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In this issue:

BIODIESEL DEBATE

OBSELETE LAWS, TOBACCO ENDOWMENT, AND MORE

HF2420-HF2453



Session Weekly

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On the cover: The Capitol quadriga sits amid gray rainy skies the first full week of April.

—Photo by Andrew Von bank

Fueling the debate

Proponents of biodiesel fuel plan call it good for the environment, while opponents say it is bad public policy

By JONAS M. WALKER

Following one of the most visible public lobbying campaigns of the legislative session and the indefatigable efforts of its sponsor, a bill to require the inclusion of biological material in diesel fuels has earned the approval of four House committees.

HF362, sponsored by Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake), would require the sale of so-called “biodiesel” fuels in Minnesota, a mandate proponents say would spur the development of “home-grown,” ecologically-friendly fuels and bolster the state’s sagging rural economy. Opponents,

including the trucking and airline industries, say biodiesels are insufficiently tested and decry the measure as “good farm politics but bad public policy.”

Biodiesel fuel is just like regular diesel fuel, but it includes a biodegradable, combustible liquid fuel derived from organic oils for use in internal combustion engines. According to the National Biodiesel Board, a nonprofit industry association, soybeans provide 90 percent of the biological component of biodiesel fuels. Other sources include recycled oils from restaurants and even animal fats, although those are less commonly used.

The House Transportation Policy Committee amended and approved the bill April 10 after one of the longest debates the measure has yet seen. It will now go to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

In its original form, HF362 would require that all diesel fuel sold in Minnesota after July 1, 2002 contain at least 2 percent biodiesel; that would increase to 5 percent by 2006.

In response to concern that Minnesota would isolate itself by becoming the first state to adopt such a move, the committee amended the bill to stagger the implementation until significant production facilities exist in the state. In the new language, the 2 percent requirement would take effect no sooner than 180 days after the commissioner of agriculture announces that Minnesota producers can generate at least one-half the amount needed.

The amended bill also stipulates all diesel would have to be at least 5 percent biological



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Bill Frank of Lawrence Transportation testifies before the House Transportation Policy Committee April 10 in opposition to HF362, a bill that would specify minimum biodiesel fuel content.

material in the same period of time after Minnesota producers could generate a quantity equal to 2.5 percent the amount of diesel fuel sold the previous year. By that second date, though, the commissioner may only count biological material toward that minimum if

the production facilities are farmer-owned.

The committee adopted a second amendment requiring the Department of Agriculture to study the “feasibility and desirability” of providing tax credits benefiting biodiesel producers.

Westrom told the committee that HF362 is “all about three E’s: environment, economics, and energy.” The middle factor determines stakeholders’ perceptions of the other two.

The debate surrounding the environmental benefits of biodiesel takes place in the context of new federal rules requiring diesel fuel to reduce its sulfur component by 95 percent by 2000. The National Biodiesel Board wrote, “Sulfur emissions are essentially eliminated with pure biodiesel.”

Opponents, however, argue that fuel companies will make the necessary improvements in fuel at the refinery level.

John Hausladen of the Minnesota Trucking Association said any additive intended to reduce sulfur emissions would be “a redundant product.”

A National Biodiesel Board study concluded that biodiesel fuels yield significantly less soot and carbon monoxide, both of which are regulated pollutants. Additionally, biodiesels contribute 93 percent fewer hydrocarbons, which contribute to smog.

However, the same study also found that biodiesel fuels can produce more nitrogen oxides (NOx), a compound that Runge says is a “major contributor” to nitrous ground-level ozone emission.

A report issued by University of Minnesota Professor C. Ford Runge concluded that “the Twin Cities area has the potential to exceed EPA standards for ozone” and that “any increase in NOx emissions is a potential source of environmental costs of compliance.”

Proponents counter that “biodiesel’s lack of sulfur allows the use of nitrogen oxide control technologies that cannot be used with conventional diesel. Biodiesel nitrogen oxide emissions can be effectively managed and efficiently eliminated as a concern of the fuel’s use.”

Westrom’s second “E,” economics, proved among the most contentious. Hoping for a financial windfall, farmers seek to create a new market for a bountiful product. Truckers and other industries see themselves as being forced to pay for a lopsided mandate benefiting some

farmers at the expense of all other economic sectors.

The biodiesel debate is often compared to the ethanol controversy of the mid-1980s. Ethanol is a corn byproduct that reduces pollutants when added to gasoline. Building on its green record and wishing to nurture a fledgling market, Minnesota began financially subsidizing ethanol production in the state in 1987, an incentive that the United States also began providing.

Ten years later, Minnesota became the first state to require that all gasoline sold within its borders contain ethanol. It remains the only state to have done so.

The Runge report concludes that Minnesota soybean farmers stand to earn \$7.5 million per year were the state to adopt the biodiesel mandate, while the added yearly costs to diesel fuel users add up to \$16 million at 2 percent and \$48 million at 5 percent.

Hausladen estimated that biodiesels would cost truckers about 4 cents per gallon, a figure that, magnified over hundreds of gallons consumed, and in the context of already slim operating budget, could amount to one-third to one-half of a trucker's funds.

This constitutes a financial "risk that no industry should be forced to take," said Bill Frank, speaking on behalf of the Lawrence Transportation Company. He characterized the proposed requirement as "a statewide research project paid for by (diesel) users."

Frank and others raised technical concerns about the reliability of biodiesel fuels.

Westrom told the committee biodiesel fuels have proven safe and reliable after being "tested in many, many engines for many, many miles."

Proponents characterize biodiesel fuels as functional at all temperatures and characterize the infrastructure upgrades necessary to physically combine diesel and biological material as negligible. Opponents disagree, arguing that biological additives contribute to diesel's propensity to gel at low temperatures and warning that equipment improvements could prove devastatingly costly to diesel retailers.

Finally, Westrom argued that adopting biodiesel could serve American strategic interests by reducing reliance on Middle Eastern oil. Even this, though, attracted criticism from the bill's opponents, a number of whom said that most diesel fuel refined in the United States is drawn from South American, Southeast Asian, and Alaskan wells. 🐼

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Minnesota nice

A look at tourism in the 1940's

Though times have changed, one thing is for sure in Minnesota: vacationers still come to the state mainly for its fishing as they did 50 years ago.

But the scenery, atmosphere, and the state's people have also lured both in-state and out-of-state enthusiasts.

Steps to Better Vacations in Minnesota: A survey of Minnesota's vacation industry, which was compiled in 1948, was the first comprehensive examination of tourism in Minnesota.

The Department of Business Research and Development surveyed vacationers during the months of June through September with the intent of learning the number of vacationers in Minnesota during the summer season, where they come from, how much they spend on their vacation, and what they thought about their Minnesota vacation.

The department estimated nearly 860,000 out-of-state residents and nearly 800,000 Minnesotans spent their vacations at one or more Minnesota resorts during the summer of 1948. Illinois and Iowa vacationers comprised almost one-half of Minnesota out-of-state visitors, while Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas combined sent another 25 percent.

Summer vacations were generally family affairs, with both resident and non-resident vacation parties averaging 3.5 people. But the true cash-generating activities came from non-residents of the state, who spent an average of \$274.15 per trip compared residents who spent \$159.29.

Forty-two cents of every vacation dollar were spent on resorts; 13 cents on food; 10 cents on transportation; 10 cents on retail stores; and 8 cents on sports and recreation.

The survey wanted to know who could afford vacations and what their incomes were. Responses for the survey were kept anonymous. The highest percentages of those surveyed earned the following annual incomes: 34 percent earned between \$2,000 to \$3,500; 23 percent earned between \$3,500 to \$5,000; and 19 percent \$5,000 to \$7,500. The highest income bracket category was listed as "over \$25,000."

The average length of vacation stay during

1948 was between 12 and 13 days. The fisherman tended to spend more time in Minnesota than the non-fisherman, the report stated. Ninety percent traveled by automobile, while others traveled by train, bus, or private airplane.

About 60 percent of vacationers occupied "housekeeping cabins" during their stay, while most of the rest lodged in resorts, and a small percentage in "overnight cabins" or hotels. Just 2 percent camped in a tent.

"Better than three out of every four vacationists in Minnesota purchased a fishing license during the 1948 season," the report states. The survey concluded that fishing is the most popular form of recreation and is "enjoyed extensively by both Minnesota residents and our non-resident visitors."

The survey rated fishing as 46 percent of "what vacationists liked most about Minnesota." Thirty-three percent chose "scenery"; 26 percent reported "climate and weather"; 15 percent

for "fellowship and friendliness"; and 6 percent said for "peace and quiet." Vacationers rated their dislikes as 20 percent for poor fishing (the publication notes there are probably as many definitions of poor fishing as there are fishermen); 11 percent for mosquitoes; 7 percent for "having to go home"; and another 7 percent for poor cabins and lack of facilities.

Interestingly, the report makes reference to something the state is known for today as "Minnesota nice." It noted that residents and non-residents listed primarily the same "likes" about their vacations, with one exception. "The latter group (non-residents) placed much more emphasis on fishing, on fellowship, and friendliness than did Minnesotans. The friendly attitude ... apparently is a very desirable characteristic to the visitor.

"It might be advisable, therefore, that we make a conscious effort to cultivate our hospitable atmosphere so that 'Minnesota Smiles' might become the national ideal."

(T. STAHL)



A 1940's era postcard promoting vacations in the Gull Lake area of Minnesota.

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

★ AGRICULTURE

Milk board approved

A plan to create a milk price control board has received its first recommendation to pass from a House committee.

HF1238, sponsored by Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie), would create a five-member board appointed by the governor to levy fees on milk producers and distributors. The bill is intended to assist dairy farmers by bolstering milk prices, which have been declining for many years.

The House Civil Law Committee unanimously approved the bill April 6 and referred it to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee. The House Agriculture Policy Committee approved the bill Feb. 26, but declined to recommend its passage out of concern that other committees could perceive the bill as too extreme.

The committee's approval came after hours of testimony and significant amendment to prevent the bill from being challenged on constitutional grounds. Both opponents and supporters were concerned that the bill's original form could have violated the U.S. Constitution's commerce clause, which gives Congress exclusive purview to regulate interstate trade.

"I have done everything I can to make this constitutional," Otremba said.

Specifically, the committee removed a provision that would have required Minnesota milk distributors to purchase milk from Minnesota producers "whenever possible." Another amendment cut a section that would have allowed the board to bring civil action against any party that failed to comply with "an order or rule of the board."

Wy Spano, a lobbyist for the Dairies Federation of Minnesota, opposed the bill "in sorrow." He described the measure as the "fourth permutation of legislation" intended to assist struggling dairy farmers. He warned its adoption could have the unintended consequence of decreasing milk sales in Minnesota, especially since the amended bill could not prevent producers from seeking less expensive milk produced in Wisconsin or Iowa.

Fair value

Calling it a "sticky bill" but one with a "wonderful flavor," Rep. Roxann Daggett (R-Frazee) presented a bill to the House Taxes Committee Property Tax Division April 9 that would add maple syrup to the state's definition of agricultural products.

Daggett said HF2397 literally adds just two words, "maple syrup" to the statutes. By being included in the definition, maple syrup producers would benefit from the tax rates applied to agricultural property.

In current law property that is classified as agricultural must be used for the "raising or cultivation of agricultural products." Those products include livestock, dairy animals, dairy products, poultry and poultry products, fur-bearing animals, certain horticultural and nursery stock, fruit, vegetables, forage, grains, bees, and apiary products.

Agricultural land by definition must be 10 acres or more of contiguous acreage.

Under current law for agricultural property, similar to residential homestead property, the market value on the house and garage and the immediately surrounding one acre of land has a class rate of 1 percent on the first \$76,000 of market value. The rate is 1.65 percent on property greater than the \$76,000 threshold.

The value of the remaining land including improvements up to \$115,000 has a class rate of .35 percent of market value. The value of property between \$115,000 and \$600,000 has a rate of 0.8 percent and the rate increases to 1.2 percent on property greater than \$600,000.

Jerry Jacobson, a maple syrup producer in Otter Tail and Becker counties, said he contacted the Department of Agriculture to determine whether his land could be classified as agricultural. He was told that because it wasn't included in the definition, the land did not qualify.

"We are as dependent on trees as farmers are on their fields," Jacobson said.

John Hagen from the Department of Revenue said the department is concerned there is no quantifying mechanism in the bill that establishes how much syrup has to be produced to qualify.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) said he shared the concern because under the bill producers of any dollar amount could qualify.

Jacobson said the costs of the equipment and process that ensure a safe and healthy product would discourage hobby farmers

from becoming maple syrup producers.

The committee took no action on the bill, but it will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

★ CHILDREN

Homework helpers

The House Family and Early Childhood Education Finance Committee has been spending a great deal of time making sure children have constructive activities after school. They have considered several bills that would fund after-school enrichment programs.

On April 9, they heard a proposal for a pilot program that would pair St. Cloud State University students with at-risk children in a nearby neighborhood.

"This is the most stressed neighborhood in the state outside the Twin Cities," said Rep. Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud), sponsor of HF206. "It happens to be the neighborhood I grew up in, and it's a very different place than when I grew up in the '60s and '70s."

The bill would appropriate \$100,000 for a grant to the St. Cloud Southside Boys and Girls Club for an after-school computer skills program for youth from low-income families. HF206 will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

The funds would pay for an education and career development coordinator for two years. The program, to take place after school, would serve about 100-150 children and provide internship opportunities for college students who would teach the children computer and homework skills.

"The partnership with St. Cloud State University is integral to the success of the project," said Mark Sakry, executive director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota.

The new club opened in January after a successful fundraising effort that netted \$4.7 million. Contributors included the city of St. Cloud and many individuals, foundations, and corporations.

"About five years ago I noticed a build-up of children in the neighborhood who had no place to go after school," said Larry Haws, St. Cloud city park director. "Now volunteers are saying this is the best group of children they've ever worked with."

Examining felony DWI costs

The House Judiciary Finance Committee spent the majority of its April 10 and 11 hearings discussing the fiscal note for a bill that would institute a felony-level drunken driving penalty.

The bill (HF351), sponsored by Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove), would make a person's fourth drunken driving conviction within 10 years a felony. The committee will consider the measure for inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Stanek said he planned to spend a substantial amount of time scrutinizing the fiscal note so the committee could include a fair amount of funding for the plan, while still meeting other obligations under its spending target.

Fiscal staff from the House and various state agencies testified to the difficult nature of pinning down drunken driving costs. They said there are so many variables and different assumptions, it's hard to settle on one standard.

According to the fiscal note, the bill would increase budgets for state criminal justice agencies by \$5 million in the first year and between \$10 million and \$11 million in subsequent years. Impact on local government agencies would be about \$632,000 in the first year, \$1.4 million in the second year and nearly \$2 million in the third year.

However, Stanek questioned many of the

assumptions in the fiscal notes because of inconsistencies in some of the averages used.

For example, different agencies did not agree on the increase in trials a felony penalty would create. In addition, officials said given the serious nature of a felony and the rights lost, defendants will be more likely to contest the gross misdemeanor drunken driving cases, as well as the felony penalties.

"As you have enhanced penalties," said Maj. Mike Asleson of the State Patrol, "when you have the possibility of prison time versus jail time, there's simply going to be some additional work."

Both the State Patrol and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension stated in the fiscal note they anticipate more court time for officers and scientists with the felony penalty. Local costs also reflected high overtime for officers to appear in court.

Stanek and other committee members questioned the assumptions department officials used and in some cases asked them to return with different numbers.

Several officials agreed if some assumptions were changed, the costs would likely decrease.

The committee will continue discussing the potential fiscal impact and determine a recommendation to include in the bill with the committee's omnibus spending package.

"I do think this is good legislation," said Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul). "I don't think this legislation is going to have a deterrent effect on the chronic alcoholic. It's just the nature of the disease, and these people need to be taken off the streets. This bill effectively does that, and I appreciate it."

Forging identification cards

Legislators have approved a plan to stiffen penalties regarding the for-profit manufacture of fraudulent driver's licenses and identification cards.

