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In this issue:

STATE OPERATED CASINO

TAX-FREE DEVELOPMENT ZONES, AND MORE



HF1092-HF1301

Session Weekly

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On the cover: Terry Eiswald of Hopkins holds his 4-year-old son, Taner, during a March 22 rally at the State Capitol in support of the troops in Iraq. An estimated 20,000 people were present for the rally.

— Photo by Tom Olmscheid

A winning combination?

Plan for slot machines at Canterbury Park would put money in state coffers, but critics wonder what long-term costs may result

BY PATTY JANOVEC

A plan to allow slot machines at Canterbury Park, with proceeds going into state coffers, is moving forward, though with some hesitation.

Members of the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee forwarded the bill (HF646), sponsored by Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), to the House Taxes Committee without recommendation March 24.

A companion bill (SF576), sponsored by Sen. Dick Day (R-Owatonna), awaits committee action.

Buesgens' bill would authorize the gaming machines at Canterbury Park, a horse racing facility in Shakopee, that he calls "the jewel of entertainment in Minnesota." The Minnesota State Lottery would own, maintain, and control the gaming machines, but the casino would be owned and operated by Canterbury Park.

Under the proposal, which dubs the facility a racino, track owners would foot the approximately \$90 million bill for construction costs. Plans call for a 100,000-square foot horse racing-themed slot and gaming room, an Olympic-scale equestrian center, an agricultural event facility, a 250-room hotel and conference facility that would overlook the racetrack, and restaurants. With the state's budget problems looming, Buesgens emphasized that the profits from gambling would help the state with fiscal shortfalls.

The bill calls for 40 percent of the gross gaming machine revenues to go to the state, 15 percent to the state lottery, 7.25 percent to horse racing purses and a breeders fund, and 1 percent to local governments. After expenses and taxes are subtracted, the casino proceeds are expected to be in the 5.75 percent range.

"Based on analysis of other tracks we believe this is a fair allocation," said Randy Sampson, president and general manager of Canterbury Park Holding Corp. He said the percent allocated to the state would be more than existing track operations provide. In fiscal year 2002, the state received \$241,000 in pari-mutuel taxes, according to the Minnesota

Racing Commission.

Sampson said that as of November 2002 six other states had racinos: Delaware, Iowa, Louisiana, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. In addition 14 states are considering racino legislation.

States where racinos are now located "have been remarkably successful at increasing purses and increasing the horse racing industry, as well as generating significant revenues for state governments," Sampson said.

For example, at Prairie Meadows, which opened outside of Des Moines, Iowa in 1995, purses have increased from \$1 million in 1994 to \$19 million in 2002. Last year, gross revenues to the state totaled \$97.2 million.

Sampson said that the racino would generate at least \$150 million for the state in its first two full years of operation, and it would be the first slot-gaming facility to pay state gaming taxes.

In addition, the proposal would mean construction jobs in the short term, and 1,400 new jobs at the casino. Critics claim those jobs would come from other casinos.

He said a temporary facility could be open by the end of this year, but the full racino would take two years to construct, meaning the state would begin receiving revenue from the facility in the next biennium.

Sampson said his group is not alone in its support for a racino.

Among the studies cited was one commissioned by the track in February 2002 that showed 53 percent of Minnesotans support the idea, and 33 percent were against. That same study, he said, showed that state residents support using new gaming revenues for core state functions.

Shakopee Mayor Bill Mars said the proposal has the backing of his community and the Scott County board. "I think this is a tremendous opportunity for the state, county, and city," he said.

In addition to the money going to the state, those in the horse and agricultural areas have expressed support. They say it will increase the purses at Canterbury Park, which in turn brings in more horses, and more Minnesota-made products such as hay will be needed, as well.

Others said expanding gambling in Minnesota is not a direction lawmakers should take.

"This would establish groundwork for a

major gambling expansion throughout the state," said John McCarthy, executive director of the Minnesota Indian Gaming Association. "Turning Minnesota into a Las Vegas is bad for Minnesota, bad for tribal governments, and bad for the people who use gambling revenue to benefit their tribal members and residents in rural communities where they are located. Others that depend on gambling will be hurt by state-sponsored competition." Among those he mentioned were charities that depend on pull-tab money to help support their needs.

If approved, the casino would be the first facility of its kind to operate separate from

an American Indian reservation in Minnesota.

Others expressed concern that the proposal would increase gambling addictions in Minnesota.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Randy Sampson, president and CEO of Canterbury Park Holding Corp., testifies before the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee March 24 in support of a bill that would provide gaming machines at the Shakopee horse racing facility.



Rally time

Capitol Rotunda provides a forum for a wide range of ideas and advocates

"I'm concerned that the state is almost promoting activities that are destructive to individuals of this state," said Tom Pritchard, president of the Minnesota Family Council. He said that addiction, welfare, broken marriages, and the corruption of youth will all be consequences of the plan. "There are already enough severe gambling problems in the state."

Rep. Eric Lipman (R-Lake Elmo) successfully offered an amendment that would increase the percentage of revenues going to programs that offer treatment to compulsive gamblers from 1 percent to 5 percent. The number is included in the 40 percent already going to the state's general revenue account.


In answering a question from Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton) concerning whether tribal casinos are required to contribute funds for gambling addiction treatment, Lipman said the state has no authority to require tribal units to do that, although the state can accept contributions.

David Strom, executive director of the Taxpayers League of Minnesota, questioned whether getting into the casino business is the proper role of government. "Government should not be involved in profit-making enterprises," he said. "This is a road we don't want to go down."

If the racino idea fails to become reality, and state casino backers try to place one elsewhere, there could be limitations on where it could be built.

The committee approved HF171, sponsored by Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington), that would allow a local unit of government to reject a state-run facility. She explained the legislation came about because two former legislators "used to try and put a casino next to the Mall of America" located in her district.

On its way to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, the bill would allow a municipality by resolution to disapprove the location of a gambling facility within the city. The bill excludes racetracks and establishments where lawful gambling is conducted.

A companion bill (SF133), sponsored by Sen. William Belanger, Jr (R-Bloomington), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee. 

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The Capitol Rotunda is like a marketplace of issues.

For decades, groups of many political persuasions representing a myriad of issues have gathered under the ornate dome while the Legislature is in session, protected from Minnesota's wintry blasts, and within earshot of the governor and legislators.

As the undertone of protestors was heard in the House chamber during his State of the State address Feb. 6, Gov. Tim Pawlenty went off script to acknowledge their presence while he outlined the difficult challenges facing legislators in tackling the state's record budget deficit.

Minnesota measures up favorably, compared with its neighboring states, on access to the Capitol for group gatherings, be they protests or informational rallies. The Capitol Rotunda is available for public events for two-hour periods during normal business hours. Groups or individuals sponsoring public rallies must apply for a permit from the state Department of Administration seven days before the event.

In fact, throughout the history of the state, the three Capitol buildings have served as the people's building for stating their case on various issues. One notable rally in the current Capitol involved several supporters of a Depression relief bill in 1937. A group called "The People's Lobby" occupied part of the Capitol, and according to the state historical society, 200 protestors heckled legislators and spent the night in the Senate chamber.

During a regular session of the Legislature, an average of 175 permits are approved by the state for use of the Capitol building's public gathering and display areas, said Bernie Steele, Capitol complex services manager.

State capitols are public buildings, with generally unrestricted access. Like Minnesota, neighboring states require a permit for large gatherings.

In Madison, the Wisconsin State Capitol is a bit too cramped to host rallies, according to a spokeswoman for the Capitol

Police. Rallies are located outside the building and participants often walk through the Capitol as part of the event.

In Bismark, N.D., Memorial Hall is the site for numerous public events, but access to the office tower is restricted while the state legislature is in session.

"Only activities with an educational, cultural, or entertainment purpose will be allowed in Memorial Hall during legislative session," according to a policy statement on

the state's facility management office Web site. "Special functions that facilitate the goals and objectives of state government as a whole may also be allowed."

Public meetings and rallies can be scheduled for the first floor rotunda in Iowa's Capitol Building in Des Moines. Group

access to the second floor is regulated by the legislature.

According to the state's Web site, limited public display and use on the first and second floors is permitted in the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre.

While Minnesota's Capitol Rotunda provides a prime gathering spot for issue advocates, the floor's distinctive north star, directly under the dome, is strictly off limits.

"The star in the Rotunda is not to have items put on it or straddle it in any way," according to the Administration Department's rules of conduct for Capitol public space users. "No people are allowed to be present on the star."

Also not allowed in the Rotunda are smoking, "balloons of any kind," or musical events "during the last six weeks of the legislative session," according to the rules. And, "no dinners in the Capitol Building at any time."

Lobbyist organizations are common public event sponsors at the Capitol. State law allows denial of a rally permit, if "the rally is to be held for the sole purpose of advertising any product or goods or is designed to be held all or in part for private profit."

(T. LONERGAN)



Members of The People's Lobby express their opinions from the House Gallery in 1937.

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

★ AGRICULTURE

Doing a body good

A bill that would promote milk sales in schools, define nutritional beverages, and regulate contracts between school districts and beverage vendors received its first hearing March 26 before the House Agriculture Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls), HF915 would also prohibit school sales of nutritional beverages, as defined in the bill, at a higher price than non-nutritional beverages. The committee took no action on the bill and may continue the hearing at a future meeting.

Blaine said the bill would "enhance the sale and availability of milk in schools." Soft drink sales would not be banned, he said, nor would the bill limit a school's "vending profits."

Joan Archer, president of the Minnesota Soft Drink Association, said there was "no need for the bill." School vending machines provide milk, water, and sports drinks, she said, in addition to soft drinks. She added that the bill would establish "price controls," and its definition of a nutritional beverage lacked "scientific background."

A nutritional beverage, as defined in the bill, would include milk; "a fluid product that contains milk" and meets at least 20 percent of the federally recommended daily value of calcium per serving; fruit drinks containing at least 50 percent fruit juice; "electrolyte replacement beverages," and noncarbonated drinking water.

Ed Jostak, a Rochester dairy farmer representing the Minnesota Milk Producers Association, testified in support of the bill. "It's good for agriculture because it's good for kids," Jostak said. He said it was "not the case" that schools were providing "milk and juice options alongside soda pop."

"If it is true that schools have made the transition," Jostak said, "the bill will nudge the remaining schools that have not."

A school or school district that allows the sale of packaged beverages to students during the school day "must implement policies" that encourage milk and other nutritional beverages, according to the bill.

The bill would take effect July 1, 2003, or at the expiration of a school's contract with a beverage vending service.

A Senate companion bill (SF903), sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture, General Legislation and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Safety embargo

The House Agriculture Policy Committee approved a bill March 26 that would provide the agriculture commissioner power to embargo geographic areas of the state in a declared emergency.

Sponsored by Rep. Maxine Penas (R-Badger), HF969 would only take effect in the event of an emergency declared by the governor. The bill, which was referred to the House Civil Law Committee, was requested by the state Agriculture Department, Penas said.

Authority to declare an embargo would be needed as part of a state emergency response to "potential threats of terrorism" or an accident at nuclear power plants located near Red Wing and Monticello, said Kevin Elfering, the department's interim director of dairy, meat, and food inspection.

If a food product contaminated with botulism, for example, were to enter the state, Elfering said, the agriculture commissioner would use his embargo authority to isolate a geographic area where the product was first detected.

"We would embargo a geographic area as part of an investigation when we don't know the origin of a contaminated product," Elfering said. The embargo would likely be restricted to food products "susceptible to the emergency," he added.

The bill states, "If the commissioner finds or has probable cause to believe that a food or consumer commodity within a specific area is likely to be adulterated because of the emergency ... the commissioner may embargo a geographic area that is included in the declared emergency."

The commissioner would be required to notify the public and those in custody of the product "in as thorough a manner" as practical, according to the bill.

A Senate companion bill (SF1000), sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture, General Legislation and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Pest protection

A bill that would strengthen the Agriculture Department's ability to protect the state's horticultural resources from harmful globally based plant and agricultural pests was approved March 26 by the House Agriculture Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield), HF1090 is a comprehensive bill that updates 80-year-old state laws with

existing federal and international plant pest-related regulations and horticulture industry guidelines. The bill was referred to the House Civil Law Committee.

The bill covers plant protection and export certification, urban forests, mosquito control, nursery industry regulation, seed law, and enforcement of fertilizer and pesticide laws.

"Minnesota's burgeoning global economy has opened a virtual 'freeway' for harmful plant, agricultural pests, and invasive species to enter the state," according to an information packet the Agriculture Department provided the committee. "With more than 400 million tons of goods now moving through the state each year, invasive species will find it easier than ever to enter our borders."

