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Gov. Ventura's $27 billion proposed budget reflects more than $1 billion in tax reform and $700 million in new spending

BY MIKE COOK AND MICHELLE KIBIGER

Saying his plan will provide tax relief to all Minnesotans and reduce state government, Gov. Jesse Ventura presented his 2002-03 biennial budget Jan. 23.

The governor's budget has $27.3 billion in general fund spending, a $2.7 billion increase over the current biennium.

While House members are supportive of differing aspects of the governor's budget, they're concerned about the methods used to put the budget together and the rhetoric surrounding overall spending and reducing the size of government.

In his budget address, delivered at the Science Museum of Minnesota, Ventura said he is "much more satisfied with the 'science' applied to this budget. It is built upon a solid foundation of tax reform and relief, carefully targeted spending, and initiatives designed to better address the demands of a changing economy.'"

Since March 2000, Ventura's cabinet has been developing budget targets that fall within the bounds of normal inflation. In addition, Ventura wanted to eliminate agency "wish lists." According to budget documents, agency heads were required to "demonstrate significant, specific reform and reallocation initiatives within current funding.'"

Part of that process involved the "challenge pool" concept, which required agencies to reduce their operating budgets by at least 2.5 percent. That money would then be reallocated to higher priorities, encouraging innovative and cooperative solutions to a tight funding situation, according to the budget executive summary.

During State Finance Commissioner Pam Wheelock's budget presentation to the House Ways and Means Committee Jan. 24, Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul) said he supported that idea but was interested to know which programs were "chopped" in order to accommodate the plan. Wheelock said each agency would be addressing that issue in their presentations to individual House finance committees.

Cutting back

Though the budget is traditionally about state expenditures for the coming biennium, Ventura has pointed his 2002-2003 budget toward tax relief. "Tax relief should be across the board for all citizens," he said.

First on that list, the governor said, is returning the $925 million state surplus to taxpayers, with checks to be mailed this summer.

He said it is a matter of the Legislature fulfilling a promise. "That means keeping our word about returning the surplus to taxpayers once we've settled up and closed the books for the current budget period.'"

Current law already sets that money aside for a rebate, but the 2001 Legislature must establish the basis for the rebate.

The November forecast projected there will be a budget surplus of more than $2 billion for the 2002-2003 biennium, unless current law or other conditions change.

However, that doesn't go far enough for the governor.

"My tax reform and relief recommendations begin with continuing the reduction of motor vehicle (registration) tabs to $75 by 2004 (the 2000 Legislature reduced tab fees to $99 in the third year of a car's life), a reduction in the income tax rate by 0.5 percent in each of our brackets, and finally a recognition that we must take additional steps to prepare our state for the next century.'"

The across-the-board income tax rate reduction would be 0.4 percent this year, followed by 0.1 percent in 2003. If resources permit, Ventura would like them to drop another 0.1 percent in 2004.

Other tax reductions include: lowering the corporate income tax rate to 9.4 percent, eliminating the wholesale prescription drug tax and HMO premium tax, eliminating the scheduled 0.5 percent increase in the provider tax, and increasing the working family credit for 2001, and more than doubling it by tax year 2003.

His tax reform centers around the idea that lawmakers should not "squander the opportunity" to help improve Minnesota's position in the global economy.

"It means we now have the chance, and the leadership from my office, to reduce our reliance on property taxes for state and local spending and make our income taxes more competitive as we compete for a shrinking workforce.'"

Ventura admits his ideas may be controversial, especially on the idea of altering the state's sales tax.

Noting that services, rather than goods, account for 60 percent of consumer spending, Ventura said ultimately both the state and local governments will become more reliant on income and property taxes.
He also spoke of inequities in the state’s current tax system, such as: alterations on a suit at the time of its purchase are not taxed but later alterations are, and haircuts for people are non-taxable but those for dogs are. “Apparently the dogs don’t have a very good lobbyist at the Capitol,” he said.

“It’s in our best long-term interests to expand the sales tax to those services,” the governor said. “We should reduce this impact by lowering the tax rate from 6.5 percent to 6 percent and continue to exempt necessities of life such as food, clothing, and heating oil.”

As for rectifying the property tax system, Ventura wants to take “a big step” by having the state pay for basic K-12 educational costs, instead of local taxpayers.

“Under my proposal, when school programs are paid for with property taxes it will only represent those choices truly made at the local level,” Ventura said.

“After all of this, even after paying for part of the cost with some local shifts and a statewide levy on business and cabin owners, who don’t get to vote in local elections, we still provide double-digit tax relief to all classes of property.”

Under Ventura’s proposal, through the next biennium the state and local governments would collect $801 million less in property taxes, $496 million less in income taxes, $197 million less in license tab fees, and $446 million more in sales taxes, according to Revenue Commissioner Matt Smith’s presentation to the Ways and Means committee. As a result, the state would lose $1.048 billion from those revenue sources in the biennium.

Ventura’s plan to restructure the property tax system and provide significant cuts to rates would require the state to offset the revenues lost by the local governments. As a result, that would technically increase spending.

When taking into account changes from the restructuring of the property tax system, Ventura’s proposed $27 billion general fund budget represents an 11 percent increase in spending. Without the property tax factor, the proposed increase in state spending is 5.4 percent over the previous biennium.

Historically, executive budgets have included various state aids to local governments. Among the spending proposed in this budget is:

• more than $115 million to help emerging and incumbent workers, including $53 million to enhance the working family credit to make it easier for low-income families to stay in the work force;
• $103 million in recommendations to enhance technology and improve technological investments;
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In 1878, just 10 years after the first impeachment of a president (Andrew Johnson), the Minnesota Legislature was faced with trying to decide what constituted grounds for impeachment within its own borders.


Page, an outspoken reformer, was appointed superintendent of the Austin area schools in 1866. He attempted to hold an August teachers’ conference in the school building during working hours, but the school board told Page he had to hold the meeting elsewhere after school hours. They went so far as to nail the school doors shut. Page broke into the building with an ax and was arrested.

He would publicly wield his ax again.

Page selected former Gov. Cushman Kellogg Davis to argue his case in front of the Senate. Davis contended that none of the charges reached the threshold of “corrupt crimes in office, and crimes and misdemeanors” as defined in the state’s constitution. He said judgment against Page must be based upon his official actions as opposed to his personal matters.

Davis argued in order for the Senate to remove Page it had to be demonstrated “…he is not only a weak and erring man...not only that he has been impulsive beyond what you would have restrained yourselves to — but that he has deliberately, knowing his duty ... turned aside from that way and took the path of malice, injustice, partiality, bias, corruption.”

A majority of senators found Page guilty on a few counts, but the necessary two-thirds vote was reached on none. Page returned to Austin and was defeated in the next election.

In 1880 a shot was fired into Page's living room window. Fragments of glass hit him in the side of the head and neck. A brother of Thomas Riley was arrested for the act. Riley testified that he hated Page but that did not make him unique in the Austin community. Riley was found not guilty.

(D. MAEDA)
AGRICULTURE

Dairy consultant program

“You bet” was the answer one Minnesota dairy farmer gave when asked if her business benefited from a state program which provides professional dairy consultants to state farmers.

Administered by the Department of Agriculture, the Dairy Diagnostic program tries to slow the exodus of state dairy producers and to help the remaining farmers become economically viable.

The teams include veterinarians, farm business management instructors, nutritionists, crop experts, University of Minnesota dairy specialists, and officials representing milk processing companies.

Christine Ott, co-owner and operator of Square Deal Dairy in Randolph, testified Jan. 23 before the House Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Committee that the program "has made a huge difference in our dairy," she said.

Countering the downward trend in milk prices which troubles many Minnesota dairy producers, Ott said Square Deal has been able to raise the price of its milk because of improvements suggested by program consultants. She predicted that, given her farm’s improved economic status, she expects to soon hire consultants privately, freeing up state resources for other dairy producers.

But not all had such praise for the program.

Committee Chair Rep. Robert Ness (R-Dassel) asked Mayer farmer Bob Dressen why there is not higher demand among dairy farmers for the free consultation service. Dressen said farmers were reluctant to expose themselves to potential criticism. “Most people are reluctant because you’re opening yourself up to finding out weaknesses. No one wants to open up.”

Rep. Doug Peterson (DFL-Madison) relayed the horror story of one constituent who was advised to leave dairy farming by Dairy Diagnostic consultants who said his farm could not be made economically viable.

Pointing his finger at Bruce Kleven representing the Minnesota Dairy Leaders Roundtable, a group which endorses the Dairy Diagnostic program, Peterson said, “We help people in dairy, not out of dairy. I don’t want to hear any more (stories from disgruntled farmers).”

BANKING

Banks seek tax breaks

Community banks and other financial institutions would receive a tax break under similar bills heard by the House Taxes Committee Sales and Income Tax Division, Jan. 25.

HF67, sponsored by Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) and HF119, sponsored by the division chair Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), would repeal the corporate franchise tax that applies to banks that have elected subchapter S status under the IRS tax code.

The division took no action on either bill but Harder said both would be considered for inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Prior to 1997, federal law did not permit financial institutions to elect S corporation status. That status allows businesses to be treated as partnerships for tax purposes, where the income of the business is directly taxed to its shareholders whether distributed or not.

Abrams said that since 1999 Minnesota banks have been allowed S corporation treatment for state tax purposes, except that the bank is subject to the corporate franchise tax and the shareholders are allowed a credit against the individual income tax equal to 80 percent of the corporate tax.

The two bills would allow those banks full conformity with the federal tax treatment.

Abrams said it is good tax policy whenever possible for the state tax laws to conform with federal tax laws and thus simplify the system.

He said the proposed change would effect about 1,500 people. The state Department of Revenue estimates the cost to be around $5.3 million in fiscal year 2002.

Steve Johnson, representing the Minnesota Bankers Association, said the issue is a matter of fairness for banks to be treated the same as other main street businesses.

Linda Swanson, owner of the Blaine State Bank, said she started working at the bank when she was 20 years old as a bookkeeper and has seen the benefits of a community bank.

She said she had the opportunity to purchase the bank in 1998 due in large part to the changes allowing subchapter S status for banks.

“I look at our business as a small business first and a bank second,” she said.

CHILDREN

Department responds to audit

A recent legislative audit of early childhood education programs raised questions about how well these programs are accomplishing their goals and was critical of the lack of monitoring by the Department of Children, Families and Learning, the overseeing agency.

The three programs examined were Head Start, Early Childhood Family Education, and School Readiness. Excessively large balances in the ECFE reserve accounts of some districts were of particular concern.

Karen Carlson, assistant commissioner of the department, responded to questions about the report before the House Family and Early Childhood Education Finance Committee Jan. 22.

“We think this audit represents a fair picture of the three programs,” Carlson said. She outlined several ways in which the department differs with the report:

•Unlike the auditors, the department is convinced by research that early childhood programs improve later school performance;

•Structural differences among the programs make it hard to make direct comparisons; and

•The department would like to oversee program progress and funding more carefully but does not have the capacity to do so.

“I have a lot of concerns about this report,” said Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin). “I think the department has a lot of work to do monitoring these programs and reporting on them.”

Committee members agreed on two things. They would like to see the implementation of some form of tracking to determine the effectiveness of the programs over time. And they would like the department pay closer attention to the ways in which program funds are used.

CRIME

CriMNet system progressing

The state’s endeavor to create a criminal justice information system is moving forward, but there are still many pieces to add, state officials told the joint meeting of the House
The plan would link conviction, probation, sex offender registry, warrant, protection orders, pre-trial release and juvenile felony record information for all offenders from the 1,100 different law enforcement agencies across the state.
Currently, some of that information is available but it’s usually incomplete.
Dale Good, information technology directory for the state court system, said Minnesotans expect the state to know all of these things already, when that’s not true.
“We have a broken system,” he said. “There is no criminal justice single system in the state of Minnesota.”
Good said the Legislature has funded several pieces of the system. But, he also said there needs to be more focus on what the local communities provide to the state system. If the exchange of information is incomplete from their end, the entire system will have holes.
For example, the state Bureau of Apprehension’s system links offenders with their fingerprints. If their fingerprints are not available, then all the information about that offender goes into “suspense” and can’t necessarily be accessed by law enforcement officers in the field.
One way the state has remedied the problem is in the creation of a new suspense file system housed on a secure Internet site to which law enforcement agencies across the state have access.
However, that suspense information is not accessible for such things as criminal background checks.
“It doesn’t mean a thing for someone to do a background check when there’s potential for 26,000 mistakes,” said Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), in reference to the backlog of fingerprints waiting to be entered in the bureau’s system.
Approximately $13 million was appropriated for information system purposes in Katie’s Law, passed by the 2000 Legislature. But the idea was actually born in the 1993 legislative session.
At that time a criminal justice information policy group was created to recommend the best course of action for developing a statewide system.
Since then, many advancements have been made toward a statewide system, including additional electronic fingerprinting machines and other technological advancements.
Still, state officials have focused on helping local agencies understand how important their role in the process is.
“This is not about technology,” said Charlie Weaver, commissioner of the state Department of Public Safety. “The problem is that the data isn’t getting in there or that the data in there isn’t good. It isn’t reliable. It’s about changing the way people do their jobs every day.”