Sponsored by Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley), HF2122 would create felony-level penalties for multiple offenses against laws prohibiting making false identification cards.

The House Crime Prevention Committee approved the bill April 10. It goes now to the House Judiciary Finance Committee.

Leppik said the manufacture of false identification cards "is a huge problem for alcohol and tobacco retailers. These producers are getting more and more sophisticated, and it's becoming increasingly difficult to trust identifications."

Reflecting the technological sophistication of contemporary forgers, the bill specifically criminalizes the use of digital cameras, computer software, and paper "adapted and

designed" for the making of a fraudulent identification cards.

Current law provides for imprisonment of not more than one year and up to a \$3,000 fine. The committee amended the bill's original felony penalty of not more than five years and/or a fine of up to \$10,000. First time offenders will face only the current penalty. Any future offenses would be a felony, carrying up to a four-year prison term and \$10,000 fine.

"I don't want to advocate kids making ID's for their buddies," commented Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul). "But I don't think a kid making a mistake should be charged with a felony."

The bill does not affect the penalty for using a fraudulent identification card, up to 90 days in jail and up to a \$1,000 fine.

In another provision, the bill makes illegal the possession of "any device, gear, or instrument designed to assist in shoplifting or defeating electronic surveillance systems." Such systems are commonly used in retail stores selling items such as compact discs or clothing. Offenders could be punished by up to three years in prison and a fine of \$5,000.

Alcohol monitoring

Legislators are moving forward with a plan to study the effectiveness of remote alcohol monitoring in reducing recidivism among repeat drunken driving offenders.

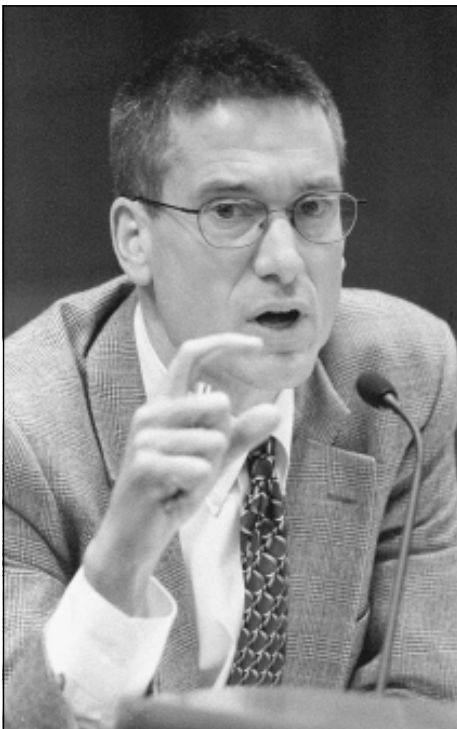
Rep. Mary Jo McGuire (DFL-Falcon Heights) sponsors SF773, which the House Crime Prevention Committee approved April 5. The bill now moves to the House floor.

University of Minnesota Law School Professor Steve Simon, a member of the state-mandated DWI Working Group, told the committee that most drunken driving offenders repeatedly drink and drive. "Because chemical dependency is involved, the simple threat of punishment is ineffective."

Simon endorsed the proposed study, drawing attention to the bill's demand that a group not assigned home breathalyzers be included as a control group. "The state would like accurate data" he said.

The bill calls for the commissioner of corrections to report the results of the study "to the chairs and members of the Senate and House committees and divisions having jurisdiction over impaired driving policy and funding" by Feb. 15, 2002.

Courts can order offenders to use remote alcohol monitoring systems at home. The systems use a computer, phone, and camera to measure blood-alcohol concentration, and then communicate that information to a



Kevin Kajer from the State Public Defender's Office testifies before the House Judiciary Finance Committee April 10 on HF351, a bill relating to felony DWI penalties.

Concealed weapon permit measure passes House

The House passed a contentious bill April 9 regarding the state guidelines for issuing and receiving concealed weapons permits. The vote was 85-46.

HF1360, sponsored by Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Faribault), would require sheriffs in Minnesota to issue a permit to anyone who meets various criteria contained in the bill. Currently, police chiefs and sheriffs have the discretion to grant or deny permits.

Requirements to obtain a permit include being at least 21 years old, completing firearms safety training from a certified instructor, passing a criminal background check, and applicants must not be mentally ill, chemically dependent, or known criminal gang members.

The bill would also create a statewide registry of permit holders, who would be required to undergo a background check annually. It would further enhance penalties for carrying a gun without a permit and for felonies committed by permit holders using a pistol.

The fee for a new permit would be \$45 under the bill. A permit would be good for three years and renewals would cost \$15.

The bill was amended several times on the floor to answer concerns expressed by members of the House Ways and Means Committee April 2. Amendments addressed specific requirements for who is allowed to provide certified training and would allow sheriffs to contract with police departments to process permit requests.

Permit holders would not be allowed to carry their weapon under the influence. An amendment, offered by Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove) and adopted by the House, defines "under the influence" as having a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.04 or higher, having consumed a con-



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Wes Skoglund holds a cutout of a semi-automatic weapon as he speaks against the bill that would allow Minnesotans to more easily obtain a permit to carry a concealed weapon. The House voted 85-46 April 9 to approve the measure.

trolled substance, or otherwise being influenced by a hazardous substance.

To violate that provision could ultimately result in permanent revocation of a permit.

Another amendment, offered by Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka), would require anyone carrying a concealed weapon at a school with a permit to notify the school's principal, but would not require the principal's permission to do so. It was approved.

Boudreau and other supporters of the measure said the bill is about protecting people's rights to defend themselves and their families. Boudreau called it a "basic civil right."

Opponents emphasized their belief that it

would merely increase the number of guns in Minnesota communities and would not necessarily make citizens safer.

Discussion also surrounded the effectiveness of background checks, particularly when thousands of records, called "suspense files," are currently unable to be matched by the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and therefore do not show up on background checks.

"Almost 50,000 of these are felonies," said Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls). "So if some sheriff does a background check, even if there's a conviction ... there are 50,000 felonies that aren't even tappable by the sheriff."

Nevertheless, proponents said without the bill, there's no guarantee of annual background checks and there's nothing providing that the state have a central registry of permit holders.

"A vote against this bill is a vote against a bill that creates centralized data system so that our police officers know who's carrying and who doesn't," said Rep. John Tuma (R-Northfield), "so they can do the background checks and so they can find the bad guys that are carrying permits. So we know who they are, so they can track them."

The Senate version of the bill, sponsored by Sen. Pat Pariseau (R-Farmington) was defeated in that body's Crime Prevention committee April 6. Though it's not impossible for the bill to become law, the action does severely hamper that reality.

"We are spending hours and hours of our time debating a bill that will not become law," said Rep. Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul). "And what we are succeeding in doing is making the public just that much more cynical. With the defeat in the Senate Crime Prevention committee, it is absolutely clear that the bill will not advance."

(M. KIBIGER)

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central facility that can alert parole officers if a violator has violated a court order.

Simon said home breathalyzer units generally cost about \$10 to \$12 per day, an expense often borne by offenders themselves. If they are unable to pay, the court can provide money for the devices.

Preventing gang violence

A bill that would appropriate \$750,000 during the 2002-03 biennium for a gang intervention pilot project in Minneapolis and St. Paul will be considered for inclusion in the omnibus bill for the House Judiciary Finance Committee.

The bill (HF2227), sponsored by Rep. Gregory Gray (DFL-Mpls), was heard by the committee April 5.

Several representatives from the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities testified that their programs of gang intervention, including tattoo removal, are working.

"They go where the kids are," said Wendell Butler, board member of the clubs. "They go in the housing projects. They go into (American) Indian land. They go into military installations."

Though Gray said the bill is a "pilot project," the intent of the bill is to give successful programs some financial support so they can grow and spread to other areas, much like the philosophy behind pilot projects.

Enrique Estrada who works with the Boys and Girls Clubs, said he took what he learned there and tries to help keep kids out of gangs today.

"I grew up in Boys and Girls Clubs," Estrada testified. "I have older brothers who were in gangs and went to prison.... Because of the Boys and Girls Clubs, I did not get involved in gangs."

Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) asked Gray whether permanent state funding is necessary for projects like this one to continue when they receive private funding as well.

Butler said about 26 percent of the program funding is from government sources.

"Government certainly has an interest in providing for an alternative to gangs, if only for its own self interest," Gray said. "I don't anticipate that problem is going to go away. Private funding is good, but in times of economic downturn, like we're experiencing now, those funds tend to dry up."

Saving Camp Ripley program

Thirteen-year-old Jasmyn Williams recalled the "rap sessions" at the Camp Ripley weekend camp for at-risk youth as the most meaningful to her because the children there were

honest about their lives. She could relate to them, she said.

Williams testified April 5 before the House Judiciary Finance Committee in favor of a bill that would keep the Camp Ripley camp open for at least two more years. Gov. Jesse Ventura did not recommend funding for the program in his 2002-03 budget.

"The people on this program are my family," Williams said. "They were there for me when my regular family were not."

The bill (HF2151), sponsored by Rep. Debra Hilstrom (DFL-Brooklyn Center), would appropriate \$1.25 million during the biennium for the program. It would also establish a goal for the camp of serving 500 youths per year.

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

Lori Roberson, a mother whose 11-year-old son with Attention Deficit Disorder attended the camp two years ago, testified the program made a remarkable difference in her son and has contributed to better grades in school.

"At 11, he was headed in a direction where his teachers didn't want to deal with him," Roberson said. "I didn't want to deal with him."

Roberson's son has improved attention, is succeeding in his public school classes after struggling in private school, and says positive things about his Camp Ripley experience, she testified.

DEVELOPMENT



Entrepreneur program funding

An entrepreneur program designed to assist low-income, inner-city neighborhoods through training, lending, and support might receive funding, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul).

HF182 would allocate \$96,500 to the Neighborhood Development Center, Inc. in St. Paul specifically for "entrepreneur training programs, development and operation of a Somali marketplace and business assistance to Somali entrepreneurs, American Indian classes, staffing for the emerging businesses and emerging neighborhoods program, and alumni training programs."

The bill was heard April 9 in the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee, and will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Since 1993, the center has taught entrepreneurship in four ethnic communities — Hmong, Latino, Somali, and American Indian — and 12 low-income neighborhoods. The center's training program alumni have started more than 280 businesses and created 1,200 jobs, according to Mara O'Neill, chief operating officer.

Tsong Sawh Lo, president of Hmong Diversified Industries, Inc., testified to the committee in support of the center. Lo started his

WOMENVENTURE TOUTED



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Tene Heidelberg, president of WomenVenture, holds 3-month-old Rosalie McGough-Pose April 11 as her mother, Maureen, tells the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee about her business, Noble Birth, that was helped by a grant from WomenVenture.

company in 1999 after completing the entrepreneur program.

Located in the Frogtown Neighborhood in St. Paul, Hmong Diversified Industries, Inc. is a light manufacturing business that provides distribution services to organizations and manufacturing companies. Lo's company currently has 14 employees directly from the neighborhood it serves.

Besides creating jobs, businesses such as Lo's return thousands of dollars back to the community. Graduates of the center are most likely to open stores in vacant storefronts, thereby improving the general image in neighborhoods, O'Neill said. Entrepreneurs have also become role models in their communities by helping to educate others, providing needed services and goods, and by stabilizing the community's financial base.

A loan from the state would contribute to new work the center wishes to achieve. The center receives the majority of its support from foundations and corporations. The center charges for services depending on the income level of the emerging entrepreneur. O'Neill said most pay \$50; the full fee is \$550.

★ EDUCATION

Analyzing returns

Amid every report, survey, and assessment of Minnesota's schools, there is not one that objectively and comprehensively evaluates the financial and academic performance of schools, said House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan). In other words, one that calculates the return on the investment of education.

Pawlenty is sponsoring a bill (HF71) that would hire an outside consultant to analyze Minnesota's schools for the benefit of taxpayers, educators, school board members, and state and local officials.

"There's often a disconnect between policy makers and education leaders," Pawlenty told the House K-12 Education Finance Committee April 11. The bill will be considered for the committee's omnibus finance measure.

A specific consultant to perform the evaluation is not named in the bill. However, William Cox, managing director at Standard and Poor's, an internationally recognized financial analysis company, gave a presentation of S&P's School Evaluation Services. Two other states, Michigan and Pennsylvania, have contracted with the company for the services.

Cox claimed findings of the report would not be a ranking or a rating, but instead a management tool to determine financial and academic strengths, weaknesses,

improvements, and risks. Compiled data would be available to the public on a "user-friendly" Web site, he said.

HF71 allocates an initial \$2.5 million in 2001, though officials suggest it might take more than one year to be effective. HF71 states the contractor would submit a written report of its findings to the commissioner of the Department of Children, Families and Learning within one year of the contract signing. Cox said the cost is comparable with Michigan and Pennsylvania, who have approximately the same number of school districts as Minnesota.

Rep. Barb Goodwin (DFL-Columbia Heights) questioned the need for spending money on another consultant. She said the department already plans to spend \$25 million on consultants in the 2002-03 biennium.

"There is a lot of oversight of school expenses already," Goodwin said, citing financial managers, regular audits, and state legislative auditors. She said the evaluation in the bill would add another layer, but wouldn't take anything away.

But Pawlenty said it is not easy for a citizen or policy maker to access information on schools. "There is no one place where you can quickly and coherently" receive impartial data, he said. "What we have now is not effective."

WEAR'N THE PLAID



PHOTO BY SARA KIRK

Tad Myers from the Twin Cities Pipe Band, left, plays his bagpipe along with 10 other performers April 7 prior to a parade leading to the State Capitol in remembrance of Tartan Day. Tartan Day is a Scottish holiday celebrating the Declaration of Arbroath, signed in 1320, that provides freedom from English rule for Scotland.

Teacher mentoring program

A comprehensive plan designed to transform teacher compensation and help retain teachers was introduced to the House K-12 Education Finance Committee April 6.

Committee Chair Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington), sponsor of HF2353, said the intent of the bill is "to try to recruit teachers and retain them." The bill would give school districts the option to create "accountability and educational improvement plans" for districts, school sites, teachers, and students.

If school districts so choose, Seagren's bill provides incentives for those that would restructure teacher compensation systems "for teachers to continuously improve their knowledge and skills," the bill reads.

In order to be approved for a new pay system, districts must add an extra 10 days of staff development activities. The additional time would be dedicated to a new teacher induction and mentoring program, which participants would be compensated for, providing all conditions are met.

Probationary teachers would receive \$2,000 in compensation, and mentoring teachers would receive \$500. One-third of the overall funds would go to districts in Greater Minnesota, one-third to the metropolitan area, and the remaining one-third would be available for either area.

The bill was a collaborative project among several education groups in the state.

Jan Alswager, a lobbyist for Education Minnesota, said her organization supports Seagren's bill, but isn't sure if there will be sufficient dollars to support it. Alswager also pointed out if large school districts such as Minneapolis or St. Paul were to use the program there wouldn't be enough money. She added the \$500 teacher mentor compensation could be increased.

Julie Kalnin, assistant professor of education at the University of Minnesota, emphasized to the committee the importance of mentoring.

"Mentoring programs are designed to make sure teachers are more productive in the classroom," she said. "There must be active engagement from learning (to) teaching."

Rep. John Dorn (DFL-Mankato) asked what has been recognized as to why so many new teachers leave the profession. Kalnin said support for new teachers causes them to stay or leave, noting that many feel isolated. "Salary and broader working conditions" also influence the decision, she said.

In programs where universities work with mentoring programs, the "attrition rate is sincerely reduced," she said. "These mentoring programs do have an effect."

The bill will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Charter school oversight

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee approved a bill April 10 without recommendation that would establish a state board for charter schools.

The bill now goes to the House K-12 Education Finance Committee.

HF1265, sponsored by Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville), would expand the list of accountability factors for charter schools and establish a board that would perform the state's role in sponsoring charter schools. The board would also administer state and federal start-up aid.

The governor, with the Senate's advice and consent, would appoint the seven-member board. Members would serve staggered six-year terms.