Tim Power, of the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association, testified in support of the bill. The group has worked with the Agriculture Department "since the first step" three years ago to update the set of regulatory laws, Power said.

"Minnesota's environment must be kept free of plant pests and we want to do our part," he said.

The bill would establish a new fee structure that would allow the state's nursery inspection program to be fee supported through a dedicated fund. Funds from nursery inspection and other fees now go to the Agriculture Department's general fund.

The agriculture commissioner would have authority, under the bill, to impose a quarantine to address the introduction or spread of a plant pest. The quarantine restrictions would cover the production, movement or existence of plants, plant products, agricultural commodities, crop seed, or farm products.

The bill would also create a public registry of tree care and tree trimming companies. Tree care providers would report business identification information to the department and a list of the counties in the state where they work. The registry would provide a way for state regulators to trace the movement of infested wood, tree branches or brush from one area of the state to the other.

A Senate companion bill (SF1065), sponsored by Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, General Legislation and Veterans Affairs Committee.

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

BUSINESS

Wine, liquor licenses

A glass of wine may be available with dinner at the 2003 Great Minnesota Get-Together.

A bill (HF356), sponsored by Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Red Wing), that would allow state fair concessionaires to sell Minnesota-produced wine by the glass was forwarded March 26 by the Liquor Subcommittee of the House Regulated Industries Committee to the full committee.

The bill included 14 liquor license-related measures the subcommittee forwarded as a local liquor omnibus bill to be approved by the full committee.

Wine sales at the state fair would be a first in the event's 140-year history, said Steve Pooch, assistant manager of the fair. "This will work well with our public who want a glass of wine with dinner," Pooch said. He said two or three vendors that sell food would likely be allowed to sell wine by the glass.

The Minnesota State Agricultural Society, which runs the fair, supported the bill to allow sale of state-produced wine that was initiated by the Minnesota Grape Growers Association. The bill was amended by the subcommittee to include state-produced wine from "grape juice, other fruit bases or honey," in addition to grapes.

Pooch said state law has prohibited alcohol

sales at the state fair, except for "3.2" beer, a weaker malt beverage that's a holdover from the Prohibition laws of the early 1930s.

Included in the bill were additional liquor license authorization requests from seven cities: Blaine, Hastings, Maple Grove, Sartell, St. Michael, Waconia, and Woodbury.

Authorization for the city of Elko to issue a liquor license for Elko Speedway was also amended into the bill, as were requests for liquor, wine, or malt beverage licenses at four theaters and the nonprofit American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis.

Held out of the bill for further investigation was a request to allow brew pubs in the state to obtain "off-sale" liquor licenses. The license would allow the restaurants which brew beer on the premises to sell half-gallon containers for customers to take home.

Representatives of the state public safety department and the Wine, Beer, and Spirits Federation of Minnesota requested that the bill (HF719), sponsored by Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee), not be forwarded to the full committee. The type of container the beer would be sold in and compliance with existing state laws were among the concerns.

CONSUMERS

Vacation advertising

Travel clubs offering fraudulent and fictitious free and reduced vacations would find it harder to do business in Minnesota, under a bill that would set up more intense regulations.

Jan Rapheal of White Bear Lake told the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee March 25 that legislation is needed to prevent repeats of the situation she and her husband faced.

"It was just one total rip-off," she said.

Rapheal described receiving a phone call informing the couple that they had won a free vacation. They attended a presentation, which revealed that they needed to buy access to a travel bureau system, which would provide a 5 percent discount on each trip booked, a free mini-vacation, and a seven-day stay in a condominium.

The price for a one-year membership started at \$8,000, but dropped to \$1,058 after the Rapheals were paraded before one salesperson after another, she said.

The couple purchased the package and set off for a three-day trip to Florida. But with three connecting flights coming and going, Rapheal said only one day was truly a vacation. In addition, the couple was required to pay a \$100 deposit and \$108 in airport tax. The

Rapheals discovered that the seven-day condominium stay required a \$500 deposit and had the staff choosing which location was applicable. Furthermore, she said, the 5 percent discount on travel bookings was only valid if the couple purchased airline tickets at a premium price.

"I just think in Minnesota we don't need things like that," Rapheal said.

Eric Dregni, a writer with the *StarTribune*, testified about his own experience with the same high-pressure travel service. Since writing about the matter in the Minneapolis newspaper, he has received about 50 phone calls from others who had similar stories.

"I haven't talked to anyone yet who was actually able to go on the free trip," he said.

HF501, sponsored by Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake), is targeted at nonlegitimate travel clubs. Unaffected would be major credit card issued services and agencies such as the American Automobile Association, better known as AAA.

The bill would prohibit:

- offering enticements that result in the club member paying more than would have been paid without membership;
- misrepresenting features of the travel, fares, and charges; and
- selling charter transportation under the misrepresentation that the arrangements have been finalized.

The committee approved the bill. It now goes to the House Civil Law Committee.

A Senate companion (SF420), sponsored by Sen. Charles Wiger (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits action on the Senate floor.

CRIME

DWI sentencing option

An unconventional sentencing technique has been reducing drunken driving cases and saving money in Isanti County, and a House committee has decided it's time to try it statewide.

For the last five years, 10th District Judge James Dehn has been using a technique he calls "staggered sentencing" to achieve lower incidences of repeat drunken driving in his area. Other judges have followed his lead and the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee approved a bill (HF387) March 20 that would explicitly allow the practice under state law. The bill only deals with multiple repeat drunken driving offenders.

In staggered sentencing, a judge may impose a jail sentence on someone convicted of drunken driving. The defendant immediately serves some portion — usually a third — of



During a March 26 hearing of the Liquor Subcommittee of the House Regulated Industries Committee, John Marshall of Great River Vineyard and Nursery in Lake City testifies for a bill that would allow wines made in Minnesota to be sold at the Minnesota State Fair.

that sentence in jail. The judge orders another one-third of the sentence to be served a year later, and the remainder a year after that. However, defendants can earn "forgiveness" of each year's incarceration if they stay sober and get the backing of their probation officer. A certain amount of the probation is usually spent on remote electronic alcohol monitoring, which requires random breath tests from a device connected to a defendant's telephone.

Defendants are required to request a new hearing each year to determine their compliance under the program. Dehn said he makes sure he is the judge for each of the defendant's subsequent hearings to ensure consistency and to develop a relationship.

A preliminary study by the nonpartisan House Research Department showed offenders given staggered sentences were re-arrested for drunken driving violations about half as often as other drunken driving offenders. A fiscal note prepared for the bill indicates the decreased use of jail time would save local governments between \$800,000 and \$1.6 million annually.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji), will be considered for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus spending bill.

Its Senate companion (SF389), sponsored by Sen. Leo Foley (DFL-Coon Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

★ DEVELOPMENT

Seeking funds

Three major development projects — two in St. Paul and one at the Stillwater prison — will be considered for inclusion in the state bonding bill following presentation March 20 to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee.

HF324, sponsored by Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport), would appropriate \$3 million from state bond proceeds to clean up contaminated land along the Mississippi River in St. Paul. The former meatpacking plant and stockyard site was previously cleaned of pollution, leading to the 52-business, 4,000-employee BridgePoint Business Park. However, additional acreage remains contaminated.

HF702, sponsored by Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul), would appropriate \$5 million from bond proceeds for river-edge improvements and redevelopment of a public park on Raspberry Island, located under the Wabasha Bridge, across from downtown St. Paul.

A Mississippi River paddleboat excursion, originating in New Orleans, will culminate on July 4, 2004, at Raspberry Island. Redevelopment

of the island, which is now "a pile of dirt," is crucial, Hausman said.

HF262, sponsored by Rep. Eric Lipman (R-Lake Elmo), would appropriate \$1.6 million in bond proceeds to the city of Bayport to complete the storm sewer system extending from a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources pond through the Stillwater prison grounds to the St. Croix River.

The current system, built in 1907, is in serious deterioration. However, it cannot be accessed due to the existence of prison buildings that were built on the land atop it.

The problem dates back to 1987 when the state advised Bayport that it would no longer maintain or repair the old sewer system. Later, the last 350 feet of the sewer line collapsed. To avoid erosion, the city built a temporary ditch through the private property of Andersen Window Corp. to the river.

Following a \$2.7 million legislative appropriation in 2000, the first phase of a two-part improvement plan was completed in the fall of 2001.

Funding for the second stage was approved by the Legislature in 2002 but was later vetoed by former Gov. Jesse Ventura, as was funding for Raspberry Island and the Mississippi River cleanup at BridgePoint Business Park.

Senate companion bills for all three projects await committee action.

★ EDUCATION

Pledge recitation

A bill that would require public and charter school students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at least once per week passed the House 113-19 March 24, but not before it became embroiled in the ongoing debate among House members regarding repeal of the Profile of Learning.

Sponsored by Rep. Bruce Anderson (R-Bufalo Township), HF6/SF287* would allow a school board or charter school directors to annually waive the pledge requirement and would not penalize students or teachers who choose not to participate.

On an 88-44 vote, the House approved an amendment, sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), which added social studies, including civics and economics, to the subject areas for new academic standards to replace the Profile of Learning. The House voted to repeal the profile standards Feb. 17.

The amendment was significant because the bill now returns to the Senate, which has not repealed the profile and differs with the House on drafting new academic standards. The Senate previously approved the Pledge of

Allegiance bill, which differs from the House bill in that it specifically calls for a week dedicated to certain aspects of education about the flag and the pledge. The Senate version is sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing).

"I hear the death knell ringing now if you send this over to the Senate," said Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar), who voted against the amendment and the bill.

An amendment, sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), to make the House bill similar to the Senate's was defeated. She said the Seifert amendment would "make a mockery of the bill by messing it up with another controversial political subject."

Seifert said the amendment removed "confusing" language about natural law that the House approved as guidelines for new standards when it voted to repeal the profile in February. The amendment directs the state education commissioner to draft standards for civics and economics, as well as English, math, science, history, and geography to replace profile standards in those subjects.

The House also defeated two attempts by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) to amend the bill with requirements that flags be manufactured in the United States. DFLers contended that China is the main manufacturer of U.S. flags.

Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview) opposed the amendment. "Every one of us has the freedom to decide what American flag we're going to buy," Krinkie said. "I don't need this Legislature to make that decision for me."

High school league money

The Minnesota State High School League would be allowed to seek more advertising revenue to support athletic events and other programs, under a bill approved March 25 by the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Tony Kielkucki (R-Lester Prairie), HF881 would allow the league's board to adopt a policy on "corporate sponsorships and similar agreements." Current law is "restricting a revenue stream that could be helping the state high school league," Kielkucki said.

The bill was referred to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

League Commissioner Roger Aronson said the bill would allow additional advertising in programs for league-sponsored tournaments. It would also help the league's fundraising by allowing sporting goods companies like Rawlings, Wilson, or McGregor to sponsor "the official basketball of the state tournament," Aronson said. The league could raise

an additional \$100,000 annually if corporate sponsorship restrictions were relaxed, he added.

State law prohibits the league's board from entering into corporate partnerships with any business or commercial organization that sells products or services used by student participants in league activities. Besides sports, the league also sponsors fine arts activities for high school students.

No tobacco product advertising would be allowed "under any circumstances," Aronson said. Tobacco use by athletes under age 18 is a violation of the league's rules. Shoe contracts and similar agreements providing equipment for an individual athlete would also not be allowed, he added.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) opposes the bill. "We don't need to make our schools and our students into commercial enterprises," she said. Kielkucki said the bill would only allow corporate sponsorships of activities "outside the school day," sponsored by the league.

A similar bill passed the House and Senate education committees in 2002, but was not considered by the full Legislature.

A Senate companion bill (SF870), sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

Safety training

Additional school bus safety training for some elementary and high school students would be required, under a bill approved March 25 by the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Tony Kielkucki (R-Lester Prairie), HF682 would require school districts to provide students in kindergarten through the third grade with school bus safety training twice during the school year.

The bill, referred to the House floor, would also require ninth- and 10th-grade students to "receive training in the laws and proper procedures when operating a motor vehicle in the vicinity of a school bus."

State law requires school districts to provide students in kindergarten through 10th grades with "age-appropriate school bus safety training." It also requires nonpublic schools located within a school district to provide training to its students who are "transported by school bus at public expense."

Representatives of the Minnesota School Bus Operator's Association and the Minnesota Association of Public Transportation testified in support of the bill. There were no testifiers against it.

SEA OF SIGNS



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

About 20,000 people came to the front steps of the State Capitol March 22 to rally in support of the troops in Iraq.