MCCL RALLY

An estimated 5,000 people rally in front of the State Capitol Jan. 22 to commemorate the Roe v. Wade abortion decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973. The event was sponsored by Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life.

Lender-Scholer purported that teaching in the United States is less rigorous and said curricula have little depth as compared to other countries.
Additionally, Sharon Stenglein, a math specialist with the department of Children, Families and Learning, said “high performing countries focus on fewer topics, spend more

EDUCATION

Troubling math skills
Guests to a joint meeting of the House Education Policy and Higher Education Finance committees declared two specific reasons students in Minnesota are not exceeding in math.
Lack of high expectations for students and proper math education at an early age might be key in determining why students in the state and around the rest of the country produced mediocre scores on a international test.
Bill Lender-Scholer, director of SciMath Minnesota, presented an overview of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) to the House Education Policy and House Higher Education Finance Committees Jan. 23. Members heard testimony on that day and Jan 25.
“Students cannot be high performing without high expectations,” he said. “TIMSS reinforced that.”
The study confirmed that Minnesota is not yet making progress in math. This was shown in test data released in December 2000 from the second test of the study taken in 1999. Fourth, eighth, and 12th grade students in the state were tested both years.

Joane McKay, dean of the College of Education at St. Cloud State University, explains math pedagogical techniques in higher education institutions during a Jan. 25 joint meeting of the House Education Policy and Higher Education Finance committees.
time on them, and keep the topic in the curriculum for less time.”

For example, she said all eighth-grade teachers in Minnesota who responded to a survey said they spend at least some time teaching the meaning and operation of whole numbers, a concept taught in elementary school.

The two committees met together in hopes for a “better alignment between K-12 and higher education math,” according to House Higher Education Finance Chair Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley).

Part of the problem for the average test scores, Stanglein said, is memorization of subject matter but not use and application.

“Many students are not prepared,” she said.

“They have learned the content, but forget and are no longer able to demonstrate learning.”

Mary Moreira, who teaches math to 10th-12th graders in the Robbinsdale school district, agreed.

“They come to us in ninth grade ill-prepared,” she said.

Moreira, a teacher of 12 years, pointed to a learning shortfall at an earlier stage.

“We have elementary teachers who don’t like math,” she said.

Joane McKay, dean of the College of Education at St. Cloud State University, said St. Cloud’s program includes a math lab with tutors for students with a “math phobia,” and students are taught by an elementary-methods teacher who has a background in math.

Many teachers, Moreira said, took the minimum math requirement in college. When they reach the classroom they generally teach math “by the book” and don’t know different ways to approach the subject matter.

Stanglein said that may be a matter of time as elementary educators teach many subjects, while in other countries a teacher may only teach one or two.

Moreira, also a longtime school board member, said school administrators, including herself, have not given students the education they deserve.

“Partly we want to be nice,” she said. “With good intentions we have allowed them to do less than they’re capable of.”

ELECTIONS

House approves board members

The House gave advice and consent approval Jan. 18 to four governor nominees to the State Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board.

Three of the nominees, Shirley Chase, Wilbur Fluegel, and Donald Roggenbauer have previously served on the board. Their confirmation is to affirm reappointment to the board. Gov. Jesse Ventura nominated the fourth, former state Sen. Allan Spear (DFL-Mpls), to fill a seat vacated by former congressman Tim Penny.

Ensuring every vote

Replacing poor election equipment will not address the primary issues lingering from last fall’s presidential election, the state’s head election official said.

“What’s broken is the public’s confidence,” Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer told the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee Jan. 24. “We need to restore that confidence.”

Kiffmeyer and her staff gave an overview of the office’s election division. Bradley King, the office’s election director, said his staff fielded more than 4,000 calls the week prior to the election and more than 6,000 on election day.

“That’s an average of a call every few seconds, 24 hours a day,” King said.

Minnesota was the first state to provide results down to the precinct level via the Internet on election night. Ninety-eight percent of the

The Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board is a service and regulatory agency that administers and enforces state laws about public officials financial interests and potential conflicts of interest, as well as overseeing lobbying expenditures.

Rep. Ted Winter (DFL-Fulda) expressed concern that none of the board members is from a rural community and that all are from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Chase is from Little Canada, Fluegel is from Minneapolis, and Roggenbauer calls Maple Grove home.

Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park), chair of the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee, said members of that committee expressed similar concerns while hearing testimony from the nominees.

Rhodes said Rep. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls) would be introducing a bill shortly to address the lack of rural representation on the board.

Current state law requires the six-member board be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of three-fifths of both the House and Senate. Two board members must be former members of the Legislature from different political parties.

The law also requires that two members must be people who have not been public officials, held any political party office other than precinct delegate, or been elected to public office for which party designation is required by law. No more than three of the board members may support the same political party and no member may currently serve as a lobbyist.

The candidates now must have their nominations approved by the Senate.
results were available by 3 a.m. the next day, King said.

Kiffmeyer said the difficulties facing Florida election officials would not happen to their counterparts in Minnesota because the state does not allow the use of punch card voting systems. However, she said, the equipment Minnesota uses has its own issues in regard to making sure each voter has equal assurances their ballot is ultimately counted.

About 92 percent of Minnesota voters cast their ballots on optical scan equipment, with the remaining 8 percent counting ballots by hand. But Kiffmeyer said even those communities with optical scan equipment face different assurances of having their ballot counted.

Two-thirds of the precincts with optical scan machines have ballot counters at the polling place and therefore a voter who mismarks the ballot has the opportunity to correct the ballot before leaving, she said.

But the other one-third mark their optical scan ballot that is later counted at a central location, usually the county government center. Those voters do not have the same chance to correct a ballot.

Kiffmeyer said this raises the questions about whether the state complies with the equal protection concerns raised in the Florida situation.

ENERGY

Gas relief in sight?

Natural gas prices, while expected to slightly decrease by next year, are not expected to be significantly reduced any time soon, commerce representatives told members of the House Regulated Industries Committee Jan. 22.

Representatives heard from several local energy companies on the current natural gas situation and potential ways to assist customers with high heating bills.

Xcel Energy’s Pat Boland, manager of low-income assistance programs, said his company has been working with “different groups” to find strategies to manage high energy prices, yet the need for assistance is tremendous.

“Unfortunately, the impacts of this winter go beyond low-income households,” he said.

Brad Holland, director of customer service for Minneegasco, said his company offers flexible payment plans and encourages customers to participate in energy conservation plans. Minneegasco is also working with the Salvation Army, asking their customers to donate money to the Heat Share program to assist people in greatest need.

Kim Rezek from the Department of Economic Security said her office has received one additional increase to appropriations from Congress, and three releases from the president’s emergency contingency fund to aid low-income households. Rezek’s office runs a federally funded block grant service that helps people in need to pay heating bills, awarding an average grant of $475.

Through the Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Rezek says the department plans to serve 18,000 additional households. The program, which currently runs on a first come, first serve basis, is being evaluated to consider prioritizing for the neediest.

After relatively mild winters due to El Nino and La Nina, weather experts have now predicted normal, or cold, winters for the next few years, commerce officials say. The forecast includes the entire country, as more than just the northern states have experienced colder weather this winter.

“The $2 to $3 (per thousand cubic feet that customers have been paying) in the past couple years has been undervalued,” said Marya White, from the energy division of the Commerce Department. Currently, natural gas is costing consumers $11.11 per thousand cubic feet, compared to $3.64 one year ago.

Rep. Bernie Lieder (DFL-Crookston) suggested the committee was not getting at the root of the issue at hand.

“We’re not addressing the rising price problem,” Lieder said. “We can’t just help people pay their bills if the cost is only going to rise.”

ENVIRONMENT

DNR a winner in lottery

Last year, the Legislature granted the Department of Natural Resources a new funding source in the form of the 6.5 percent in-lieu sales tax on lottery tickets. Previously, this money went to the general fund.

Targeted for natural resources programs, one-half goes to the Heritage Fund, which includes fisheries and wildlife, and the other one-half to the Natural Resources Fund, which includes parks, trails, and zoos.

“We gave the DNR great discretion in the use of these funds,” said Rep. Mark Holsten (R-Stillwater), chair of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee. The fund budget for fiscal year 2001 is nearly $25.5 million.

DNR Deputy Commissioner Steve Morse presented a budget allocation report for the program to committee Jan. 24.

The agency developed a spending plan after meeting with employees, stakeholders, and lawmakers. It covers a wide range of projects.

The $12.7 million allotment for the Natural Resources Fund was divided between state and metropolitan parks and trails. It was earmarked for a broad spectrum of services from park operations to environmental education.

Of the $12.7 million in the Heritage Fund, fisheries received $4.8 million, of which almost one-half was designated for the acquisition of parcels to complete aquatic management areas and provide access to trout streams.

An equivalent amount of the Heritage Fund went to wildlife, about one-half of which, $2.55 million, was used to acquire wildlife management areas. The remaining $2.2 million was designated for habitat development, restoration, and conservation.

Ecological services received $1 million, which has been designated for such projects as river and floodplain restoration and dam modification.

Enforcement received $1.7 million. Much of that will go for equipping and training conservation officers.

Committee members voiced a number of concerns about staffing. In particular, they challenged Morse to be more aggressive in recruiting women and minorities.

“The record of the department is dismal,” said Rep. Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul). “The agency has to get these people on board.”

Morse said diversity was a goal, but the department was having difficulties attracting minorities.

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) said the DNR should have “no trouble whatsoever” recruiting women with college degrees at the salary range they offer.

GAMBLING

Big bucks bet in 2000

Gambling remains a highly lucrative industry in the state, according to the director of the Minnesota State Lottery.

George Andersen told the House Government Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee Jan. 22 that last year was the most profitable yet, bringing in more than $397 million in revenue. The lottery began in 1990.

By comparison $1.5 billion was bet at charitable gambling venues in 2000 with $73 million wagered on horse racing at Canterbury Park. Andersen said the state estimates there was about $1 billion spent on illegal gambling activities in Minnesota, primarily organized sports betting.

Andersen said he expects lottery revenues to decrease over the next year due to rising gas prices. He said many sales are made at gas stations where patrons use change leftover
from their purchase of gas to buy a lottery ticket.

Retailers of lottery tickets made more than $27.1 million in 2000, an average of $8,336 per outlet. Retailers earn 5.5 cents for every dollar in lottery products they sell. They also collect 1 percent of each winning ticket redeemed at their location.

Andersen said the agency estimates it loses more than $5 million in sales annually because the state does not allow holiday-related games. He said Minnesota is the only state among the 37 that have lotteries to impose this restriction due to concerns with using religious-related imagery in its games.

He said the largest amount of revenue goes to paying out prizes — $241 million in 2000 and $2.2 billion since the lottery began. The net proceeds from lottery sales are divided between the state’s general fund and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, amounting to more than $590 million and $255 million respectively during the past decade.

Since its inception, the lottery has also allocated more than $11.5 million to the Department of Human Services for problem gambling programs. Andersen said a 1996 University of Minnesota study showed that very few compulsive gamblers in treatment named the lottery as their preferred form of gambling.

**GAME & FISH**

**Overlimit penalties proposed**

Legislators are considering a bill that would provide criminal penalties for people who “grossly” violate existing limits on fish and game. The bill designates the severity of the offense based on the monetary restitution value of the overhunted or overfished game, a dollar amount meant to reimburse the state for the loss of wildlife.

In its current form, HF94 establishes a felony penalty for taking animals with a restitution value of $5,000 or more. Any lesser violation of $5,000 or more. Any lesser felony penalty for taking animals with a restitution value of $5,000 or more. Any lesser crime value of $5,000 or more. Any lesser crime value.

For example, a person found taking three deer over the limit would be arrested, immediately have their game and fish licenses suspended, and conservation officers would seize their equipment and vehicles. A conviction would lead to a $1,500 fine and the revocation of all fishing and game licenses for five years. It would also be considered a gross misdemeanor, which is punishable by up to one year in jail and a $3,000 fine.

Currently, the maximum penalty for overlimit violations is $700, a fee often paid on the spot by violators. According to Haas, many violators resume fishing almost immediately.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester) expressed his concern that tourism could suffer if out-of-state hunters and anglers got the message that Minnesota strictly enforced limit laws already in effect. "Maybe this is too harsh," he said.

Rep. Dale Walz (R-Brainerd) disagreed, saying that responsible, desirable tourism would benefit from the protection the bill would help enforce. "I don't think this will deter tourism, it will protect it," he said.

Haas added "all the major sporting group in the state are behind this."