Greiling said the bill would be considered for inclusion in the omnibus education finance bill along with another that would establish a state board of education. She said if the decision was made to establish a board of education, that board could also oversee charter schools and thus HF1265 would not be needed.

Greiling said she is offering the bill because she believes greater oversight is needed for charter schools.

"There's been a lot in the news about charter schools having problems, and it's the contention of this bill that if there was some prevention ahead of time and more focus on responsible sponsoring as well as help along the way, which this board could provide, then some of those problems could be headed off," Greiling said.

Jessie Montano, an assistant commissioner of the Department of Children, Families and Learning, said the administration opposes the bill because it would create a new level of bureaucracy.

Montano said when charter schools first started in Minnesota, the idea was for the state to "step aside" and let the schools move along and learn from their mistakes. But she said that with the recent problems the department has taken a more proactive approach.

There is one staff member for every 10 schools and extensive training is provided before the school is open, Montano said.

Rep. Tony Kielucki (R-Lester Prairie) said he thought the department should be focused on providing services and not on regulating activities.

"When you meld things together you create problems," Kielucki said.

KidClub



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Phyllis O'Brien from Kid Key Club testifies for a bill that would expand the dependent care credit on individual income taxes from 12-year-olds to 14-year-olds to cover more children in after school programs like hers. Her testimony came during an April 9 hearing of the House Taxes Committee Sales and Income Tax Division.

Ventura signs request

A resolution urging Congress to fulfill its promise to fund 40 percent of the cost of special education was signed by Gov. Jesse Ventura April 6.

As a result, the resolution will now officially be sent to both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate.

Rep. Andrew Westerberg (R-Blaine), sponsor of the bill in the House, said the lack of funding is "hurting our education system" and explained that Minnesota has to subsidize education funds to afford special education expenses.

Federal allocations for special education funding have averaged 13 percent annually for the past few years.

The resolution reads: "Over 25 years ago, the federal government required states to provide children with disabilities an appropriate education, and for 25 years, the government has failed to meet its promise to pay 40 percent of the cost."

The House passed the resolution with a 123-1 vote April 2.

Sen. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope) sponsored the bill in the Senate, where it received a 64-0 vote March 5.

HF456/SF647*/R2

EMPLOYMENT



HIV/AIDS workplace education

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) is requesting a \$300,000 one-time grant to help educate and increase HIV/AIDS awareness in small businesses.

Clark, sponsor of HF846, said the last grant awarded for HIV/AIDS business education 10 years ago went to major corporations. Her bill would be focused on helping small businesses "to provide education and awareness and to improve capacities to manage HIV in the workplace," the bill states.

Under the bill, a community-based organization would use at least one-half of the allocation for education and legal and technical assistance for employers and their employees.

Bob Tracy, director of community affairs and education at the Minnesota AIDS Project, spoke to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee April 9. He said a national study found about one-half of people surveyed thought they could contract HIV from a sneeze, cough, or touch from a person with the virus.

(HIV is the virus that can develop into the disease AIDS.)

"When people don't have the facts they still act on what they don't know," he said.

Tracy sees lots of discrimination, partly because of a lack of information, he said. HF846 would provide businesses with resources to give help before they get into trouble, he said.

"This is to reduce the risk and cost to Minnesota employers," Tracy said.

Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) asked if employment agencies could do HIV/AIDS education for businesses. Tracy said companies need more than just a handout, they need peer-to-peer interaction, an expense that would be covered by the bill's allocation.

The bill will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

ENERGY



From waste to watts

Anaerobic digester systems — transforming manure into renewable energy — might qualify for an incentive program that would pay 1.5 cents per kilowatt hour, under a House bill.

Besides producing energy, such systems provide several environmental benefits, including odor control, pathogen reduction, weed seed destruction, and greenhouse gas reduction.

Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont), sponsor of HF1741, presented the bill to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee April 6. It will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

HF1741 would provide reimbursement to facilities that begin generating electricity after July 1, 2001. Qualified facilities would receive funds through 2015. Hydroelectric and wind energy conversion facilities are currently eligible for the incentive payment.

The bill would cost \$80,000 in the 2002-2003 biennium. The Department of Finance estimates funds for the program would gradually climb to \$361,200 by 2016. The Department of Commerce, which would manage the program, assumes that two 150 kilowatt systems will be installed each year during the 15-year period for the subsidy, and each system will be subsidized for 10 years.

Estimates are based on the Haubenschild Dairy Farm in Princeton — the only operational anaerobic manure digestion facility in the state. Haubenschild is a 1,000-acre, family owned and operated farm that processes manure from more than 400 cows, and plans to expand to 900 cows by this summer.

According to the Minnesota Project, which compiled a report on the performance of the Haubenschild Farms, before the digester was built, Haubenschild entered into a contract with a local electric cooperative. Now, "enough electricity is being produced to provide all the electric needs on-farm, plus enough surplus electricity to power about 45 average homes."

The report cautions future anaerobic digester systems that cooperation and financial support from agencies is essential for success. However, it notes payback of five years or less on the investment is possible.

★ ENVIRONMENT

St. Paul greenway

More than five years in the planning, the Trout Brook Greenway in St. Paul is coming together.

"This is truly an impressive partnership of neighbors, corporations, and government at all levels," said Susan Schmidt of the Trust for Public Lands.

A bill that would provide funding for the project was approved April 6 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee. HF1225 will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul), would allow for a bond sale and appropriation of \$8 million as a grant to the city of St. Paul for the acquisition and development of approximately 58 acres, including the Trout Brook/Trillium site and the Lower Phalen Creek Greenway.

"We believe we can open this up and make it an area the whole state can be proud of," Osthoff said.

The site forms a natural buffer of open space between neighborhoods and industry, bounded by Maryland Avenue, the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks, Interstate 35E, and Cayuga, Agate, and Jackson streets.

The concept plan shows a greenway corridor that will include the restoration of woodlands, prairies, and a brook; the creation of wetlands; a series of small pools and waterfalls; an interpretive trail; and an interpretive center. It will form a connecting link to 130 miles of trails, according to Schmidt.

"It's a visionary plan," said Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls).

Osthoff gave much of the credit to St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman, who "kept us all together on this."

Lead poisoning in eagles

A young bald eagle paid a visit to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee April 11. The eagle was a member of a delegation from the University of Minnesota's Raptor Center, which is seeking state funding for a study of lead poisoning in the birds.

"Despite the ban on lead shot in 1991, we see as much lead poisoning in eagles now as before the ban," said Patrick Redig, executive director of the center, which has been treating and studying bald eagles and other raptors for 27 years.

HF785, sponsored by Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover), would appropriate \$270,000 for the 2002-03 biennium for the proposed study. The bill will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus finance bill.

The Raptor Center study would consist of trapping 75 bald eagles and taking blood samples, which would be analyzed for lead residue. Twelve of the birds, six with high lead levels and six without, would be outfitted with satellite tracking units. The birds would be tracked to determine where they are feeding so the sources of contamination might be pinpointed.

The goal of the study would be to determine the incidence, the potential sources, and the impact of lead exposure in the bald eagle population in Minnesota.

Information gained from the study would be shared with the Department of Natural Resources and other government agencies to facilitate management of the eagle population and help ensure the species' long-term survival.

"The continued presence of lead in the ecosystem is an ongoing threat to wild bald eagles in Minnesota," said Mark Martell, coordinator of conservation programs for the center. "When we know where it's coming from, hopefully we can do something about it."



Gladdie, a 5-year-old bald eagle, is perched on the hand of Nell Henry as Mark Martell and Pat Redig of the University of Minnesota's Raptor Center testify for an appropriation to do research on lead poisoning in bald eagles. Their testimony came April 11 before the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee

Fighting the flames

"Minnesota's being stripped of experienced firefighters," Dana Linscott, a firefighter from Side Lake, told the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee April 5.

Linscott was testifying in support of a bill (HF382), sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), that would require the Department of Natural Resources to maintain a sufficiently large trained force of firefighters to handle the annual demands of Minnesota's fire season.

He said "smokechasers," seasonal wildland firefighters, have been treated by the DNR as emergency employees, which means they do not have the usual workplace rights and are not qualified for unemployment compensation.

Trained smokechasers have been leaving Minnesota in recent years for more lucrative offers with other states or the federal government, Linscott said. As a result, Minnesota has had to train and rely on "green" recruits every year.

"Fire season is not an emergency," Linscott said. "Fire season comes around every year like clockwork."

Linscott said the goal of the Minnesota Wildland Firefighters Association is to provide the state with a committed, professional cadre of firefighters who can respond quickly to both predictable and emergency wildfires.

The smokechasers can be on the job very quickly and are often relied on for emergencies other than fires. In recent years they were on the scene to deal with the tornado in St. Peter, the Red River flood, and the search for Katie Poirier.

The DNR has made some changes in response to requests from the firefighter's association, creating 45 seasonal positions, but Linscott said that is not enough.

Peggy Adelmann, budget director for the DNR, attended the meeting to explain the agency's financial position on the bill, but was unable to answer policy questions.

"This is much more than a budget issue," Rukavina said. "It's a policy issue. Why aren't the officials who run the firefighter program here?"

"This is a fairness issue," he said. "These firefighters should be treated the same as any other working people."

The bill was approved and sent to the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Committee.

Water warnings

Scientists and policymakers continue to grapple with the effects of water contamination on humans, nearly four decades after Rachel Carson sounded the warning about the risks of pesticides, insecticides and fertilizers.

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) is especially concerned about the vulnerability of children and frail adults. She has drafted a bill (HF110) that would require the state Pollution Control Agency to adopt water quality standards that would "adequately protect fetuses, children, and adults."

"The current standard is a 160-pound male," Wagenius told the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee April 10. "We have to look at the effects of environmental contaminants on children's development."

The bill would require that the agency take into account the following risks in setting water quality standards: adverse reproductive outcomes, respiratory disease, cancer, immunologic suppression, neurological development, endocrinal functioning, and infant and child development.

"You wouldn't think of giving a child the same dose of medicine that you would give an adult," said David Wallinga, a physician and senior scientist at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis.

"Children are not little adults," Wallinga said. "They have unique behaviors, physiology and development and for those reasons they're more vulnerable."

Fetuses, infants, and children experience "discrete windows of time" during which exposure to contaminants can cause serious long-term problems, he said.

Existing guidelines rely on cancer or acute poisoning as evidence of environmental contamination. They do not take into account neurological risks.

Wagenius said the guidelines are too narrow. "This bill proposes that when you don't have all the information you need, you build in a margin of safety," she said.

Speaking for the Pollution Control Agency, Marvin Hora, agreed that infants and children were more affected by pollutants than adults. However, he objected to HF110 on two points: "It sends us off on a search for information that I believe does not exist; and you cannot develop appropriate risk standards when there's no data on which to base them."

Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) was "shocked" at Hora's testimony and apparent lack of willingness to work with Wagenius.

Other lawmakers expressed dismay, as well. Regarding Hora's implication that costs would run too high, Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-

St. Paul) said, "There is another, perhaps uncounted, cost in the lives of children who may be physiologically damaged by the chemical pollutants in our water."

HF110 was approved and sent to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

★ GAME & FISH

Turtle limits

The commercial fishing of turtles dominated discussion regarding a comprehensive game and fish bill in the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee meeting April 5.

HF1591, sponsored by Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), contains a number of provisions and clarifications to game and fish laws. The bill was approved and sent to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee, which sent it to the House floor April 11.

Ozment's bill would restrict the sale of turtle licenses to Minnesota residents, who would also be required to have a fishing license. Currently fewer than 100 licenses are sold annually, many of which go to people who trap turtles for their own use. None of the states adjacent to Minnesota allow turtle trapping.

The bill specifies the number and type of traps allowed, but sets no limit on the number of turtles that can be taken. It would establish minimum sizes of 10 inches in width for snapping turtles and five inches for painted turtles.

"Unlimited harvest will insure that turtle populations will continue to dwindle in Minnesota," wrote Robert Hay, a herpetologist who was consulted on the bill. "The lack of a limit poses a significant threat to turtle populations."

Experts who testified at the meeting said there is no good data on the populations of most turtle species in Minnesota. However, the Department of Natural Resources does keep data on the number of turtles harvested commercially, which over the past eight years have averaged about 3,500 snapping turtles and 32,000 painted turtles per year.

Legislators voiced concern over the effects of turtle trapping and offered amendments ranging from increasing the number of traps allowed to prohibiting all turtle trapping. None of the amendments passed.

Testifiers at this and a previous meeting said there are relatively few commercial trappers.

"These people's entire livelihood and their families' welfare depend on this income," said Rex Campbell, a commercial turtle trapper

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from Grey Eagle. "The people in this industry are too old to change their line of work and find good employment elsewhere in their small communities."

Steve Hirsch, of the DNR Fisheries Division said, "It certainly wasn't the intent of our legislation to put turtle trappers out of business."

★ GOVERNMENT

Returning alcohol-related fees

A bill that would help local governments cover alcohol-related costs was given a hearing, but might not have much life this session.

HF2403, sponsored by Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji), would dedicate a portion of the sales tax collected in each county on retail sales of alcoholic beverages to an account for local governments to use the money for costs related to alcohol abuse.

Fuller presented his bill before the House Judiciary Finance Committee April 11. Committee Chair Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove) said he thinks the bill needs more discussion and may be reconsidered at a later date.

"It's an idea as we're talking about felony DWI," Fuller said. "This was an idea that I wanted to throw out there and toss around."

In its current form, the bill would take all alcohol taxes and make them available to the counties. Fuller said the statistics he has are several years old, but he estimated the bill would take about \$110 million per year from the general fund.

The bill would allow counties to spend the money on any costs related to alcohol abuse, including chemical dependency treatment, law enforcement and public safety, corrections, social services, and cities in the county.

Rep. John Tuma (R-Northfield), asked if cities could be included or if under the bill they had to go to the county boards to ask for money. Fuller said they would, and Tuma suggested amending the bill so counties and cities could benefit directly.

Several members expressed interest in the bill, but only if Fuller would be willing to amend the bill to increase the tax rate on alcohol to compensate for the lost revenue from the general fund.

"If you don't like to raise taxes on liquor, then I don't like your bill at all," said Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester).

Fuller said he was not interested in raising sales taxes on alcohol, currently at a rate of 9 percent, but merely wanted to introduce the idea as a way to help local governments buffer the costs of such measures as felony DWI.

The committee officially entertained no amendments or other matters associated with the bill.

★ HIGHER EDUCATION

Stadium discussion

Many can remember crisp fall days when the University of Minnesota Marching Band would strut down University Avenue before the Gopher football team battled a foe at Memorial Stadium.

Some would like to see a similar scenario re-created.

HF2241, sponsored by Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring), may accomplish that. It was before the House Higher Education Finance Committee April 11 for an informational hearing.

The bill would create a 17-member task force to study proposals to construct a new sports facility on the university's Twin Cities campus or renovate the Metrodome to be used as a joint college and professional football facility. If a new facility is approved, the stadium would be home to the Gophers and Minnesota Vikings.

Members would look at programmatic, operational, and financial issues. Stang said private financing would pay for the study, and a report would be requested by Oct. 31, 2001.

University officials emphasized to the committee that the stadium is not a priority for them.

"We want to make sure our needs and desires are considered and we want to be part of the debate, not an afterthought," said Eric Kruse, vice president of University Services. "We are here because others asked us to be here. Academics is our top priority."

Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr. (DFL-Winona) questioned that statement, saying the Board of Regents has a position on the stadium issue but not on a Commission on University of Minnesota Excellence proposed by House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan). He further noted regents were present for the stadium discussion but not the commission discussion two days prior.

Board of Regents Chair Patricia Spence said the board already had the stadium on its agenda for the last meeting and was not aware of the Pawlenty proposal until just before the hearing. She reiterated that the stadium is not a priority for the university.

University representatives also showed a list of 10 principles given to the Vikings that were conditions of its support.