The bill would exempt a "type III," school bus – including vans and cars – from the state requirement to stop at railroad crossings. Kurt Schumann, of the school bus operators group, said requiring the cars and vans to stop at a crossing creates a potential traffic hazard because of the possibility of being rear-ended by another vehicle.

The bill would also repeal state designation of the third week of school as "School Bus Safety Week."

A Senate companion bill (SF627), sponsored by Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrista), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Student survey consent

A parent or guardian's written consent would be required prior to a school district obtaining information about a student or their family via surveys and other similar means, under a bill approved March 25 by the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), HF906 would provide similar privacy protection as outlined in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

The bill "limits information gathered from students without parental consent," Holberg said, through surveys, assessments, evaluations, or similar means. The bill was referred to the House Civil Law Committee.

When seeking consent for student participation, the bill would require school districts to provide parents with a copy of the instrument used to obtain information.

The bill would prohibit a school district from revealing the following information

about a student, through a survey or other means, without a parent's or guardian consent: political beliefs; psychological problems; sexual behavior or attitudes; illegal or antisocial behavior; legally recognized privileged relationships; religious practices or affiliations; and income or income-related information required to determine eligibility for financial assistance.

There was no additional testimony in support or opposition to the bill at the committee hearing.

The bill has no Senate companion.

Fiscal note request

The chair or ranking minority member of the House or Senate tax committee can now request a local impact note from the Department of Finance when proposed legislation affects a city or county.

HF674, sponsored by Rep. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park), would add affected school districts to the list.

The bill was approved March 25 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee and referred to the full House.

Latz said school districts "make up 40 percent of the state budget" and the Legislature should make "well-educated and informed decisions" on unfunded mandates that might have an impact on local schools.

Bob Meeks, director of governmental relations with the Minnesota School Boards Association, said the organization supports the bill.

He said the state assumed more

responsibility for education funding in tax adjustments within the past few years, and asked the committee how schools could be “funded adequately if you don’t know the impact on school districts.”

The bill also adds the chairs or ranking minority members of the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees to the list of legislators who can request a fiscal note.

The bill has no Senate companion.

★ ELECTIONS

Federal funds account

An account could be established to receive federal funds for elections, under a bill passed by the House March 24.

Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park), the sponsor of HF195, said that the state would receive \$6.5 million in federal dollars under the Help America Vote Act, signed into law by President Bush last year. An additional \$14 million could be added to the fund, if the state provides a \$700,000 match.

The appropriated money can be used in a variety of ways, including: training election officials such as judges and county administrators, educating voters, and buying voting systems.

Several amendments have changed aspects of the bill.

In its original form, state and federal contributions to the fund would be carried over from year to year. During the March 13 House Ways and Means Committee meeting, Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview) raised concerns over a possible accumulation of funds. The language was changed so the state’s contributions would not be carried forward, but returned to the general fund.

Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) unsuccessfully attempted to amend the bill on the House floor, by allowing the Legislature to have “scrutiny” over changes in election law by the Secretary of State.

He said the Senate companion, SF152, sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), contains similar language. That bill awaits committee action.

Rhodes suggested that Hilty address the issue in another elections-related bill. Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Fairbault) is sponsoring HF1006, that establishes detailed rules on conforming with the Help America Vote Act.

The House bill now moves to the Senate.

★ EMPLOYMENT

Union issues

State and local governments would be prohibited from requiring contractors and subcontractors from paying union wages and adhering to union rules if they are not subject to a union agreement, under a bill narrowly approved March 26 by a House committee.

Heard by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, the bill drew a lengthy testimony from union proponents and those who operate independently. Sponsored by Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior), HF961 was approved on a 10-8 vote.

The bill deals with project labor agreements, which are contracts requiring all bidders on a construction project to adhere to union work rules even if they are not union companies.

Union officials say such agreements lower a project’s costs, ensure timely project completion because labor strikes are avoided, improve quality, and increase safety. Others say the agreements discriminate against non-union jobs, drive up costs, require workers to pay union fees for benefits never received, and create an anti-competitive climate.

Sykora said she believes it is inappropriate to force contractors who are paid with state taxpayer dollars to oblige by union rules. “I don’t believe it’s right that contractors should be coerced into paying union wages for that period of time,” she said.

She added, “I don’t care whether people decide to be union or nonunion,” but that Minnesotans appreciate a “level playing field.”

Seventy-five percent of workers at construction projects are nonunion, she added.

Three contractors and a representative from the Association of Building Contractors testified in favor of the bill.

“I think (the practice) does raise the cost of the projects,” said Chris Grant, a fire sprinkler contractor.

Testifying against the bill were one contractor and Dick Anfang, president of the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council. Anfang said project labor agreements guarantee use of local workers and do not reduce the pool of qualified bidders.

In response, Rep. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester) said the bill would prohibit local government units from requiring project labor agreements, but does not state that they can’t be used.

Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls) wondered aloud whether there was a deeper issue at hand. Information distributed by those in favor of the bill referred to inflated wages and regulations. But, he said, union wages are living wages and union rules are often invoked to ensure worker safety.

The bill now moves to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee. A Senate companion (SF1161), sponsored by Sen. Brian LeClair (R-Woodbury), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Essential employees

Two groups of employees could become essential state workers under bills approved March 25 by House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

Under the classification, the employees give up their right to strike, and they must go to arbitration if labor negotiations do not result in an agreement.

Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina), the sponsor of HF769, said public safety radio communications operators serve a “highly skilled technical area. You can’t just fill someone in.”

Col. Anne Beers, chief of the Minnesota State Patrol, explained there are 10 centers around the state and that the operators, who “are essential to the state patrol,” receive nearly 650,000 emergency calls a month.

During the October 2001 state employees strike public safety radio communications operators were forced to join in, or cross the picket line.

Beers said the department called sheriffs and chiefs to have the 911 calls transferred to their stations but they refused, meaning troopers and supervisors had to quickly fill in because of the concern for public safety. In addition, troopers were going to take the department to court because they were taken off the road to perform dispatch functions, which was a violation of their contracts. Beers explained that because of the “high learning curve” in the dispatch language and code words, it would have been hard to use other resources, such as the National Guard, to fill the roles.

Representatives from the unions that represent state employees — the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees — testified against the legislation. Both groups said they oppose any expansion of essential employees.

Beers said a poll of dispatchers done last year showed 56 out of 66 operators favored the classification to essential.

Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) said, “We have a common sense bill here.” Although he said he understood the unions’ positions of not wanting more essential employees, to make the operators choose between crossing the picket line to assure public safety, or continue a strike, put them in a very difficult situation.

A similar bill (HF796), sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), would make Metropolitan Council operating engineers, electrical workers, pipefitters, and machinists employed by the metropolitan disposal system essential employees.

The bill would affect 360 employees, of which 250 are operating engineers.

Bill Moore, general manager of the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services, said if the employees strike it would cause a "multi-plant failure" sending untreated wastewater into rivers.

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids) inquired whether the plant had ever discharged untreated water into the rivers. Moore responded no, and explained the plant has had only one strike in its history, in the 1970s. At the time they were one day away from the "plant on the verge of failure."

Dwight Mattson, an engineer with the plant, said the employees opposed being classified as essential, and they have never been surveyed for their opinion.

Both bills now move to the House floor. Their Senate companions await committee action.

★ ENERGY

Storage plan advances

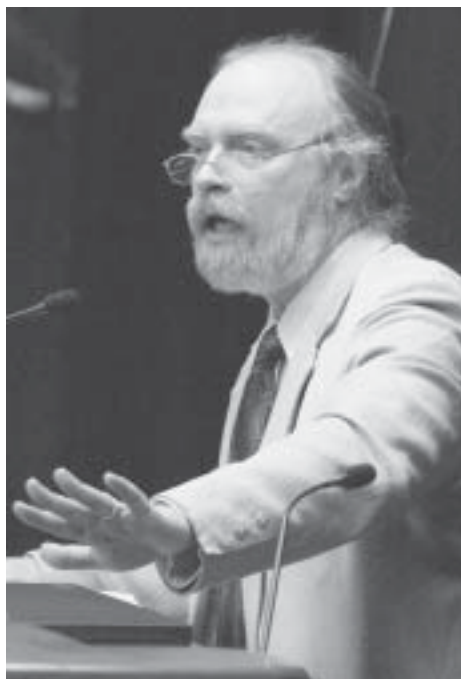
The House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee approved a bill March 25 that would allow Xcel Energy to expand nuclear storage at its Prairie Island facility and shift future oversight of the utility from the Legislature to the Public Utilities Commission.

Bill sponsor Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake) said HF775 was balanced because it also supported renewable energy development, particularly wind power, and addressed the concerns of the Mdewakanton Dakota Tribe who lives near the Prairie Island plant. The tribe did not testify at the hearing, though there was extensive testimony before the House Regulated Industries Committee in previous weeks.

Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount) successfully amended the bill to require environmental impact statements for new or expanded dry cask storage facilities to ensure compliance with state groundwater standards.

Rep. Aaron Peterson (DFL-Madison) failed to win support for an amendment, promoting Minnesota's "homegrown" energy resources, that outlined the risks of continued reliance on nuclear energy and called for the state to transition away from nuclear power.

The Peterson amendment also would have



George Crocker, executive director of the North American Water Office, testifies before the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee March 25 in opposition to a bill that would authorize dry cask storage of radioactive waste at the Prairie Island nuclear power plant and require Public Utilities Commission approval for additional storage capacity for spent nuclear fuel.

kept the oversight of Xcel's nuclear facilities with the Legislature and increased the amount of money directed by the utility toward energy conservation efforts.

"In short, this amendment moves Minnesota away from nuclear power and toward renewable energy," said Peterson, whose legislative district encompasses 467 wind turbines along Buffalo Ridge in the western part of the state.

"I think that a beautiful area of Minnesota has been polluted with wind turbines," said Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin).

"We think they are beautiful," former state senator and current Lincoln County commissioner Jim Nichols replied when asked how the residents along the ridge feel about the turbines. The production over a one-year period is very reliable, he said, and the cost for wind energy "has exceeded our wildest dreams at how cheaply it's produced."

Other amendments addressing security, nuclear reactor license renewal, facility closure costs, and the federal process surrounding storage capacity at Yucca Mountain in Nevada also failed to win committee approval.

George Crocker, executive director of the North American Water Office, raised questions about the level of security at Minnesota's nuclear facilities. The security is "sufficient to keep the graffiti man out, but the graffiti man is not who we are afraid of," he said.

"I have a high confidence level that our plants are hardened and secure," said Mike Wadley, senior vice president of government affairs and development for the company that manages the nuclear plants.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty recently called National Guard members to active duty to provide additional security at the state's nuclear plants and water treatment facilities. He removed them from the plants March 26.

Crocker also said he opposed the bill because of inherent dangers in nuclear waste management. "You can't suspend the second law of thermodynamics," he said. This scientific principle addresses the tendency of energy not to stay localized and to disperse if it has an opportunity to do so, whether along a brief or lengthy timeline.

The bill now moves to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

A Senate companion (SF794), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), has been referred to the Senate Commerce and Utilities Committee.

Reporting requirements

A bill that would relax state required conservation reporting requirements for small municipally owned electric utilities was approved March 25 by the House Regulated Industries Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont), HF860 would exempt small municipal utilities from certain conservation program reporting and allow the use of conservation funds for the improvement of municipal district heating and cooling systems. The bill was referred to the House floor.

The state's 20-year-old conservation improvement program requires a municipality to spend 1.5 percent of its gross operating revenues from the sale of electricity on conservation improvement and investments. The conservation law also applies to a cooperative electric association that provides retail service to its members, and privately owned large utility companies like Xcel Energy.

The law requires a municipality or cooperative to file a detailed overview every two years with the state Commerce Department regarding its conservation program that analyzes increased efficiency and cost effectiveness.

The bill would allow a municipality with less than \$2.5 million in annual gross revenues from retail electricity sales to satisfy the reporting requirement with a letter that certifies the utility has spent the required amount on conservation programs.

"The changes are appropriate," said

Gunther. "They aren't going to hurt this program."

Greg Oxley, of the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association, said there are 126 municipally owned electric utilities and 34 gas utilities in the state. He said the small utilities have found the conservation reporting requirements to be "a daunting task."

The bill would also allow a municipal utility to use up to 50 percent of its required conservation spending to refurbish steam-powered district heating systems. Some of the heating systems in five small cities are nearly 80 years old, Oxley said. The bill would establish a sunset date of July 1, 2007 for a utility to use conservation funds to improve a district heating system.

