest
(DFL-New Hope)
Members: 25
(14 R, 11 DFL)

Scope: Considers policy
matters affecting Minne-
sota taxpayers and re-
views bills affecting state
income taxes, sales and
use taxes, excise taxes,
and property taxes.

food, are sales tax exempt. There are some fine distinctions however between taxable and nontaxable food. For example, honey roasted nuts are tax exempt but honey covered nuts are not.

According to a Department of Revenue estimate, the cost to the state in exempting the items proposed in the bill would be about \$1.1 million a year.

Dennis Bjonfald, the owner of Vendstar Company in St. Paul, said the bill is about equity and leveling the playing field for vending machine operators.

Rep. Loren Jennings (DFL-Harris) raised a concern over whether the savings incurred by vending machine owners would actually be passed on to consumers.

Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) proposed an amendment that would exempt water purchased from vending machines from sales tax. Rep. Bob Milbert (DFL-South St. Paul), whose business distributes bottled water, said that under current law only water sold in individual containers of one-half gallon or more is exempt.

Milbert said the bill would not effect his own company, which only deals in larger bottles of water. But he said he agreed with Wilkin's amendment because people are buying bottled water more and more as a necessity because of health concerns.

Erhardt persuaded Wilkin to withhold his amendment until the fiscal impact of the measure is determined.

★ TRANSPORTATION

Stepping up seat belt enforcement

Meghan Cooper, 15, was sitting in the back seat of a car last June when the vehicle collided with another car. Cooper, who was not wearing a seat belt, was thrown from the car. She died two days later from head injuries.

Meghan's mother, Kathy Cooper, told the House Transportation Policy Committee March 9 about her daughter's death. Cooper is seeking a change in the law that would allow law enforcement officers to stop a car if the passengers in the front seat are not wearing seat belts. The bill also would raise the age requirement for seat belt use in the back seat.

Rep. Lee Greenfield (DFL-Mpls) is sponsoring a bill containing such changes. Currently, officers can issue drivers for failure to wear a seat belt only if the car was stopped for a different violation.

The committee approved the bill (HF857) and sent it to the House Crime Prevention Committee.

Greenfield cited Department of Public



Kathy Cooper, Kenyon, testifies March 9 before the House Transportation Policy Committee in support of a bill that would require all back-seat passengers under age 18 to buckle up. Current law requires only children up to age 11 to be buckled up when in the back seat. Cooper's 15-year-old daughter, Meghan, wasn't wearing a seat belt in the back seat when she was killed in a car crash in last year.

Safety statistics that show 2,477 died on Minnesota roads in the past five years. About 1,200 of those were not buckled up.

"There will be a 15 percent increase in use of seat belts," Greenfield said. "That is what has happened in other states. That would save 48 lives a year."

Currently, 17 states have a primary offense law, Greenfield said. That means drivers can be stopped for not buckling up.

Dave Long, a paramedic in Minneapolis, told lawmakers a person can die from a crash when a vehicle is traveling just 30 mph. Airbags are designed to save people who wear seat belts and should not be considered an alternate to seat belts, he added.

"I've never unbuckled a dead person from a car," said Long, who has been a paramedic for 15 years.

Greenfield said some legislators might be concerned that the bill would allow police to harass individuals. He refuted that claim, pointing out police can currently stop a car for noisy mufflers, a cracked windshield, or signs in the window.

Besides the primary offense for people in the front seat, the bill would require all passengers up to age 18 to wear a seat belt in the back seat. Currently, only children 3 to 11 years old are required to wear a seat belt in the back seat. Younger children must be strapped in a children's car seat.

Voter approval for light rail

The House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee approved a bill March 3 that would require Hennepin County voters to approve the county's \$70 million portion of funding for light-rail transit.

By a 15-3 vote, the measure was sent to the House floor.

The bill (HF4000), sponsored by Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan), would require the county to include a question on its November general election ballot asking voters to approve levying or spending any public funds for the Hiawatha Corridor light-rail transit project.

If the voters did not approve the county's annual \$4.7 million levy, all unspent state appropriations would be canceled as well.

Pawlenty said that although it was "somewhat unusual" to mandate a county referendum, the controversy surrounding the light-rail project warrants such action.

"The governor's battle cry is, 'Let the people decide.' This particular issue is so clouded, so controversial that this is the only way to clear the air," Pawlenty said.

Rep. Myron Orfield (DFL-Mpls) said that in order to keep politics out of transportation project decisions the Legislature has historically trusted the decision-making of transportation experts.

He said that there is no significant distinction between the questions surrounding the light-rail project and major road projects.

"This is nothing more than a highly political effort to kill the rail system with no principal basis," Orfield said.

Rep. Mike Osskopp (R-Lake City) said that the difference between county road projects and the light-rail transit project is that road projects don't require the ongoing subsidy that will be required to operate the light-rail system.

Peter McLaughlin, chairman of the Hennepin County board, submitted written testimony stating that the county remains committed to the light-rail project. He said that the board approved its funding portion of the project on a 6-1 bipartisan vote.

Demand for input on rail

The Department of Transportation would need the Legislature's permission to spend money on commuter rail projects, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska.)

Molnau told the House Transportation Finance Committee on March 6 that her bill (HF3548) would leave decision-making to legislators. The committee may consider the bill later for inclusion in a larger transportation measure.

The state is exploring the possibility of using three train lines for commuter or passenger lines. One line would link St. Cloud to Minneapolis, and another line would link Hastings to St. Paul. A third would link Lakeville and Minneapolis.

The Transportation Finance Committee, which Molnau chairs, did not approve any funding for commuter rail lines in its bonding proposal to the House Capital Investment Committee.

Al Vogel, director of freights and waterways

for the department, told the committee that the department needs the authority to create a standard approach to the cities affected along the line.

This function would include spending money for planning, design, and engineering of the line, which would be forbidden by the bill unless the department got direct legislative authorization.

The committee rejected a proposed amendment that would have allowed the Transportation Department to spend money on

planning and designs but would not have allowed spending for any project purchases or construction.

Molnau said she favors having the local communities make the decisions because they would be the ones affected by a commuter rail line.

"I don't see a problem if a local group finances this and does it on their own," Molnau said. "It doesn't say you can't do it, it says (money) must be appropriated through the Legislature."