The bill remains in the Crime Prevention committee in part to allow its supporters more time to clarify the powers granted to conservation officers who discover violators.

**Tight hold on the billfold**

In an effort to caution state agencies of hopes for a high budget, State Government Finance Committee Chair Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview) presented a fiscal appropriations bill (HF218) much earlier in the session than the bill has ever appeared previously.

Typically a finance committee hears proposals from state agencies over the course of the session and compiles them into one omnibus spending bill.

Krinkie's bill appropriates $135 million less than the governor's recommendations. Gov. Jesse Ventura's budget proposes to spend $791 million, compared to the bill's $656 million.

"We are going to learn, once again, that Chair Krinkie is much more fiscally conservative than the governor," Krinkie said at the Jan. 25 committee meeting.

The committee took no action on the bill. Krinkie has chaired the committee since 1999 and served on it two years prior to that. He said there has always been confusion in regard to operating objectives.

"I wanted to lay before the committee a starting point for the level (a state) agency is funded," and prompt more ongoing evaluation of increased spending needs in areas such as salary, health care, and rent, he said in an interview.

Krinkie said he wants the bill to "show that the governor is proposing substantial increases, and give a side-by-side comparison" to show differences between the two. Krinkie's "starting point" is tremendously less than the governor's projections for several state agencies.

Funding for the Office of Technology in Krinkie's bill, for instance, falls more than $28 million behind the governor's budget.

Spending for the Department of Administration, under the bill's proposal would be $39 million less than Ventura's plan.

Few of the bill's recommendations appear higher than the governor's and total less than $1 million.

Another of his intentions with the bill, Krinkie said, is to forewarn members that what the committee did not fund in 1999, it will still not fund. "There is going to be greater scrutiny on agencies that have been examined closely before," he said.

State agencies will have a bigger challenge presenting their budget requests since HF218 already establishes different priorities than the governor's proposal.

"The reason for early introduction of (HF)218 is to lay down budget principles," he said.

**HEALTH**

**Home health care**

The growth in home health care is giving headaches to the agencies that regulate it.

"It is ironic that when we have a trend toward use of more home-based services almost all our dollars are committed to nursing home regulations," said Linda Sutherland, director of the Facility and Provider Compliance Division of the Minnesota Department of Health.

Speaking before the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee Jan. 23, Sutherland said if it was up to her to decide how federal funding was allocated, she would spend less on regulating nursing homes and more on home health care.

Other officials agreed that while complaints about home care are growing in number, the resources to address them are very limited.

Most of the growing pains in home health care relate directly to staff shortages. It's not unusual for personal care assistants to show up late, and sometimes not at all, leaving vulnerable people to fend for themselves, according to Sutherland.
“Work force issues pervade all the problems in health care,” she said.

A health care staffing crisis has led employers to hire people they would not have considered in the past, said Jerry Kerber, director of licensing for the state Department of Human Services. The agency does background checks on people who provide direct personal care; it has disqualified people at increasing rates over the past nine years.

In addition to complaints to agencies, individuals who have concerns about publicly licensed and regulated programs can turn to a state ombudsman for help.

An ombudsman will teach individuals about their rights and help them to advocate on their own behalf, said Sharon Zoesch, from the office of Ombudsman for Older Minnesotans. She said that 83 percent of complaints reported to her office are successfully resolved.

“We focus on real people with real lives,” said Roberta Ophein, ombudsman for mental health and mental retardation. She emphasized that her staff try to resolve issues before they become candidates for regulatory agencies.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Students may pay more

Gov. Jesse Ventura’s commitment to higher education is in question by members of the House Higher Education Finance Committee.

At its Jan. 24 meeting, the committee members took turns questioning Ventura’s proposal for post-secondary institutions.

The unpleasantness centered around proposed allocations for the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities — $40 million to each in the form of faculty and staff compensation.

The amounts equal two-thirds of the total compensation increase. The remaining one-third is scheduled to come from tuition increases. State Budget Director Peggy Ingison said traditionally the state pays for two-thirds of instruction costs, with the rest coming from tuition.

Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) said this proposal “looks like a passing of the buck to students.” He said the only way post-secondary institutions may be able to meet their needs are through tuition increases or layoffs.

Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr. (DFL-Winona) said students at Winona State University were already facing a 7 percent tuition hike for next year, but now that number is expected to be 15 percent. “My assumption is it may be more at other campuses. This is not unfortunate, it is tragic.”

Ingison reminded members that Ventura’s other tax cuts will put money back in families’ pockets so they can do what is best for them.

At least one legislator was a bit more optimistic. Rep. Steve Dehler (R-St. Joseph) said he thinks the Legislature will ultimately end up passing a good higher education bill. “I’m thrilled at the adventure ahead of us.”

Ventura’s higher education budget proposal is 4.8 percent ($126 million) higher than fiscal year 2000-01. The recommendation includes a net increase in $99.2 million in new initiatives. The increase to the University of Minnesota is $49 million more than last biennium, $41 million more to MnSCU, and $10 million more to the Higher Education Services Office.

Stewart McMullan, executive budget officer, said higher education institutions requested $519 million in funding, 19.3 percent more than the previous biennium.

Among the highlights of the governor’s plan are $8 million to the University of Minnesota to stabilize core funding at its medical school, $7 million from the Workforce Development Fund to MnSCU to create regional programs that address critical workforce needs in each region, and new spending of more than $30 million for financial aid.

The governor also included $68.3 million for the University of Minnesota, and $86.4 million for MnSCU, in his bonding proposal, primarily for building maintenance.

Operating cost help

The University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities will soon be seeking funds for operational costs.

But private college officials are urging legislators to not focus solely on public institutions.

Before the House Higher Education Finance Committee Jan. 19, David Laird, president of the Minnesota Private College Council, spoke about policy concerns and issues regarding higher education in general.

“There is no better investment return anywhere in society than a college degree,” he said, adding Minnesota needs strong, diverse, and adaptive educational institutions to maintain its competitive edge in the economy.

Using numbers from the Minnesota Department of Economic Security, Laird noted that state employment is expected to increase by more than 400,000 jobs through 2016, with 59 percent of those positions expected to be in occupations requiring at least a college degree.

Laird said he spent a little time addressing the value Minnesotans receive from private colleges: an average of 60 percent of students remain in Minnesota after graduation (including 80 percent in 1999), private colleges and universities employ more than 10,000 people, and taxpayers save $200 million when undergraduate state students attend private colleges instead of public universities.

However, he urged the 2001 Legislature to consider three ways to ensure greater investments in higher education, both public and private, to bring maximum returns.

Raising the ire of at least one member was a recommendation to “double the direct investment in Minnesota students by increasing to 20 percent the share of state funding that flows to them through the Minnesota State Grant Program,” Laird said.

Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley), committee chair, said she was “troubled that the state private colleges are asking the state to double the state grant fund when it would be at the expense of public education.”

Laird’s other two recommendations were: that the state increase funding to $5 million annually for a program that helps prepare middle and high school students for college, particularly for those from low-income families with parents who did not attend a post-secondary institution; and develop fair and equitable indicators of all colleges and universities in the state, and use that information to direct state subsidies in the most appropriate way.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Pay for protection

Getting a day job in the city of Mahtomedi might be a bit more attractive to potential paramedic candidates under a bill heard by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Jan. 24.

The bill (HF172), sponsored by Rep. Harry Mares (R-White Bear Lake), gives the city the authority to provide housing assistance for volunteer firefighters with paramedic credentials.

Mares said the legislation is necessary because of a precedent established by a 1952 opinion from the state attorney general. The 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.

City Administrator Jon Hohenstein said Mahtomedi has had a difficult time finding volunteer firefighters because most of the department’s members work outside the community during the day and there is a small employer base from which to recruit other daytime volunteers.

Todd Rogers, the city’s fire chief, said the bill would give the city one potential solution to a larger problem.

“If the program is successful, it would be another tool of recruitment,” he said.
The city council recently approved a $390 a month stipend to new recruits who agree to work dayshifts, along with making themselves available on other days.

Remi Stone, from the League of Minnesota Cities, said the league has heard from at least six other cities — including Balaton, Excelsior, Roseville, Shoreview, and St. Cloud — with a similar problem. She said those cities have expressed interest in what is being proposed in the bill to address their own public safety employee shortages.

The league is now researching the issues of expanding the idea statewide.

Mares said he has sought a new opinion from the attorney general that may mean the bill is not even necessary and the city may proceed without legislation.

The committee took no action on the bill but Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Hastings), the committee chair, said further hearings on the matter would occur once the attorney general’s office has issued its opinion and the League of Minnesota Cities has determined the statewide benefits of a similar bill.

**RECREATION**

Expansion of trails

With almost 17,000 miles of snowmobile trails, Minnesota has one of the largest systems in the country. Now, advocates of other off-highway vehicles (OHVs) would like the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop similar trail systems for their use.

The status of trail development and funding for the vehicles in Minnesota’s forests was addressed at the Jan. 22 meeting of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

The vehicles under discussion include all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), 4X4 trucks, and off-highway motorcycles.

“IT will be an ongoing challenge to keep user conflicts to a low level,” said Dennis Asmussen, director of trails and waterways for the DNR.

“There are increasing opportunities for users to irritate each other.”

The planning process for off-highway vehicle trails is underway and involves four points, he told the committee:

• Prevention of environmental damage;
• Enforcement of rules;
• Paying attention to non-motorized needs; and
• Off-trail riding.

Stakeholders from user groups agreed on the importance of these guidelines.

“We have recognized and advocated for some time that ATV use needs to be registered and managed similar to snowmobiles,” said Sonia Bartz, president of the All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota. She said the effort to designate all-terrain vehicle trails in the state has “not been painless,” but the group has tried to honor the process.

Rep. Margaret Anderson-Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) asked about education and safety training programs. Bartz said safety is important to the group and they intend to focus on it after the trails are established.

Don Youngdahl, legislative chair of the Amateur Riders Motorcycle Association, pointed out that about 90 percent of the trails they want to use for off-highway vehicles already exist and need mostly signage, rerouting, and maintenance.

The economic impact on Minnesota’s economy from the building and use of off-road vehicles was a common theme of discussion.

Doug Franzer of the Minnesota United Snowmobilers’ Association said the Department of Tourism estimates the economic impact of snowmobiling on the state’s economy at $148 million.

Mitchell Johnson, ATV division manager of Polaris, said his Minnesota company employs 3,500 people and had $1.3 billion in sales in 1999. He said their ATV business is three times that of their snowmobile business.

Not everyone wants to see such a trail system built. Gene Larimore, speaking for the Minnesotans for Responsible Recreation, told the committee his group believes off-highway vehicle use violates two principles of state land use: to protect the resource and minimize conflict among users of public land. The group wants an environmental assessment done before any such trails are built.

**TAXES**

Checks in the mail?

As has been the case the past two years, many Minnesotans could receive a check from the Department of Revenue this year in the form of a sales tax rebate as provided in two separate bills heard by the House Taxes Committee Jan. 24.

Rep. Dale Walz (R-Brainerd) said his bill (HF2) would fulfill a promise to the taxpayers of the state.

“It is very important to rebate the money back to the people who paid it in,” Walz said. “Families could use the rebate for home repairs, vacations, or unfortunately as may be the case, catching up on overdue fuel heating bills.”

The bill is similar to legislation passed in 1999 and 2000 providing for an automatic rebate in which eligible recipients are not required to file any forms to receive a check.

The bill would provide for a sales tax based rebate totaling $924.5 million. Residents who were not claimed as dependents and who filed a 1999 Minnesota tax return would be eligible as would Minnesota residents at least 18 years old who received social security income.

Current law already designates the money to a rebate, but the Legislature must determine the basis for the rebate.

As with last year’s rebate, dependents with at least $1 of income tax liability would receive a rebate equal to 35 percent of the amount for single filers.

Under Walz’s bill the maximum rebate amount would be $3,400 for joint filers and $1,700 for single filers. The minimum would be $240 for married couples and $136 for single filers.

The committee chair, Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) presented a similar bill (HF48). Abrams said his bill addresses a couple of issues that came up in the state’s first two sales tax rebates.

One issue is that individuals or married couples who received social security or public pension benefits are eligible for a rebate of $136 individually. But those same people may also be eligible for a rebate based on whether they filed a Minnesota income tax return in 1999. The bill specifies in that instance the recipient receives the larger of the two amounts.

The committee took no action on either bill.
but Abrams said both will be considered for inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Provider tax may be axed

For the past few sessions several bills have been introduced reducing, reforming, or repealing the health care provider tax. But because the tax helps fund the insurance program for lower income Minnesotans, lawmakers have not been able to agree on how to deal with it.

So perhaps it was a symbolic sign of some kind that something is different this year when the fire alarm sounded during the House Taxes Committee hearing Jan. 23, providing a brief interruption in testimony from a variety of groups supporting a bill that would eliminate the tax.

Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester), sponsor of the measure (HF14) said efforts to eliminate the tax have received "enthusiastic support from members on both sides," and he said his bill attempts to address concerns raised in the past.

Bradley said the bill would credit one-time and ongoing tobacco settlement payments to the health care access fund and eliminate the provider tax and premium tax on nonprofit health plan companies. The bill would require health care providers to lower rates reflective of the savings resulting from the elimination of the taxes and document their compliance with the rate reduction requirement.

"This is a desire to get rid of a regressive and very unpopular tax," Bradley said.

The bill requires the commissioner of the Department of Revenue to set the provider tax rates beginning in 2002 based on Department of Finance budget estimates regarding the balance of the health care access fund. If there is no deficit forecast, no taxes would be imposed under the measure. If a deficit is predicted, the commissioner would determine the rate by reinstating the tax in one-quarter of 1 percent increments up to 2 percent.

Currently the provider tax rate is set at 1.5 percent and is scheduled to increase to 2 percent starting Jan. 1, 2002 if no changes in the law take place.

Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul) offered an amendment, supported by Bradley, clarifying the reporting and enforcement requirements to make sure the tax reduction ultimately means lower rates for consumers. The amendment was adopted but no further action was taken on the bill.

Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), committee chair, said the bill would be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Special vote for new taxes

Raising taxes would require a supermajority vote of the Legislature under a bill approved by the House Taxes Committee Jan. 24.

HF12, sponsored by Rep. Eric Lipman (R-Lake Elmo), proposes a constitutional amendment asking voters if a three-fifths vote in each house of the Legislature should be required on bills that would increase the state income, sales, and property taxes, as well as state fees and surcharges.

"The Taxpayer’s Protection Act does not solve all problems in state government," Lipman said. "It is a needed improvement and it is not a radical change…. It is a modest reform and a needed reform."

Lipman said the bill would impose a similar restriction on the Legislature’s ability to raise taxes as is already in place with its ability to pass legislation that incurs debt. A three-fifths vote is required on bonding bills.

Similar supermajority requirements are already required in 12 states with eight of those states requiring an even tougher standard, a two-thirds or a three-fourths vote.

Lipman said the bill would limit the state’s power to tax family budgets and help ensure that tax increases are only used as a last resort.

Under the proposal, voters would decide on the constitutional amendment in the 2002 general election.

Tom Pritchard, the president of the Minnesota Family Council, said the group supports the bill because it reduces family budgetary burdens.

"Families are ultimately the ones who pay taxes," Pritchard said.

Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul) said the bill was "anti-democracy" because it allows a minority vote to ultimately decide the issue if it receives less than 60 percent approval, thereby killing the bill. He said that states that impose the supermajority requirement such as California have seen a decline in the quality of their schools.

"I don’t think it’s necessary. We’ve spent the past five or six years cutting taxes," Dawkins said. Rep. Michelle Rifenberg (R-La Crescent) said she supported the measure because it addresses an “important point — whose money is it, the government’s or the taxpayers?”

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

TRANSPORTATION

Improving bus safety

Minnesota may soon add to the list of offenses that prevent some convicts from being allowed to drive school buses.

The House Transportation Policy Committee forwarded a bill to the House floor Jan. 23 that would bar those convicted of certain offenses from obtaining the endorsement necessary to drive. The crimes would include illegal use of minors in sexual performance, possession of child pornography, and the dissemination and display of harmful material to minors.

Representatives approved the increased restrictions following testimony from Chaska Police Chief Scott Knight that his department had arrested a school bus driver who had illegally obtained official permission to drive. According to Knight, the driver altered his name slightly while making a job application, so state employees did not discover his criminal record, which included a prior conviction of child molestation. "He didn’t even change his birth date," Knight said.

Dennis Lazenberry, pupil transportation safety director at the state Department of Public Safety, told the committee his department conducts state-mandated background checks on all applicants. He conceded the applicant had eluded detection by simply modifying his name.

The department currently relies on fingerprinting to discover convicted applicants who alter their names, but only those applicants who moved to Minnesota within the previous five years have been fingerprinted. The technique allows the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to better search applicants’ criminal histories for disqualifying convictions in other states.

Rep. Dan Larson (DFL-Bloomington) expressed his disapproval of a system that he sees as allowing inappropriate applicants to win endorsements.

"We depend on the state to conduct background checks. It’s a false sense of security," he said, promising to examine the possibility of mandating fingerprinting for all new applicants. The department currently fingerprints under its own policy; doing so is not required under state law.

Where to find information

House Public Information Office
175 State Office Building
(651) 296-2146 or 1-800-657-3550
The House Public Information Office is a nonpartisan office that provides committee meeting schedules; legislator information; and publications, including the Session Weekly news magazine, educational brochures for all ages, and member directories. All information is available at no charge.

Most of what this office publishes can be viewed on the Legislature’s World Wide Web page. To connect, point your web browser at: http://www.leg.state.mn.us
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- A 13 percent increase in criminal justice dollars, including $27 million for CriMNet, a system that shares criminal information between state and local jurisdictions;
- $13.8 million to provide health care coverage to more low-income children by simplifying health care programs in the General Fund and Health Care Access Fund;
- $489 million for K-12 education, a 4.4 percent increase, including $10 million for teacher recruitment strategies, and $15 million for schools and districts that try alternative approaches to compensating teachers, focusing more on performance than on seniority;
- A 4.8 percent increase ($126 million) in higher education funding, including $14 million to increase financial aid for low income independent, non-traditional, and part-time students, $11 million to increase the period someone is eligible for the State Grant program, and $8 million to stabilize core funding for the University of Minnesota Medical School;
- $95 million for transportation, including $33.1 million for public transit assistance in 64 Greater Minnesota counties.

Other proposed spending could be categorized as “taking from Paul to give to Peter.”

“My budget redirects $73 million from nursing homes into an $82 million initiative to expand community-based health care services,” Ventura said. “By creating incentives for nursing facility downsizing, more options will be available to help our elderly remain in their homes or live independently.”

However, according to Wheelock’s presentation, many of those allocations will not be available until fiscal year 2003 because they already received extra funding from the 2000 Legislature for the current fiscal year.

That’s because the Legislature didn’t heed the governor’s request for no additional funding during the previous session, Wheelock said, and he built that into his budget proposal.

Ventura finished his Jan. 23 presentation with a challenge to lawmakers.

“I am recommending a capital budget this year because I believe the Legislature can get both the capital and operating budgets done in one session.”

In submitting a $504 million capital budget, the governor said his goal is to eliminate next year’s legislative session.

He warned legislators if they send a capital budget to his office at the end of session, but don’t adjourn sine die, they will risk a veto of the entire package.

During Ways and Means committee discussion of the governor’s budget, Wheelock emphasized the governor’s goals of keeping spending down.

However, members questioned the veracity of some numbers within the presentation and accused the governor or using accounting tricks to make his budget appear as if it didn’t significantly increase state spending.

For example, House Speaker Steve Sviggum asked Wheelock to address the governor’s contention that the Legislature increased spending by 16 percent in the previous biennium and whether it is fair to compare that figure with the governor’s proposed spending increase of 5.4 percent.

“You know that I am mostly supportive of the governor’s budget,” Sviggum said. “But I’m also sensitive to the fact that the governor said we (the Legislature) increased spending by 16 percent in the last biennium. ... Let’s compare apples to apples.”

Wheelock said the previous spending increase by the Legislature was probably closer to 13 percent, though officials contend that does not hold with how the governor’s recommendations and Legislature’s actions were compared historically.

During the presentation, Wheelock outlined several other areas that will benefit from the budget, including using various other state funds and endowments, such as tobacco settlement payments.

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), chair of the committee, said the governor should include those funds as state spending and use proper terms to compare how his recommendations have increased over the previous biennium.

Bishop then told Wheelock to admonish the governor to use the proper numbers. He said he thinks the public perceives all spending to come from the general fund, when that is only a part of the numerous funds in the state coffers.

“I think that was misleading and a hit at the Legislature,” Bishop said.

However, Bishop concluded by saying that the budget does reflect a lot of hard work on behalf of the executive branch.

Ventura’s budget priorities emphasized helping Minnesota compete with other states and nationally. But Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) said it’s important to not curtail the power of service-related businesses, which made significant contributions to the economic boon Minnesota has experienced in recent years.

“What we’ll be looking for are unintended consequences of this proposal,” she said. “By suddenly shifting the costs to those (service-related) firms, we immediately shut them down.”
‘One session, one budget’
Legislators wrestle with Ventura’s capital investment plan in what’s typically a non-bonding year

BY MARY KAY WATSON

Gov. Jesse Ventura presented his 2002 capital budget in 2001, with the caveat to lawmakers that his approval of any capital bonding this year is contingent on their agreement to hold a single session each biennium instead of meeting annually.

“This budget is based 100 percent on (Ventura’s) initiative of ‘one session—one budget,’” Lee Mehrkens, capital budget coordinator for the Department of Finance, told the House Capital Investment Committee Jan. 23.

In keeping with the proposal made in his State-of-the-State address, the governor presented a $576 million capital bonding plan in a year that would typically see only a small budget for bonding.

In the past, the governor presented the biennial operating budget in odd years and the capital bonding budget in even years.

In 2000, Ventura’s strategic capital budget plan was for $462 million, of which $401 million was to come from general obligation bonds.

In 1999, a non-bonding year, the Legislature approved about $150 million in new projects, and in both 1997 and 1995, bonding for projects was less than $100 million.

This year, of the $576 million recommendation, $504 million would come from general obligation bonds. Other funding sources include $2 million from the general fund, $27 million from the trunk highway fund, $8 million from the solid waste fund, and $35 million from user-financed bonds.

State bonding is intended for major construction projects, such as for highways and buildings, particularly state university and college facilities.

The governor’s bonding proposal for this year hinges on his conviction that “the state should adequately maintain its current buildings before adding new ones.”

The underlying principles of this plan are preservation of state assets and facilities.

“The governor’s budget focuses on the three R’s,” Mehrkens summed up. “Repair, renovation, and replacement.”

Over time, repairs to state-owned property have fallen well behind what is needed. Commonly referred to as the “capital iceberg,” this deferred maintenance backlog is estimated at more than $1.5 billion by the Department of Administration.

In keeping with his view of government’s role as a steward of public assets, Ventura has proposed a capital budget that allocates $365.3 million, about 60 percent of the total, to asset preservation and replacement projects.

“The idea is to fix up what we’ve got and make it more workable,” Mehrkens said.

The remaining 40 percent of the capital budget, $210.7 million, would be committed to strategic investments consistent with what the governor calls his “Big Plan.” Several of these projects take advantage of federal funding opportunities.

Transportation
The largest single allocation is for $115 million for the state’s share of the Northstar Commuter Rail line between St. Cloud and downtown Minneapolis. With the federal appropriation for this project due to expire in September 2002, “time is of the essence” to approve this funding, according to Mehrkens.

Of the $115 million, $7 million would be available immediately, with the remainder available only when federal funding is in place.

The proposed Northstar project would use existing rail corridors for an 80-mile, 12-station commuter rail line that would act as a link in the governor’s vision of a multi-modal transportation system for Minnesota.

Other transportation-related projects include $37.2 million for the repair, renovation, or replacement of three state transportation buildings and $30 million for repair and replacement of local bridges.

Education
Higher education accounts for $154.7 million of the governor’s capital budget. Included in this amount are the following:

• $75 million to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) for safety and statutory compliance, repairs, and mechanical improvements on its 53 campuses;
• $50 million for health and safety improvements, improved access, and infrastructure repairs at University of Minnesota campuses;
• $18.3 million for upgrades to U of M plant growth facilities and science lab design for the Duluth campus; and
• $11.4 million for the remodeling of science labs and buildings on MnSCU campuses.

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Playing by what rules?

Bill seeks to clarify ethics laws for constitutional officers, including the governor, as state employees

BY DAVID MAEDA

A cynic might say that the words “ethics” and “government official” are not often found in the same sentence.

But the state’s code of ethics for its government employees dates back to 1959. And now lawmakers are grappling with the question of whether Gov. Jesse Ventura should be able to referee wrestling matches or do color commentary for football games while in office or if taking such outside employment opportunities violates the code of ethics.

The issue was before the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee Jan. 19 as members heard a bill that would prohibit Ventura, and five others, from holding outside jobs.

The committee did not vote on the measure but will continue taking testimony and discussing it.

Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview), the sponsor of HF111, said he believes the governor is already bound by the existing ethics code for state employees, but the bill would clarify that the six constitutional officers (governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state auditor, state treasurer, and attorney general) are indeed state employees.

“I’m not here to try to prohibit or eliminate the potential earning income of any citizen in the state of Minnesota,” Krinkie said.

“When you take the oath of office to be a legislator or to be a constitutional officer of this state you do indeed give up certain opportunities that we all might have.”