A Senate companion bill (SF866), sponsored by Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Utilities Committee.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Vapor recovery

Twin Cities metropolitan area residents might breathe easier under a bill that would require gasoline haulers and retail outlets to reduce the risk of public exposure to benzene, volatile organic compounds that contribute to the production of ozone, and other toxic substances.

The bill (HF623) would require the installation of special equipment designed to capture 95 percent of the hazardous substances released during the transfer of gasoline between trucks and storage tanks. The measure is limited to the counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington.

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar), the bill was approved by the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee March 20 and the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee March 26.

Under the bill, every underground gasoline storage tank at retail locations and the tankers that deliver the gasoline within the region would be required to have special fittings known as stage I vapor controls by Jan. 1, 2006. Retailers and haulers would be eligible for reimbursement from the state Petroleum Tank Fund up to \$3,000 per location or vehicle.

"It is a consistent, manageable way to have vapor recovery installed in the seven-county metropolitan area," said Bob Krogman, Minnesota Petroleum Marketers Association representative. The industry had requested the legislation after a voluntary program "didn't seem to go."

Currently, 40 percent of the gasoline sold in the Twin Cities metropolitan area is from stations using stage I vapor control, said Leo Raudys, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency metro region manager.

"This really is one of the most cost effective, easiest ways out there to control ozone," he said.

Exposure to ozone can damage lungs and airways, and benzene is a known carcinogen, explained Paula Maccabee, Sierra Club Air Toxics Campaign program coordinator. The Sierra Club supports the concept, Maccabee said, but disagrees with limiting the program to just the metropolitan area.

Amendments offered by Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) and Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) to take the program statewide failed to win approval in their respective committees. Mariani's amendment would have required the program statewide by 2008.

The bill now moves to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee. The Senate companion (SF636), sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), has been referred to the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Native grass debate

A bill that would prohibit the purchase of native grass seeds, which are planted along highways in the state, with trunk highway funds or county and municipal aid funds created a lengthy debate before the House Transportation Finance Committee March 26.

HF902, sponsored by Rep. Chris DeLaForest (R-Andover), was tabled by the committee and may be considered at a later date.

Proponents suggest that native grasses are more expensive and do not provide sufficient benefit in regard to preventing erosion and eliminating road runoff.

The state Department of Transportation maintains standards for vegetation within right-of-way property adjacent to the roadways in the state. Seeding and other right-of-way vegetation maintenance is part of the cost of road projects. The department produces a seeding manual that provides guidelines for engineers and other establishing vegetation portions of road projects.

David Gamez, sales representative for Twin City Seed in Edina, said non-native grasses often establish themselves more quickly, which prevents erosion. He also said that Wisconsin tends to pay considerably less per acre for its roadside vegetation than Minnesota does.

A letter to Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau, included in materials presented to the committee, from Tom Ehrhardt of the Albert Lea Seed House



Joe Schaffer of Minnesota Native Landscapes in Foley testifies for the continued use of native grass seeds for roadside vegetation by the state Department of Transportation during a March 26 meeting of the House Transportation Finance Committee.

noted that "it is not uncommon to have native mixtures costs as much as \$300 per pound."

However, native seed producers and department officials say those price estimates are inflated and that native grass seed has significantly better results in terms of long-term maintenance and overall environmental benefit. And testifiers said the plants do a better job at absorbing water, thereby avoiding runoff, and preventing erosion.

Bob Jacobson, a plant ecologist and program manager for the department, said non-native grasses cost an average of \$152 per acre, and native grasses cost an average of \$196 per acre.

"I think you're getting numbers that really aren't accurate on what we're doing on roadside seeding," Jacobson said.

He clarified that one project, cited by Gamez as costing between \$60,000 and \$80,000, involved significant wetland replacement, which required the department to use seed with more wildflowers in the mix. The seed producers all noted that wildflower seeds are much more expensive than grass seeds alone.

"This is not a very good project to use for general reference as far as what we do for roadside seeding," Jacobson said.

Jacobson said that only about 20 to 30 acres per year are seeded with the expensive wetland restoration grasses that are required under permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the state Department of Natural Resources. Those are driven by regulations, he said, while general roadside seeding is fairly economical.

He also said that the root systems are deep and long lasting. In addition, he said they require mowing and spot spraying for weeds only once every five years, while non-native species require much more frequent mowing and weed spraying.

The bill has no Senate companion.

★ FAMILY

Surrogate parents

For the second year in a row, a bill regulating the practice of surrogate pregnancies will not make it out of a House committee.

On March 26 the House Civil Law Committee tabled HF792, which would have created a legal framework for parents unable to have children naturally to reach agreement with a surrogate mother. Under the practice an embryo from the biological parents is implanted into a surrogate mother. At birth, the biological parents take full legal responsibility for the child.

Though the practice already takes place legally nationwide, the bill spells out certain legal guidelines for parents and surrogates and requires a set of legal agreements clarifying all parties' rights and responsibilities in the arrangement.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover), said the bill would be a model for other states because it incorporates so many different elements of the surrogacy process, from requiring psychological assessments of all parents, to limiting the amount of money a surrogate could be paid.

Under the bill, all parents would have to be at least age 21, the intended mother must prove she is unable to bear healthy children herself, and at least one intended parent must be biologically related to the child. The intended parents would also be required to accept any resulting child, regardless of its health or physical condition.

Tingelstad said the goal is to build happy families. "These are families who really want children," she said. "They're able to do (surrogacy) now, but there's a lot of hoops to jump through and a lot of uncertainty. This would give it some certainty."



Kris Binsfeld of St. Martin gives tearful testimony before the House Civil Law Committee March 26 in support of a bill that would authorize gestational surrogacy agreements relating to assisted reproduction.

Some committee members were visibly moved by testimony from Kris Binsfeld, who told about experiencing five miscarriages and spending thousands of dollars on ineffectual fertility treatments. Her cousin, Mia, volunteered to carry Binsfeld's child. "Mia was incredible. She shared everything... we got to go to every doctor's appointment. I even gained weight with her," said Binsfeld, of St. Martin, Minn.

Her son is now 4 years old. "He will tell you if you ask how he came into this world, 'Mom, I started in your heart and went from Mommy's tummy to Mia's tummy and then back into your arms,'" she said.

Opponents of the bill, including the Minnesota Catholic Conference, said it would turn embryos into commodities to be bought and sold. Tom Prichard, president of the Minnesota Family Council, told legislators the bill redefines the concept of motherhood and encourages "baby selling."

Some legislators said they liked the bill because it could seem to confer rights on a child even before birth. But some also said they were disappointed it included no requirement for marriage between the intended parents, allowing the possibility of single parents or same-sex couples to use the practice.

Tingelstad said the prevalence of infertility

among otherwise wonderful parents makes it necessary to reconsider the traditional notion of motherhood. "We have this idea, that is kind of old-fashioned, that whoever delivers the baby is the mother. Now we have so many more things we can do with science," she said.

She expects it will take a high-profile court case on the issue before legislators will decide to approve any legislation regulating the practice.

The bill's Senate companion (SF813), sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

★ GAMBLING

Legalizing fantasy leagues

An establishment that sells alcoholic beverages would be permitted to conduct fantasy sports leagues, under a bill approved March 26 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring), the sponsor of HF642, acknowledged that many people, including himself, are already participating in the leagues. Currently "you can practice legally outside bars, this brings it inside bars," he said.

The bill does not authorize sports bookmaking or wagering on the outcome of an individual sporting event.

No revenue would be generated to an establishment that holds a league, but legalizing the location would allow for more revenue when customers purchase drinks, said Stang. HF642 designates that bar owners cannot handle the exchange of funds, but by hosting an event, the bar can promote and market the leagues.

Other restrictions under the bill are:

- total payout to all members must be equal to the total paid in by all members;
- no individual can receive more than a \$250 payout; and
- the establishment has no interest in the outcome and cannot participate financially.

The legislation would help charitable gambling said Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton).

Currently, some locations have sports betting, but because the practice isn't legal, the charities could lose their licenses by participating. Erickson explained with declining enrollments in organizations like the Lions Club, this is an opportunity for marketing the associations and bringing in more memberships.

HF642 now goes to the House State Government Finance Committee.

A Senate companion (SF723), sponsored by Sen. Michelle Fischbach (R-Paynesville),

awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Bigger prize pools

Bingo prize money could be pooled together by several locations for a live electronic game statewide with a jackpot as high as \$8,000 to \$9,000, under a bill approved March 26 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Tony Kielkucki (R-Lester Prairie), HF734 now goes to the House State Government Finance Committee.

King Wilson, executive director of Allied Charities of Minnesota, said the plan is "very similar to Powerball." The idea is to have 30 places across the state contribute \$300 to a single pool, and have a live feed to each hall as the bingo game is conducted. Current state law caps a bingo payout at \$300.

Wilson explained the original plan was to be live in a television studio, such as how the numbers for the Minnesota Lottery's Gopher 5 used to be drawn. The other plan was to move from location to location, but he said the charities soon realized the cost would be too great. A live feed is expected to link each site, although no specifics have been drawn. Hopefully, "it will get additional people in the halls to make more money," said Wilson.

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) asked if there were problem gamblers associated with bingo. Kielkucki said, "As with anything in life, there are," but explained the numbers are not as high as with other forms of gambling.

A Senate companion (SF666), sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), is awaiting action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Sports board approval

Fans of the Minnesota Vikings or some other professional team could be watching games with more than just a rooting interest, under a bill approved March 26 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee. They could have a financial reason to watch, too.

Sponsored by Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park), HF619 would permit sports boards to be added to the list of lawful charitable gambling.

The bill defines a sports board as "a game in which a participant buys a square, line, or other chance on a board with the winner determined by the outcome of a professional sporting event." Under the proposal, the maximum prize for a single board would be \$500.

However, Tom Barrett, executive director of the Minnesota Gambling Control Board, said the

bill could violate federal laws because betting on professional sports teams is illegal in most states.

Joseph Bagnoli, representing the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association, said he checked with the Office of the Revisor of Statutes on language in the bill, and said, "We shouldn't have any problems."

Charities are "100 percent behind it" said King Wilson, executive director of Minnesota Allied Charities. He said sports boards could "raise a lot of money for charity and the state."

The bill now moves to the House State Government Finance Committee. Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin), the committee chair, said he would address any issues of possibly violating federal law in his committee.

A Senate companion (SF604), sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

SHOWING THEIR HAND



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

James Anderson, *left*, of St. Paul and Dennis Buckanaga of Red Lake, came to the Capitol Rotunda March 26 as part of a coalition of Red Lake and White Earth Bands of Chippewa Indians showing their support for HF1020, which would authorize the state lottery to operate gaming machines at a facility in the Twin Cities metropolitan area operated by one or more American Indian tribal governments.

★ GOVERNMENT

Cost disclosure

A bill designed to reform the rulemaking process is now law after being signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 24.

When a state agency proposes a rule change, it must, under the law, specify the portion of the total costs that will be borne by identifiable categories of affected parties, such as separate classes of governmental units, businesses, or individuals. The costs of not adopting the proposed rule must also be specified.

Under prior law, agencies were required to provide a Statement of Need and Reasonableness, which would identify the costs associated with a proposed rule change, to the extent that the agency can ascertain the information.

Signed
by
the
governor
★ ★ ★

Administrative rules enacted by state agencies have the full force of law.

For example, said House sponsor, Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), "If a Department of Health rule comes down in the rulemaking process and they are going to mandate something to our nursing homes, they have to spell that out in the Statement of Need and Reasonableness, or if we have the Department of Agriculture mandating a rule on farmers, they are to identify the probable costs that will be borne by the farmer."

Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley) is the Senate sponsor.

The law takes effect July 1, 2003, and applies to a rulemaking proceeding for which notice of intent to adopt rules is published in the State Register following that date.

HF64/SF61*/CH3

★ HEALTH

Hospital safety

Saying that Minnesota's hospitals are not as safe as they should be, Rep. Lynda Boudreau (R-Faribault) brought a bill before the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee March 20 that would create a statewide reporting system for medical errors and other adverse health care events.

Dr. Gordon Mosser, executive director of the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement, said medical mistakes are the eighth leading cause of death in the country. He cited statistics that show between 44,000 and 98,000 Americans die each year because of mistakes made in hospitals.

Twila Brase, president of the Citizens Council on Health Care, said she is concerned the state would use the data to "shape and mold the direction of health care," eventually leading to a system of government-directed health care. Brase said the numbers of deaths reportedly caused by hospital error are inflated because many of the patients counted would have died anyway.