Among them are: the project cannot detract

from current or future investment by the state in academic programs or capital projects, it cannot have a negative effect on the university's balance sheet or debt capacity, the university will not be responsible for any capital project costs, and the university will participate in the management and oversight of daily operations.

Committee Chair Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley) asked if the university is only contributing land for the stadium, won't it be tough to have management say.

Richard Pfitzenreuter, CFO/Treasurer of the university, said that is something the task force will need to address. "We don't have the answers today."

Tech center request

Wanting a place to teach lifelong learning skills, leaders of two Minnesota schools are seeking legislative help.

Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls), sponsor of HF2371, told the House Higher Education Finance Committee April 9 that his bill would appropriate \$80,000 from the state's general fund in fiscal year 2002 to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees for a grant to Fergus Falls Community College and the local school district.

The funds would be used to plan and implement pilot programs in a combined vocational training center of the college and school district. The two entities would operate the center.

Monies would be spent between a facility use study, curriculum development, computer connections between the college and school district, and a pilot program to begin in the fall. The bill specifies the appropriation would be available until the end of the 2002-03 biennium.

High school juniors would be the minimum age eligible to participate in the program. Ken Peeders, president of Fergus Falls Community College, said students could potentially be ready to go to work after high school or pursue an advanced degree at a MnSCU two- or four-year institution. "There are some real opportunities for economic development," he said.

Bob Duncan, Fergus Falls school district superintendent, said: "We are looking to salvage opportunities for students. This is a win-win for our high school and our graduates in this area."

"It's innovative programs like this that keeps things going," said Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth).

No action was taken on HF2371, but it will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

University commission considered

Members of the House Higher Education Finance Committee heard a bill April 9, intended to aid the decision-making process at the University of Minnesota.

The bill (HF2377), sponsored by House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan), would establish a Commission on University of Minnesota Excellence to examine and make recommendations to the university.

The bill will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

"It's often beneficial to have an outside group look in and offer compliments and criticism," Pawlenty said. "The university could benefit from a fresh look."

The commission would be comprised of 15 members with equal numbers appointed by the governor, speaker of the House, and a Senate committee. No current university regent may serve, and the university president, or a designee, is an ex-officio, nonvoting member. All members would serve without compensation.

Pawlenty's bill requires the commission to:

- Review the university's national rankings;
- Review major investment efforts in interdisciplinary initiatives identified by the university;
- Evaluate and recommend how the university can develop five or more additional centers of excellence programs that can achieve a national rank in the top 10 within the next decade;
- Examine the mission, scope, and financing of the university and propose ways to refocus or refinance the mission of offerings; and
- Examine the regent selection process.

In looking at centers of excellence, Pawlenty said, "I'm concerned the rankings are not as good or as frequent as they should be." He also was concerned many of Minnesota's gifted students leave the state for college. "We need a magnet to keep them here."

Additional centers of excellence should come from "the programs and departments in which the university is currently considered a national or regional leader and from existing or potential interdisciplinary initiatives at the university," the bill states.

The commission must report on the regent selection process by Jan. 15, 2002 and the mission focus and areas of excellence by July 15, 2002. The commission would expire Dec. 31, 2002.

Christine Maziar, vice president for research and dean of the university's graduate school, said the U of M supports the idea. "This promises an exciting way to have further dialogue on what the university needs."

Rep. Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud) wants the commission to include costs with any

recommendations. Pawlenty responded that in the bill it states "the task force is encouraged to consider operation and capital financing needs, Minnesota economic needs, federal research priorities, and opportunities for private financial support."

Raising a concern about more bureaucracy, Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr. (DFL-Winona) asked why this bill is necessary now but wasn't in the past.

Pawlenty said some people might be happy with where the university is now, but for those that are not "this is worth a try. They can benefit from a constructive nudge now and then."

HOUSING

Uniformity of inspection fees

A bill that might bring more uniformity to municipal inspection fees was approved by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee April 6.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

HF1310, sponsored by Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), would restrict municipalities from adopting ordinances or developing agreements that differ from the state building code.

The bill also requires that municipal permit and plan review fees be fair, reasonable and proportionate to the actual cost of the service for which the fee is imposed.

Abrams said there is a concern that some inspection fees are being used by municipalities as revenue sources and that in some cities the cost of the regulation is far less than what is being collected. He said the bill strikes the appropriate balance between ensuring public safety needs are met but keeping the fees based on their true costs.

"This is the first step in the process by which the Legislature can get a handle on one of the causes that is driving up housing costs," he said. He added that he believed the vast majority of local officials want to know why their fees differ from other cities.

The bill would clarify that the state's building code supercedes local ordinances. It also would require municipalities to report annually to the Department of Administration all construction and development related fees that are collected.

Thomas Joachim, a state building official with the Department of Administration, said the department is in the process of adopting a new code that will become effective July 1, 2002. He said one of the principle concepts behind the code is that it is applied consistently throughout the state.

Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville)

expressed concern that the bill would restrict some necessary local ordinances. She said that in Lakeville the city has certain requirements dealing with tiling in foundations because of water problems unique to the city.

Abrams incorporated an amendment into the bill that would allow municipalities to adopt ordinances differing from the state building code to account for certain physical conditions.

HUMAN SERVICES

Truth in advertising

Finding an appropriate assisted living facility for a family member with Alzheimer's disease is an arduous task on many levels. Making a decision would be easier if you could clearly see how establishments compare.

With that and the protection of vulnerable people in mind, Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie) is sponsoring a bill that would establish disclosure requirements for assisted living facilities with special care units for people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

"Basically, the bill says what you advertise, you must do," Otremba said.

HF918 was heard April 10 by the House Health and Human Services Policy



Deb Peterson from the state Attorney General's Office answers questions from House Health and Human Services Policy Committee members April 10 about a bill that would establish disclosure requirements for assisted living facilities that have special care units for people with Alzheimer's disease.

Committee. It was narrowly approved after a lengthy discussion and sent to the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee.

Iris Freeman, public policy director of the Alzheimer's Association of Minnesota, said there are currently more than 90,000 people in Minnesota with Alzheimer's disease. She characterized HF918 as "a comparison shopping bill that will help families shop wisely."

Areas of disclosure would include such things as: a statement of philosophy; criteria for deciding who may reside in the special unit; the process for assessment; staff credentials, duties, and job descriptions; physical environment characteristics; type and frequency of activities and programs for residents; and fee schedules for additional services.

The bill is a "product of lengthy discussion" by the nursing home industry, the attorney general's office, and the Alzheimer's Association, according to Doug Beardsley, public affairs chair for Care Providers of Minnesota. "It's a delicate balance," Beardsley said. "I believe we've achieved a workable disclosure agreement."

Several lawmakers voiced concerns about Otremba's bill, especially over the role played by the attorney general's office.

"I'm very reluctant to add more regulations when I'm not convinced there's a problem," said Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Faribault).

Assistant Attorney General Deb Peterson said the only power being given to the attorney general was to enforce disclosure violations.

Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin) said he was uncomfortable with the bill and suggested waiting until next session to consider it.

"There are thousands and thousands of Alzheimer's patients out there, and some of them are being cared for inappropriately," Otremba said. "I am not willing to wait and sacrifice a few more patients."

Committee Chair Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester) said he supported the bill. "It is the right level of compromise."

★ IMMIGRATION

Hispanic population prospers

The 1990 census showed the state's Hispanic population to be 53,884. Ten years later that population grew to 143,382, a 166 percent increase.

The House Redistricting Committee heard from representatives of the state's fastest growing minority community April 10. Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie), the committee chair, said the hearing was the first of several in the



Val Vargas of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Minnesota testifies April 10 before the House Redistricting Committee.

next few weeks that will focus on presentations from the state's minority communities.

"It's critically important that we hear testimony from these groups," Paulsen said. He said the committee hopes to learn more about the business and industries of the communities along with their social, cultural, religious, and historical backgrounds.

Rick Aguilar, president of St. Paul-based Aguilar Productions, said the Hispanic community is now the largest minority community nationwide and the state's Hispanic population is changing.

"Immigrants who historically left are staying now," Aguilar said.

Ricardo Vallejos, president of the Minnesota-based International and Ethnic Communications, said there are differences between how traditional America views such concepts as culture and values compared to how those in Hispanic communities view the terms.

Vallejos said the "Anglo" definition of culture has to do with shared beliefs and values, along with ways of thinking and language. But Latinos tend to view culture more in historic terms, as traditions are an important part of life.

Similarly Vallejos said in defining community, the Anglo definition incorporates geographic area into the equation while the Latino

use of the term has more to do with the sharing of identity and interests.

The Latino community had around \$2.8 billion worth of buying power in 1999 according to Val Vargas, the chief executive officer of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Minnesota.

Vargas said that by 2015 one out of every 22 Hispanic adults would own a business. Currently there are more than 2,000 Hispanic businesses in the state. She said there are a large number of Hispanic students in Minnesota and many of them would like to stay because of the economic opportunities found in the state.

Vargas grew up in a Twin Cities suburb where her family was the only Hispanic family in the area. But she said that over the past few years she has seen the rapidly changing face of the area.

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) said historically the state's Hispanic population was found mostly in the western part of St. Paul but now there are significant numbers in places like Moorhead and Willmar.

"It's everywhere and that's a good sign, a healthy thing for this state," he said.

★ INDUSTRY

Governor grants miners benefits

The House passed a conference committee report April 9 that would allow laid-off LTV miners to collect an extra 26 weeks of unemployment benefits when regular benefits expire.

Unemployment benefits are running out for about 30 LTV Steel Mining Co. workers laid off in August 2000. More than 1,300 additional workers of the Hoyt Lakes plant were laid off when the company went bankrupt in February.

The measure (HF47) was passed by the House with a 126-5 vote and passed the Senate April 11. Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) sponsored the bill in the House.

Gov. Jesse Ventura signed the measure into law April 11. It is effective for benefits retroactive to Aug. 1, 2000.

Rep. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook) explained to House members the reason they received a conference committee report so early in the session.

"Those 900 people on unemployment benefits are making decisions about how to put their lives back together for themselves and their families," he said.

The former LTV workers are also moving into new careers, and Bakk said in rural

Minnesota one can't go down the street and find another job — especially on the Iron Range. "Their skills are unique to the industry," he added.

HF47 was initially passed by the House earlier in the session. In its original form, it granted an extra 13 weeks of unemployment compensation for those laid off last August. Another bill had been introduced that would have provided a longer extension of benefits for the workers laid off in February.

A Senate version of the bill, however, called for 30 weeks of unemployment compensation for all former LTV workers and therefore a conference committee convened.

HF47, as it was originally drafted, still extends the time a mining plant is kept in operating condition from one year to two years to give the state more time to find a buyer for the facility.

The former workers would be eligible for 26 weeks of compensation in a 95-week window of time. This would allow workers to be employed in temporary positions such as summer construction.

To receive benefits, applicants must be enrolled in an education or job training program. The 95-week period would extend through the end of the 2001-02 school year, allowing time for applicants to complete any training programs while still receiving benefits.

Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville) said with HF47, "the LTV fix," no further unemployment extensions for the workers should be necessary.

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

HF47*/SF39/CH30

LAW



Child support changes

Lawmakers have removed a provision creating driver's license sanctions from a bill intending to streamline child support payments.

The House Civil Law Committee voted unanimously April 6 to delete a section of current law permitting the state to suspend the driver's license of parents whose child support payments are overdue.

Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Faribault) proposed the amendment. She had explained previously that the suspension is especially hard on rural parents who need a car to get to work. Committee Chair Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound) agreed, describing the provision as "way too onerous."

In addition to streamlining child support procedures, the bill (HF1807), sponsored by

Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls), would allow the commissioner of human services to pay a fee to financial institutions for information relating to parents whose child support payments are overdue.

Smith successfully proposed a second amendment reducing a proposed \$700 penalty the state may impose on financial institutions that fail to comply with subpoenas for information regarding the financial resources of parents failing to make child support payments. Under Smith's amendment, employers could be fined up to \$500 per incident and \$25 per day.

Christa Anders, legislative manager for the child support enforcement division at the Department of Human Services, said federal law requires states to impose monetary fines on employers who fail to comply with court-ordered child-support wage garnishment.

"This is the last thing we need to implement the federal mandate," she explained during a telephone interview. She said the federal government would withhold about \$3 million from welfare grants if Minnesota failed to adopt the sanction on financial institutions.

The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

Premarital counseling

In response to concern over high divorce rates, legislators are moving forward a plan intended to encourage engaged couples to seek premarital counseling.

A bill (HF2132), sponsored by Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), would decrease the marriage license fee from \$70 to \$20 for couples who receive at least 12 hours of premarital education.

Harder told an April 6 meeting of the House Civil Law Committee that premarital education can "have a positive effect on issues we are wrestling with at the Capitol." The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Judiciary Finance Committee.

The bill specifies that counseling could be provided only by a licensed or ordained minister, a person authorized to perform marriage ceremonies, or a licensed marriage or family counselor.

The committee amended the measure to specify that \$15 of the \$20 fee remains with the county in which the license is granted. The remaining \$5 would be deposited into the state's general fund, as are most funds under the existing system.

Of that \$5, the bill would continue an existing appropriation of \$2 to the commissioner

of health for the MN ENABL teen pregnancy program and \$3 to the Department of Children, Families, and Learning for "parenting time centers." The fiscal impact of the bill has not yet been determined.

A similar bill passed both the House and Senate last year but was vetoed by Gov. Jesse Ventura because it increased all marriage license fees to \$75. The Senate overrode the veto, but the House was unsuccessful in its attempt.

William Doherty, a faculty member at the University of Minnesota Law school specializing in family law, said premarital counseling has been shown to increase couples' satisfaction and is associated with decreased divorce rates. He said successful counseling includes conflict management and communication skills and should last at least 12 hours.

Administering state courts

For the past 10 years, the state has been examining the option of taking over the administration of the court systems in the state. As of July 1, 2000, costs for four of the state's 10 judicial districts were transferred to the state.

A bill, sponsored by Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), would continue the process, transferring costs for all 10 districts to the state by 2005.

HF2244 would provide for the state takeover of districts 2 and 4 (Hennepin and Ramsey counties) in 2003, districts 1 and 3 (southeastern and south central Minnesota) in 2004, and districts 6 and 10 (northeastern and east central Minnesota) in 2005.

"We are one state, we ought to have one judicial system," Abrams said before the House Judiciary Finance Committee April 5. Minnesota needs "equality of justice and equality of the administration of justice."

The committee approved the measure, as did the House Civil Law Committee. It now moves to the House Taxes Committee, which Abrams chairs. Members expressed interest in helping craft the final version of the bill that might be included in the omnibus tax measure for 2001.

Abrams said counties are struggling to cover the costs of the judicial system, since costs have increased significantly during the past few years, but Homestead Agricultural Credit Aid (HACA) has only increased at a rate of about 1.6 percent.

The bill would create a formula for determining how much a county's HACA aid should be reduced since the state is taking over the costs of running courts.

The Minnesota Supreme Court, which oversees state court administration, would

determine the county's cost savings (which would take into account the transfer of certain court fines and fees to the state) and then the county's HACA payment would be permanently reduced by 50 percent of the net cost.

The remaining 50 percent of HACA would be reduced in the second calendar year following the state takeover.

Abrams said some counties might not be totally satisfied with the solution initially. But this is a situation, he said, where officials need to evaluate whether the system is better five years down the road.

He challenged members of the committee to view the issue in the long-term context.

Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) agreed the system transfer needs to move forward. She asked Abrams to discuss some of the difficulties the counties already under state jurisdiction have had during the transition.

Abrams said it's important as the plan moves forward to make sure the counties are accurately reporting costs and the state judicial system receives an adequate budget to cover costs.

He also suggested giving chief judges a sufficient check and balance system with the state court administrator in running each district.

★ LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Firefighter aid becomes law

A new law signed April 11 by Gov. Jesse Ventura will give cities the authority to provide housing assistance for volunteer firefighters and ambulance personnel.

HF172/SF9*, sponsored by Rep. Harry Mares (R-White Bear Lake), allows cities to offer the assistance to attract and retain qualified personnel necessary to ensure timely public safety service.