House divided on one-house plan

Unicameral proposal stalls despite efforts to revive it on House floor

By JON FURE

Gov. Jesse Ventura's proposal to let voters decide if the Legislature should switch to a one-chamber, or unicameral, system failed to advance out of the House State Government Finance Committee March 9.

An attempt to revive the bill on the House floor later that day also failed.

The committee voted 5-5 on a motion to send the bill to the House Ways and Means Committee, which means the bill remains in the State Government Finance Committee.

The bill (HF159), sponsored by House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon), was sent to the committee mainly to consider the direct costs associated with the legislation and the projected financial impact if the switch were made.

Under the bill, the legislative body would consist of 135 districts. Currently there are 67 Senate districts, each of which is divided to make 134 House districts. The proposed terms would be four years, and they would be staggered — half of the members' terms would expire every two years.

Those changes would take place in 2003, if the voters were to approve the constitutional amendment.

The projected fiscal effects of the bill were calculated using current information and many assumptions.

For example, the House currently has about 270 employees, a two-to-one ratio of staff to elected members.

Assuming that ratio would stay the

same in a unicameral legislature, and adjusting for reduced costs in joint legislative commissions and other areas, the switch to a unicameral legislature is projected to save about \$5.9 million in fiscal year 2003.

But several lawmakers refuted those assumptions.

Rep. Mike Osskopp (R-Lake City) said Nebraska has five staff per senator in its unicameral Legislature. And he said the workload for each lawmaker would increase under a unicameral system in Minnesota, which would cause lawmakers to become full-time or to hire more staff.

Sviggum responded to those concerns by saying that the politicians often generate the work, which he said is apparent in that more than 4,000 bills have been introduced this session.

And he argued that the unicameral system would make it easier for people to participate in the lawmaking process, which would especially benefit those who travel from outside the metropolitan area.

While the committee vote effectively stalled the bill's progress, Rep. Tony Kielkucki (R-Lester Prairie) later that day brought the issue to the House floor.

Kielkucki argued that every House member should have the right to vote on

the matter, and that they should vote to move the bill to the Ways and Means Committee despite the earlier tie vote in the State Government Finance Committee.

Of the 11 members on the state government finance panel, Rep. Bruce Anderson (R-Buffalo Township) was absent during the committee vote.

But several House members pointed out that the bill is not dead, because it can still be reconsidered by the State Government Finance Committee, and there are many other ways to keep the bill alive until the end of the session.

"Why this issue today?" asked Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston), who chairs the House Commerce Committee. "There's plenty of time to go back to the State Government Finance committee. It's not about the issue, it's about the process."

Rep. Phil Krinkie (R-Shoreview), who chairs the state government finance panel, said he was among the five who voted to move the bill forward, but he was opposed to Kielkucki's motion because it would overrule the committee's earlier vote.

Kielkucki responded that he was within his rights to make the motion, but he withdrew it due to the objections that it would circumvent the committee process.

Unless the bill is reconsidered, attached as an amendment to another bill, or otherwise revived, the unicameral constitutional amendment question will not appear on the 2000 election ballot. 🗳️

Incentives to teach

Lawmakers mull several proposals to fend off projected teacher shortages and draw qualified people into Minnesota classrooms

By MIKE DeLarco

One of the more serious issues facing both urban and rural school districts in coming years is teacher shortages at elementary, middle school, and high school levels.

Over the next decade, a large number of teacher vacancies are expected to arise due to retirements, student enrollment growth, and policies requiring class-size reduction.

Some experts forecast as many as 2 million openings for teachers nationwide.

Troubled by the forecasted shortages, many legislators are offering proposals this session to make teaching an attractive option for graduates and to assure that districts have enough staff to provide students a quality education.

A University of Minnesota study conducted between February and July 1999 found that school districts that responded to a questionnaire identified a total of 3,259 vacancies to be filled for the 1999-2000 school year. Of these vacancies, 1,258 were elementary positions, 1,459 were secondary positions, and 542 were special education positions.

Some experts attribute the shortages to reduced respect for teachers, low pay, and little room for career advancement as deterrents to choosing teaching as a profession.

"Because of the strong economy the nation is currently enjoying, workforce opportunities for college graduates abound," said Rep. Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington), chair of the House K-12 Education Finance Committee. "If we don't try to entice them to teach, our schools are not going to have the level of quality in the classroom they now enjoy."

Seagren is sponsoring a bill that would establish a loan forgiveness program to assist school districts in recruiting and retaining excellent teachers in science, math, industrial tech, and special education.

Seagren's bill (HF3698) would also establish a program for rural areas and create a loan forgiveness account in the state treasury that would consist of money appropriated by the Legislature, repayments, and penalties.

Rep. Michelle Rifenberg (R-La Crescent) also wants to aid districts, especially rural ones, in recruiting and retaining quality teachers. She is sponsoring a bill (HF3206) that would establish loan forgiveness programs for newly licensed teachers who teach in a school district within an economic development region that serves 100 or fewer pupils per grade.

Rifenberg's bill would appropriate \$1 million in fiscal year 2001 for loan forgiveness payments to a maximum of 500 eligible rural teachers.

Both situations have made it difficult for many districts to locate money to bring in qualified teachers to plug the gaps.

Furthermore, more than 60 percent of school districts with more than 5,000 students reported budget cuts this year, according to the Office of the Legislative Auditor's report on school district finances.

Cuts often lead to a decline in classroom personnel, said Christine Jax, commissioner of the Department of Children, Families and Learning.

"It's perplexing to have the legislative auditor say that there is no financial crisis . . . then find out (districts) are making cuts and having to lay off teachers," Jax said.

A bill sponsored by Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview) focuses on placing qualified teachers who have gained experience outside of Minnesota in state classrooms as soon as possible.

The bill (HF3840) would allow people who have completed a teacher preparation program in another state to take a Board of Teaching exam to receive a one-year alternative Minnesota teaching license.

Similar language to Krinkie's bill can be found in a bill (HF3231) advocated by the governor's office and sponsored by Seagren that provides for general education, special

"It's important to have incentives to help small, rural schools find teachers in critical subject areas."