Alan Gilbert, an attorney from the state Attorney General’s Office, said he issued two opinions, one in January 1999 and the other last November, stating the governor is governed by the state employee code of ethics. Gilbert said Ventura’s acceptance of a position with the new Xtreme Football League may therefore be a conflict of interest.

According to a report published by the Department of Employee Relations in 1987, the Civil Service Board developed the original code of ethics for classified state employees in 1959.

The 1961 Legislature then required each state agency to develop its own code for its employees; as most agencies merely adopted the already existing code.

In 1973 the Civil Service Board was abolished, and a year later the Legislature repealed the law requiring state agencies to develop their own code of ethics. This left the state without any code in place. In 1975 the commissioner of personnel was required to develop a new set of standards through the rulemaking process.

In 1981 the bulk of the current laws governing state employee ethics was passed by the Legislature. That law covers all executive branch employees.

Rep. Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul), a co-sponsor of HF111 and the chief author of a similar bill last year, said the issue is broader than just the current governor.

“Imagine if the secretary of state went into the business of selling election equipment, or the recycling of used chads, or other issues involving elections, and argued that when he or she was doing that, they were doing it in their spare time,” Entenza said. “I think we would be concerned about that, and be concerned that a constitutional officer was not focusing on her primary duty of upholding the election laws of this state.”

Entenza said in his research for the bill he came across no instances of a governor seeking outside employment.

Krinkie’s bill includes “constitutional officer” as part of the definition for employee for the purposes of the state employee code of ethics.

Further, it stipulates the attorney general would be responsible for determining whether a constitutional officer is violating conflict of interests laws, and the governor would be charged with determining conflict of interest charges against the attorney general. Currently the commissioner of the Department of Employee Relations makes the determination on all constitutional officers.

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Bovey) expressed concern with allowing the attorney general and governor to make the conflict of interest determinations against the other officer. He said this may lead to unnecessary political fighting.

Rep. Mark Gleason (DFL-Richfield) said even though legislators are part-time employees, as opposed to the full-time position of governor, he was wary of passing law that holds the chief officer of the state to a different standard than legislators.

“I’m very mindful of my own situation,” said Gleason, who is a practicing accountant. “I’m very concerned about holding the governor to a standard where a conflict of interest for him is a violation of the law but I can still personally do all the things I’m not letting the governor do.”

Former representative Marc Asch, now the director of Common Cause Minnesota, a citizen’s lobbying group, said the governor knew while running for office he would have to give up some of his citizen rights if elected.

“As someone from the private sector who holds a responsible position, I am appalled at the assumption that a CEO would not owe his full faith and effort to the entity that was employing him,” Asch said.

Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount) took exception to some of Asch’s remarks.

“If you’re saying he’s doing something different than what he campaigned on, that’s not true. He campaigned on the fact that he was not a career politician, and if he is forced to give up his entertainment career then he becomes a career politician,” Ozment said.

If you have Internet access, visit the Legislature’s web page at: http://www.leg.state.mn.us
Liquor limitations

Keg registration plan gathers momentum with legislative, teenage support

By Jonas M. Walker

The situation is all too common, according to law enforcement officials. Officers receive a report of a loud party, or come across a large group of young people gathered in a warehouse or field. In moments, the teenagers scatter, leaving plastic cups strewn about, a beer keg half-empty, and no clue as to who is responsible.

Representatives are considering a bill that would require liquor stores to number all kegs so they can be individually identified. The bill (HF58) would require liquor stores to record the name, address, and driver’s license number or social security number of the person making the purchase.

That information, in addition to the date and time of purchase and the keg identification number, would be recorded and kept by the liquor store for at least 90 days. The identities of purchasers would be made available upon request by law enforcement officials.

Proponents of the bill say keg registration will assist in the tracking and prosecution of adults who provide beer to underage drinkers.

Rep. Mary Jo McGuire (DFL-Falcon Heights) is sponsoring the bill and, at a Jan. 24 House Civil Law Committee hearing, described the legislation as “our attempt to link that specific keg to that specific (purchaser) in order to hold that person responsible for providing alcohol to minors.”

The committee plans to hold further hearings on the bill.

McGuire said she was approached by students who wanted her to sponsor the bill.

She was joined by Rep. Steve Dehler (R-St. Joseph), who began his testimony by emphasizing the bipartisan support for the initiative.

McGuire and Dehler were joined by two Irondale High School students who support the bill.

Anna Gregg said it “will help parents think twice before providing alcohol” to their underage children. Brandon Keller affirmed Gregg’s remarks, conveying the issue’s importance to people his age. “I see firsthand the effects of underage drinking. It is a problem costs only 30 cents. She added that “we have studies showing that the higher the cost of the beverage, the less (underage people) will drink.” Under the proposed law, underage drinkers would be forced to illicitly procure alcohol by more expensive anonymous means, such as purchasing canned beer.

That economic disincentive could have far-reaching effects, say plan proponents. For example, the new law could help alleviate the state’s drunken driving problem. According to figures provided by Reilly, incidents of drunken driving decreased 32 percent in Massachusetts following that state’s adoption of a similar law.

Dehler said he could speak from the retailer’s perspective, given his job as a grocer. He mentioned that he may eventually amend the bill to make retailers less liable for the crime of underage alcohol possession. Currently, he explained, “liability follows the purchaser.” That is, liquor stores now break the law only if they illegally provide alcohol to minors.

The bill provides for no additional punitive action against liquor stores. Dehler explained that existing criminal laws provide for punishment of those liquor stores that knowingly violate laws against selling liquor to those under 21. The bill explicitly protects liquor stores from litigation as long as they “reasonably and in good faith rely upon the identification provided by the purchaser of a beer keg.”

Legislators raised a number of concerns regarding the specific language of the bill.

Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls) objected to the inclusion of social security numbers as acceptable forms of identification for those purchasing liquor.

“There are some federal restrictions on the use of social security numbers,” he said. He went on to argue the numbers are easily forged, and they cannot be relied upon as a secure means of identifying liquor purchases.

Wishing to help the authors avoid unintended consequences, Skoglund also suggested that Dehler and McGuire amend a section of HF58 that would bar the possession of an unregistered keg by any “person other than a wholesaler or retailer licensed or authorized…” to sell malt liquor.

There is no penalty for such possession written into the bill.

He gestured to a keg the students had hauled into the committee meeting as a prop. “I would hate for someone to get into trouble for having that one,” he said. 

Student Youth Coordinator for Mothers Against Drunk Driving Selena Reilly testifies before the House Civil Law Committee Jan. 24 in support of a bill that would prescribe standards for identification of beer kegs and require retailers to maintain records of beer keg sales. 

in the high schools,” he said.

The Minnesota chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving base their support for the bill on the same motivation: deterrence.

State MADD Youth Director Selena Reilly argued that tracking the movement of kegs would restrict a significant source of alcohol for underage drinkers. Kegs are an “easy way to provide lots of beer to lots of kids.”

McGuire pointed out MADD’s calculation that a typical 12-ounce cup of beer from a keg
Third time’s a charm
Evans brings concern to safe, strong schools back to Legislature for her third term representing District 52B

BY MARY KAY WATSON

From her first job out of college as an arts coordinator for the Hudson, Wis., school system, Geri Evans (DFL-New Brighton) has been passionately involved in education issues.

“Really love education,” said Evans, who received her bachelor’s degree in arts education from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn. “My training as an educator informs my whole life.”

It was like a graduate course.

Her life is also informed by the principle of voluntarism, for which her father was her role model. She got her first taste of volunteering in 1970 when she formed a tenant’s rights group to fight an illegal rent increase.

“My training as an educator informs my whole life.”

It was the beginning of my belief that you should do what you can to improve things in your community and to educate people about their rights,” she said.

Not surprisingly, education and voluntarism have come together often in Evans’ life: as the chair for the St. Anthony-New Brighton School Board, as president of the League of Women Voters of New Brighton, and as a board member for the Minnesota Alliance for Arts in Education, among others.

“It was in the League of Women Voters where I got my education in issues,” she said.

“I really love education. My training as an educator informs my whole life.

—Rep. Geri Evans

“I was in the League of Women Voters where I got my education in issues,” she said.

“It was like a graduate course.”

She achieved these notable positions through years of work behind the scenes on issues such as parks, child safety, and day care for mentally handicapped adults.

Her hard work has not gone unnoticed. Among the awards Evans has received are: the Minnesota Human Rights Award, the Advocate for Heart Award from the American Heart Association, the Channel 11 Volunteer Recognition Award for Community Service, the state Board of Government Innovation and Cooperation Service Reward, and the state Board of Education Leadership in Vocational Equity Award.

Now in her third non-consecutive term as a legislator from District 52B (she also won a seat in 1992 and 1996), Evans, the mother of two grown sons and a 37-year resident of New Brighton, plans to continue her support of the issues she has championed.

“I hope we’re beyond the rhetoric of ‘We just can’t keep pouring money down the rat hole of education,’” Evans said. “Education is an investment.”

She is especially concerned about healthy environments in schools. “I really care about safe schools,” she said.

Legislators should revisit the laws they’ve passed to see what has resulted from them, she said.

“If you care about something, you ought to be sure it’s still workable.”

This session Evans plans to return to the issue of indoor air quality she advocated in her second term, when children and teachers in an elementary school in her district were getting very sick from what was found to be mold in the ventilating system.

With a rueful smile, she acknowledged that she’d also like to revisit another issue — this one from her first term. It’s the one that made her famous, gender equity in restrooms, called the “potty parity” bill by her detractors. Men may have scoffed, but her successful effort to require public buildings of certain capacities to have equivalent restroom facilities for women and men made some women cheer.

In addition to education and air quality issues, Evans said she plans to focus on health care costs — especially prescription drugs — and property taxes, which she hears about frequently from her constituents.

She said she gets calls from people who say, “What are we going to do? We’re being taxed out of our home.”

The importance of lowering property taxes is one area where she agrees with the governor. On others she’s not as enthusiastic.

“I have deep concerns about education being 100 percent state funded,” she said.

Evans said she would prefer to see a balanced approach used in dealing with the budget surplus — one that would include some kind of rebate but that would also go toward meeting the needs she sees in education, health care, and transportation.

Regarding a rebate, Evans said, “I don’t hear much ‘Give me back all my money’ from my constituents. I hear a lot of ‘Couldn’t we pool this money and accomplish something big?’”

Evans said her committee assignments — Capital Investment, Government Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy, and State Government Finance — were not the ones she had hoped for, but she is enthusiastic about them.

Evans said she moved from volunteering to politics when she “realized there’s a larger picture here.” She has fond memories of the people she worked with as a volunteer and shows an undiminished enthusiasm for making a difference as a lawmaker.

“I really love education. My training as an educator informs my whole life.

—Rep. Geri Evans

DISTRICT 52B

1998 population (estimate): 33,707

Largest city: New Brighton

County: Ramsey

Location: northern St. Paul suburbs

Top concern: “Indoor air quality is one of my top priorities, particularly when it comes to schools. I am very concerned about safe facilities.”

—Rep. Geri Evans
‘Eye’ing the environment

Campaign to help clean up the Pig’s Eye dump site prompted successful run for the House

BY DAVID MAEDA

Looking into the future, Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul) envisions a quiet and serene park on the old St. Paul Pig’s Eye dump site, complete with walking trails and educational materials on how flood plains operate and what happens when a site becomes contaminated.

That anyone is even in a position to envision the potential rejuvenation of one of the state’s most contaminated areas is due in part to Johnson’s involvement in seeing that cleanup began on the dump.

And his successful lobbying efforts during the 2000 session helped prompt his successful run for the Legislature and taught him a valuable lesson in the process.

"Maintaining a positive attitude is important in how effective you are," Johnson said.

The 300 acre Pig’s Eye site is located approximately three miles southeast of downtown St. Paul. From 1956 to 1972 it served as an unofficial dumping ground for the city's garbage, junk, and other pollution. For the last 28 years tall grass has grown, covering all the leftover waste.

Johnson became involved in cleanup efforts in the early 1990s, volunteering to serve as a member of the Pig’s Eye Park Task Force. After finding out the site had served as a dump, he went to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and began to examine files on the polluted area.

The files showed that the site was contaminated with heavy metals, PCBs, and other toxic materials.

"It was leaching into Battle Creek and into Pig’s Eye Lake," Johnson said.

He and his neighbors were concerned that because the homes in the area have their own wells, there was potential for the residents' drinking water to become contaminated.

"The MPCA needed some impetus to tackle this project," Johnson said. "With all the other projects the case had to be made (for the Pig’s Eye site)."

He said that around 20 major environmental organizations became involved in "prodding" the MPCA to put the project near the top of the list of contaminated sites that needed cleaning up. For the past few years, Johnson worked with Sen. Randy Kelly (DFL-St. Paul) on legislation that would give priority to the Pig’s Eye site.

Last session a law was passed allowing responsible parties at Superfund sites to apply for 15 percent to 20 percent of entire cleanup costs resulting from contamination caused by individuals or businesses unable to pay for cleanup, or responsible parties that cannot be located. Before the law was changed, funding came as a reimbursement after the entire project was completed.