No matter what the actual numbers are, "it's still a lot of lives involved," said Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester), who supported the measure.

As approved by the committee, HF1001 would give the Minnesota Department of Health authority to collect information and create a database of those events in order to find ways to prevent them in the future.

It identifies six categories of reportable events:

- surgical, including surgery performed on the wrong body part or leaving a foreign object in a patient;
- product, including a malfunctioning device

or contaminated medications;

- patient protection, including discharging babies to the wrong person or patients disappearing for more than four hours;
- case management, including administering a wrong blood type or other medical errors;
- environmental, including burns, electric shock, or falls; and
- criminal, including care by someone impersonating a doctor, kidnapping, or sexual assault.

The information would include data about the hospital reporting it, but no personally identifiable information about patients involved would be included. The information would not be admissible in court cases, including malpractice suits or settlements.

Mosser said the root cause of harm in hospitals is not the errors themselves, but the systems that allow those errors to happen. As an example, he told of a pharmacist dispensing the wrong medication to a patient because a clerk transcribed the doctor's written prescription incorrectly. While the clerk caused the error, hospitals and pharmacies would be wise to switch to an electronic prescription system, eliminating at least one point of possible error.

"We will gain from (the proposal) if and only if it fosters a movement to change our systems," Mosser said.

The committee referred the bill to the House Civil Law Committee. A companion bill (SF1019), sponsored by Sen. Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins), awaits a hearing in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

Protecting students

A bill designed to help ensure the health of college students may be included in the House Higher Education Finance Committee omnibus bill.

Sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield), HF746 would require post-secondary institutions in Minnesota to provide information on meningitis to every new student living in campus housing.

Each year in the United States about 3,000 people get meningococcal meningitis, an inflammation that affects the brain and spinal cord. About 300 of them die and another 450 who survive have permanent disabilities, including the loss of limbs, mental retardation, and deafness.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, freshmen living in dorms are 7.67 times more likely to get the disease compared to college students overall.

Since 1998, Cox said that 11 college students in Minnesota have gotten the disease, and two died.

Meningococcus, a bacterium that commonly is the cause of meningitis, is spread by droplets or by direct contact. The bacteria are sprayed into the air through sneezing and coughing, with shared items, such as cigarettes or drinking glasses, or through intimate contact.

The disease strikes quickly. For example, a Stillwater resident attending the University of Wisconsin-River Falls was taken to the hospital about 11 a.m. on a Sunday last November and died 14 hours later. Symptoms include a high fever, nausea and vomiting, severe headache, and a skin rash of bright red spots.

Jane King Hession from Edina appealed to legislators to pass the bill. She lost her 17-year-old son, Brendan, to the disease in 1997. She said that while she understands that meningitis strikes relatively few people in a year, when your child is one of the few, statistics matter very little.

Cox admits that many schools already offer such information, but the bill is to ensure that all schools do.

"This bill is about getting information to students to make decisions about getting vaccinated," he said, emphasizing his bill does not require a vaccination.

Maddona McDermott, health director at the University of St. Thomas, said she has noticed that more freshmen in the past two years already have the vaccination. "I support any measure to increase health awareness," she said.

Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr. (DFL-Winona) said that when he was first informed about the possibility of such a bill it came from the drug company that makes the vaccine. He said that he might move to amend the bill, when it is further discussed at a later date, so that the fiscal cost be paid by the drug company.

A companion bill (SF641), sponsored by Sen. Claire Robling (R-Jordan), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

Nurse titles

A bill approved March 24 by the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee would give official protection to the title of "nurse" under Minnesota law.

Representatives of the Minnesota Board of Nursing and Minnesota Nurses Association said under current law, people without proper certification and training can claim to be nurses without the threat of punishment. They said HF496, sponsored by Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka), would protect consumers.

Susan Stout, representing the Minnesota Nurses Association, said some organizations providing health-related services such as weight loss, advertise they have nurses on their staff to gain an image of credibility when those

individuals are not actually trained nurses. She said the bill would close the loophole permitting that practice. "The public expects a certain level of training," she said.

Thirty-seven states currently protect the title.

Even though "licensed practicing nurse" and "registered nurse" are already protected titles under state law, supporters said most people associate the generic term nurse with a certain level of training and expertise and should be protected from people who claim to be nurses without that training.

Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) called the bill unnecessary because the state already protects the official nursing titles. "In my opinion, it's too generic," he said. He expressed worries that other hospital staff who are perceived to be nurses would be subject to discipline under the bill.

Stout said that would not be a problem. "We're not attempting to be heavy-handed to people perceived to be a nurse," she said, "only people who hold themselves out as a nurse."

People or organizations violating the law by claiming to be nurses would be informed of the law and told to desist before any formal action would be taken, said Rene Cronquist, Minnesota Board on Nursing assistant director for nursing practice.

A separate provision of the bill would allow graduates of foreign nursing schools to work in nursing facilities if they have completed a competency evaluation and a medication training program.

The bill next goes before the full House. Its Senate companion (SF223), sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits a vote on the Senate floor.

Eye care prescriptions

Minnesota optometrists would see their authority to prescribe medications expanded if a bill approved by the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee March 20 becomes law.

HF373, sponsored by Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls), would allow optometrists some of the prescribing authority currently reserved for ophthalmologists, who hold medical degrees. Optometrists, who are not medical doctors but hold degrees in optometry, traditionally specialize in prescribing glasses and contacts. In 1993, legislators gave them authority to prescribe topical medications like eye drops. Nornes' bill would allow them to prescribe certain oral medications as well.

Optometrists framed the bill as a way to reduce medical costs and provide greater access to care by providing more places for patients to receive their necessary prescriptions.

In their view, too many patients are sent to expensive medical doctors for prescriptions optometrists could easily write themselves.

Dr. Kerry Beebe, a Brainerd optometrist and chair of the Clinical Care Division of the American Optometric Association, said oral medications to deal with eye conditions fall within optometrists' realm of expertise and most states already grant such authority.

Opponents said the bill would further blur the line between optometrists and ophthalmologists and risks taking the state down a slippery slope. Some suggested optometrists ultimately want to enter the lucrative laser eye surgery market.

Dr. Gary Schwartz, a St. Paul ophthalmologist, asked lawmakers to look at the difference in medical training between the two groups when considering who can prescribe oral medications. Since the additional schooling required of ophthalmologists requires more anatomy classes and training in systemic medicine, they are aware of the effects oral medications will have on areas of the body other than the eye.

He fears optometrists, who focus only on eye care, will over-prescribe oral medications without realizing harmful side effects or interactions with other medications. Any money saved by fewer doctor visits under the bill would likely be spent on unnecessary medication, he said.

The committee approved an amendment offered by Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) that would limit the scope of the new authority to less powerful oral medications. Strong narcotics, such as Tylenol III, would not be allowed under the amendment.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill (SF418), sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

HIGHER EDUCATION



Changes proposed

A bill that would add one position to the governor's cabinet was approved March 26 by the House Higher Education Finance Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring), the committee chair, HF864 would require the governor to appoint the director of the Higher Education Services Office (HESO). The governor recommended the idea in his proposed 2004-05 budget.

Susan Heegaard, a policy manager in the governor's office, said it "makes sense to try to elevate the importance of higher education in the executive branch."

"We're at the point (where) we need to make some changes," Stang said. "This in no way ensures that their projections will be accurate." The services office has previously been criticized for requesting money for state grants and then not using it. The money was then cancelled back to the state's general fund instead of being used elsewhere for higher education.

In addition, Stang said there has been concern about how forthcoming the office has been with information, and some of its reliability. He said that both legislators and financial aid administrators at schools have expressed concern.

Office Director Robert Poch was not at the meeting.

Stang does not worry about the position becoming political. "Often differences in higher education cross party lines," he said.

The bill would also change the name of the Higher Education Services Office to the Office of Higher Education, and change the composition and responsibilities of the Higher Education Advisory Council.

Among the changes, the bill would increase the council's size from nine to 16 members and change the board's makeup.

Currently the board is comprised of the president and senior vice president for academic affairs of the University of Minnesota; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) chancellor; the associate vice chancellors of the state universities, community colleges, and technical colleges; the commissioner of the Department of Children, Families and Learning; the president of the Minnesota Private College Council; and a representative from the Minnesota Association of Private Post-Secondary Schools.

The bill would drop the MnSCU associate vice chancellors and University of Minnesota vice president for academic affairs. It would add five citizens and five student members (two from MnSCU, and one each from the University of Minnesota, private colleges, and private vocational schools).

Derek Hudyma, vice-president of the Minnesota State College Student Association, said that a student representing community and technical colleges should be added because those schools generally have a different mission. Stang said he is open to working on an amendment so that all students are represented.

Rep. Lyndon Carlson (DFL-Robbinsdale) said he prefers to see a smaller board. He handed out a possible amendment that would keep the board at nine members, but chose not to offer it, saying he may do so when the bill returns for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

The bill now moves to the House

★ HOUSING

Security deposits

Landlords would not have to pay as much interest to their tenants when returning their security deposits under a bill approved March 25 on a split vote by the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee.

Under current law, landlords must accumulate interest on the deposits and give that interest to the tenant, along with whatever portion of the deposit is returnable, when the tenant moves. The interest rate is 3 percent until May 1, 2004, and at 4 percent thereafter.

HF438, sponsored by Rep. Arlon Lindner (R-Corcoran), would reduce the interest rate to 1 percent after Aug. 1, 2003. Lindner said the proposed change reflects the market in which interest earnings are on average between zero and 1 percent.

Other legislators, however, said renters could ill afford any changes that take money from their wallets.

Landlords did well in the state's 2001 tax bill "and now we're here today nicking the consumer a little bit again," said Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), who said he was "appalled" by the legislation.

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) said moving into an apartment is costly as renters must pay not only a deposit, but the first month's and often last month's rent in advance. And the security deposits have risen from one-quarter to one-half of one month's rent to a full month's rent, she said.

A two-bedroom apartment costs \$900 to \$1,000 a month, Clark added. "So it's a fairly big investment."

Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague) said she supported the bill as security deposits keep renter costs in check. Without them, landlords would absorb the cost of damage repairs and would likely pass those expenses onto renters in the form of higher rents, she said.

The payable interest amount has been changed numerous times to reflect market changes since the law was enacted in 1973. The current rate of 3 percent was set in 1996, and has remained at 3 percent during three subsequent reviews, said Jack Horner, representing the Minnesota Multi-Housing Association.

The bill now moves to the House Civil Law Committee. A Senate companion bill (SF645), sponsored by Sen. James Metzen (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action on the Senate floor.

★ LAW

Hmong marriages

Seeking to maintain age-old cultural traditions while also conforming to state legal standards, Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul) has introduced a bill to officially recognize traditional Hmong marriage ceremonies in Minnesota.

HF707, approved by the House Civil Law Committee March 25, would provide a process for solemnizing Hmong wedding ceremonies by vesting power in the mej koob, a group of two or more people designated as go-betweens for the families. The mej koob would be responsible for solemnizing the marriage and signing and submitting the marriage certificate.

Sher Lee, a board member at the Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul, called the bill "very powerful" for the growing population his organization serves. He said the purpose of the bill is "to help the Hmong people maintain the Hmong marriage traditions and also support this country."

However, opponents testified it would only make legal provision for a sexist tradition and do nothing to resolve long-standing problems in the Hmong community.

"I don't think this bill has had adequate community input, particularly from Hmong women," said concerned resident Ka Vang. "This bill cannot address a 4,000 year old issue such as polygamy or arranged marriages



Ai Vang of Hugo testifies before the House Civil Law Committee March 25 in support of a bill that would provide a Hmong marriage solemnization form.

or forced marriages. These are issues that deserve more community discussion."

Thao admitted the bill's purpose is not to address those problems.

"The issues I admit exist, but they will be addressed at a later time in a different bill," Thao said. "There are statutes in (current) marriage law that prohibit these practices. This bill's not seeking to undue any of these."

Other opponents said the bill arbitrarily singles out mej koob as the ones to officially solemnize the marriage. Out Vang said mej koob are always men, require no specific training or experience, and are sometimes involved in arranging marriages against a woman's wishes.

"This bill does not give the intended parties a say in their marriage, especially brides. The mej koob (and) the parents marry them, but she really can't say 'yes' or 'no,' she has no voice," Out Vang said.

The bill would add Hmong and Buddhists to the list of religious and ethnic groups — including Baha'i, Hindus, Muslims, Quakers, and Native Americans — who may solemnize marriages through traditional practices under state law.

The committee will consider it for possible inclusion in a family law omnibus bill. A Senate companion (SF827), sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Moua and former Rep. Andy Dawkins (DFL-St. Paul) pulled a similar bill from consideration last year after heavy criticism led them to seek more community input.