— Rep. Michelle Rifenberg

"It's important to have incentives to help small, rural schools find teachers in critical subject areas," Rifenberg said.


Both bills were heard March 3 by the House K-12 Education Finance Committee and will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus spending measure.

Other factors contribute to the teacher shortage, as well. As an example, a special state allowance for districts that have a high number of veteran teachers, who command higher salaries, is being phased out.

To complicate matters, an unexpectedly high number of teachers have chosen to retire over the past two years, taking with them a big chunk of allowance funding.

programs, facilities and technology, and education policy.

The measure would allow a teacher who's been fully licensed to teach in another state but does not meet all Minnesota requirements for a similar teaching license to be granted a temporary Minnesota teaching license for up to three years. That license would be valid to teach subjects and grade levels for which the teacher was licensed in the other state.

HF3840 and HF3231 will also be considered for possible inclusion in a K-12 education finance omnibus bill. 

Making marriage last

Couples could choose an option demanding more preparation going in and making it more difficult to get out

By MICHELLE KIBIGER

Experts say that 90 percent of people here and elsewhere in America aspire to lifelong marriage. However, in the same breath they'll tell you that between 45 and 50 percent of Minnesotans who get married this year will eventually divorce.

Marriage counselors report that most of their clients wish they had taken more time to work things out with their spouse when the marriage began to break apart.

In fact, said William Doherty, director of marriage and family counseling at the University of Minnesota, 66 percent of people who divorce say they wish they had tried to work things out.

Doherty and other leaders, including Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), think something needs to be done to strengthen and add stability to the institution of marriage. They say that couples need to be more deliberate about marriage and make sure they are prepared for the commitment.

difficult to escape in situations of abuse or coercion. They also said the bill is unnecessary because current law allows people to pursue similar legal actions to strengthen the bonds of marriage.

The committee adopted an amendment that clarifies the requirements for pre-marital counseling and conditions under which separations and divorces would be allowed under a covenant marriage.

According to the bill, the couple entering into a covenant marriage does so from day one — the couple must go together to apply for the marriage license, which is where they will designate specifically if the marriage will be a covenant marriage or a standard one.

"It is a step in the direction of a cultural shift that I think the culture is ready for and that most Minnesotans will accept. Most people aspire to a permanent, lifelong union. This is a responsible thing for people to agree on in advance."

— William Doherty, University of Minnesota

Harder is sponsoring a measure that would encourage couples to opt into a "covenant marriage" in lieu of a standard marriage. The House Judiciary Finance Committee sent the bill (HF1571) without a recommendation to the House Ways and Means Committee on March 7.

"It is a step in the direction of a cultural shift that I think the culture is ready for and that most Minnesotans will accept," Doherty told members of the committee. "Most people aspire to a permanent, lifelong union. This is a responsible thing for people to agree on in advance."

However, critics of the bill said it would create ambiguities and would make marriage too

Harder emphasized that couples could choose a covenant marriage. It is not something that would be mandatory.

The filing fees, under the current version of the bill, would be the same for a standard or covenant marriage.

Then, before the couple could be married, they would have to undergo at least 12 hours of pre-marital education from one of the following: a licensed or ordained minister, a person authorized to solemnize marriage under law, or a licensed marriage and family therapist.

The husband and wife would have to individually sign an official declaration that they intend to enter a covenant marriage. Along

with that, the instructor would have to sign a statement verifying that the parties took the required education classes.

The pre-marital education program would have to include the following: a pre-marital inventory, discussions of the serious nature of marriage and that marriage is a commitment for life, instruction on communication skills and conflict management, and discussions of the obligation to seek marital counseling should difficulties in the relationship arise.

If counseling during the marriage did not work, the couple could pursue divorce after living separately without reconciliation for two years. Also, nothing would prohibit the parties from obtaining a legal separation.

In addition, under the covenant marriage bill, parties could be granted a divorce without having to wait two years if either spouse has committed adultery, abuse, or abandonment or has been convicted of a felony.

Doherty testified that in situations where these conditions do not exist, it's important to give people time to think about the marriage and whatever problems exist.

"This gives people a cooling off period," he said.


The bill also would specifically prescribe that a covenant marriage is a union entered into by one man and one woman, precluding any same-sex unions.

Currently married couples could pay an extra fee to change their standard marriage status to a covenant marriage if they so desire. Married couples would only have to undergo six hours of "pre-marital" education.

Among the critics of the bill was Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul), who said couples are already free to obtain a pre-nuptial agreement or otherwise safeguard themselves legally. Furthermore, he said, the bill would force people to stay in situations they ought to escape.

"We are not binding them to this, they are choosing to bind themselves to this," Doherty said. "The state is just asking them to make good on their promise."

Kathleen Murphy from the National Organization for Women said that because marriage is technically a legal agreement, attorneys can draw up a number of other agreements to deal with the covenant marriage issues.

"A marital commitment between two people cannot be protected by the state," Murphy said. 

Angling for a fee hike

The need to protect and enhance resources is driving an effort to increase prices for fishing and hunting licenses

By JON FURE

Hunting and fishing license fees would see across-the-board increases, under a bill approved March 6 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

Revenue from licenses, and from fines that are generated by enforcement of state laws, goes into the state's game and fish fund. That fund also contains money from the federal government, which is allotted according to the size of the state and the number of people who buy hunting and fishing licenses.

Fiscal analysts project that the game and fish fund will face a deficit in fiscal year 2003 because revenues are not increasing at the same rate as expenses.

The bill (HF3046), sponsored by Rep. Mark Holsten (R-Stillwater), chair of the committee, is one proposal that would help resolve that problem.

Holsten said he and other committee members are concerned about the state's ability to take care of its natural resources on a long-term basis.

"We want to do what we can to make sure that the base needs in environment, parks, trails, and habitat are maintained at a level that we expect and demand," Holsten said.

Without the proposed fee increases, revenue to the game and fish fund is projected to remain constant, while costs of the related projects are increasing.

Those projects include improving water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams; stocking fish and enhancing aquatic vegetation; and increasing public water access.

Along with the license fee increases, Holsten's proposal would include additional revenue from the state's general fund. Holsten said that only makes sense because those projects provide a general benefit to all state residents, not just to those who hunt and fish.