Mares said he sponsored the bill on behalf of the city of Mahtomedi, which is seeking help in attracting volunteer firefighters to the city.

The legislation was necessary because of a precedent established by a 1952 state attorney general opinion. That opinion held that the city of Newport did not have the authority to provide living quarters to its police chief unless the Legislature granted special authority.

Sen. Charles Wiger (DFL-North St. Paul) was the Senate sponsor.

The law became effective April 12.

HF172/SF9*/CH19

★ METRO AFFAIRS

'Sane Lane' study

Legislators have approved a study of Interstate 394 that could open high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to all traffic for an estimated six weeks.

The House Transportation Policy Committee approved HF1054, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Johnson (R-Plymouth), April 10 and referred it to the House Transportation Finance Committee without recommendation.

The lanes are designated for use only by vehicles carrying more than one passenger. They lead motorists east into Minneapolis from western suburbs in the morning, and are reserved for outbound vehicles during the evening rush.

According to Christine Johnson of the Federal Highway Administration, high-occupancy vehicle lanes are designed to appear underutilized to frustrated commuters, who then feel motivated to carpool or ride the bus. In the long run, she said, the very perception of underutilization is "part of the attraction" for mass transit.

Rep. Johnson described the lanes as "a failed experiment in behavior modification," and described as "purely speculative" concerns that the study's opening the lanes could increase congestion in all lanes. Johnson said he "is generally not a big fan of studies," but that the proposal is "the only way to go with respect to this issue."

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) argued the bill could ultimately hurt commuters by eliminating current mechanisms that make transit more attractive.

George Bentley, acting transit administrator for Plymouth Metrolink, a suburban Minneapolis bus operator, said buses from his agency, Metro Transit, and Southwest Transit all use HOV lanes. He predicted that closing the lanes would encourage suburban bus riders to simply drive themselves, making existing congestion worse.

Rep. Johnson characterized such concerns as "speculative," urging the committee to "see what happens."

Responding to concerns raised by opponents, Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska), chair of the House Transportation Finance Committee, assured members that HF1054 would not pass her committee without assurances that closing HOV lanes would not violate federal contracts as to how the lanes would be used.

The FHA's Johnson suggested a violation could result in a federal funding moratorium for Twin Cities metropolitan area transportation projects.

★ RECREATION

Yer out!

A bill that would have provided a \$140 million loan to the Minnesota Twins to help build a new stadium was tabled by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee April 11.

Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview) made the motion to table the bill. It was approved by a 12-6 vote.

In its original form, HF2214, sponsored by Rep. Harry Mares (R-White Bear Lake), would require that one-half of the stadium costs be financed by the Twins or other private sector contributions. The bill originally had the state contributing a \$100 million interest-free loan.

An amendment supported by Mares increased the amount of the loan by \$40 million but removed a provision that would have allowed the Metropolitan Council to issue up to \$40 million of revenue bonds to help in construction costs.

The bill also would exempt the unspecified stadium site from property and sales tax. Further sales tax exemptions would be applied to the materials and supplies used in construction.

"I firmly believe in the concept of this bill," Mares said at an April 9 hearing. "The Minnesota Twins are a very significant part of life for millions of Minnesotans. They are truly a Minnesota resource — economically, socially, culturally. There is a great deal of support for the Twins."

Mares said the proposal would require no increase in taxes and that the Twins would ultimately be responsible for more than 96 percent of the cost. The bill also requires that Major League Baseball adopt reforms to improve the game's competitive balance.

Karla Blomberg, a local realtor who co-chaired the Twins funded "Committee of Minnesotans for Major League Baseball," said when asked to serve on the committee she let it be known she knew little about baseball and was not interested in serving on a stadium committee.

Blomberg said she was concerned about the challenge to remain independent since the Twins funded the committee. But the integrity of committee members ensured their autonomy, she said.

"Quality of life has long been a source of pride for Minnesota. Beyond having it in our homes and our workplaces and in our education it's outside. It is in the fields. It is recreation and sports facilities and sports teams that make up a big part of that quality of life. These are the things that put us on the map," Blomberg said. "Nobody would have ever heard of Green Bay all around the country if



Wisconsin state legislator John Gard from Peshtigo holds up a newspaper proclaiming the opening of the new Miller Park, home of the Milwaukee Brewers. He told the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee April 9 of the little or no political fallout members received for voting to approve financial assistance for the stadium. Two days later the committee voted 12-6 to table the bill.

it wasn't for the Packers."

Speaking at the April 11 hearing, Tom Goldstein, a publisher of a literary baseball magazine questioned why the issue was even being considered with other issues to address this session and with little public support behind the initiative.

Goldstein said there was nothing in the bill that would prevent the Twins from playing county proposals against each other and ultimately end up responsible for none of the costs. He said the proposed stadium was an effort to cater to the elite at the expense of the true baseball fan.

"Major League Baseball is making a fatal mistake trying to attract customers and not fans," Goldstein said.

★ SAFETY

Resolution for safer cigarettes

After voting down a measure to create rules for fire retardant cigarettes, the House Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Policy Committee approved a resolution urging Congress to pass legislation requiring only cigarettes that are less likely to start fires to be sold in the United States.

The resolution (HF2362) addresses some concerns of members who voted down the bill for fire retardant cigarettes earlier this session.

It reads, in part: "Whereas, the Minnesota Legislature realizes that a state law may be rendered less effective by the availability of non-complying cigarettes from other states.

"Whereas, the development of appropriate

regulations to reduce the risk of cigarette-related fires and the enforcement of such regulations can be most efficiently and effectively accomplished at the national level through federal legislation."

Committee Chair Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston) explained to committee members April 10 why he sponsored the resolution after voting 'no' on the bill (HF175) for safer cigarettes.

Davids said he didn't disagree with the measure, but was concerned about the effect it would have on commerce in Minnesota.

"If there is no movement at the national level ... in a year I will consider where I am on the bill," he said. "Something needs to be done nationwide to make a safer cigarette that reduces fires."

HF175 would have required the state fire marshal to adopt rules regarding fire retardant standards for cigarettes. The fire safe cigarettes would not have been required to be the only type of cigarette sold in the state until a bill stating so received legislative approval.

Only New York has passed legislation on fire safe cigarettes. Six other states have legislation pending on the matter.

Other members also expressed further support for the bill if no federal action results in the coming years. Rep. Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm), a no vote on HF175, said he will keep a close eye on New York and the effects the new laws have on commerce and communities.

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★ TAXES

Wedded tax bliss

The House Taxes Committee Sales and Income Tax Division heard a bill April 5 that would further reduce the "marriage penalty" found in the tax code.

In both federal and state tax laws, married couples are sometimes required to pay more income tax than if they were to file as individuals because of the different rates that apply to individuals and joint filers.

Two years ago the state adopted a marriage penalty credit that allowed a deduction for couples who file a joint return equal to the difference they would have paid if they had filed separate returns.

HF1848, sponsored by Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud), would further reduce the marriage penalty by allowing subtractions to five of the state's tax credits, subtractions or exemptions — the working family credit, the dependent care credit, the K-12 credit, the elderly/disabled subtraction, and the alternative minimum tax exemption.

Knoblach said although far fewer people are affected by the inequities in the credits than the penalties that exist in the tax rates, the amount of those who are affected is far greater.

As an example he said currently a single mother of two with an income of \$19,000 would qualify for a \$1,347 working family credit. If that person were to marry an individual with the same income, the couple would lose the credit because the combined income of \$38,000 is over the eligibility amount.

The Department of Revenue estimates the cost of the bill would be around \$45 million in 2002 increasing to \$57 million by 2005. The estimate did not include the administrative costs the department would incur.

"I don't believe we should be penalizing marriage in our tax code," Knoblach said. "Marriage is the foundation of our society."

The committee took no action on the bill, but Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), the division chair, said it would be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Medical research break

Last year an unusual new word made its way into the American lexicon — the genome, also known as the human genetic pattern.

One wouldn't think the word would pop up in a House Taxes Committee hearing. But House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan) presented a bill to the committee April 10 that would establish a public/private

partnership designed to develop commercial applications for biomedical research and technologies, including genomics developed in the state.

Pawlenty said HF2127, an initiative of Gov. Jesse Ventura's administration, would direct the Department of Trade and Economic Development to establish a for-profit entity that would pursue biomedical innovation and commercialization initiatives.

The entity would be a joint venture between the state, the University of Minnesota, the medical technology industry, and private investors. The bill would allow a 25 percent credit against the individual income and corporate franchise tax for investments in the initiative. The total cash investment in the entity is capped at \$40 million.

Pawlenty said the bill is an attempt to address Minnesota's ability to continue to compete in a changing economy.

Dr. Mark Paller, assistant vice president of the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center, said the biomedical industry is rapidly growing.

"This would provide a business opportunity to position the state of Minnesota for a future prominent role in the biomedical industry," Paller said.

Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville), who is sponsoring a similar measure because he believes in the economic development potential, had concerns with the bill. He said that because the state no longer requires corporate bylaws, it wasn't clear how the entity would function.

McElroy also pointed out there was no definition in the bill of what "biomedical" encompasses.

Pawlenty said he wanted to keep the definition as broad as possible, and that he would work on clarifying the way the entity would function.

The committee adopted a couple of technical amendments to the bill clarifying language, but took no further action. Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), the committee chair, said it would be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Stimulating economic development

Early in the session the House Taxes Committee heard a bill sponsored by Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan) that would establish 10 tax free zones in the state to encourage economic development.

The committee's Sales and Income Tax Division heard a bill April 5 that would provide a sales tax exemption on the first \$1 million in sales for small businesses in small cities.

Rep. Richard Mulder (R-Ivanhoe), the sponsor of HF1695, dubbed the bill "Pawlenty-lite."

He said many small cities in his district are losing their populations and are thereby slowly dying. The bill would encourage business creation and retention in those communities.

HF1695 would only apply to cities with populations of less than 1,200. In order for a business to qualify for the exemption it would have to be located more than five miles from any city with a population greater than 10,000, be owned and operated by a person living in the same city, and could not be a franchise or owned by a large corporation.

Mulder said that there is a high risk involved in opening a business in a small community that's losing its population. In order to stop the population loss, he said, communities must retain businesses like hardware and grocery stores.

"Maybe this is the incentive they need," he said.

The Department of Revenue was unable to estimate how much the bill would cost, but Mulder said that because small border cities might attract businesses from other states to come to Minnesota, the impact to the state probably would be small.

The committee took no action on the bill, but Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), the division chair, said it would be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

"This is one small thing we can do to maintain these communities," Mulder said.

"So it's one small step for the tax committee, one giant leap for rural mankind," Harder quipped.

Better health

A bill that would allow more Minnesotans to subtract health insurance premiums from their taxes was heard by the House Taxes Committee Sales and Income Tax Division April 5.

The committee took no action on the measure, but Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), the division chair, said it would be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

HF1995, sponsored by Rep. Connie Bernardy (DFL-Fridley), would expand the current state subtraction for health insurance premiums for the self-employed to include all medical care expenses for all taxpayers.

Bernardy said approximately 90 percent of health care premiums are currently deductible including employer paid or employee paid from pre-tax accounts. There also is a deduction allowed for the self employed.

She added, "6.2 percent of the premiums paid do not receive a tax break or deduction. This is an issue of fairness and would make

health care premiums more affordable."

Mike Burress, a financial planner from Swenson and Anderson, said there is a trend for more businesses to not include one's spouse and dependents in their employee's health care packages.

"It is surprising to me the number of people who we counsel that pay for their own health care," Burress said.

The Department of Revenue estimates the cost of expanding the subtraction would be around \$32 million in 2002, increasing by about \$3 million each year after that. The estimate does not include the administrative costs the department would incur.

Rep. Roxann Daggett (R-Frazee), who carried a similar measure that was included in last year's omnibus tax bill but did not survive the conference committee, said she appreciated that Bernardy brought the issue back.

"It seems unfair that a certain few just cannot get this break that others are," she said.

★ TRANSPORTATION

.08 shot down

By an overwhelming margin, a House committee has rejected a plan to reduce the legal blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) for operating vehicles from .10 to .08. The House Transportation Finance Committee voted the bill down April 9 by a 10-4 vote.

Sponsored by Rep. Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul) and Rep. Kevin Goodno (R-Moorhead), HF51 was estimated to save the state \$2.4 million in fiscal year 2002, a figure that reflects federal funds expected to be made available as an incentive to states that adopt the 0.08 level. Were the bill adopted, the Department of Revenue estimates the state would save a total of \$24.7 million through different grant programs by fiscal year 2005.

On the other hand, if the state does not move to .08 by 2004 it could lose federal highway dollars.

The Senate version, SF118 sponsored by Sen. Leo Foley (DFL-Coon Rapids), was defeated in the Senate State Government, Economic Development, and Judiciary Budget Division April 5.

The fiscal impact of the bill has been especially difficult to calculate, in part because federal incentive money is dispersed according to the order in which states adopt .08, and other states could do so earlier or later than anticipated.

The bill's genuine cost has also been obscured by confusion regarding federal

funding, other than the incentive dollars, to states adopting the lower limit. The federal government chose to reallocate federal monies from transportation to public safety projects in states with a limit above .08.

However, Committee Chair Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska) emphasized that Minnesota appropriated that money specifically to improvements in the driver's license database, and not to what she described as "hazard mitigation," an expenditure more closely related to projects associated with transportation spending.

Kenn Rockler, executive director of the Wine, Beer, and Spirits Federation of Minnesota, warned that dropping the legal blood-alcohol limit would result in a \$20 million loss in state tax revenue. Entenza disagreed, claiming to have data showing an increase in alcohol consumption and tax revenue in states moving from a .10 to a .08 limit.

Goodno said the only fee increase for .08 convicts would be a \$2.50 increase in the \$20 driver's license reinstatement fee.

Photocop measure fails

Citing potential technical glitches and "philosophical objections," the House Transportation Policy Committee rejected a bill that would have allowed local governments to enforce existing traffic signal laws with photographic evidence.

HF663, sponsored by Rep. Len Biernat (DFL-Mpls), would have allowed cities to erect "photocop" cameras activated only when cars enter intersections after the stoplight has turned red. Biernat told the committee April 5 that a second photograph is then taken to determine the direction of the car and whether it was stuck in traffic or if the driver waited for other cars before turning left.

Police officers would inspect the images and mail tickets to those drivers who genuinely appear to be running a red light. The bill specifies that photocop systems may photograph only the rear of a vehicle and not drivers.

The bill would have exempted owners of stolen vehicles and car rental companies. It also guaranteed that photocop tickets would not appear on drivers' records.

Biernat said photocop systems are used by 40 foreign countries, at least 14 states, and the District of Columbia.

After using the systems, San Francisco experienced a 40 percent decline in the number of cars running red lights at intersections with the system, while Washington D.C. experienced a 59 percent decline. He said that according to national figures, running red lights yields 89,000 crashes, 80,000 injuries, 1,000 deaths, and \$7 billion in economic loss each year.

Rep. Andrew Westerberg (R-Blaine)

BIG BEAR COUNTRY PROPOSAL



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Larry Fiegen, chair of the Citizens for Bear Center, describes the Big Bear Country Education Center to members of the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee during an April 6 hearing. Also testifying on the project were Richard Swatek, director of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority, and Mayor Gary Buentemeier of Northome.

explained his opposition to the bill grew from concern that the signals could someday be used to monitor crosswalks and other intersections. He added that were the system to be refined, "people would be cut out completely" from the enforcement process. "Violators would be policed by just a machine," he said.

Tom Trekker, Minnesota Coordinator for the National Motorists Association, said enforcement mechanisms such as proper engineering of intersections, increased yellow-light durations, and public education campaigns are "far more effective than camera enforcement."

"There is absolutely nothing we can accomplish public-safety wise with a camera," Committee Chair Rep. Tom Workman (R-Chanhassen) said.

Bottlenecks and regional corridors

Lawmakers are considering devoting hundreds of millions of dollars to eliminating traffic bottlenecks in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and improving "at-risk" regional highway corridors in Greater Minnesota.