Report protection

Broadcasters who unknowingly disseminate incorrect information as part of an emergency broadcast would be immune from liability for

First deadline approaches

House and Senate leadership have set the following deadlines for committees to complete their business this session:

- **Friday, April 4** — Bills must be out of policy committees in the house of origin.
- **Friday, April 11** — All House and Senate files must be out of all policy committees in the other body.
- **Tuesday, April 29** — Omnibus finance bills must be out of House and Senate finance committees.

There are exceptions to these deadlines. For example, bill sponsors may appeal to the rules committee to have rules suspended so a bill may be considered after the deadline. In addition, the taxes committee is not bound by the deadlines.



Patty Wetterling, co-founder of the Jacob Wetterling Foundation, testifies before the House Civil Law Committee March 25 in support of a bill that would provide limitations to emergency notification actions liability.

damages that occur as a result, under a bill approved by the House Civil Law Committee March 25.

Sponsored by Rep. Paul Kohls (R-Victoria), HF628 would protect Web sites, broadcast and cable television stations, and radio stations from civil actions resulting from information relayed through the Emergency Alert System, Amber Alert System, or other emergency notifications. Those systems are designed to quickly spread word of emergency information in the event of severe weather, war, or child abduction.

Under the bill, broadcasters cannot be held liable for damages if such broadcasts are unintentionally inaccurate and cause damage.

Jim du Bois, president and CEO of the Minnesota Broadcasters Association, said television and radio stations are only required to broadcast messages from the president and may choose which other emergency alerts to air. He worries stations will choose not to air important information if they fear being sued as a result.

"The immunity it grants will protect broadcasters from frivolous lawsuits and encourage greater participation," du Bois said.

Though he knows of no lawsuits in the United States arising from any of the instances

the bill would protect, he said Minnesota's new Amber Alert System has the potential to further complicate matters because of the potential for naming names. If the wrong person is identified as the kidnapper and is subjected to ridicule as a result, that could result in lawsuits.

Many Minnesota radio stations are independently owned and operated, and cannot afford to purchase insurance against defamation claims, du Bois said. "The cost of civil litigation would bankrupt many of these local broadcasters and deprive communities of what is often their only electronic source of news and information.

The bill next goes before the full House.

A companion bill (SF673), sponsored by Sen. Julianne Ortman (R-Chanhassen), awaits a vote by the full Senate.

★ LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Eagle center construction

Proponents of a project to showcase American bald eagles in Minnesota are asking a House committee to allocate \$500,000 to replace earlier money tapped by the governor during the 2003 budget crisis.

The money would be given to the City of Wabasha for construction of the National Eagle Center, under HF280, sponsored by Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Red Wing).

"We need to preserve America's legacy, which is the bald eagle," Dempsey said March 25 before the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee.

Dempsey said the money was previously appropriated by the Legislature, but was taken by Gov. Tim Pawlenty to help solve a fiscal year 2003 state budget crisis. The city, with a population of 3,000, has raised \$1 million in matching funds, as required by the previous and current legislation.

Center Director MaryBeth Garrigan said the city's only eagle facility is a 2,000-square foot makeshift storefront, which serves as a temporary visitor center. It was busy the third and fourth weekends in March, the latter of which saw 3,000 visitors when 200 to 300 eagles passed overhead.

Records show that 22,000 visitors signed the registry last year at the temporary visitor center. However, that number represents only one-third to one-half of the estimated visitors, many of whom don't sign in because they go directly to the 24-hour observation deck near the Mississippi River, Garrigan said.

"People love their bald eagle," she explained, adding that all 50 states and 60 nations were represented by visitors to the center in 2000.

In response to legislators' questions, Garrigan said the city does not charge admission at the eagle facility now. However, donations are encouraged. Any new facility would charge \$3.50 for adults and up to \$2 for children and senior citizens.

The National Eagle Center is the only congressionally designated project dedicated to the nation's symbol of the bald eagle. And, Garrigan added, it serves as an economic driver for both Wabasha businesses and the state.

The bill will be considered for inclusion in the committee's bonding recommendations for the biennium.

A Senate companion bill (SF290), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

★ METRO AFFAIRS

Proper employee benefits

Should Metropolitan Council employees — government workers with salaries paid by taxpayers — be allowed to share in profits realized through cost-savings measures that they recommend?

Such was the question at the heart of a lively debate on HF926 before the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee March 25.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), the bill would disallow gain-sharing at the Metropolitan Council, a regional governing and rulemaking body that oversees waste management, metropolitan transit, and regional planning for the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Holberg said 110 of Metropolitan Council's employees shared about \$250,000 for submitting a \$500,000 cost-saving measure in 2002 relating to multiple operational facets of the agency's incinerator.

Metropolitan Council employees are the only state employees allowed to partake in a gain-sharing program, which was authorized in a 1998 law. Since then, the only cost-savings suggestion submitted to the council's board was the \$500,000 measure that captured Holberg's attention.

It's one thing for a profit-making business to share with employees, but it's quite another if that entity is a government agency "consuming taxpayer dollars," she said.

Distributed to committee members was a memo from one Metropolitan Council employee stating that the cost-saving measure was not original, but was largely extrapolated from manufacturing operating manuals, or reflects current or past industrial practice.

Other legislators said the program is a good idea.

"If this is happening ... it seems innovative and maybe something others should be doing," said Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls), a former Metropolitan Council board member.

Holberg said she is not opposed to the program goals. Rather, she said, suggestions should be submitted by public employees because they have high values, want to do what's right, and want to preserve jobs.

"I'm just wondering why a plaque doesn't work," said Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague).

The Metropolitan Council opposed the bill, saying that without the program it would not have saved nearly as much money.

On a split vote, the committee approved the bill. It now moves to the House floor.

No Senate companion bill has yet been introduced.

Transit options for I-35W

The House Transportation Policy Committee approved a bill March 25 that would call for a study to measure the feasibility of a bus rapid transit system on Interstate 35W between Minneapolis and Lakeville.

The bill (HF795), sponsored by Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls), now moves to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

Bus rapid transit involves high-speed bus travel on dedicated busways with a limited number of stops. The buses are lower to the ground, accommodating quicker boarding and exiting of the vehicle. In addition, the buses travel between stations more like those on rail systems where the fares are collected as riders enter the station rather than as they board the bus.

"It does not look like our regular bus system," said Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls).

Hornstein said the systems are very efficient and effective modes of moving commuters. He also said that the federal government is endorsing bus rapid transit and is authorizing federal funds for such systems. While buses currently use the shoulders on freeways, he said that option is not a long-term solution to meeting commuter needs in the area.

The bill provides for a study to determine whether such a system is feasible along I-35W. It would utilize the existing joint powers agreement between the communities that are part of the I-35W Corridor Commission, according to the bill. The corridor has been identified as one of the more heavily used and congested areas in the Twin Cities metropolitan area freeway system.

"I think a bus rapid transit option would service both areas very well," Hornstein said.

Rep. Bill Kuisle (R-Rochester) asked how the study would be paid for since the bill included no specific appropriation. Hornstein said the goal was to use existing resources in the state Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Council to complete the study.

The mention of the new technology prompted members of the committee to question whether the study should include personal rapid transit options, as well. Personal rapid transit systems involve individual cars that operate on a network of guideways, and riders select a destination and the car takes them there, bypassing all other stops.

"It might be kind of an exciting thing to see if we could use that from Lakeville to Minneapolis," said Rep. Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington). "This might be something that might be better than a bus system" for the needs of the area.

Hornstein said he was open to studying the option at a later time, but preferred limiting this bill to just bus rapid transit.

The bill currently has no Senate companion.

MILITARY



Funding National Guard activity

A bill to appropriate extra money to help pay for National Guard activity was approved by one House committee March 26 and forwarded to another.

Sponsored by Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin), HF1094 would allocate \$500,000 in the current fiscal year to the Department of Military Affairs.

"With the war starting the state had to activate National Guard members so we need to appropriate additional money," he said, testifying before the House State Government Finance Committee.

Col. Dennis Lord, executive director of the Minnesota National Guard, said the personnel were activated to generally provide security at water treatment facilities, nuclear plants, and oil refineries in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Other members helped out at the state's emergency operations center. The initial number of those activated was 232, but Lord said that number would likely be reduced to about 24 by the end of the month. He said that he expects the Guard to have a presence for the next week to 10 days.

Haas said the money would come from the reserves that Gov. Tim Pawlenty left in the current budget. Any money not used would be carried forward and used for disaster relief aid in the future.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, next goes to the House Ways and Means

Committee. Pawlenty reduced the number of guards stationed at the above facilities on March 26.

SAFETY



Crib concerns

An emotional father urged a House committee March 25 to pass legislation limiting the use and resale of old and potentially unsafe children's cribs.

"I cannot explain what it's like to lose a child," said Rick Torgerson of Lino Lakes to the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee. A large, framed photo of his son, Luke, was displayed on the witness table.

Torgerson explained that his son's death was a result of an unsafe crib at a daycare. The daycare's cribs were inspected one business day prior to Luke's death as part of biannual county inspections, he said. However, the inspection was only visual.

"Things may look and appear to be in good condition, but, in my son's case, far from it," Torgerson said.



Rick Torgerson tells the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee how hard it was to lose his 13-month-old son, Luke, as he testifies for a bill that would prohibit the use and sale of used cribs. His son died in a crib accident at a day care that was using a crib purchased at a garage sale.

HF374, sponsored by Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport), would require child-care providers to conduct monthly crib safety inspections. The mandatory records of such examinations would be reviewed during official inspections.

Additionally, child-care providers would be required after Jan. 1, 2004 to: maintain documentation for each crib, stating its brand name and model number; to annually certify that their cribs are not identified as unsafe by the Consumer Product Safety Commission; or to certify that the cribs have been modified to be safe. The provider's documentation would be maintained on the Internet for viewing by parents and the commissioner of human services.

Safety inspections would account for spacing between side slats, the height of railings, and the integrity of hardware, among other items.

In addition, HF374 would:

- prohibit the sale or resale of unsafe cribs;
- prohibit hotels and motels from lending unsafe cribs to patrons; and
- allow retrofits of unsafe cribs where the Consumer Product Safety Commission has approved the retrofit and where the retrofit is disclosed at the time of sale.

Sieben said the bill would not prohibit the sale of potentially unsafe cribs at garage sales due to the state's inability to enforce such a measure.

The bill was approved and forwarded to the House Civil Law Committee.

A companion bill (SF377), sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), was approved by one committee and awaits action by the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

Checking security installers

David Frings assured legislators that he would pay for the long distance phone call he made during a committee hearing March 25.

Using his laptop computer to make the call, Frings, the manager of a security alarm company, demonstrated just how easy it is for security company workers to tap into surveillance cameras all over the nation. As members of the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee watched live images of a New Jersey parking lot, Frings explained why Minnesota needs to do a better job certifying the people who install and maintain security systems in the state.

"Right now, how security systems actually work is getting to be pretty scary. We can do just about anything," he said.

Minnesota currently does not require background or criminal history checks for security company workers. It also does not require any specific training to be qualified for the job. Frings said that could put just about anyone

in a position of trust.

"We're supposed to be the good guys," he said. "When we're in your house, you're expecting us to be installing something that's going to keep your family safe versus us casing your place."

Committee members approved a bill (HF773), sponsored by Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson), which would attempt to remedy the problem by disqualifying people with prior felony convictions from employment in electronic security system companies. Under the bill, businesses would pay the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to conduct background checks on prospective employees.

Frings said many schools and businesses don't have personnel to follow his camera installers around the building. "Usually what they do is give us a set of keys and they say, 'Here, they're yours'.... Once we put on our security identification, we're never questioned in the building," Frings said.

Since most security companies in Minnesota employ only a handful of workers, Frings said the bill is necessary to prevent the wrong kind of people from entering the business.

Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls) said he thought the bill would disqualify too many people. He suggested only disqualifying people who have committed certain felonies or putting a time limit on how recently the crimes were committed.

He said criminal laws tend to have a disparate effect on low-income people and minorities. "And of course those people often have the most trouble getting employed even when they don't have a prior criminal record," he said. "So it seems to me that we need to tailor this more towards who we're really afraid of."

Hilty said he would consider making such changes before the bill's next hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee.

A companion bill (SF797), sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

TAXES



Vehicle tax break

Alternative-fuel vehicle purchasers and those buying fuel efficient automobiles would be eligible for a sales tax break, under a bill being considered by the House Taxes Committee.