The game and fish fund pays for some of the Department of Natural Resources' administrative costs. The bill would effectively replace part of the game and fish fund's allocation to the administrative costs with the general fund appropriation. That would allow more money from the game and fish fund to

pay for projects that improve the state's natural resources.

Under Holsten's proposal, \$2 of revenue from the fee increase would be matched by \$1 from the general fund. The fee increases are projected to raise about \$3.1 million in revenue for the 2002-03 biennium, and the general fund match would be slightly more than \$1.5 million.

The bill also would include a \$500,000 general fund appropriation to pay for walleye stocking.

crease said it would be hard to justify in light of the state's budget surplus.

That prompted Gov. Jesse Ventura to veto nearly \$1.6 million from the DNR's budget. In his veto message, he wrote, "My support for general fund increases in these activities was contingent upon passage of legislation increasing the (license) fees."

While the state's economic growth has caused the general fund revenue to increase in recent years, that has not affected the game and fish fund because of its reliance on revenue from licenses.

Hunting and fishing license fees were increased in 1991, and fishing license fees were again increased in 1997.

In 1998, game and fish fund revenues were about \$56 million.

The bill now moves to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Holsten has proposed two other bills that would help divert more money to maintaining the state's natural resources.

One bill (HF1092) would allocate a portion of revenue from lottery ticket sales to the game and fish fund. That bill was heard Feb. 18 by the House Taxes Committee and could be included in this year's omnibus tax bill.

Another bill (HF3426) would put a consti-

Proposed fee increases

(current fees in parentheses)

Resident hunting

- Small game, \$12 (\$10)
- Small game, age 65+, \$6 (\$5)
- Deer, \$25 (\$22)
- Youth deer, \$5.50 (\$5)
- Moose, \$310 (\$275)
- Bear, \$38 (\$33)
- Turkey, \$18 (\$16)
- Elk, \$250 (\$220)

Nonresident hunting

- Small game, \$73 (\$56)
- Deer, \$125 (\$110)
- Bear, \$195 (\$165)
- Turkey, \$73 (\$56)

Resident fishing

- Angling, \$16 (\$15)
- Angling, age 65+, \$6.50 (\$5.50)
- Angling, married couple, \$25 (\$20.50)
- Spearing, \$16 (\$15)
- Angling for one day \$8.50, (\$8)


Nonresident fishing

- Angling, \$34 (\$31)
- Angling, 7 days, \$24 (\$21.50)
- Angling, 72 hours, \$20 (\$18)
- Angling, married couple, \$46 (\$41.50)
- Angling, 14 days, \$35 (\$32)
- Angling for 24 hours \$8.50, (\$8)

Currently, Minnesota's license fees are among the lowest of the four surrounding states, and they still would be under the proposal.

The same proposal had been part of the environment finance panel's 1999 omnibus bill, but the House voted to remove the license fee increases. When the proposal was debated on the House floor, opponents of the fee in-

tutional amendment before voters in the 2000 election. The amendment would divert a small portion of sales tax revenue to pay for various environmental improvements, including fish and wildlife resource enhancement and improvement.

That bill has not yet been heard in the House. 

Tax was a hard sell

Lawmakers battled for more than 30 years before making Minnesota one of the last states to institute the sales tax

BY DAVID MAEDA

Minnesota faces frequent criticism for the taxes it imposes on its residents.

And when each visit to a merchant's counter requires a person to plow down six-and-a-half pennies for every dollar's worth of goods, it's not hard to imagine why the criticism exists.

But consider this: Minnesota was one of the last states to institute a sales tax, and the sales tax did not become law until the late 1960s.

Political conflict over economic and tax issues stood in the way of a statewide sales tax for more than 30 years — from the early days of the Great Depression until the day it became law.

The first states to consider implementing a sales tax did so during the Great Depression because they were struggling to provide basic services.

As pressure grew from counties, cities, and towns to transfer property tax revenue to the local level, states looked for alternative funding sources. In 1932, Mississippi became the first state to approve a sales tax, settling on a 2 percent tax rate.

The following year nine states followed suit, including California, Illinois, and Michigan. By the end of World War II, 23 states had some form of sales tax in place. Minnesota lawmakers discussed, debated, and rejected the new form of revenue repeatedly throughout that time, as it seemed public sentiment was strongly against the new form of taxation.

To help alleviate property tax rates, the 1935 Legislature passed a measure creating a state sales tax but Gov. Floyd Olson vetoed the bill. Olson, like other critics of sales taxes, argued the tax was regressive, meaning that all people regardless of their income paid the same percentage. Therefore those with lower incomes paid proportionately more than those with higher incomes.

From 1935 to 1945, each legislative session provided some reduction in the state's property tax rates along with discussion of a possible state sales tax. It was continually evident as government services continued to expand that alternative sources of revenue were strongly needed. Then came the booming wartime and post-war



Gov. Harold LeVander vetoed a 1967 bill calling for a 3 percent sales tax, but the Legislature, led by members of his own party, voted to override the veto.

economy, which temporarily alleviated the need to search for new sources of revenue. But by the mid-1950s debate again focused on reforms to the state's tax system.

In 1959, Gov. Orville Freeman, a DFLer, clashed with Republican lawmakers over the direction Minnesota government should take in reforming its tax structure. To address growing deficits, Freeman proposed increasing income taxes and establishing the state's first automatic withholding of taxes.

The latter proposal was made to reduce the number of people guilty of tax evasion, and it promised the state additional revenue up front. The federal government had begun automatic withholding of federal income taxes in 1943 and had actually established the method of automatic withholding with the creation of the Social Security system in 1937.

Many of the Republican legislators opposed both of Freeman's proposals, instead favoring

a creation of a sales tax. The session (and subsequent special session) lasted a record six months with no resolution to the tax debate.

In 1967, Minnesota was enjoying a relatively strong economy, including a \$130 million surplus. The major tax issue of that year's session again focused on finding a method to reduce property tax rates, which by that time provided 48 percent of all state and local revenue.

Several lawmakers said Minnesota's high property taxes were driving businesses out of the state. As talk focused on the creation of a sales tax, Gov. Harold LeVander said he would veto any bill that contained a sales tax provision and did not also contain a clause for a referendum on the issue.