One of the first sites expected to benefit from the change is the Pig’s Eye Dump.

For Johnson, the experience was very gratifying and convinced him he should run for the House seat vacated by former Rep. Steve Trimble (DFL-St. Paul).

A lifetime Minnesotan, Johnson was born on a small dairy farm in Braham. He has a bachelor’s degree in social work from Bethel College and a master's degree in psychology from the University of St. Thomas.

Besides his involvement with several community organizations, ranging from the St. Paul District One Community Council to the Harding High School PTSA, Johnson brings to the Legislature 14 years of experience working in the area of corrections. He currently supervises the work release program at the Ramsey County Workhouse.

Johnson said his experience working with troubled juveniles should help him add perspective as a member of the House Crime Prevention Committee.

"I’ve found I’m good at working with people and effective in helping people make a better future," he said.

As a freshman member Johnson knows he will spend a lot of time listening and learning. He said his community activism has taught him the necessity of working collaboratively and collectively with others in order to get things done.

Indeed it was a collective family effort that helped him win his election. His wife and two teenage daughters played an integral role in his campaign.

“They were excited and they helped out quite a bit — from door knocking to phone call work to cleaning the house — they did whatever needed to be done," he said.

“I’ve found I’m good at working with people and effective in helping people make a better future,”

—Rep. Sheldon Johnson
Call her ‘Maxine’

Former teacher continues her education as a new representative from Greater Minnesota in St. Paul

BY DAVID MAEDA

Behind Rep. Maxine Penas’ (R-Badger) office desk in the State Office Building, rests a picture of her 18-month-old grandchild sitting atop a big lustrous Victory motorcycle posed to rev it up and take off.

With the juxtaposition between family and adventure, and its prominent display spot in her office, the snapshot gives visitors a sense of the new lawmaker’s priorities and a glimpse of her down-to-earth sense of humor.

Judging her by her mild-mannered grandmotherly appearance, you’d probably never guess that one of Penas’ favorite hobbies is riding a motorcycle.

Penas and her husband Albert, an engineer at Polaris Industries, began riding the company’s distinctive motorcycles a couple years back. But despite her enjoyment of the hobby, she said that last fall she had to learn to use the bike sparingly during her campaign.

“I got some pretty weird looks when I’d pull up at my age in a leather jacket,” she said.

Now retired, Penas said her 31 years of teaching remain the single most inspirational part of her life.

“My students, to my dying day, will be the highlight of my life. Their enthusiasm. Their energy. They keep you on your toes. I enjoyed them immensely.”

Indeed her former students provided much assistance with her campaign, ultimately not only with their votes but also through their encouragement. Penas said after she decided to run for the House she contacted more than 450 of her former students, many of whom supported her and helped with her campaign.

“My message to them was if they had me as a teacher in school and felt I was honest, treated them fairly and they learned something, then vote for me,” she said.

Running against a popular incumbent, Rep. Jim Tunheim (DFL-Kennedy) who served nine terms in the House, Penas said when she started off the campaign trail she didn’t even realize that few gave her much of a chance to win.

But she said it was her hard work and diligence in covering at least every town once and just about every township in one of the state’s largest geographic legislative districts that paid off in the end. The vast district covers much of northwestern Minnesota and Penas racked up more than 35,000 miles on her vehicle between June and October and 3,000 to 4,000 more on her husband’s truck. But she said the effort it took was one of the most rewarding lessons she learned.

“Win or lose, I won. I never would have expended the energy to meet people if I hadn’t run,” she said.

Penas was no stranger to the lawmaking process when House Speaker Steve Svigum (R-Kenyon) asked her to run last spring.

A member of several education groups, including serving seven years on the Minnesota Rural Education Board, including one as its president, Penas had come to the Capitol several times to work on issues with her legislators. Still she wasn’t quite prepared for what would face her on the other side of the table.

“I don’t think a person realizes the work involved in the whole legislative process until you’ve gotten into it,” she said. “I understand it’s designed to move slowly for a good reason, but it’s like pumping water out of a well and not getting any water until May.”

A few years ago, Penas said she and her husband decided to join the Republican Party because they felt it fit their long-held beliefs better than the DFL party did. She mentioned specifically that she is strongly supportive of pro-life and land rights issues, and as an avid hunter she is a strong advocate for gun rights.

The switch to the other party didn’t exactly please her parents, both very active Democrats, but she was reminded of a lesson her father told her when she was growing up.

While she was in college and home for the holidays, she took a job at the town’s liquor store because it paid well for part-time seasonal work. She asked her father for approval and she remembers him telling her, “It’s not where you work, it’s how you act.”

That is a lesson she’ll keep in mind as a member of the Legislature where the key to being effective is to “be honest, work hard, research the issues, vote with a good conscience, and keep constituents informed.”

Thus far into the session she has been able to fly home for the weekends where she, among other things, can enjoy her first time being a grandmother. She is glad the steady stream of emails and phone calls have kept her quite busy, even though she sometimes still has to reassure her constituents that she is the same person in St. Paul that she was back home.

“I still am not used to people calling me ‘representative.’ I’m no different than I was in my district. So calling me Maxine is wonderful,” she said.

“My students, to my dying day, will be the highlight of my life. Their enthusiasm. Their energy. They keep you on your toes. I enjoyed them immensely.”

—Rep. Maxine Penas

DISTRICT 1A

1998 population (estimate): 31,766
Largest city: Roseau
Counties: Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, and Roseau
Location: northwestern Minnesota
Top concern: “Equity in education funding ensuring that the poor districts are equal to the rich districts. Decreasing taxes, reducing property taxes. It’s an agricultural district and reducing property taxes would give some relief to farmers already distressed by bad prices on grain.”

—Rep. Maxine Penas
### Minnesota House of Representatives

#### 2001-02 Committee Assignments by member

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HF252—Seifert (R)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Repeal of obsolete rules.

HF253—Seifert (R)  Health & Human Services Policy
Health and human services obsolete rules repealed.

HF254—Seifert (R)  Transportation Policy
Transportation obsolete rules repealed.

HF255—Seifert (R)  Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Environment; obsolete rules repealed.

HF256—Howes (R)  Transportation Policy
Gross weight seasonal increase for transporting carrots authorized.

HF257—Marko (DFL)  Transportation Policy
Previous transportation appropriations modified to require grants to local governments for right-of-way acquisition and construction costs.

HF258—Swapinski (DFL)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Additional unemployment insurance benefits provided specified employees on layoff from M. E. International.

HF259—Swapinski (DFL)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Duluth aerial lift bridge repair and restoration authorized, and money appropriated.

HF260—Stanek (R)  Crime Prevention
Criminal justice information system improvements provided and money appropriated.

HF261—Paymar (DFL)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Political party units receiving public subsidies resulting from income tax and property tax form checkoff required to create oversight committees, and civil penalties imposed.

HF262—Boudreau (R)  Health & Human Services Policy
Abortion informed consent required and civil remedies provided.

HF263—Walz (R)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Camp Knutson renovation and construction grant provided and money appropriated.

HF264—Wolf (R)  Regulated Industries
Legislative Energy Task Force; correcting names of committees represented by members.

HF265—Wolf (R)  Regulated Industries
Legislative Energy Task Force sunset delayed and composition modified.

HF266—Swapinski (DFL)  Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Lake Superior Center authority enabling law modified, contract and agreements made conditional, and status as a political subdivision clarified.

HF267—Wagenius (DFL)  Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Well water; model notice created regarding testing of wells, and dissemination required including posting on health department web site.

HF268—Mulder (R)  Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Murray County; Currant Lake level maintenance required.

HF269—Anderson, B. (R)  Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Wright County aggregate materials production tax authorized.

HF270—Murphy (DFL)  Taxes
Sales tax applied to prefabricated homes.

HF271—Anderson, B. (R)  Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Wright County authorized to impose production tax on aggregate materials removed from the county.

HF272—Nornes (R)  Family & Early Childhood Education Finance
Emergency assistance and transitional housing programs and grants appropriation provided.

HF273—Skoglund (DFL)  Crime Prevention
Juveniles; domestic abuse and harassment misdemeanors excluded from juvenile petty offense definition.

HF274—Dorman (R)  Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Mercury thermometer sales prohibited.

HF275—Abeler (R)  Health & Human Services Policy
Nursing facility closure plans savings procedure modified.

HF276—Paulsen (R)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Candidates prohibited from accepting specified contributions.

HF277—Clark, J. (R)  Transportation Finance
Highway User Tax Distribution Fund appropriations provided.

HF278—Nornes (R)  Health & Human Services Policy
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.

HF279—Huntley (DFL)  Health & Human Services Policy
MinnesotaCare premium and other provider taxes repealed, pass-through of savings required, tobacco settlement disposition provided, health access fund contingent repeal provided, and civil penalties imposed.

HF280—Anderson, B. (R)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Elk River additional on-sale liquor licenses authorized.

HF281—Greiling (DFL)  Civil Law
Civil commitment mentally ill definition and emergency hold standard modified, early intervention hospital stay extended, and specified hearings on medications combined with civil commitment proceeding.

HF282—Knoblach (R)  Health & Human Services Policy
Truancy prevention pilot program provided and money appropriated.

HF283—Knoblach (R)  Taxes
Sales tax rebate provided and money appropriated.

HF284—Goodno (R)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Moorhead additional liquor licenses authorized.

HF285—Ness (R)  Agriculture Policy
Agricultural liens regulated; revising and consolidating crop liens and agricultural liens on livestock.

HF286—Anderson, I. (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance
Education finance; sparsity correction revenue modified.

HF287—Mares (R)  K-12 Education Finance
Intermediate school districts authorized to sell and issue bonds under specific conditions.

HF288—Jaros (DFL)  Education Policy
School board membership modified.

HF289—Daggett (R)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Four-year terms provided for representatives and senators and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF290—Milbert (DFL)  Taxes
Home heating fuels sales and use tax exemption expanded.

HF291—Seifert (R)  Higher Education Finance
Higher education grant stipends calculation modified relating to Pell grants.

HF292—Opatz (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance
Board of Teaching required to report annually on performance of teacher candidates on reading, writing, and math skills exam and on common core assessments.

HF293—Pawlenty (R)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Legislative sessions limited to odd-numbered years, and special sessions authorized by written agreement of speaker of the house and majority leader of the senate, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF294—Walz (R)  Taxes
Income tax subtraction allowed for national guard and active duty military pay.

HF295—Cassell (R)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Teachers retirement association service credit authorized for specified former St. Paul police officer.

HF296—Peterson (DFL)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Automobile insurance retroactive cancellation not to affect third-party claimants under specified conditions.

HF297—Peterson (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance
Independent School District No. 2853, Lac qui Parle Valley, authorized to include a school nurse and medical personnel in health and safety program costs.

HF298—Peterson (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance
Independent School District No. 2853, Lac qui Parle Valley, severance levy authorized.

HF300—Peterson (DFL)  Transportation Policy Snowplows defined as special mobile equipment exempted from registration taxes and title requirements.

HF301—Marquart (DFL)  Taxes Sales to political subdivisions tax exemption provided.

HF302—Davnie (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance Excess fuel cost adjustment and energy assistance aid to school districts authorized, and money appropriated.

HF303—Cassell (R)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Purchase of specified service credit authorized for prior police or salaried firefighter service.

HF304—Juhnke (DFL)  Transportation Finance State patrol vehicles equipped with video cameras, and money appropriated.


HF306—Folliard (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance General education basic formula allowance increased.

HF307—Evans (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance General education basic formula allowance increased.

HF308—Bernardy (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance General education basic formula allowance increased.

HF309—Walker (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance General education basic formula allowance increased.

HF310—Johnson, R. (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding established and money appropriated.

HF311—Hilstrom (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding established and money appropriated.

HF312—Bernardy (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding established and money appropriated.

HF313—Goodwin (DFL)  K-12 Education Finance Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding established and money appropriated.

HF314—Kubly (DFL)  Taxes Sales to political subdivisions tax exemption provided.

HF315—Kubly (DFL)  Taxes Sales tax general rate reduced.

HF316—Peterson (DFL)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Purchase of prior service credit from the public employees retirement association authorized for a specified individual.

HF317—Evans (DFL)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Campaign contributions and spending limits imposed on political parties participating in the political contribution refund program, multicandidate expenditures by parties limited, and maximum refund amount increased.

Thursday, January 25

HF318—Abrams (R)  Taxes Corporate franchise tax; single sales apportionment adopted.

HF319—Bishop (R)  Crime Prevention Trial court judgeships increased in specified judicial districts and money appropriated.

HF320—Davids (R)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Licensed property-casualty insurance agents authorized to assist in procurement of surplus lines insurance without a license.

HF321—Fuller (R)  Taxes Unmarked police cars exempted from motor vehicle sales tax.