The House Transportation Finance Committee heard two bills containing one-time appropriations April 11, choosing to lay both over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

HF1286, sponsored by Rep. Connie Ruth (R-Owatonna), would devote \$200 million "primarily for the purpose of improving traffic flow and expanding highway capacity" around the Twin Cities. An additional

\$200 million would be devoted to Greater Minnesota trunk highway improvements. She proposed those figures based on a similar proposal made last year.

Ruth said in a later interview that she would "leave up to leadership" the decision whether the \$400 million would be appropriated from the state's estimated \$856 million surplus at the conclusion of the current fiscal year. She suggested bonding, appropriations from future surplus, or eliminating non-highway expenditure from the highway user tax distribution fund could sufficiently cover the appropriation.

Waseca Mayor Tom Hagen testified in favor of HF1286, explaining that "a few years ago, I would have said 'Give back all the surplus.' Having become a public servant, I have seen the unmet needs, particularly in our community."

Hagen specifically mentioned U.S. Highway 14, which runs through his community and which Ruth described as a "death trap," as a likely candidate for improvement. He said the appropriation would allow Waseca to "focus on downtown revitalization" and "help the private economy to flourish."

Rep. Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake) described his proposed \$60 million appropriation as "a little more modest."

HF1965 would devote \$25 million for each of the appropriations in Ruth's bill, and would provide \$10 million for transit advantages such as park-and-ride lots.

The committee adopted an amendment forbidding the use of the funds for any expenditure related to light rail or commuter rail.

Truancy prevention

Bill aims to set student attendance goals high and provide rewards for meeting those goals

BY THERESA STAHL

Since he retired from a long teaching career, Rep. Lyndon Carlson (DFL-Crystal) said he has been asked how things have changed in the classroom. Most changes were positive, he said, but there were also problems, mainly relating attendance and mobility.

The number of students who were frequently absent was minimal in Carlson's early years of teaching, he said. In his last year, however, he said his attendance book was scattered with absences and excuses.

Combining his own experience with the findings of a statewide study on truancy, Carlson is sponsoring a bill (HF2376) that would attempt to reduce truancy by helping schools set attendance goals and providing financial incentives for schools to meet those objectives.

The House K-12 Education Finance Committee heard the bill April 9, and will consider it for inclusion in its omnibus bill.

HF2376 would require school districts to establish a minimum threshold for student attendance of 95 percent. Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka) offered an amendment to require a 95 percent student attendance goal for secondary schools and a 97 percent student attendance goal for elementary schools. Carlson did not object to the amendment, which was approved.

Under the bill, school districts would be required to issue an initial report of its truancy goals, as well as its current truancy rates to the Department of Children, Families and Learning. Annual reports on the outcomes of truancy reduction efforts would also be submitted to the department.

The bill would cost about \$8.2 million in each year of the 2002-03 biennium. School districts would receive an additional 4 percent of the district's base compensatory revenue only if its truancy goals are met.

(Compensatory revenue is a portion of school's general education funding. The revenue is based on the number of students who

are eligible for free and reduced price meals.)

Truancy revenue issued to schools would be over and above funds a district is already spending on truancy prevention measures.

Programs to reduce truancy may include "parental involvement programs, programs designed to increase personal contact with stu-



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Stephanie Autumn, staff member at the Council of Crime and Justice, testifies April 9 before the House K-12 Education Finance Committee in support of HF2376, a bill that would promote school success through enhanced pupil attendance, and provides funding for truancy reduction activities.

dents and family, and collaborative activities with other schools or with social service and law enforcement agencies providing truancy reduction activities," the bill states.

Rep. Len Biernat (DFL-Mpls) said he appreciates the premise behind the bill, but it may be shifting what is presently counties' responsibility to local school boards. Carlson said language in the bill describes a "community-wide approach" in programs to reduce truancy.

Youth workers testified in support of the bill, telling the committee that truancy workers are spread thin and assistance with this growing problem is greatly needed.

On any given day in Minneapolis or St. Paul, 10 to 15 percent of students miss school, said Susan Carstens, a juvenile specialist with the Crystal Police Department and Truancy Coalition. She explained the bill evolved from findings of a task force to study truancy.

"There is a high correlation with kids who miss school and kids in corrections," Carstens said.

Stephanie Autumn, staff member at the Council on Crime and Justice, has seen the same results in years of work with truants. Autumn, herself an American Indian, said the American Indian community has the lowest high school graduation rate and subsequently the highest dropout rate. However, she said, the problem starts long before high school.

"We're losing children before they get to middle school," Autumn said. She cited poverty, violence, and homelessness as reasons for truancy.

Rep. Bob Ness (R-Dassel) said with so many programs from preschool to post-high school, "Where is the disconnect?"

Steven Robinson, associate director of the Youth Intervention Programs Association, who attributed truancy to a "lack of social skills and the issue of mental health," said the lack of connection takes place outside the social structure of school.

"We need to address things going on in families. It is parents' responsibility to get these kids to school, but they need our help," he said.

School officials say they don't have the resources to provide help in addressing issues outside of school, Robinson said. The bill addresses helping community organizations collaborate, something Robinson said "needs to happen."

"When they drop out of school they also drop out of the community and into the justice system," Autumn said. "We need to be making our schools community-based schools." 🐼

Out with the old

Lawmakers move to repeal obsolete laws dealing with issues ranging from loose cattle to dance marathons

BY DAVID MAEDA

Current Minnesota law requires that you honk your car horn within 200 feet of any curve on a "mountain highway" where your view is obstructed.

The 1937 law is one of several on the books that do not seem to apply to modern times.

Lawmakers demonstrated April 5 that it might be easier to be in agreement when repealing obsolete laws than it often is when passing new ones.

Much of that day's floor session was devoted to bills repealing old laws. Due to the nature of the bills, a lot of the discussion on the House floor was light-hearted as members found themselves in the unusual position of talking about gypsies, dance marathons, and castrating breachy cattle.

The day was a culmination of an effort by lawmakers this session to take a good look at existing laws and see which ones really are obsolete or outdated. Although the Office of the Revisor of Statutes does propose a bill eliminating obsolete references each year, some things still slip through.

Most of the bills passed April 5 with little dissension and were considered so uncontroversial in the Senate they were placed on the consent calendar where they passed unanimously.

Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville), the House sponsor of SF480 which repealed the

1937 horn honking law, said the bill also repealed laws regulating trackless trolleys and prohibiting an owner of a coach carrying passengers from employing any person who is addicted to the excessive use of intoxicating liquors.

The bill passed by a 130-0 vote. It now awaits the governor's signature.

McElroy also sponsored a bill that repeals a law prohibiting "itinerant carnivals."

The statutes define an itinerant carnival as "a promiscuous gathering of people, as spectators or otherwise, at which lewd or obscene features are a part, or at which any gambling concessions are given or games of chance practiced or in or about which actors or other persons connected therewith are engaged in immoral pursuits, or at which attractions are exhibited which affect the health or morals of the community."

SF971, sponsored by Sen. Randy Kelly (DFL-St. Paul), also passed by a 130-0 vote. Gov. Jesse Ventura signed the bill April 11. It takes effect Aug. 1, 2001.

McElroy said other existing statutes regulate the more conventional and traditional circuses held in the state.

Among other obsolete law bills that passed unanimously were SF327, sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), which tosses out a statute that required the chair of town boards to castrate stallions, bulls, boars, or rams



HF1637 — repeals provisions that require counties to license

roaming at large in a town. HF1616, sponsored by Rep. Mark Thompson (DFL-New Hope), would repeal a rule specifying what types of sirens are approved on emergency vehicles.

Gov. Ventura also signed SF327, sponsored by Sen. Arlene Lesewski (R-Marshall). It takes effect Aug. 1.

SF972, sponsored by McElroy and Kelly, would repeal a law prohibiting endurance contests such as dance marathons. It passed 129-2 with Reps. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) and Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) casting dissenting votes. The bill, signed by Gov. Ventura on April 11, becomes law Aug. 1.

Rep. Barbara Goodwin (DFL-Columbia Heights) asked McElroy if he would support



SF480 — abolishes statutes that define a trackless trolley car, that regulate driving through rough country (such as having to sound your horn around "mountainous" curves), and that prohibit employment by passenger carriers of persons addicted to liquor.



hawkers and peddlers.

the ban of marathon legislative floor sessions and committee hearings.

McElroy pointed out, to choruses of laughter, that the proposed repealed law had to do with entertainment and he didn't think too many Minnesotans are "entertained" by the Legislature.

Not all the bills were agreed upon so unanimously.

HF1637, sponsored by Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), would repeal licensing of hawkers and peddlers.

Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea) offered an amendment to the bill that would repeal the state's law prohibiting the reselling of tickets above their face value.

"This is going on whether we want to admit it that it's going on or not. People are paying more than face value for tickets all the time," he said. "Right now if someone has



SF327 — repeals a provision about requiring the castration of certain male animals or breachy cattle (those prone to breaking through fences).

enough money that they can afford to go out and afford to buy that ticket they just may not do it from someone in Minnesota. We ought to at least acknowledge what's happening and we should go ahead and repeal this law."

Rep. Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul) spoke against the repealing of ticket scalping saying the law was in place to ensure people of all incomes could afford to go to sporting events.

"I get really upset when I see people charging \$7,000 for tickets that have face value of \$75 or \$150," Osthoff said. "What you're proposing is that only big business or the rich can buy tickets to go into publicly sponsored events in our state. When travel agencies can buy big blocks of tickets and then raise the price to sell them so that average people can't get them, I believe that's a mistake."

Osthoff's comments prompted a lively exchange with Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls).

"Rep. Osthoff do you really believe that the Minnesota law against scalping has prevented the sale of scalped tickets?" Kahn asked.

Osthoff replied, "Rep. Kahn that's a question you ought to ask your chief of police. He said he's made arrests to stop it. But I know we don't have this problem in St. Paul, seems only to be a Minneapolis problem."

"Maybe if you had anything worth going on in St. Paul," Kahn retorted, again answered with good-natured exclamations.

Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls) said he thought that sponsors of major sporting events, such as the NCAA Men's Final Four basketball tournament, would not come to a city that allows scalping.

The amendment failed by a 91-39 vote. The bill passed unanimously.

Another bill that generated discussion was HF615, sponsored by Seifert, that dealt in part with repealing rules of the Pollution Control Agency in abating tire dumps.

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) said she opposed the bill because officials from the PCA testified in committee that the counties would become responsible for dealing with waste tires.

"I don't think we want to be shifting this to property taxes," Wagenius said.



SF971 — repeals a law that prohibits holding itinerant carnivals (those that travel from place to place and are engaged in "immoral pursuits").



SF972 — repealing the law prohibiting endurance contests, particularly all-night dance marathons.



HF1616 — repealing obsolete rules of the commissioner of public safety prescribing standards for sirens on emergency vehicles.

Seifert said that even if the bill did not pass, the agency was going to invalidate the rules this summer at a cost of \$6,700 to go through the repeal process. He said the rules have not been used in seven years.

The bill failed by a 66-64 vote. Seifert moved that it be reconsidered and returned to the General Register. That motion was approved and the bill likely will be taken up again later in the session. 🐸

Photos courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

Forging ahead

A quintet of bills focus on early intervention to prevent long-term mental health problems

By MARY KAY WATSON

Members of the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee considered five bills relating to mental illness at their April 11 meeting. All five were laid over for possible inclusion in the committee's finance bill.

Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester) is sponsoring two major mental health bills this year. HF812, the Comprehensive Mental Health Act of 2001, would provide a systematic improvement in the state's mental health system, and HF1531 would allow greater flexibility for provision of mental health services.

But other initiatives, sponsored by Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) and Rep. Harry Mares (R-White Bear Lake), also make significant adjustments to the mental health system.

Based on recommendations by the Mental Health Legislative Network, a collaboration of 17 nonprofit organizations, HF812 would appropriate approximately \$100 million for the 2002-03 biennium. Among its provisions are the following:

- Funding for suicide prevention planning and community-based programs,
- Establishment of discharge plans and transition services for offenders with mental illness before their discharge from prison,
- Updating reimbursement rates for mental health and psychiatric services,
- Establishment of coverage requirements for mental health services and treatment,
- Appropriation of funds for grants to programs that provide economic support or housing assistance to people with mental illness, and
- Prohibiting health plans from refusing to cover health services that result from suicide attempts.

HF1531 includes mental health initiatives and changes to statutes recommended by the state Department of Human Services. Its fiscal impact would be about \$4.6 million for the 2002-03 biennium.

Some of the provisions included in HF1531 are:

- Authorization of grants for transition services to young adults with severe emotional disturbances to help them live independently,
- Increased coverage for community-based rehabilitative mental health services for adults, and
- Establishment of coverage for adult mental health crisis response services.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville), sponsor of HF987, brought to the lawmakers' attention a report by the Citizens League that lambasted the state's efforts in the area of children's mental health.

"More than 10 years after its passage, the mission of the Children's Mental Health Act (of 1989) remains utterly unfulfilled," states the January 2001 report.

HF987 would attempt to help children who are already in crisis. It would appropriate \$2 million to the commissioner of the Department of Human Services for children and adolescents with emotional disturbances who exhibit violent or destructive behaviors, including a pilot project for counties to do mental health screening of youth in the juvenile court system.

Similar projects have shown "significant results," said Glenace Edwall, director of children's mental health for the department. "Results of screening youth from ages 10 to 18 showed substantial reduction in the numbers of incidences of violence, severity of violence, petty offences, and misdemeanors."

In addition to HF987 a second bill, sponsored by Rep. Harry Mares (R-White Bear Lake) also addresses the recommendations of the Citizen League report's that emphasis must be placed on better mental health screening and early intervention for children and adolescents.

HF1221 would appropriate \$1.5 million for grants to school districts to establish pilot programs for integrated service models for children's mental health.

Mares said the current system is fragmented and his bill would attempt to provide a coordinated system that would identify youths with problems at an early stage.

"By intervening early, we hope to reduce the costs of out-of-home placement," said Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhart. "We want to reach children who are having difficulty academically and socially, but may not yet be in crisis."

Greiling also presented HF281, a bill that would modify the legal definition of "mentally ill person" and would revise civil commitment law to help the mentally ill get treatment before a crisis develops.

The fiscal note for HF281 estimates the cost



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

John Milton (right), legislative co-chair of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Minnesota, testifies in front of the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee April 11 in support of HF281. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Mindy Greiling, left, modifies the definitions of civilly committing mentally ill and emergency hold standards.

Continued on page 31

Fringe benefits

Plan to transfer state tobacco settlement funds to the University of Minnesota faces a tough road

BY MIKE COOK

Legislators have ignited a plan that could aid the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center, but others want to snuff it out.

Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring) presented HF2381 to the House Higher Education Finance Committee April 6. His bill transfers a portion of the money from one of the two endowments of the annual tobacco payments and gives it to the other, which would produce more money for the university's academic health center.

The academic health center comprises seven schools and colleges of medicine, public health, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine, as well as various allied health programs and the university hospital.

"This is one of the more pressing issues this committee has discussed this session," said Stang, who sits on the committee. "We've heard a lot of testimony from the academic health center, the needs they are facing, and some of their concerns if we don't address some of their funding issues."

The measure will be considered for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Saying this a health issue, not an education one, Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) tried to move the bill to the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee during the April 11 floor session. After a brief discussion, his idea was defeated 69-60.

Under the plan, \$212 million would be transferred on July 1, 2001 and \$38 million one year later from the state's tobacco use prevention endowment fund to the state's medical education endowment fund.

Monies used for the program would come from earnings on the investments of the two endowments established with the tobacco funds, estimated at \$23 million for the biennium.

"We are not touching the local tobacco programs or the local public health. We are only impacting the statewide tobacco money of \$14.1 million (in fiscal year 2002)," Stang said.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Department of Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm testifies before the House Higher Education Finance Committee April 6 in opposition to HF2381, a bill that would increase aid to the University of Minnesota Academic Health Center with proceeds from the tobacco settlement.