But members of LeVander's own Republican party, which had a majority in both the House and Senate, disregarded the governor's warning and passed a measure creating a 3 percent sales tax without a referendum provision.

The 1967 Property Tax Reform and Relief Act reduced local real estate taxes by 35 percent. The bill dedicated one-fourth of the revenue generated by the sales tax to local units of government and school districts. It exempted food prepared at home, clothing, gasoline, prescription drugs and health aids, as well as most services, hotel and motel rooms, and utilities such as gas, electricity, water, and local telephone calls from the new sales tax.

True to his word, the governor vetoed the bill. The House then voted to override the governor's veto. But the Senate, despite a majority vote, didn't have the necessary two-thirds majority required for a veto override.

LeVander called a special session during which both the House and Senate re-passed the tax bill containing the 3 percent state sales tax. LeVander again vetoed the bill. But this time both the House and Senate voted to override the veto.

It was the first time in state history that a governor's own party voted twice to overturn his veto. Thus, Minnesota became the 44th state to have a sales tax. Only five states currently do not have a state sales tax. They are Alaska, Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire, and Oregon.

In 1971, the Minnesota sales tax rate was increased from 3 to 4 percent. In 1981, it was raised to 5 percent, and two years later it increased to 6 percent.

In 1991, the Legislature, facing a serious budget deficit, agreed to raise the rate to its current 6.5 percent. 🐻

Monday, March 6

HF4030—Erhardt (R)

Taxes

General education tax exemption provided for agricultural and homestead property, property tax class rates reduced, new homestead credit program established, state aid reductions and levy provided, and money appropriated.

HF4031—Mares (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy

Independent School District No. 625, St. Paul, trades personnel authorized to elect an exclusion from Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) plan coverage.

HF4032—Mares (R)

K-12 Education Finance

Refurbished computer program for schools extended.

HF4033—Nornes (R)

K-12 Education Finance

Independent School District No. 544, Fergus Falls, fund transfer authorized.

HF4034—Westerberg (R)

Taxes

Blaine City Hall and police department construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF4035—Wenzel (DFL)

K-12 Education Finance

Mid-State education district grant authorized for model program development, and money appropriated.

HF4036—Paulsen (R)

Taxes

Individual income tax social security income subtraction provided.

HF4037—Gerlach (R)

Commerce

Municipal liquor store wine tastings authorized.

HF4038—Hausman (DFL)

Transportation Policy

St. Croix River Bridge required to be a toll bridge and trunk highway bonds issued.

HF4039—Huntley (DFL)

Transportation Finance

University of Minnesota, Duluth, transit demonstration and bus pass program established, and money appropriated.

HF4040—Larson, D. (DFL)

Taxes

Gumballs sales tax exemption provided.

HF4041—Gerlach (R)

Education Policy

Board of Teaching community expert teaching eligibility pre-approval authorized.

HF4042—Dawkins (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority tax increment financing housing district created.

HF4043—Leppik (R)

Capital Investment

Higher education bonding bill and money appropriated.

HF4044—Otremba (DFL)

Transportation Policy

Physically disabled person definition expanded to include pregnant women and mothers of children under one year for parking purposes.

HF4045—Larsen, P. (R)

Taxes

Private noncommercial aircraft storage hangars on leased airport land property tax exemption provided.

HF4046—Chaudhary (DFL)

Taxes

Private noncommercial aircraft storage hangars on leased airport land property tax exemption provided.

HF4047—Boudreau (R)

Health & Human Services Finance

Suicide prevention plan appropriated money.

HF4048—Carlson (DFL)

Education Policy

Profile of Learning moratorium established pending conditions, educational standards and assessments reviewed, technology needs addressed, student course grades scoring criteria provided, and curriculum and instructional practices improved.

HF4049—Seifert, J. (R)

Commerce

Cable and modem communications modified, clarified, and recodified.

HF4050—Tunheim (DFL)

Taxes

Partial fuel tax refund authorized for commercial recreational fishing launch owners.

HF4051—Tomassoni (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy

Blaine National Sports Center renamed Rudy Perpich memorial national sports center.

HF4052—Peterson (DFL)

Commerce

Third-party claimants not affected by retroactive automobile insurance policy cancellations and condition specified.

HF4053—Tunheim (DFL)

K-12 Education Finance

Marginal cost pupil units definition modified.

HF4054—Luther (DFL)

Health & Human Services Policy

Healthy women campaign established to provide family planning community resource information and referrals, toll-free number and Web site provided, and money appropriated.

HF4055—Kelliher (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources Policy

Fishing in designated swimming areas prohibited.

HF4056—Dorn (DFL)

K-12 Education Finance

General education revenue specified allocation provisions repealed.

HF4057—Pugh (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

West St. Paul amortization of signs authorized.

HF4058—Jennings (DFL)

Agriculture Policy

Minnesota State Fair; state agricultural society membership, security, and liquor sale provisions modified; and fair foundation authorized.

Wednesday, March 8

HF4059—Fuller (R)

Higher Education Finance

Bemidji State University and Northwest Technical College improvements provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF4060—McCollum (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy

POW/MIA; President and Congress memorialized to take necessary action to obtain the release of American prisoners in North Korea, China, Russian, and Vietnam.

HF4061—Solberg (DFL)

Taxes

Itasca and Cass counties casino tax revenues distribution modified.

HF4062—Paulsen (R)

Health & Human Services Policy

Tobacco settlement revenues credited to the health care access fund, provider premium tax modified, and contingent elimination of MinnesotaCare provider taxes created.

HF4063—Larsen, P. (R)

Judiciary Finance

Board of Public Defense deficiency funded and money appropriated.

HF4064—Leppik (R)

Higher Education Finance

E-mentoring pilot project established and money appropriated.

HF4065—Rostberg (R)

Higher Education Finance

Cambridge Community College connection to city sewer and water costs reimbursed, and money appropriated.

HF4066—Abeler (R)

Education Policy

Trespasses on school property provisions modified related to parents and guardians.

HF4067—Krinkie (R)

State Government Finance

Governor's authority to control state bonds and certificates of indebtedness eliminated.

HF4068—Otremba (DFL)

Education Policy

Area learning centers Profile of Learning alternative authorized.