HF322—Rhodes (R)  Health & Human Services Policy Minnesota utilization review act and practice of medicine definition modified.

HF323—Haas (R)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Motor vehicle fuel franchises change in ownership provisions expiration date removed.

HF324—Kuisle (R)  Taxes Agricultural property net tax capacity, and homestead and agricultural credit aid payments computation modified; and educational agricultural credit application increased and extended.

HF325—Doggett (R)  Health & Human Services Finance Hospital surcharge repealed for specified medical assistance costs, and money appropriated.

HF326—Ozment (R)  Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Local and state government agency denial of requests for action clarified.

HF327—Kahn (DFL)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Statutory vote recount margins modified, presidential and congressional election recounts provided, ballot requirements increased, and instant runoff provided for state and federal offices.

HF328—Dorman (R)  K-12 Education Finance School district revenue subject to equalization increased.

HF329—Hackbarth (R)  Crime Prevention Death penalty imposed for first degree murder under aggravating circumstances, criteria and procedures established, automatic appellate review and administrative framework provided, and money appropriated.

HF330—Abeler (R)  Health & Human Services Finance Nonprofit agency grant provided to agency currently serving deaf and hard-of-hearing adults with mental illness.

HF331—Abeler (R)  Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Historic preservation grant program created and money appropriated.

HF332—Nornes (R)  Health & Human Services Policy Nursing facility case mix transition plan established and fine imposed for noncompliance.

HF333—Bienart (DFL)  Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Secretary of state prohibited from serving on campaign committees or participating in recounts for an office for which the secretary is a candidate.

HF334—Tuma (R)  Crime Prevention Negligent homicide of a vulnerable adult defined as third degree murder, penalties for failure to report maltreatment increased, and scope of kidnapping expanded to include certain acts involving vulnerable adults.

HF335—Erhardt (R)  Taxes Corporate franchise tax single sales apportionment adopted.

HF336—Erhardt (R)  Taxes Capital equipment sales tax collection and refund repealed.

HF337—Erhardt (R)  Taxes Capital gains income tax exclusion authorized.

HF338—Erhardt (R)  Taxes June accelerated payment of sales taxes eliminated.

HF339—Dempsey (R)  Taxes Individual income tax deduction provided for owning an automobile.

HF340—Tuma (R)  K-12 Education Finance Independent School District No. 392, Le Center, technology integration grant authorized, and money appropriated.

HF341—Dehler (R)  Crime Prevention Liability and criminal penalties imposed for unlicensed driver involved in a traffic accident resulting in bodily harm or death.

HF342—Dehler (R)  Higher Education Finance Higher education grants terms and conditions modified.

HF343—Dehler (R)  Environment & Natural Resources Policy Public transit construction, administration, and use requirements established.

HF344—Greiling (DFL)  Civil Law Treatment facilities liability limited for administering medication to certain mentally ill persons.

HF345—Carlson (DFL)  Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Robbinsdale project 4 tax increment financing district extended.

HF346—Juhnke (DFL)  Education Policy One statewide bargaining unit created for all K-12 teachers employed by school districts, and statewide bargaining revenue provided.

HF347—Swenson (R)  Agriculture & Rural Development Finance Manure processing and odor control project loans authorized and money appropriated.

HF348—Gunther (R)  Jobs & Economic Development Finance Youth intervention program grants provided and money appropriated.

HF349—Rifenberg (R)  State Government Finance Independent School District No. 492, Austin, previously canceled grant to construct a television transmitter reauthorized.

HF350—Seifert (R)  Higher Education Finance Minnesota State Colleges and Universities appropriations distribution provided.

HF351—Stanek (R)  Crime Prevention DWI; felony level driving while impaired offense established.
HF352—Kuisle (R)  
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Annexed property not serviced for two years reversion to township provided.

HF353—Kubly (DFL)  
Agriculture & Rural Development Finance
Farm advocates program and agriculture information centers financing provided and money appropriated.

HF354—Skoglund (DFL)  
Crime Prevention
Background checks required before transferring a pistol or semiautomatic military-style assault weapon at a gun show.

HF355—Koskinen (DFL)  
Health & Human Services Policy
MinnesotaCare employer-subsidized insurance definition modified, four-month uninsured requirement exemptions provided, and prohibition on coverage in same month repealed.

HF356—Workman (R)  
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Teachers retirement association service credit purchase authorized for a specified teacher in Independent School District No. 270, Hopkins.

HF357—Boudreau (R)  
Health & Human Services Policy
Alcohol and drug counselor licensing requirements modified.

HF358—Wilkin (R)  
Taxes
Property tax class rate on apartments reduced and increased homestead and agricultural credit aid provided.

HF359—Murphy (DFL)  
Taxes
Proctor community center construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF360—Winter (DFL)  
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Workers’ compensation; injured employees not required to submit to examination by employer’s physician, and benefits continued except as determined by a neutral health care professional.

HF361—Rukavina (DFL)  
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Market assistance plan activation and joint underwriting association regulated.

HF362—Westrom (R)  
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Diesel fuel minimum biodiesel fuel content specified.

HF363—McGuire (DFL)  
Taxes
City aid base and maximum aid increased for specified metropolitan municipalities.

HF364—Sertich (DFL)  
Crime Prevention
Hands-free use of mobile telephones (cell phones) required in motor vehicles.

HF365—Mares (R)  
K-12 Education Finance
Intermediate School District No. 916, Northeast Metro, fund transfer authorized.

HF366—Gleason (DFL)  
Transportation Policy
Special license plates authorized for retired veterans.

HF367—Murphy (DFL)  
Taxes
Hermantown indoor sports and physical education complex construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF368—Stang (R)  
Transportation Policy
Stearns County Highway 55 bridge designated as Old St. Annes’s pass.

HF369—Bishop (R)  
Civil Law
Joint and several liability apportionment regulated.

HF370—Stanek (R)  
Transportation Finance
Express bus service provided between Rogers and downtown Minneapolis, and money appropriated.

HF371—Workman (R)  
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local metropolitan government comprehensive plans required to include protection and development of aggregate resources in land use plans.

HF372—McGuire (DFL)  
Crime Prevention
Crime victim notification of expungement proceedings required, and victims allowed to submit a statement to the court.

HF373—McGuire (DFL)  
Civil Law
Child support work reporting noncompliance penalties modified, payors hiring independent contractors for public projects required to comply, and report required.

HF374—McGuire (DFL)  
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Pollution Control Agency noise survey and analysis conducted and money appropriated.

HF375—Kuby (DFL)  
Civil Law
Farm tractor clock-hour meter tampering prohibited, criminal and civil penalties imposed, and remedies provided.

HF376—Bradley (R)  
Health & Human Services Policy
Omnibus health and human services senior and long-term care services and appropriations bill.

HF377—Harder (R)  
Taxes
Income tax credit for taxes paid to other states extended to taxes paid to Canada and Germany.

HF378—Davnie (DFL)  
K-12 Education Finance
School district emergency energy assistance provided and money appropriated.

HF379—Winter (DFL)  
Taxes
Diesel fuel minimum biodiesel content required, B5 or B20 diesel fuel required in specified vehicles and equipment, special fuel tax rate on biodiesel fuel reduced, and money appropriated.

HF380—Kuby (DFL)  
Health & Human Services Policy
MinnesotaCare provider tax and health plan premium taxes repealed, health care access fund eliminated, hospital surcharge repealed, and money appropriated.

HF381—Lenczewski (DFL)  
Taxes
Metropolitan area fiscal disparities program eliminated.

HF382—Rukavina (DFL)  
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Seasonal firefighter force maintained, and temporary emergency firefighters eligible for unemployment insurance.

HF383—Haas (R)  
Health & Human Services Policy
Health insurance premium tax and premium tax on nonprofit health plan companies repealed.

HF384—Rukavina (DFL)  
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Board of services for the blind created and money appropriated.

HF385—Juhnke (DFL)  
Civil Law
Notice required prior to engaging in electronic monitoring of employees.

HF386—Juhnke (DFL)  
Civil Law
Notice required prior to engaging in electronic monitoring of employees or use of such monitoring as basis for employment decisions.

HF387—Walker (DFL)  
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Black Minnesotans council membership increased.

HF388—Wenzel (DFL)  
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Disabled peace officers and firefighters health coverage continuation provided.

HF389—Dempsey (R)  
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Mississippi River Parkway Commission extended and membership modified.

HF390—Winter (DFL)  
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development
Prairie Island exposition center nonprofit management corporation authorized.

HF391—Kahn (DFL)  
Capital Investment
Previous Hennepin County office space appropriation redirected to People, Inc.

HF392—Finseth (R)  
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Water and soil resources board state commissioner members defined as nonvoting members.

HF393—Mahoney (DFL)  
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Ramsey County and St. Paul city employees allowed equal competition for vacant county jobs in combined county departments.

HF394—Seifert (R)  
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Repealing statutes concerning castrating animals running at large in a town.

HF395—Juhnke (DFL)  
Agriculture Policy
Agricultural land definition modified for purposes of hunting trespass restrictions.

HF396—Juhnke (DFL)  
Agriculture Policy
Agriculture department principal offices located outside of the metropolitan area.

HF397—Koskinen (DFL)  
Taxes
Home heating fuels year-round sales and use tax exemption provided.

HF398—Seifert (R)  
K-12 Education Finance
Agricultural lands exempted from the school district debt service levy.

HF399—Kuisle (R)  
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Municipal tax rate limited to township rate prior to annexation until sewer and water are provided.

To find out who represents you at the Capitol . . .
Call the House Public Information Office at (651) 296-2146
**MONDAY, Jan. 29**

**8 a.m.**

**GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS & VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICY**
Tour of National Guard, Rosemount
Chr. Rep. Jim Rhodes
*Agenda:* Overview and tour.

**8:15 a.m.**

**Children’s Environmental Health Working Group**
125 State Capitol
*Agenda:***NOTE CHANGE***
Children’s environmental health issues - Report from John Helland, House Research. Pesticide and integrated pest management issues, Department of Agriculture and University of Minnesota Extension. Governor’s “Healthy Kids Learn” initiative.

**9 a.m.**

**JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE**
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
*Agenda:* Overview of the budget books by the Department of Finance. Budget review of the Department of Labor and Industry.

**9:15 a.m.**

**TRANSPORTATION FINANCE**
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau
*Agenda:* Commissioner Charlie Weaver, Department of Public Safety. State Patrol budget presentation, Chief Anne Beers.

**9:30 a.m.**

**Regent Candidate Advisory Council**
400S State Office Building
Chr. Nedra Wicks
*Agenda:* Business meeting 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Interviews for positions on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (lunch break 12 noon to 1:15 p.m.).

**10:15 a.m.**

**ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE**
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten

**12:30 p.m.**

**HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE**
300S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik
*Agenda:* University of Minnesota budget request, Witness: Mark Yudof, President, University of Minnesota. Northern Resources Research Institute (NRRI) and Physics and Electrical Engineering Department funding, Witness: Charles Nutter, CEO, Silicon Valley Corporation.

**1:30 p.m.**

**K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE**
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren
*Agenda:* Governor’s budget presented by the Department of Children, Families and Learning.

**1:45 p.m.**

**Sales and Income Tax Division/TAXES**
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Elaine Harder
*Agenda:* HF294 (Walz) Allows a subtraction for National Guard and active duty military pay from the individual income tax. HF68 (Buesgens) Allows a subtraction for U.S. military pay from the individual income tax. HF230 (Bernardy) Allows a subtraction of up to $5,000 for military pay in U.S. and U.N. armed forces from the individual income tax. HF90 (Mulder) Allows a subtraction for military pension from the individual income tax. HF91 (Mulder) Exempts sales tax for goods and admission for non-profit dance clubs.

**TUESDAY, January 30**

**8:15 a.m.**

**EDUCATION POLICY**
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Harry Mares
*Agenda:* To be announced.

**HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES POLICY**
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Fran Bradley
*Agenda:* Presentation of the nursing home case-mix system transition plan. Presentation on the prescription drug program.

**JUDICIARY FINANCE**
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek
EIGHTH LEGISLATIVE SESSION - 2001  - DAY 22

TRANSPORTATION POLICY
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Tom Workman
Agenda: HF254 (Seifert) Transportation obsolete rules repealed (continued from Jan. 25 meeting). HF368 (Stang) Stearns County Highway 55 bridge designated as Old St. Anne’s pass. Others to be announced.

8:30 a.m.

Regent Candidate Advisory Council
400N State Office Building
Chr. Nedra Wicks
Agenda: Business meeting 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Interviews for positions on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (lunch break 12 noon to 1:15 p.m.).

10:15 a.m.