Of the money, \$8 million will meet the U of M's budget request to stabilize the core funding of the medical school, and \$2.6 million will be used for the interdisciplinary academic initiative, including the areas of medical science, nursing, rural dentistry, and pharmacy.

The remaining \$3.5 million would remain for statewide tobacco programs in 2002.

The bill also outlines how money is distributed in future years, with each area projected to receive more annually based on future investment earnings.

"We realize the need for the prevention program, but I believe we as a state have to prioritize where we are spending our dollars, and I think the most pressing issue facing the state right now is in terms of our medical industry providing training for some of those people," Stang said. "It's not that smoking prevention is not important. We do leave local money in there and there is still some money in the statewide prevention as well."

Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), a co-sponsor of the bill, said the measure presents a tough choice.

"This is not fun or popular, but it is necessary," he said. "We do not have enough money to provide everything everybody wants. If we don't do this, where do we find the money, or should we just cannibalize the academic health center and not train doctors and pharmacists anymore?"

"If this appropriation prevails it will provide resources for the Board of Regents that will fix the core budget of the medical school, the portion of the budget that pays faculty to teach, that pays staff to support the faculty, and pays for systems such as information technology that support the education of health professionals that supply 60 percent of the health professional workforce to the state," said Dr. Frank Cerra, senior vice president for health sciences at the university.

Without a core funding increase, the university is faced with the following options: a hiring freeze, a tuition increase of at least 10 percent per year — possibly up to 20 percent — starting July 1, and the likelihood of paring down programs. Even with the appropriation, Cerra said a double-digit tuition increase "is very real anyway."

While the university would like to see the plan succeed, a dozen testifiers at the hearing said it is a bad idea.

"I can't tell you strongly enough how much the administration opposes this approach to solving a problem," said Jan Malcolm, state health commissioner. "I'm happy there will be no disruption of local programs, but their effect will be diminished without state support. Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of not only premature death but illness and disability."

Noting that 38.7 percent of today's 12th-graders have used tobacco once in the past 30 days, Phil Bartusek, a lieutenant with the Albert Lea Police Department who has helped conduct more than 800 compliance checks, said that number is above the national average and growing. "We have work to do. If this passes, tobacco wins and kids lose."

Guy McDonald of Edina gave the most

Continued on page 31

Tracking new laws, vetoes

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

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

In the first year of the biennium, the important thing to remember is that the governor has three days from the time of "presentment" to veto a bill. If the governor

doesn't sign the bill within this time frame, it will become law with or without his signature. (Sundays are not counted in the three-day time limit, but holidays are.)

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

A two-thirds vote of the members in each house is needed to override a veto. But because only the governor can call a special

session of the Legislature, anything vetoed after the Legislature adjourns is history — at least until the next year.

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

This information is also available on the governor's Web site (www.governor.state.mn.us). Select the "Legislative Initiatives" link, then click on "Legislative Log 2001."

Key:

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

CH	HF	SF	Description	Signed	Vetoed
Res.1	219	258*	Resolution requesting a ban on the importation of certain steel products.	3/15/01	
Res.2	670	647*	Resolution memorializing the President and Congress to fund 40 percent of special education costs.	4/6/01	
1	34	28*	Teacher licensing under current licensure rules.	1/16/01	
2	421*	460	Energy assistance program federal fund expenditure authorized.	2/2/01	
3	213	201*	Physicians assistants infection control continuing education requirements repeal.	2/15/01	
4	181	43*	Adult foster care license capacity age requirement and maximum admissions variances.	2/28/01	
5	817	376*	City contract limit increases.	3/2/01	
6	106*	47	Minnesota agricultural education leadership council replacement members authorized	3/8/01	
7	656*	231	Revisor's Bill.	3/15/01	
8	80*	79	Coon Lake water level control.	3/16/01	
9	393*	155	Ramsey County and St. Paul employees allowed equal competition for county jobs in city-county departments.	3/16/01	
10	357	289*	Alcohol and drug counselors licensing requirements modified.	3/16/01	
11	487	433	Townships health, social, and recreational services contracts amounts increases.	3/21/01	
12	320*	399	Property casualty insurance agents surplus lines insurance procurement authority.	3/29/01	
13	1016	509*	City and county obligations payment by electronic transfer or credit card authorized.	4/6/01	
14	368	63*	Stearns County Highway 55 bridge designated as Old St. Anne's pass.	4/6/01	
15	243	346*	Trusts; uniform principal and income act modified, and antilapse law clarified.	4/6/01	
16	556*	756	Federal law enforcement officers authorized to exercise arrest powers in MN under specified circumstances.	4/9/01	
17	416	400*	Hokah authorized to vacate roads if necessary due to extensive damage.	4/9/01	
18	1046	991*	Notifies schools of student possession of drug paraphernalia.	4/11/01	
19	172	9*	Authorizes cities to provide housing assistance for volunteer firefighters or ambulance personnel.	4/11/01	
20	64	971*	Repeals law prohibiting itinerant carnivals.	4/11/01	
21	394	327*	Repealing statutes concerning castrating animals running at large in a town.	4/11/01	
22	466	972*	Repeals law prohibiting endurance contests.	4/11/01	
23	252	570*	Repeals obsolete rules.	4/11/01	

*The legislative bill marked with an asterisk denotes the file submitted to the governor.

Monday, April 9

HF2420—Mares (R)

Civil Law

Maltreatment of Minors Act clarified regarding the role of the Department of Children, Families and Learning; and other special programs provided.

HF2421—Rukavina (DFL)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Virginia central steam heating system repairs provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF2422—Mulder (R)

Education Policy

Small school districts and school districts on the state border authorized to determine appropriate school guidance counselor to student ratio.

HF2423—Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services Policy

Traumatic brain injury waiver amended to include acquired or degenerative diseases including Multiple Sclerosis.

HF2424—Hausman (DFL)

Health & Human Services Finance

Ramsey County nursing facility rate increase provided.

HF2425—Clark, K. (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources Policy

Removal of the word "squaw" from Minnesota geographic features provided.

HF2426—Tuma (R)

Judiciary Finance

Alternative dispute resolution programs established in the third and fifth judicial districts and money appropriated.

HF2427—Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services Finance

Nursing facility construction moratorium exception provided to allow a renovation, operating rate increase and property rate increase for a 64-bed facility for residential rehabilitation operations provided, and money appropriated.

HF2428—Abeler (R)

K-12 Education Finance

Pupil transportation reserve account established and money appropriated.

HF2429—Dibble (DFL)

Taxes

Metropolitan property tax levies for transit operations eliminated, sales tax rate and motor vehicle sales tax rate reduced, and area transportation partnership sales taxes imposed.

HF2430—Jaros (DFL)

Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development

Resolution urging the United States Congress to amend the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

HF2431—McElroy (R)

Taxes

Electric utility property tax exemption provided, state aid payments to local governments provided, bonds guaranteed, and money appropriated.

HF2432—Winter (DFL)

Agriculture & Rural Development Finance

Soybean oilseed processing facility development grant authorized and money appropriated.

Wednesday, April 11

HF2433—Osskopp (R)

Health & Human Services Policy

Vulnerable adults; assessments and investigation of reports provisions modified, and enforcement authority by the attorney general provided for certain offenses against vulnerable adults.

HF2434—Dibble (DFL)

Transportation Policy

Community preservation routes category established in the county state-aid highway system and municipal state-aid street system.

HF2435—Gleason (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Richfield; Metropolitan Airports Commission required to transfer Taft Park property to Richfield.

HF2436—McElroy (R)

Taxes

Taconite production tax rate reduced, payment provided in installments, grants provided, distributions of the tax modified, and taconite industry equipment and personal property sales tax exemption provided.

HF2437—Erickson (R)

Education Policy

Wrestling teams required to be gender-separated.

HF2438—Winter (DFL)

Agriculture & Rural Development Finance

Grain inspection fee study provided and report required, and money appropriated.

HF2439—Gerlach (R)

Transportation Finance

Dakota County; Cedar Avenue transportation corridor feasibility and environmental studies, and preliminary engineering, funding provided and money appropriated.

HF2440—Stang (R)

Taxes

Rockville city and fire hall construction materials and supplies sales tax exemption provided.

HF2441—Dehler (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy

Video lottery terminals authorized, revenue use specified, penalties prescribed, and local regulatory authority provided.

HF2442—Gunther (R)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Lewisville wastewater infrastructure grant provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF2443—Vandever (R)

Transportation Policy

Lino Lakes Highway 49 speed limit designated.

HF2444—McElroy (R)

Taxes

Tax increment financing consultant registration and regulation provided.

HF2445—Anderson, I. (DFL)

Education Policy

Students prohibited from enrolling in another school district to avoid being dismissed under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, and behavior agreements applied to new enrolling districts.

HF2446—Folliard (DFL)

Education Policy

Online learning pupil units provided and report required.

HF2447—Abrams (R)

Taxes

Tax increment financing, abatement, and related development statutes minor and technical changes provided.

HF2448—Davnie (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy

Permanent resident non-citizens authorized to vote in local elections and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2449—Daggett (R)

Taxes

Income tax return forms to include a line allowing taxpayers to report use tax liability.

HF2450—Rukavina (DFL)

Taxes

Taconite production tax rate modified, tax proceeds distributed, tax relief area definition modified, local government state aid provided, and money appropriated.

HF2451—Wenzel (DFL)

K-12 Education Finance

Independent School District No. 482, Little Falls, laboratory school established in Randall to develop innovative teaching techniques, facility renovation authorized, and money appropriated.

HF2452—Folliard (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources Policy

Toxic pollution prevention plan requirements expanded, surcharge provided on releases of persistent bioaccumulative toxics, related pollution prevention funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF2453—Davnie (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy

Local governments authorized to permit permanent resident non-citizens to vote in local elections and constitutional amendment proposed.

MONDAY, April 16

No committee hearings.

TUESDAY, April 17

No committee hearings before 12 noon.

12 noon

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

NOTE ROOM

500S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: ***NOTE CHANGE***

HF1031 (Hackbarth) Local community forest ecosystem health program, community forestry assessments, and tree planting funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1235 (Holsten) Forest management money appropriated.

Department of Natural Resources: Division of Forestry.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

Basement Hearing Room

State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek

Agenda: HF1960 (Stanek) Sex offender and other offender registration law provisions clarified, DNA offender testing requirement expanded, and criminal penalties imposed.

HF1353 (Stanek) Recommendation required on impact of entering into interstate compact for adult offender supervision, and commissioner of corrections required to develop a plan to handle interstate transfers of adult offenders.

HF1330 (Clark, J.) Felony penalty for aggravated cruelty to pets imposed.

HF1918 (Tuma) State public defender salary provided.

HF2132 (Harder) Marriage license fee reduced for couples who obtain marital education, and fee disposition provided.

HF2291 (Skoglund) Automated victim notification system implemented, report required, and money appropriated.

HF848 (Skoglund) Electronic evidence search warrants authorized on foreign corporations, Minnesota corporations to provide electronic evidence when served, and specified child pornography penalties enhanced.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Bob Ness

Agenda: Omnibus Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Bill:

HF1266 (Ness) Dairy diagnostics and modernization program additional funding provided and money appropriated.

RULES & LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION

500N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Tim Pawlenty

Agenda: Calendar for the Day for Wednesday, April 18, 2001.

Amendment to Joint Rules (Olson, M.).

1:30 p.m.

Salary and Budget Subcommittee/ Legislative Coordinating Commission

400N State Office Building

Chr. Sen. Roger Moe

Agenda: Review/approve biennial budget proposal. Other business as approved by the chair.

Immediately following the Salary and Budget Subcommittee meeting

(approximately 2:15 p.m.)

Legislative Coordinating Commission

400N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Steve Sviggum

Agenda: Report from the Subcommittee on Salary and Budget regarding biennial budget proposal. Other business as approved by the chair.

3 p.m.

THE HOUSE MEETS IN SESSION.

15 minutes after session

WAYS & MEANS

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. David Bishop

Agenda: HF632 (Luther) Organ donors; paid leave required for organ donation.

HF1293 (Davids) Public service commissioner's remaining duties transferred to commissioner of commerce, light capacity scales inspection provided, unfair cigarette sales act administration transferred to commerce, and money appropriated.

HF1080 (Thompson) Gender-specific language replaced with gender neutral language in the constitution, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF156 (Seifert) Barber shop registration fee exception provided for sole operators of multiple shops.

One hour after session

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF660 (Anderson, I.) Medical assistance mileage reimbursement increased.

HF706 (Goodno) Breast and cervical cancer treatment medical assistance eligibility established and money appropriated.

HF775 (Boudreau) Day training and habilitation service variance request mediation process established, rate structure pilot project provided, county responsibilities defined, task force extended, and money appropriated.

HF934 (Bradley) Alternative quality assurance licensing system project for programs for persons with developmental disabilities expiration date extended, requirements modified, and money appropriated.

HF1014 (Boudreau) Medical assistance reimbursement for special transportation services provisions modified.

HF1124 (Mulder) Nonmetropolitan inpatient hospital rates for certain diagnosis-related groups adjusted.

HF1829 (Larson) Autistic children intensive early intervention behavior therapy medical assistance coverage provided.

HF1956 (Goodno) Program options for certain persons with developmental disabilities provided, and money appropriated.

HF1957 (Goodno) Medicare payment rate established as rate for all nursing facility residents for the first 90 days, and money appropriated.

HF2179 (Mullery) Welfare-to-work transportation funding provided and money appropriated.

HF693 (Goodno) Dentists loan forgiveness program established, donated dental services program created, dental services and provider requirements modified, reimbursement rates increased, immunities provided, and money appropriated.

HF278 (Nornes) Dentists; medical assistance reimbursement rate increased for specified dentists, dental hygienists permitted to perform services under supervision, grant program for community clinics established, and money appropriated.

HF587 (Huntley) Detoxification services provided by counties reimbursed by state funds and money appropriated.

HF1291 (Boudreau) Health plan subrogation clause limitation provisions modified.

HF1337 (Mulder) Health insurance; purchasing alliance stop-loss fund account created and money appropriated.

HF1668 (Mullery) Hennepin County Southeast Asian collaborative transitional employment training project federal TANF funding provided and money appropriated.

Note: If necessary, agenda will be continued Wednesday, April 18, at 8:15 a.m. in 10 State Office Building.

WEDNESDAY, April 18

8 a.m.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

500S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek

Agenda: HF260 (Stanek) Criminal justice information system improvements provided including fingerprinting, collection of aliases, and suspense file reporting, and money appropriated.

Discussion of Judiciary Finance Omnibus Bill.

8:15 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: Continuation of Tuesday, April 17, agenda.

HF2427 (Abeler) Nursing facility construction moratorium exception provided to allow a renovation, operating rate increase and property rate increase for a 64-bed facility for residential rehabilitation operations provided, and money appropriated.

HF2424 (Hausman) Ramsey County nursing facility rate increase provided.

HF2303 (Huntley) Duluth nursing home moratorium exception provided.

HF2146 (Milbert) South St. Paul nursing home bed moratorium exception provided and money appropriated.

HF1962 (Marquart) Wilkin County nursing facility bed moratorium exception provided.

HF1117 (Jennings) Pine City nursing facility replacement bed moratorium exception provided.

HF1030 (Lenczewski) Bloomington nursing facility replacement exception to moratorium provided, rate increased, and money appropriated.

HF531 (Johnson, R.) Hospital construction and new nursing facility bed moratorium exceptions provided.

HF787 (Abeler) Nursing home moratorium exception priority for Anoka area extended, and money appropriated for moratorium exceptions.

HF1319 (Huntley) St. Louis County nursing facility laundry costs calculated into total operating payment rate.

HF2117 (Rhodes) Raw food cost adjustment excluded from nursing facility rate computations.

HF124 (Folliard) Home care providers required to provide notice of service termination, and state health care program reimbursement rates increased for home care providers.

Note: If necessary, agenda will be continued Thursday, April 19, in 10 State Office Building.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy

Agenda: Presentation of the Jobs and Economic Development Finance Omnibus Bill; committee comment and public testimony.