HF4069—Pugh (DFL)

Civil Law

Equality of rights for men and women provided, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF4070—Pugh (DFL)**Taxes**

Smoking cessation devices sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF4071—Molnau (R)**Transportation Finance**

Hiawatha corridor light-rail transit bonding authority removed, exclusive bus transitway provided, and money appropriated.

HF4072—Molnau (R)**Transportation Finance**

Hiawatha corridor light rail-transit authority portion changed to exclusive bus transitway design and construction, remainder canceled, and previous appropriation reduced.

HF4073—Abrams (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Legislative budget office established and money appropriated.

HF4074—Schumacher (DFL)**Civil Law**

Civil commitment relative notification provided, minor voluntary treatment consent provisions modified, and early intervention treatment and commitment provisions modified.

HF4075—Gray (DFL)**Family & Early Childhood****Education Finance**

Adolescent child care program for students created.

HF4076—Haake (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy**

Internet state agency grant information required and uniform application developed.

HF4077—Howes (R)**Taxes**

Forest land taxation studied, report required, and money appropriated.

HF4078—Knoblach (R)**Capital Investment**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) improvements provided, and Minnesota West Community and Technical College land lease authorized.

HF4079—Solberg (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

Northwest Technical College and Bemidji State University improvements provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

Thursday, March 9**HF4080—Holsten (R)****Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Environmental & natural resources appropriations bill.

HF4081—Leighton (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities (MNSCU) health care insurance cost increases covered and money appropriated.

HF4082—Rest (DFL)**Taxes**

Taxpayer assistance services studied and report required.

HF4083—Kahn (DFL)**Taxes**

Low alcohol dairy mixed cocktails separate excise tax provided.

HF4084—Kuisle (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

County criminal justice aid increased.

HF4085—Krinkie (R)**Transportation Finance**

Light-rail transit and enhanced bus services comparison required prior to funding.

HF4086—Erhardt (R)**Taxes**

Elderly homeowners additional property tax refund provided.

HF4087—McElroy (R)**Taxes**

Twin Cities metropolitan area transit property tax levy eliminated and money appropriated.

HF4088—Kelliher (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Minneapolis Community Development Agency housing tax increment financing district created and original net tax capacity established.

Reflections

U.S. presidential candidates have conducted some intensive national political campaigning during the past year. So much this past week, one would think today that campaigning is now completed and we know who will be the next president.

But the political process is not that simple, especially in a race for public office at the highest level. Rather, it is a complex system that begins, not so much in New Hampshire and Iowa, but in urban and rural areas like the neighborhoods and communities where Minnesotans live.

Here is the first opportunity for statewide citizens to get involved in the political process.

This week, on "Super Tuesday" March 7, 16 states across the country held 11 primaries and five caucuses to elect delegates who will nominate a presidential candidate or endorse individuals seeking state offices. Minnesota is one of the five states that held a precinct caucus on this date.

The precinct caucus gives the average citizen an opportunity to meet with others to elect political party delegates to serve at county and district conventions. These grass roots participants also present issues

they think will be significant in constructing a statewide party platform.

If all of Minnesota's eligible voters went to a caucus where a candidate is nominated for president or endorsed to run for state or federal office, an average of 849 people would show up for each precinct caucus across the state. But only about 3 percent of the state's eligible voters get involved this early in the process.

Based on these figures, an average of 26 citizens would go to a caucus at one of 4,068 election precincts across the state. But, in reality, caucus participant totals range from two to 300 individuals.

Each political party will hold a separate caucus in a given precinct and site to elect delegates who will ultimately make final decisions and endorsements at the party's state convention.

Within state guidelines, political parties set their own rules for conducting business. By March 12 in the state, four political parties conducted precinct caucuses — the Constitution, Democratic-Farmer-Labor,

Independence, and Republican parties. All elected delegates to serve at a state convention to nominate their leaders.

But caucuses conduct business in a very different manner. Some caucuses are entrenched with single-issue participants who are quite successful in getting their voices heard over the requests of others. They come prepared with organized plans for electing a majority of delegates.

Others may go through an odd process called a "walking sub-caucus."

In order to have many delegates support their causes, walking sub-caucus participants are given time to join together to form a united bloc of voters. Here they show strength in numbers to be assured that the delegates elected will support their beliefs.

Where else but in America's backyard can "human rights for all" individuals, anti-gay marriage groups, "fill in the wetlands" folks, and "save the environment" rank and file come together to elect delegates to ensure that their voices will be heard?

—LECLAIR G. LAMBERT

Schedule is subject to change.

For information updates, call House Calls at (651) 296-9283.

All meetings are open to the public.

Sign language interpreter services:

(651) 224-6548 v/tty.

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[lyris.pl?join=houseschedule](http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/scripts/lyris.pl?join=houseschedule) and fill

out the subscription form on the

Legislature's Web site.

MONDAY, March 13

8 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF3818 (Otremba) County-based purchasing medical assistance per capita payment modified.

HF3384 (Van Dellen) University of Minnesota Board of Regents type 1 diabetes research grant provided and money appropriated.

Other bills to be announced.

Note: The health and human services omnibus bill will be made available to the public after 4 p.m. Location to be announced.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy

Agenda: Omnibus jobs finance bill mark-up.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie

Agenda: Omnibus state government finance bill.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau

Agenda: HF3886 (Krinkie) Light rail transit funding canceled and bonding reduced.

HF4071 (Molnau) Hiawatha corridor light rail transit bonding authority removed, exclusive bus transitway provided, and money appropriated.

HF3723 (Molnau) Major transportation projects account established in the trunk highway fund, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF4020 (Molnau) Intergovernmental cooperative facilities loan fund established, and transportation revolving loan fund and state trunk highway construction projects appropriated money.

10 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: HF2552 (Anderson, I.) County stream maintenance program grants provided and money appropriated.

HF3240 (Finseth) Agricultural land set aside and payment program established, and money appropriated.

HFXXXX (Holsten) Omnibus environment finance bill.

Note: The committee will reconvene in 10 State Office Building immediately after session.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: HF3800 (Seagren) Omnibus K-12 finance bill.

Property Tax Division/TAXES

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: HF4030 (Erhardt) General education tax exemption provided for agricultural and homestead property, property tax class rates reduced, new homestead credit program established, state aid reductions and levy provided, and money appropriated.