Under HF507, sponsored by Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls), a motor vehicle sales tax exemption would be in place from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2007 for automobiles:

- certified with a fuel efficiency of at least 45 miles per gallon on the highway and 35 mpg in the city; or

- powered solely from an alternative fuel source; or
- powered partially from a rechargeable energy storage system and partially from regular or alternative fuel, or both.

Alternative fuels include alcohol fuels, natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, hydrogen, coal-derived liquid fuel, fuels derived from biological products, and electricity, including solar power.

Hornstein told the House Taxes Committee March 25 that the measure would help the United States reduce reliance on imported oil, improve global warming, and lead to fewer cases of cancer and asthma for those living along busy transportation corridors.

"If we can be known as an alternative fuel state, that will also enhance our ability to develop economically," Hornstein said, adding that 20 other states offer similar incentives.

Whether the state can afford the estimated \$8.9 million loss in taxes during the four-year period is another question, said Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), the committee chair. Regardless, Abrams said the bill prompts members to begin pondering how government would fund road construction and maintenance when a drop in gasoline consumption, and gas tax revenues, results.

The U.S. Department of Energy identified 2,657 alternative-fuel vehicles in use in Minnesota in 1997 and 6,267 in 2000, for an average annual increase of 1,203 vehicles.

The average price of vehicles qualifying for exemptions under the bill is \$19,000. On the market today are the Toyota Prius, Honda Insight, and Honda Civic Hybrid. On the way are nine vehicles by six automakers, according to literature supplied by Hornstein.

HF507 will be considered for inclusion in the tax omnibus bill. A Senate companion bill (SF405), sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

TRANSPORTATION



Donating vehicles

A bill that would change provisions governing donation and resale of vehicles by nonprofit organizations was approved March 25 by the House Transportation Policy Committee.

The bill (HF343), sponsored by Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka), now moves to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

Abeler testified that the need for the bill was brought to his attention by the Free 2B group that works in Anoka County to help individuals become self-sufficient by providing

Continued on page 35

Turf battles

Tax-free zone plan revised to include additional incentives for business development to thrive and stay in Greater Minnesota

By MIRANDA BRYANT

A much-touted proposal to waive taxes in 10 competitive rural Minnesota zones to arouse economic vitality is raising questions among metropolitan legislators.

The tax-free zone plan, also known as Jobs Opportunity Building Zones or JOBZ, is perceived to have wide support from Republicans and rural legislators alike, as well as from Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who introduced similar legislation in the 2002 session while serving as a legislator.

Under the direction of its sponsor, Rep. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton), HF3 has been significantly rewritten since its early introduction in an effort to reduce the problems that occurred under similar legislation in Pennsylvania and Michigan.

At every opportunity, Magnus tells of the growing income disparity between the Twin Cities metropolitan region and areas such as his southwest Minnesota district. He speaks of shrinking populations and businesses being wooed away by neighboring states.

"Do we have a level playing field, especially for rural Minnesota? No, we don't," Magnus told the House Taxes Committee March 20.

But some metropolitan area legislators have questioned everything from whether the lost taxes sufficiently surpass the economic gain, to whether the focus should instead be on proposed drastic cuts to local government aid (LGA) to cities.

"I think we may be kind of poking ourselves in the eye with this proposal when we ought to be focusing on LGA cuts," said Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights).

When the bill was before the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee on Feb. 27, Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) questioned why the program is only for rural Minnesota and not also for poorer inner-city districts also in distress.

Furthermore, Rep. Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) and Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) have wondered aloud whether the bill would encourage businesses to stay in rural areas once the 12-year tax-free status expires. Both

have seen businesses partake of state-offered incentives only to leave years later, creating unemployment and economic development disasters.

Also against it is the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Political Action Director Chris Cowen cited as reason for the group's opposition a study by the National Governors' Association on rural economic development. The study said states should embrace "industry clusters," promote entrepreneurship, and encourage value-added agriculture and agricultural diversification. Not mentioned, said Cowen, were tax-free zones.

Under HF3, the state Department of Trade and Economic Development would designate 10 business zones of up to 5,000 acres and five agricultural zones throughout Greater Minnesota. The zones would be in place for 12 years.

Cities, counties, townships, and school districts could apply individually or jointly for a zone later this year, if the bill were to become law. Qualifying businesses would forgo sales, income, and property taxes. Individuals investing in zone businesses would be exempt from applicable income and capital gains taxes.

In addition, businesses would receive a monetary credit from the state for creating full-time jobs paying more than \$30,000 a year.

Businesses could not, however, forgo property taxes resulting from school levies or local general obligation bonding measures already in place. Furthermore, the property tax waiver applies to commercial and industrial property, but not to land.

Absent from the bill is an early provision to exempt residential property taxes.

The tax-free status would apply to businesses within the zone at the time of

designation, as well as those that begin anew, expand, or relocate from other states.

To prevent Minnesota businesses from simply moving to the zone to avoid taxes, relocating businesses must increase employment by 20 percent in the first year, or make a capital investment in the zone equaling 10 percent of its previous year's gross revenues, under the bill. If neither measure is met on an annual basis, that business must pay the waived taxes.

The program would cost the state \$4.7 million in lost tax revenue in 2004-05 and \$9.4 million in 2006-07, according to current estimates.

While the state designates the zones, the communities will determine the success of the plan, said Matt Kramer, commissioner of the state Department of Trade and Economic Development. It's not enough to simply have a zone. Infrastructure must be in place, as well as local economic development strategies, and worker training opportunities, he added.

In analyzing the legislation, the Center for Rural Policy and Development in St. Peter found that similar zones in Michigan and Pennsylvania have appeared to help the job market, and business viability and cash flow.

However, zones have not had any major transformational impacts, the analysis stated.

"... Economically depressed areas are still depressed, areas of high poverty are still high, and areas of high unemployment still face employment challenges."

Many communities are on board with the legislation, including the cities of Albert Lea, Chisholm, Buhl, Kinney, Hibbing, and the Town of Balkan.

Rep. Pete Nelson (R-Lindstrom) said the bill would help businesses — and the jobs they provide — stay in Minnesota.

Said Nelson, "In my county we're losing businesses to the state of Wisconsin. The score is about 15-0 right now and climbing. I think that we've been losing far too long."

HF3 will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

A Senate companion bill (SF496), sponsored by Sen. Thomas Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits committee action.



Tax-free zones could be divided into smaller zones, as illustrated above, at the discretion of the community granted authority to develop the zone.

Graphic courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development

Fresh ideas

After a decade as mayor, Atkins brings his interest in the budget and innovative problem solving to the Legislature

By MIKE COOK

Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) has spent most of his adult life making policy at the local level, and he is now doing the same



Rep. Joe Atkins

in St. Paul.

After three years on a school board, Atkins became mayor of Inver Grove Heights at age 27. While some may have seen his youthfulness as a negative, Atkins did not. "We did things that other people never

thought would work, and I think it's because I didn't know any better."

For example, a community center was built without using tax dollars. "I made a comment after the referendum failed that people wanted the community center but they didn't want to pay for it," he said. "I said 'Why can't we do it without tax dollars?' and you could have heard a pin drop because people knew that you just couldn't do it that way. The next thing you know, after about 300 meetings later in people's kitchens and living rooms seeking donations, we built a community center." The city also partnered with its school district and with some civic organizations.

"Once we did that it was like, 'Well if we can do this what about these other good things?'" In his hometown, that has included improvements to the city's main street, and the construction of a library and an indoor aquatic center.

Atkins, now 37, believes similar ideas can be repeated across the state.

"We've talked about revenue and expenses, but what everybody seems to be missing is the partnership component," he said. "There are thousands of civic organizations that can play a role in the state's business. We did \$30 million in public improvements without tax dollars in a city that only had 25,000 people."

As mayor, Atkins filled a seat once held by his father, Gene, who served from 1971 to 1978.

"I learned a ton from him, but I learned as much from my mom, 'Andy,'" he said. "She quietly and doggedly presses on no matter the obstacle."

Atkins said the family mayoral tradition might now have to wait until the youngest of his three children gets a little older.

"My kids and I were driving along one day, and my son, John, turns to me and says 'Dad, I'm not going to be mayor. I want to be a fireman.' Then my son, Tom, says 'Dad, I'm not going to be mayor, either. I'm going to be a football player.' Finally my daughter Katie, who was 3 at the time, says 'Daddy, I'll be mayor.'" His children are now 9, 8, and 6. At home, Atkins said his wife, Julia, is considered the mayor.

Atkins calls himself a numbers wonk. His 63-page senior paper in law school was on the

"I volunteered for the tax committee," he said. "I can talk with Rep. Ron Abrams (the committee chair) for an hour. I love the numbers. I just hope we get an opportunity to get our hands dirty in the budget."

To solve the deficit, Atkins said he thinks everyone must contribute. "I want to be sure that at the end of the day the Pawlenty family and the Atkins family are pitching in our fair share. If that happens then I think it's going to be a fair kind of budget solution," Atkins said.

Education is also a top issue. "Many people have lost sight that education is an investment, it's not merely a cost. We've got to make sure we're getting the best return we can on that investment," said Atkins, who has previously taught classes at a community college.

Being mayor was the best job Atkins said he's had, but that he stepped down because "the state needs more help than the city did."

He replaces his friend, eight-term Rep. Bob Milbert, after the latter chose not to seek re-election.

There is one worry that Pugh has about Atkins: his choice of sports.

Pugh and Milbert are hockey players. Atkins is into basketball. "That's a big drawback,"

"We've talked about revenue and expenses, but what everybody seems to be missing is the partnership component. There are thousands of civic organizations that can play a role in the state's business. We did \$30 million in public improvements without tax dollars in a city that only had 25,000 people."

— Rep. Joe Atkins

equities of school finances.

"He's coming in as though he's mayor of Minnesota, in terms of the budget in sitting down with the books and trying to make the numbers match up, without ever having served a day on an appropriations committee," said Rep. Tom Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul). The two have been law partners since 1996.

While Atkins is doing his best to understand all the numbers, Pugh said, one of his strengths is being able to put what he knows into terms every resident can understand.

That is important as Atkins sits on the House Taxes Committee, as well as the Civil Law and Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Policy committees.

Pugh said, laughing. "In fact, I think he's only skated a couple of times. That's the only grave concern we have about him."

DISTRICT 39B

2002 population: 36,656

Largest city: Inver Grove Heights

County: Dakota

Location: southern Twin Cities suburb

Top concern: "The budget and education issues are probably the things I heard the most about as I traveled door-to-door."

— Rep. Joe Atkins

Like father, like son

Eken looks to fight for family farms, quality of life for all as member of the House of Representatives

By TOM LONERGAN

Representing a rural district that has townships named Rosebud, Silver Leaf, and Wild Rice, Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley) says he doesn't think bigger is always better, whether the enterprises are farms, businesses, or cities.



Rep. Kent Eken

The idea that "you can never be big enough" is extreme, Eken said. "The quality of life is declining both in rural and metropolitan areas," the 39-year-old first-term House member added. "We need some balance."

As the number of farms and businesses dwindles and population declines in his district, northeast of Fargo-Moorhead, Eken said the economic and social consequences of those trends aren't limited to Greater Minnesota. Metropolitan areas have traffic congestion and school districts straining to handle more students, he said, while rural communities are harmed economically, with underutilized infrastructure and schools forced to close.

"It's not in anyone's interest to see more migration to cities," Eken said. "We all have a common interest here. I don't see this as a rural versus metro issue at all."

A former economics, government, and history teacher at Saint John's Preparatory School in Collegeville, Eken interrupted pursuit of a doctorate in history to run for the Legislature.

His election last November marked the first time Saint John's "lost a teacher to the Legislature," said Fr. Ian Dommer, upper school principal. "Instead of teaching about government, he (Eken) wanted to be in it," Dommer said. "He enjoys the political process."

Said Eken: "The seat opened up (due to redistricting in 2002) and I saw the chance of following in my dad's footsteps." Willis Eken was a House member from 1971 to 1984, including four years as House majority leader.

Eken serves on the House Agriculture Policy, Education Policy, Education Finance, and

Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs committees.

He's concerned that legislators share "the importance of agriculture issues," Eken said, as metropolitan area representatives become more removed physically and generationally from the state's farm communities.

"When dad was here, there were as many rural (legislative) districts as urban, if not more," Eken said. "We all need food. This isn't just a rural issue."

Preserving family farms and casting a critical eye toward policies that favor "absentee owners," are among his agriculture issue priorities, Eken said. "The bulk of farms (in the state) are still family owned and I'd like to keep it that way."