Note: If you are interested in testifying, please contact Ann Matuella, Committee Legislative Assistant, no later than 5 p.m. Tuesday, April 17.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau

Agenda: HF2174 (Osskopp) Gambling control board authorized to use unmarked vehicles and registration tax exemption provided.

HF2292 (Stanek) Metropolitan Council demonstration project funded to provide express bus service between downtown Minneapolis and locations outside transit taxing district, and money appropriated.

HF624 (Seagren) Light rail; requiring route to be identified before spending appropriations to study light rail transit and commuter rail.

HF2193 (Vandever) Special "choose life" motor vehicle license plates authorized, adoption support account established for grants to counties, and money appropriated.

HF1527 (Kuisle) Motor vehicle definitions, registration, and dealer regulation provisions

modified, electronic accident reporting authorized, driver instruction requirements modified, and public safety department advertising revenue expanded.

HF1949 (Westerberg) Trunk highway bond proceeds and highway bond-financed property governing provisions modified.

9 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie

Agenda: Public testimony on HF218 (Krinkie) State Government Finance Bill.

HF218 (Krinkie) State Government Finance Bill: Section 12, proposed budget for Department of Administration.

Additional bills may be added.

10:15 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: ***NOTE CHANGE***

HF659 (Wolf) Minnesota Energy Security and Reliability Act adopted requiring an energy plan, providing essential infrastructure, regulating conservation expenditures, encouraging flexibility, and providing safety standards.

HF1323 (Jennings) Electric generation parks authorized, Minnesota energy reliability trust fund established, generation facility incentives provided, center for energy security created, tax incentives provided, and money appropriated.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: Governor's Budget - Department of Children, Families and Learning's budget.

HF928 (Abeler) Relating to education; including the removal of architectural barriers for access for disabled persons as a health and safety program expenditure.

HF2428 (Abeler) Relating to education finance; creating a transportation reserve account; appropriating money.

HF1854, (Abeler) Relating to education; developing special education services and access to information.

HF2380 (Sykora) Relating to education; providing students with additional opportunities to learn to read.

HF1470 (Buesgens) Relating to education; requiring that school district contracts with teachers be structurally balanced.

HF601 (Johnson, R.) Relating to education; appropriating money for a grant to Independent School District No. 508, St. Peter, for declining pupil aid.

HF2407 (Ness) Relating to education finance; modifying the definition of equity revenue; adding a small schools factor.

TAXES

200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: HF2339 (McElroy) Exempts current value of utility generation personal property from the general education levy; reduces the class rate on utility generation personal property.

HF2431 (McElroy) Provides that certain personal property of an electric utility is exempt from taxation; provides state aid payments to replace the revenue loss by local government provides a state guarantee for certain bonds; appropriates money.

HF2244 (Abrams) Provides for state funding of trial courts in unfunded judicial districts.

HF2436 (McElroy) Taconite tax reduction.

HF1907 (Biernat) General education levy provided as a state-determined, state collected levy.

HF1874 (Abrams) Department of Revenue penalty disclosure bill.

HF577 (Lenczewski) Amendment to Minnesota Constitution; allows a reverse referendum to rescind increases in certain state tax revenues.

Note: Bills not heard today will be heard on Thursday, April 19, 2001, 30 minutes after session in 200 State Office Building.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE POLICY

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Tim Finseth

Agenda: Informational hearing on Foot and Mouth Disease. Representatives of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Board of Animal Health will be discussing tips for farmers on how to prevent the possible spread of the disease and also some security measures the state will be taking.

FAMILY & EARLY CHILDHOOD

EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Walk-through of Committee Omnibus Bill (Delete-all to HF1515).

3 p.m.

THE HOUSE MEETS IN SESSION.

THURSDAY, April 19

8 a.m.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek

Agenda: Discussion of Judiciary Finance Omnibus Bill.

8:15 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: HF795 (Johnson, S.) Ramsey County project ReConnect grants provided and money appropriated.

HF811 (Swenson) Rural hospital capital improvement grant and loan program established and money appropriated.

HF924 (Nornes) Residential mental health grant program for facility upgrades established and money appropriated.

HF1833 (Goodno) Multiple sclerosis services nursing facility reimbursement pilot project authorized and money appropriated.

HF2088 (Kubly) Rural hospital or nursing home health professionals loan forgiveness program established and money appropriated.

HF1376 (Abeler) Human services licensing background studies provisions modified.

HF1851 (Abeler) State health care program provider participation nonfinancial barrier identification required.

HF1307 (Bradley) Guardianship service

providers defined, duties specified, and money appropriated.

More bills will be added.

Note: If necessary, agenda will be continued at the call of the chair in 5 State Office Building.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau

Agenda: HF1146 (Ozment) Salt distribution stockpiles design, construction, and use requirements established.

HF852 (Howes) Motor vehicle filing fees modified and clarifying changes provided.

HF1054 (Johnson) I-394 "sane lanes" use by single-occupant vehicles study and report required, and money appropriated.

HF1728 (Workman) Transit assistance fund expenditures restricted to operating and capital assistance to public transit systems, motor vehicle sales tax revenue dedicated, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1921 (Workman) Bus transit study authorized and bus transit way within part of the southwest light rail transit corridor prohibited.

HF2309 (Kuisse) Trunk highway project construction considerations clarified.

HF1861 (Holberg) General obligation bonds authorized to be issued for trunk highway construction, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF362 (Westrom) Diesel fuel minimum biodiesel fuel content specified.

9 a.m.

*****NOTE TIME CHANGE*****

Property Tax Division/TAXES

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: ***NOTE CHANGE***

HF2375 (Erhardt) Deed taxes definition of consideration clarified.

HF1402 (Erhardt) Homestead, agricultural, and seasonal recreational property exempted from general education tax; property tax class rates reduced; homestead credit program established, school district levy computation modified, and money appropriated.

HF187 (Abrams) Specified tax increment financing districts modifications prohibited and expenditures limited.

HF662 (Rukavina) Aurora housing and redevelopment tax increment financing district extended.

HF1505 (Lenczewski) Pre-1990 tax district five-year rule applied and time limitations provided.

HF1676 (Wasiluk) North St. Paul provided tax increment financing grant.

HF2157 (Swenson) Gaylord tax increment financing law approval time extended.

HF2173 (Howes) Park Rapids tax increment financing district requirement extension provided.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie

Agenda: HF218 (Krinkie) State Government Finance Bill:

Section 12, proposed budget for Department of Administration

Section 2, proposed budget for the Legislature.

Section 3, proposed budget for the Governor's Office.

Additional bills may be added. Meeting may be continued following session.

10:15 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: ***NOTE CHANGE***

MORNING AGENDA

HF766 (Holsten) Environment and natural resources appropriation bill.

AFTERNOON AGENDA

HF1313 (Ozment) Soil and water conservation district grants provided for nonpoint engineering technical assistance, feedlot water quality management program, and special projects cost-share program; and money appropriated.

HF2342 (Osthoff) Empire Builder property in St. Paul compensation for environmental contamination remediation provided, claim priority provided, and money appropriated.

HF83 (Anderson, I.) Deer River fire station addition design appropriation provided.

HF1984 (Olson, M.) Wright County Indian Lake aeration treatment grant provided and money appropriated.

Note: Meeting will reconvene immediately following session in 10 State Office Building.

Sales and Income Tax Division/TAXES

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Elaine Harder

Agenda: ***NOTE CHANGE***

HF1974 (Gray) Modifies the education credit and subtraction, allows certain credits to be assigned, and provides duties and powers to commissioner of revenue.

HF2124 (Stang) Exempts certain additional classroom materials from sales and use taxes.

HF2125 (Dawkins) Provides that the education expense credit and deduction apply to certain expenditures for pre-kindergarten expenses and museum memberships.

HF2247 (Bernardy) Allows an income tax subtraction for the purchase of classroom materials for teachers.

HF2256 (Bernardy) Allows the education income tax subtraction and credit for extracurricular activities and musical instruments.

HF1740 (Clark, J.) Increases aid to counties with tribal casinos.

HF1820 (Clark, J.) Exempts the purchase of construction materials and equipment used in constructing or improving certain buildings in the city of New Ulm.

HF1444 (Wilkin) Abolishes withholding taxes on wages, and provides for payment of estimated taxes on wages.

HF2234 (Erhardt) Increases the maximum long-term care insurance credit, reduces the lifetime benefit requirement, and extends the credit to employers.

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.

30 minutes after session

TAXES

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: Continuation of bills not heard on Wednesday, April 18, 2001.

HFXXXX (Dawkins) Reforms state aid programs; modifies local government aid; adjust HACA.

FRIDAY, April 20

7:30 a.m.

*****NOTE TIME*****

JOBS & ECONOMIC

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

200 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy

Agenda: Mark-up of Jobs and Economic Development Finance Omnibus bill.

Note: This meeting is scheduled to last until 12:45 p.m.

8 a.m.

JUDICIARY FINANCE

500S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek

Agenda: HF699 (Sykora) Domestic abuse criminal and civil penalties and procedures modified, and money appropriated.

Discussion of Judiciary Finance Omnibus Bill.

8:15 a.m.

HEALTH & HUMAN

SERVICES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno

Agenda: To be announced.

9 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE

300N State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie

Agenda: To be announced.

10:15 a.m.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE

10 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

Agenda: To be announced. Possible a.m. and p.m. meeting schedule.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

300S State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik

Agenda: To be announced.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE

5 State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: To be announced.

TAXES

Basement Hearing Room

State Office Building

Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: HF1416 (Abrams) Streamlined Sales Tax Bill.

Other bills may be added.

9 a.m.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE300N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie**Agenda:** To be announced.


10 a.m.

JUDICIARY FINANCEBasement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek**Agenda:** Discussion of Judiciary Finance Omnibus Bill.**Continued from page 24**

to be \$1.9 million for 2002 and \$3.14 million in future years. The latter amount would be reduced by one-half if HF1531 passes, according to Greiling.

Greiling believes HF281 will save money in the long run, but the Department of Human Services has interpreted the bill as meaning many more people would go to regional treatment centers.

In eight states with similar laws to this bill, admissions actually fell, according to John Milton, legislative co-chair of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Minnesota.

"Mental illness is a medical problem, not a deficiency," Greiling said. "If you put money into early care it clearly does save money in the long run." 


Continued from page 25

graphic testimony as to the dangers of tobacco use.

He began smoking at age 15 and did not quit until he was 65. Now at age 76 he has emphysema and must carry an oxygen bottle at all times. Coming in from the parking lot outside the State Office Building, a distance of roughly 100 yards, McDonald said he had to stop twice for rest.

"I can't encourage young people enough to not use tobacco," he said. "My golden years have been tarnished by smoking."

St. Paul's Leo Jackson, a senior at Cretin-Derham Hall High School has lost many family members to cancer related to smoking, and has one uncle who could die anyday. "Please help this cause to keep all of us healthy," he said. "Today's youth do not want to have to worry about carrying oxygen tanks, or if I am going to die tomorrow."

"By taking these funds away we are greatly diminishing (the efforts of anti-tobacco youth) and we are sending the wrong message to youth on their input on tobacco prevention," said Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth). 

Reflections

More lawmakers and staff are walking outside instead of through the underground tunnel to get to session in the Capitol. This is a sign of better things to come, and a welcome sight as spring arrives in the capital city.

But residents of river towns and the National Guard may have a different view as they are building mounds of sandbags along parts of the Red, Minnesota, and Mississippi rivers should the waters rise above their flood stage.

Many of the river towns have only just recovered from the devastating floods of 1997, but the latest calamity caused by a quick thaw and major rainstorms leads one to think of the words of former New York Yankees catcher Yogi Berra, "It's *deja vu* all over again."

If flooding becomes too serious and reaches a critical, emergency stage the Legislature might respond with aid as it has for other disasters. For example, two bills are now pending in both the House and Senate that would provide relief for the July 2000 tornado in Granite Falls.

In the past, lawmakers have also responded to invasions of insects, major forest fires, and other quirks of nature.

The Grasshopper Invasion of the 1870s, almost devastated the state's major wheat resources. In 1873, a swarm of millions of Rocky Mountain locusts, or grasshoppers descended upon southern and southwestern Minnesota, and ate every plant in sight.

Each summer for four years thereafter, grasshoppers spread destruction over more than 28 counties. The Legislature intervened with appropriations for relief, bounties for insects caught by the bushel, and money for seed for the next season's crops. But not until midsummer 1877 did the grasshoppers suddenly leave. Why or where they went is an unsolved mystery.

Disasters caused by melting snow, rainstorms, and tornadoes may not be predicted early in spring, but the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is certain about some insect infestations after a cool winter and quick thaw. This year, the armyworm is a possible culprit. The DNR believes a "bumper crop" of armyworms will appear and eat the canopies of leaves of northern forests.

An invasion of armyworms, or forest tent caterpillars, was first recorded in 1922. As they marched across northeastern Minnesota, they left in their wake thousands

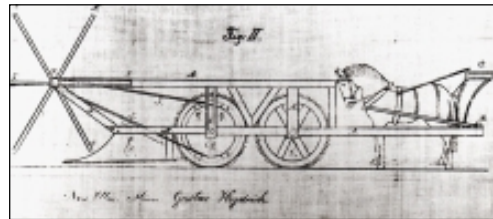
of aspen and birch trees stripped of leaves. Every 11 to 15 years since, moths fly in droves to new areas and lay millions of eggs as outbreaks continue to spread.

Now that the tent caterpillars have added basswood and oak to their menu in central and west central parts of the state, they cover everything — highways, sides of houses and more — as they extend their onslaught to defoliate more trees.

The Legislature will likely not be called upon to assist since tent caterpillars are more nuisance than devastation compared to grasshoppers, floods, or tornadoes. Armyworm outbreaks may last for two or three years, but the trees will not be harmed and the leaves will grow back.

Floods, tornadoes, and grasshopper invasions are destructive. They usually require major efforts and assistance to start over or rebuild. Armyworms can be better dealt with, even if one falls from a tree into a hotdish some mild Minnesota summer evening.

—LECLAIR GRIER LAMBERT



A drawing of a modified hopperdozer, designed by Gustav Heydrich of New Ulm, Minn. in 1876. The paddlewheel design was never implemented, but other versions were used to collect grasshoppers during infestations.

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: STEVE SVIGGUM
MAJORITY LEADER: TIM PAWLENTY
MINORITY LEADER: THOMAS W. PUGH

MINNESOTA INDEX

Teens and Tobacco

Percent of Minnesota high school students who used tobacco products	
at least once in a 30-day stretch	38.7
Middle school students	12.6
National high school average, as percent	34.8
Middle school	12.8
High school students who smoked cigarettes at least once within 30 days,	
as percent	32.4
Middle school students	9.1
National averages for high school students, as percent	28.4
National averages for middle school students, as percent	9.2
Percent of high school students who smoked 20 or more days out of 30	16.9
Middle school students	2.5
High school students who had their first whole cigarette at age 12 or younger,	
as percent	47.2
Percent of high school students using smokeless tobacco at least once	
in a 30-day period, as percent	10.2
Middle school students	2.2
National averages for high school students, as percent	6.6
National averages for middle school students, as percent	2.7
High school students who have already tried smoking, or are susceptible	
to start, as percent	73
Middle school students	49.5
Percent of high school smokers who have tried to quit at least once	
in the previous year	61
Percent able to stay off cigarettes for 30 days or less in their last attempt	48.5
Percent of high school students who gave someone else money to	
buy cigarettes	41.7
Borrowed them from someone else	23.6
Bought them in a store	15.9
Percent of middle school smokers who borrowed cigarettes from	
someone else	29
Gave someone money to buy them	23.8
Took them from a store or family member	19
High school students who bought or tried to buy cigarettes (within a	
30-day stretch) who were asked for identification, as percent	41
Estimated number of public high school students under age 18 using tobacco	
products whose primary source for tobacco is direct purchase at stores	15,000
Percent state hopes to reduce youth tobacco use by in next five years	30

Source: *Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey*, Minnesota Department of Health, August 2000.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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