HF4009 (Goodno) Local government aid payments to cities increased.

HF4077 (Howes) Forest land taxation studied, report required, and money appropriated.

HF3930 (Dawkins) Capital region watershed district authorized to exceed levy limits.

HF3992 (Mulder) Lincoln County agricultural and homestead credit and adjustments provided, and money appropriated.

Additional bills may be added.

Note: If necessary, the committee will reconvene after session in 5 State Office Building.

12:30 p.m.

FAMILY & EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FINANCE

500N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Committee omnibus bill.

Note: The committee will reconvene after session as needed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Peg Larsen

Agenda: HF3685 (Westfall) Aggregate resources management provided and money appropriated.

HF2483 (Erickson) Pollution Control Agency termination of the Mille Lacs water resources agreement required.

3 p.m.

The House meets in session.

15 minutes after session

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: HF3800 (Seagren) Omnibus K-12 finance bill.

TUESDAY, March 14

8 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF2699DE (Goodno) Omnibus health and human services bill.

Note: The meeting will reconvene at 3 p.m. in 10 State Office Building.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie

Agenda: Omnibus state government finance bill.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau

Agenda: HF2891 (Molnau) Omnibus transportation finance bill.

9 a.m.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: HF3800 (Seagren) Omnibus K-12 finance bill.

10 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: HF3426 (Holsten) Sales tax receipts portion dedicated to natural resources purposes and constitutional amendment proposed.

Other bills to be announced.

TAXES

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: HF3057 (McElroy) Business subsidy provisions clarified.

HF3772 (McElroy) Individual income tax education credit modified.

HF3905 (Harder) S corporations federal tax treatment conformity provided.

HF3907 (Molnau) Department of Transportation trunk highway fund sales tax exemption provided.

HF3987 (Pawlenty) Individual income tax adoption credit authorized.

Note: The committee will recess and reconvene at 3 p.m. in 5 State Office Building.

12:30 p.m.

**AGRICULTURE & RURAL
DEVELOPMENT FINANCE**

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness
Agenda: To be announced.

3 p.m.

TAXES

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: HF446 (Kuisle) Passenger automobile registration tax depreciation rate decreased, motor vehicle sales tax revenue allocated, portion deposited in the highway user tax distribution fund, and constitutional amendment proposed. HF3810 (Kuisle) Eligible interstate carrier vehicles and engines sales and use tax exemption provided. HF3967 (Vandever) Passenger automobile registration tax credit provided. HF3272 (Swapinski) Local excise tax on motor vehicles limited.

WEDNESDAY, March 15

8 a.m.

**HEALTH & HUMAN
SERVICES FINANCE**

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno
Agenda: Discussion of case-mix audits. Discussion of HF2713 (Rest) Funeral acts and services regulated, and pre-need arrangement requirements established.

**JOBS & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT FINANCE**

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

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau
Agenda: HF2891 (Molnau) Omnibus transportation finance bill.

10 a.m.

**ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL
RESOURCES FINANCE**

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

Property Tax Division/TAXES

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Erhardt
Agenda: HF3116 (Abrams) Tax increment financing district reporting requirements modified. HF3675 (Abrams) Tax increment financing district property tax abatement agreements authorized and abatement duration extended. HF3619 (Rest) Tax increment financing district pooling authorized for qualified low-income housing developments.

HF3458 (Haas) Brooklyn Park Economic Development Authority's tax increment financing district No. 18 parcel inclusion regulated.

HF3920 (Davids) Fountain tax increment financing district duration extension authorized. HF3743 (Dawkins) Tax increment financing redevelopment district definition expanded. Additional bills will be added.

Note: The order of consideration for these bills is subject to change. Please check the meeting schedule for a possible time change to 9 a.m.-12 noon.

The full Tax Committee will meet 15 minutes after session. The Property Tax Committee will meet immediately following adjournment of the Tax Committee to consider HFXXXX (Abrams) Property tax bill.

12:30 p.m.

**FAMILY & EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION FINANCE**

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora
Agenda: Update on Early Care & Education Finance Commission and related issues: David Nasby, General Mills Foundation; Allen Quist, former legislator; and Don Fraser, former mayor of Minneapolis. Report by Humphrey Institute on University of Minnesota research and initiatives dealing with early childhood. Child care; report by Department of Children, Families and Learning on employer pre-tax accounts.

3 p.m.

The House meets in session.

After session

TAXES

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: HF3800 (Seagren) K-12 bill.

Immediately following Taxes

Property Tax Division/TAXES

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Erhardt
Agenda: HFXXXX (Abrams) Property tax bill.

THURSDAY, March 16

10 a.m.

TAXES

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: HF3307 (Rest) Job training program income tax credit and participant income limit modified, authorized credit amounts increased, and permanent credit provided. HF4007 (Rest) Failure to pay income or franchise taxes civil penalty modified. HF4010 (Jennings) Ski area machinery and equipment sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF3208 (Dawkins) Residential real estate held in trust homestead treatment clarified, appeal periods consistency provided, and specified uniform probate code provisions modified. Others may be added.

12:30 p.m.

**AGRICULTURE & RURAL
DEVELOPMENT FINANCE**

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness
Agenda: To be announced.

3 p.m.

The House meets in session.

FRIDAY, March 17

8 a.m.

**JOBS & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT FINANCE**

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

10 a.m.

TAXES

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

What's on the Web

Session Daily is the new online companion to *Session Weekly* magazine, which is published by the nonpartisan House Public Information Office.

As the name suggests, the Web page offers news from the House on a daily basis, so you can stay on top of major events at the Capitol. Brief but informative updates about daily committee and floor action are posted before 8 a.m. Monday through Friday.

Session Daily includes the latest House committee schedule and offers links to useful resources, such as bill introductions and pages with information about lawmakers and committees. You can also view an archive of previous Session Daily postings.

Be sure to bookmark Session Daily and check back regularly.

To find the page, just go to the main House of Representatives site (www.house.leg.state.mn.us) then click on the link labeled "Session Daily."