CRIME PREVENTION
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. John Tuma
Agenda: HF260 (Stanek) CriMNet - Criminal justice information system improvements and appropriations.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dennis Ozment
Agenda: HF80 (Hackbarth) Anoka County; Coon Lake water level control installation required. Continuation of air toxic discussion, American Lung Association.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE
300N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie
Agenda: Testimony on: Section 19, proposed budget for Veterans of Foreign Wars; Section 20, proposed budget for the Military Order of the Purple Heart; Section 21, proposed budget for the Disabled American Veterans; and Section 18, proposed budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

TAXES
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: HFXXXX (Sviggum) Governor’s tax bill.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness
Agenda: Overview of the governor’s budget proposals relating to agriculture by the Department of Agriculture.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Knoblauch
Agenda: Overview of Department of Finance issues and procedures, Peter Sausen.

COMMERCE, JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Greg Davids
Agenda: HF47 (Rukavina) Relating to economic development; requiring a closed iron mine and related facilities to be maintained for a period of time; amending Minnesota Statutes 2000, section 93.003. HF219 (Sertich) A resolution requesting a ban on the importation of certain steel products.

1 p.m.

Major Transportation Projects Commission
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. to be elected
Agenda: Introduction and comments by members. Introduction of legislative and Department of Transportation (MnDOT) staff. Election of chair. Discussion of commission goals. Discussion of procedural issues. Election of other officers: vice chair and secretary. Scheduling of meetings: monthly/bi-monthly/semi-monthly. Location of meetings: Capitol complex, other metro/outstate locations. Staff services: meeting notices, other mailings, minutes. Presentation by MnDOT: Discussion/presentation of transportation planning process and project selection process. Setting of time, place and agenda for next meeting.

2:30 p.m.

REDISTRICTING
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Erik Paulsen
Agenda: Analysis of Minnesota’s population shifts, Tom Gillaspy. Background on redistricting software, Lee Meilleur.

Legislative Audit Commission
316 State Capitol
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
Agenda: Release and review of program evaluation report on affordable housing.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Kevin Goodno
Agenda: Budget discussions regarding health-related licensing boards.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
Agenda: Budget review of the Department of Commerce and Minnesota Technology, Inc.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Carol Molnau
Agenda: Deputy Commissioner Doug Weiszhaar, Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Chief Financial Officer Kevin Gray, MnDOT. Cecil Selness, Modal Operations Division. Office of Aeronautics Budget Presentation, Ray Rought, director.

8:30 a.m.

Regent Candidate Advisory Council
500S State Office Building
Chr. Nedra Wicks
Agenda: Business meeting 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Interviews for positions on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents 9 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. The meeting may close to the public after the last interview for a discussion of reference checks, and then re-open to the public as the council votes for candidates to recommend to the Legislature. Between two and four candidates will be recommended for each open position on the Board of Regents. The council will take a lunch break from 12 noon until 1:15 p.m.

10:15 a.m.

CIVIL LAW
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Steve Smith
Agenda: HF130 (Dawkins) Dangerous dog definitions and regulations modified, animal control officers duties expanded, evidence preservation provided, and criminal penalties imposed.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES FINANCE
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Mark Holsten
Agenda: Minnesota Zoological Garden budget presentation. Academy of Science budget presentation.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE
300S State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik
Agenda: Academic Health Center (University of Minnesota) budget request. Witness: Dr. Frank Cerra, Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, University of Minnesota.

WEDNESDAY, January 31

8:15 a.m.

GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS & VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICY
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Rhodes
Agenda: Department of Employee Relations overview, Julien Carter. Campaign Finance Board, Jean Olsen.
K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren
Agenda: To be announced.

TAXES
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: HFXXXX (Sviggum) Governor’s tax bill.

12:30 p.m.

AGRICULTURE POLICY
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Tim Finseth
Agenda: HF149 (Pawlenty) Regulating the serving, selling, and labeling of certain religion-sanctioned food.

HF106 (Ness) Allowing certain members of the Minnesota Agriculture Education Leadership Council to designate permanent or temporary replacement members.

Overview of rural statistics, Tom Gillaspy, State Demographer.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Division/COMMERCE, JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Arlon Lindner
Agenda: Affordable housing.

10:15 a.m.

CRIME PREVENTION
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. John Tuma
Agenda: HF 94 (Haas) Fish and game law gross overlimit criminal penalties established (continuation from Jan. 25 hearing).

Crime trends overview from the Department of Corrections, Courts, and Minnesota Planning

Joint House ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY/
Senate ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY
***NOTE ROOM***
123 State Capitol

Department of Administration - procurement and recycling issues.

Minnesota Soft Drink Association & Recycling Association of Minnesota - statewide recycling campaign.

STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCE
300N State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Philip Krinkie
Agenda: HF218 (Krinkie) State Government Finance Bill. Testimony on Section 17, proposed budget for Department of Military Affairs.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES POLICY
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Fran Bradley
Agenda: Presentation on issues surrounding adult and child mental health.

HF97 (Greiling) Revisor instructed to replace phrase concerning mental illness.

JUDICIARY FINANCE
Basement Hearing Room
State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Rich Stanek
Agenda: Dakota County Community Justice Zone.

Budget hearing for the Ombudsman of Crime Victim Services.

Budget hearing for the Ombudsman of Corrections.

Budget hearing for the Peace Officer Standards & Training Board.


TRANSPORTATION POLICY
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Tom Workman
Agenda: To be announced.

1:30 p.m.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jerry Dempsey
Agenda: Presentations: Metropolitan Mosquito Control District, Minnesota Regional Development Organizations, and Metropolitan Council.

AFFAIRS
8:30 a.m.

THE HOUSE MEETS IN SESSION.

8:15 a.m.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Dan McElroy
Agenda: Budget review of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.

11:30 a.m.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE
10 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Bob Ness
Agenda: Continuation of overview of the Governor’s budget proposals relating to agriculture by the MN Department of Agriculture.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Jim Knoblach
Agenda: Department of Finance report on cancellations, Peter Sausen.

3 p.m.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE
Tour, St. John’s/St. Benedict’s colleges
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik
Agenda: Tour departs from the north entrance of the State Office Building at 4:15 p.m.

Roundtable presentation and tour scheduled from 6 p.m. to 7:20 p.m.

FRIDAY, February 2

8:15 a.m.

JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE
200 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Peggy Leppik
Agenda: University of Minnesota-Crookston roundtable discussion and tour (8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.).

Northwest Technical College tour (12 noon to 1:30 p.m.).

Bemidji State University lunch/roundtable discussion and tour (11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.).

10:15 a.m.

K-12 EDUCATION FINANCE
5 State Office Building
Chr. Rep. Alice Seagren
Agenda: To be announced.
Environment

A proposal to clean up the Minnesota River would invest $50.8 million in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Federal funding of up to $163 million is guaranteed for this project, but it is only available until Sept. 30, 2002, and a percentage must be matched with state dollars.

The goal of the project is to provide a 20 percent reduction of pollutants in the river by putting 100,000 acres of marginal cropland into conservation easements. Essentially, CREP would pay farmers not to farm flood-prone land. The Water and Soil Resources Board predicts that improved water quality and expanded wildlife habitat will benefit tourism, recreation and economic development.

Historically, members of the Capital Investment Committee take a state tour of projects during the interim before they decide which ones to fund. If they agree to the one budget-one session initiative, they will not have time to see projects first-hand.

Some committee members responded to the governor’s proposals with frustration and concern about items from the 2000 bonding bill. They suggested the governor may yet recom-mend canceling some previously approved projects. Essentially, CREP would pay farmers not to farm flood-prone land. The Water and Soil Resources Board predicts that improved water quality and expanded wildlife habitat will benefit tourism, recreation and economic development.

Historically, members of the Capital Investment Committee take a state tour of projects during the interim before they decide which ones to fund. If they agree to the one budget-one session initiative, they will not have time to see projects first-hand.

Some committee members responded to the governor’s proposals with frustration and concern about items from the 2000 bonding bill. They suggested the governor may yet recommend canceling some previously approved projects, though currently his plan contains no specific cancellations.

“It seems to me that the governor is trying to undo legislative intent,” said Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley), referring to much lower than expected allocations for higher education facilities and previously approved projects.

Mehrkens said it was not possible “within this funding level” to go ahead with some of the projects passed in last year’s session.

“Then why didn’t he veto them last year?” asked Committee Chair Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud).

The proposed tax rebate hung like a cloud over the discussion. “It is political nonsense,” said Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), “to send money back to taxpayers then turn around and commit ourselves to bonds for building repairs.”

The Saint Paul Winter Carnival pays homage to the coldest season of the year. It begins or ends about the time the Legislature convenes, either in odd- or even-numbered years.

In 2001, the Legislature began its two-year session earlier, but normally, the ice festival is the first to begin in even-numbered years.

The carnival was the first major celebration of winter in the United States. Today, it lasts for 12 days with many outdoor activities, including parades, ice sculpting contests, and softball games on ice.

About the time of the festival’s inception 116 years ago, legislative sessions lasted for 60 calendar days. Today, the business of providing for the people overlaps the mid-winter gala during 120 non-consecutive session days during a two-year period.

The Legislature begins its work in January or February out of tradition and constitutional mandate, which dates back to 1858, when most lawmakers were farmers. The first legislators decided to make their roles part-time because most of them had crops and animals to tend to during the other three seasons.

The legislative session and the Winter Carnival underscore the fact that nothing in Minnesota shuts down because of the weather.

The tradition began in response to a visiting New York reporter who wrote that the city was just “another Siberia, unfit for human habitation” at this time of the year.

To dispire “those easterners,” members of the Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce created an association in 1885 to manage the winter celebration.

At its first event in 1886, the sponsors promoted many outdoor events and other unusual activities not seen by those from warmer climes. They also built what was then the tallest ice structure in the world — a 106-foot palace where state government buildings now stand at the edge of the present-day State Capitol building grounds. In 1937, another palace was constructed directly opposite the Capitol.

The palace has always been part of the myth created to help draw more people from across the country to what some called the “frozen tundra.” The structure houses Boreas, King of the North Wind, and his court — all who want the weather to stay cold.

His nemesis, the Fire King, or Vulcanus Rex, and his “Krewe,” the Vulcans, make frequent assaults on Boreas’ realm to try and make spring reappear. Vulcanus Rex usually emerges as the victor after he makes a major assault on the castle near the end of the carnival.

Legislators such as Rep. Daniel A. Morrison (R-Rochester), who had already served in the Senate for four terms, joined in as The Fire King for the 1888 carnival, when the then-tallest ice structure to date was constructed. It was so large that 6,000 people attended a wedding inside its walls before it was attacked by Morrison and his Vulcans.

Another state elected official involved in a mid-winter gala was the 1896 Speaker of the House, Samuel R. Van Sant (R-Winona), who served in Boreas’ court as Lord High Chancellor. Van Sant became governor in 1901.

When winter comes to the Capital City, so do elements that make ice palaces vulner-able and legislators energetic enough to spend long hours in conducting legis-lative business.

—LECLAIR GRIER LAMBERT
Minnesota State Lottery

Number of states with lottery in fiscal year 2000 ............................................ 37
Total U.S. lottery sales in fiscal year 2000, in billions ...................................... $38.1
Sales per capita in Minnesota during fiscal year 2000 .......................................... $83
Minnesota's ranking nationally ................................................................. 26
Number of states with no form of legalized gambling ................................... 2
Minnesota State Lottery sales in fiscal year 2000, in millions ......................... $397
  In 1999 .................................................................................. $390
  In 1998 .................................................................................. $372.8
  In 1997 .................................................................................. $369
Sales since lottery began in April 1990, in billions ........................................... $3.7
Fiscal Year 2000 sales by product, as percent:
  Scratch Games ......................................................................................... 71
  Powerball ............................................................................................. 19
  Gopher 5 ............................................................................................. 6
  Daily 3 ................................................................................................. 3
  Cash 4 Life .............................................................................................. 1
Payout in winnings in fiscal year 2000, in millions .............................................. $241.5
  In 1999 .................................................................................... $235.5
  In 1998 .................................................................................... $224.5
Prize payments since lottery began in April 1990, in billions ......................... $2.2
Lottery proceeds donated to state's general fund, as percent ............................ 60
  Proceeds dedicated to the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund,
  as percent .......................................................................................... 40
Amount transferred to state General Fund since April 1990, in millions .......... $590
  In fiscal year 2000, in millions ......................................................... $37
Amount transferred to State Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund
  since April 1990 (in millions) .............................................................. $255
  In fiscal year 2000 (in millions) ......................................................... $23.5
Number of projects funded with that money ............................................... 217
Percent of adult Minnesotans who gambled in 1998 .................................. 82
Percent of those who played the lottery ..................................................... 55
Percent of people with incomes higher than $75,000 annually who gamble .. 88
  Those with incomes of less than $15,000 ......................................... 69
Lottery proceeds provided to the Department of Human Services in 2000-2001
  for problem gambling programs (in millions) ......................................... $3.4
Total state non-lottery wagering during fiscal year 2000, in billions ............... $5


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