Name Pronunciation Guide

2000 Minnesota House of Representatives

Abeler, Jim	ABE-ler	Holsten, Mark William		Paulsen, Erik	
Abrams, Ron		Howes, Larry		Pawlenty, Tim	paw-LENTY
Anderson, Bruce		Huntley, Thomas		Paymar, Michael	
Anderson, Irv		Jaros, Mike	YAHR-ohs	Pelowski Jr., Gene	
Bakk, Thomas (Tom)	BOCK	Jennings, Loren Geo		Peterson, Doug	
Biernat, Len	BE-AIR-nat	Johnson, Alice M.		Pugh, Thomas W.	PEW
Bishop, Dave		Juhnke, Al	JUNK-ee	Rest, Ann H.	
Boudreau, Lynda	boo-DROH	Kahn, Phyllis		Reuter, Doug	ROOT-er
Bradley, Fran		Kalis, Henry J.	KAH-liss	Rhodes, Jim	
Broecker, Sherry	BROKE-er	Kelliher, Margaret Anderson	KELL-a-her	Rifenberg, Michelle	RIFF-en-berg
Buesgens, Mark	BISK-ens	Kielkucki, Tony	keel-COO-ski	Rostberg, Jim	
Carlson, Lyndon R.		Knoblauch, Jim	NOB-lock	Rukavina, Tom	roo-ka-VEEN-a
Carruthers, Phil	ka-RUH-thers	Koskinen, Luanne		Schumacher, Leslie J.	SHOE-mocker
Cassell, George	CASTLE	Krinkie, Philip		Seagren, Alice	
Chaudhary, Satveer	CHAW-dree, SUT-veer	Kubly, Gary W.	KOO-blee	Seifert, Jim	SY-fert
Clark, James T.		Kuisle, William	KWEEZ-lee	Seifert, Marty	SY-fert
Clark, Karen		Larsen, Peg		Skoe, Rod	SKOY
Daggett, Roxann	DAG-et	Larson, Dan		Skoglund, Wes	SKOHG-lund
Dauids, Gregory M.		Leighton, Rob	LAY-ton	Smith, Steve	
Dawkins, Andy		Lenczewski, Ann	len-CHESS-key	Solberg, Loren A.	
Dehler, Steve	DAY-ler	Leppik, Peggy		Stanek, Rich	
Dempsey, Jerry		Lieder, Bernie L.	LEED-er	Stang, Doug	
Dorman, Dan		Lindner, Arlon		Storm, Julie	
Dorn, John		Luther, Darlene		Sviggum, Steve	SWIG-um
Entenza, Matt		Mahoney, Tim		Swapinski, Dale	swah-PIN-ski
Erhardt, Ron	AIR-hart	Mares, Harry	MAIRS	Swenson, Howard	
Erickson, Sondra		Mariani, Carlos	mar-ee-ON-ee	Sykora, Barb	sick-OR-ah
Finseth, Tim		Marko, Sharon		Tingelstad, Kathy	
Folliard, Betty	FOLLY-ard	McCollum, Betty	mah-CALL-um	Tomassoni, David J.	tom-a-SONY
Fuller, Doug		McElroy, Dan	MACK-el-roy	Trimble, Steve	
Gerlach, Chris	GER-lock	McGuire, Mary Jo		Tuma, John	TOO-ma
Gleason, Mark S.		Milbert, Bob		Tunheim, Jim	TON-hyme
Goodno, Kevin		Molnau, Carol L.	MOLE-now	Van Dellen, Henry Todd	
Gray, Gregory		Mulder, Richard		Vandeveer, Ray	
Greenfield, Lee		Mullery, Joe		Wagenius, Jean	wa-GHEEN-yus
Greiling, Mindy	GRY-ling	Murphy, Mary		Wejcman, Linda	WAITS-man
Gunther, Bob		Ness, Robert "Bob"		Wenzel, Stephen G.	WEN-zel
Haake, Barb	HOCKEY	Nornes, Bud	NOR-ness	Westerberg, Andy	
Haas, Bill	HAHZ	Olson, Mark		Westfall, Robert L. (Bob)	
Hackbarth, Tom		Opatz, Joe	OH-patz	Westrom, Torrey	
Harder, Elaine		Orfield, Myron		Wilkin, Tim	
Hasskamp, Kris		Osskopp, Mike	AHZ-cop	Winter, Ted	
Hausman, Alice		Osthoff, Tom	AHST-hoff	Wolf, Ken	
Hilty, Bill		Otremba, Mary Ellen	oh-TREM-ba	Workman, Tom	
Holberg, Mary Liz		Ozment, Dennis	AHZ-ment		

As of December 30, 1999

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
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MINNESOTA INDEX

Growth in charitable gambling

Gross fiscal year 1999 receipts from charitable gambling (pulltabs, bingo raffles) in Minnesota, in billions	\$1.45
Prizes paid, in billions	\$1.18
Payroll and operating costs, in millions	\$127.4
State taxes paid, in millions	\$62.6
Funds contributed to charities, in millions	\$78.5
Growth in charitable gambling over previous fiscal year, as percent	3
Fiscal year 1999 receipts from pulltabs, in billions	\$1.35
From bingo, in millions	\$76.2
From paddlewheels, in millions	\$15.6
From raffles, in millions	\$3.8
From tipboards, in millions	\$3.3
Net receipts from charitable gambling of Multiple Sclerosis Society, in millions	\$6.4
Rank among state's charitable gambling operators	1
Net receipts from bingo of Little Canada Charity Plus, Inc.	\$511,000
Rank among state's bingo operators	1
Organizations licensed for charitable gambling operations	1,521
Veterans groups	407
Churches	30
Snowmobile clubs	30
Fraternal groups (Lions Club, Moose Lodge, Elks Club, etc.)	316
Gross receipts from charitable gambling in Hennepin County (highest in state), in millions	\$203.7
Cook County (lowest in state)	\$34,000
Year bingo was legalized for nonprofit organizations in Minnesota	1945
Year pulltabs were legalized	1981
Gross receipts of Minnesota State Lottery in fiscal year 1999, in millions	\$392
Prizes paid, in millions	\$235.3

Sources: *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1999*, Minnesota Gambling Control Board; *Charitable Gambling in Minnesota*, House Research Department, 1998; Minnesota State Lottery (www.lottery.state.mn.us).

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