Eken said he defines so-called factory farms as those "controlled by absentee owners and not controlled by the people who live in the

(HF1088) that would create "small school sustainability revenue" as part of state general fund aid to school districts. Rural districts could use the revenue to attract teachers, finance information technology improvements and enhance curriculums.

"If we implement technology the right way," Eken said, "small schools can offer as many options as large schools."

His hobbies, Eken said, include reading "lots of history," as well as hiking, camping, and canoeing with his wife, Lori, and their three children, who range in age from 16 months to 9 years old.

The children helped Eken in parades during the campaign, along with "Little Bertha," a donkey from the family farm that was supposed to pull the children in a campaign wagon. Eken said he ended up "pulling the wagon more than Bertha."

Prior to redistricting, Rep. Bernie Lieder (DFL-Crookston) represented much of the geographic area that's now in Eken's district.

"He is really pretty sharp," said Lieder, now in his 10th term. "You can't change the world overnight, and I think he's starting to realize that."

"When dad was here, there were as many rural (legislative) districts as urban, if not more. We all need food. This isn't just a rural issue."

— Rep. Kent Eken

community. It's not that they're evil," he said. "It's not their community, so they're not going to be concerned about it."

On education issues, the former high school teacher said he "has a problem with the No Child Left Behind act," the federal legislation governing K-12 public schools.

"I think we could call it 'No Child Left Untested,'" Eken said. "We're trying to test our way into excellence." The federal law mandates increased state testing of elementary grade students and public disclosure of schools that fail to meet minimum academic standards.

Education's primary function, Eken said, should be encouraging students "to think in an analytical way and get them interested in learning."

High academic standards and "rigorous testing" are necessary, Eken said, "but that's secondary to schools and teachers having the resources they need." He's introduced a bill

Eken said he's felt "hamstrung" during his first three months in the House by the state budget deficit and the DFL's minority position. "I'm in a defending mode," he said, regarding education issues and local government aid for cities, counties, and townships in his district.

DISTRICT 2A

2002 population: 36,566

Largest city: Ada

Counties: Becker, Clearwater, Mahnomon, Norman, Polk

Location: northwest Minnesota

Top concern: "I'm hoping to broaden the debate. We shouldn't be looking at just the short-term, bottom line. We need community impact statements to help people in rural communities protect existing businesses and family farms."

— Rep. Kent Eken

A man of many hats

Heidgerken brings experience as teacher, coach, businessman, and local official to the House of Representatives

BY JEFF JONES

Rep. Bud Heidgerken (R-Freeport) has been called many things in his life — teacher, business owner, coach, board member, director,



Rep. Bud Heidgerken

city councilman, husband, father, and grandfather — but do not call him a freshman.

“I demand the same respect as anybody else down here and I realize that some of the people have been here a long time,” said the first-term

legislator. “I look upon them as being younger than me, a lot of them. I look upon me as bringing more experience to the table than what they have. They may have it at the state level, but they don’t have it at the local level like I do.”

Heidgerken said he’s paid his dues in 21 years as a high school teacher, 12 years as a business owner, and by serving on dozens of boards and commissions, including economic development councils, recreation boards, and the school boards and city councils in Freeport and Brooten.

And to top it off, Heidgerken still works 40 hours each weekend at the award-winning Charlie’s Cafe in Freeport. He takes care of the bookkeeping and scheduling for the restaurant’s 30 to 40 workers, many of whom have worked there more than 25 years. His wife, Ann, is in charge in the kitchen. “I take care of one end, she takes care of one end and it really works out very well. We’ve had a very successful business,” he said.

In addition to his two full-time jobs, he continues to run the largest fast-pitch softball league in the Midwest, which he has done for 40 years. He also spent 27 years as a wrestling coach, and until two years ago, he coached youth basketball.

Heidgerken ran for the House as a DFLer in 1988 and lost by 150 votes. He said the experience was disappointing, but very important.

“It taught me to be humble. It taught me to go out and pick myself up like I’d been teaching my kids to do when I was a wrestling coach,” he said.

Last year, Heidgerken switched party affiliation and the man who beat him in 1988, former Rep. Sylvester Uphas, served as honorary chair for his campaign.

“Deep down, the first time he ran as a teacher and a strong union man,” Uphas said. Since then Uphas said he thinks Heidgerken has fallen in line with the conservative fiscal views of the district. “He’s become more realistic now that he’s in business for his own ... to realize that people have to perform before they can get a raise,” Uphas said.

Heidgerken says the well being of his district depends on the success of its farmers, for whom he is a strong advocate.

“I demand the same respect as anybody else down here and I realize that some of the people have been here a long time. I look upon them as being younger than me, a lot of them. I look upon me as bringing more experience to the table than what they have. They may have it at the state level, but they don’t have it at the local level like I do.”

— Rep. Bud Heidgerken

On behalf of dairy farmers, he is encouraging Minnesota schools to take steps to promote milk among students. “We’re seeing what happens to little kids. They’ve got their mouths full of rotten teeth because the only thing they drink is pop,” he said. “They don’t know what milk is.”

He has also been a vocal opponent of Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s proposal to significantly cut subsidies for ethanol producers, which he says would force three of the state’s ethanol plants to close, resulting in lower corn prices for farmers. He calls ethanol “the one positive thing that we have going on in our district.”

Heidgerken said he isn’t afraid to break with his party over issues he finds important. “You have to represent what you really feel is right

for your district, and my area is farmers, and they’re very, very important to me. And yet at the same time I’m a businessman and I can see that end of it. At the same time, I was an educator and I can see that end of it, too,” he said.

He says his experience as a teacher makes him wary of the governor’s plan to freeze the pay of public employees. “I have problems with telling people who have been working for years that their salaries are frozen,” he said. “I had that happen to me in the Nixon era. Nixon froze my salary. I’ve never forgotten that.”

Always curious, Heidgerken says his favorite part about being a legislator is sitting on committees. He says he tries to put himself in the shoes of whoever is testifying and identify with their point of view. “I love the knowledge that is thrown at me,” he said. “They’re giving me more and more literature to read at night. I’m usually here until midnight reading. And I try to get myself informed on as many issues as possible.”

With four busy committees — he sits on both agriculture and education policy and finance committees — he says getting all the information he wants is hard to do. Still, it’s

no surprise to hear him say, “I love it. I wouldn’t mind being on a fifth.”

DISTRICT 13A

2002 population: 36,758

Largest city: Sauk Centre

Counties: Kandiyohi, Pope, Stearns

Location: west-central Minnesota

Top concern: “If I could help my rural economy, it would be number one. ... If agriculture’s doing well, our rural economy is doing well. Then my little towns are going to do well, and everything else is going to do well. We’re all in it together.”

— Rep. Bud Heidgerken

Persistence pays off

After three failed tries at winning a seat in the House of Representatives, Urdahl fulfills another of his life goals

By MICHELLE KIBIGER

Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City) has had three major goals for his life: become a teacher, become a published writer, and become a legislator.



Rep. Dean Urdahl

Urdahl has been teaching in the New London-Spicer school district for 31 years. His first book was published in March 2001, with a second to follow a month later. And in November 2002, he realized his

third goal, though it took him four tries to make it happen.

He ran in 1992 and lost by 1,200 votes. He ran in 1994 and lost by 175 votes. He ran in 1996 and was defeated in the primary. When the new districts were drawn in 2002 and he ended up in a district where incumbent Bob Ness had decided not to run, he decided to give it one more try.

"This is my last shot," Urdahl said. "If I'm ever going to make it, it's got to be this time."

Urdahl said his family's support, particularly that of his wife, Karen, made his election to the Legislature possible. His three sons – one a history teacher, one a lobbyist, and one a newspaper editor, were also supportive, he said. "It was a long hard trip to get here, but we made it."

He said he's been interested in running for public office since high school. "I've always had a desire to work in public service," Urdahl said, "and this provides the best opportunity for the abilities that I have."

Since that time, he has been involved in a number of political capacities, including working on campaigns, working for late Congressman John Zwach, and serving in leadership positions in both the state and local Republican parties.

Urdahl also decided at a young age that he wanted to be a teacher. For all but one of his years, he has taught seventh-grade social

studies. He jokes that he's been stuck in the seventh grade for 30 years. He's also coached three state championship cross country teams at the high school level, including last year's team that earned the title three days before the general election.

"Even if I wasn't a teacher, I think it's natural to realize that our children are the future and we have to insure success in the future by doing right by kids today," Urdahl said.

Though education issues are important to Urdahl, it's his ties to the history of his district and his enthusiasm for all history that prompted him to become a history teacher. He says he hopes to transfer his desire to teach others about history and government to his role as a legislator in helping his constituents connect to government.

"When you're excited about something,

with House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) back in the 1970s.

"Dean didn't have a jump shot then and he still doesn't now," joked Sviggum. "Thirty years later he still can't get off the ground."

All joking aside, Sviggum described Urdahl as a hard worker who is truly concerned about the needs of constituents in his district. Sviggum said Urdahl's strengths include his ability to listen, respond, and care. He also said Urdahl appreciates the need for legislators to work together and desire the success of their colleagues.

These are attributes Sviggum said he observed many years ago when he and Urdahl first became friends.

"You develop a kind of neat relationship in athletics," Sviggum said. "And you develop a mutual respect that's important. Dean and I were able to do that many years ago before he even ran for office."

Urdahl said he's focusing on all aspects of rural economic development in his first term. Specifically, he's looking at park developments that can help stimulate the local economy, agricultural initiatives that may help the farmers in his district, and items to help create jobs.

"Even if I wasn't a teacher, I think it's natural to realize that our children are the future and we have to insure success in the future by doing right by kids today."

— Rep. Dean Urdahl

sometimes you want to impart your excitement to others," Urdahl said.

Urdahl's family moved to Meeker County in 1856, just as conflicts with the American Indian tribes in the area were breaking out. He said his great-great-grandfather helped bury some of the initial casualties in the conflict.

His grandfather ran the first all-electric farm in the country. His father was a dairy farmer in the area until Dean was 3, and the family then moved into Litchfield. His father then ran a painting business, which Urdahl still operates, and his mother was a nurse.

He said he still runs into people in the towns in his district who knew his parents and grandparents.

Urdahl also remembers playing basketball

"Because I want to help the people that I serve, and we can clearly see that (economic development) is an area where help is needed, it's natural for me to be interested," Urdahl said.

DISTRICT 18B

2002 population: 36,654

Largest city: Litchfield

Counties: Meeker, Wright

Location: central Minnesota

Top concern: "Many of the things that I'm doing one way or another tie into economic development."

— Rep. Dean Urdahl

Monday, March 24

HF1092—Davids (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Expedited form and rate filing provided for specified life, accident, and health insurance.

HF1093—Lanning (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Legislative commission on unnecessary mandates established.

HF1094—Haas (R)
State Government Finance
Military Affairs Department funding provided for forces called to state active duty by the governor, and money appropriated.

HF1095—Bradley (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Construction deadline extended for previously approved nursing home moratorium exception projects.

HF1096—Harder (R)
Agriculture Policy
Rural economic infrastructure opportunities expanded, and annual appropriation established for ethanol production and other rural infrastructure.

HF1097—Nelson, P. (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local government public employment equitable compensation relationship reporting requirements eliminated.

HF1098—Olson, M. (R)
Education Policy
Children, Families and Learning Department and other state agencies prohibited from entering into a contract with a federal agency under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind act of 2001.

HF1099—Kohls (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State contribution for employee hospital, medical, and dental premiums limited.

HF1100—Kohls (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State contribution for public official hospital, medical, and dental premiums limited.

HF1101—Walz (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Tourism office performance-based revolving account established, and money appropriated.

HF1102—Sykora (R)
Education Policy
Kindergarten through grade 12 education, special programs, educational excellence, nutrition, and family and early childhood education policy provisions modified.

HF1103—Swenson (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Water and soil resources board membership expanded.

HF1104—Lipman (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Stillwater; Brown's Creek environmental protection capital improvements funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF1105—Dorman (R)
Taxes
Individual income tax check-offs provided for additional funding to K-12 education, health care, higher education, early childhood and family education, and state parks.

HF1106—Koenen (DFL)
Agriculture Policy
Ethanol production goal and oxygen content requirement for gasoline increased.

HF1107—Dorman (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
State park annual permit fee increased.

HF1108—Hausman (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Recreational motor vehicle insurance and drivers license endorsements required; registration requirements modified; education, training, use on stateland, and other programs and studies provided; and money appropriated.

HF1109—Krinkie (R)
Education Finance
School board contracting requirements for certain noninstructional services modified.

HF1110—Koenen (DFL)
Education Finance
Special education aid payments made in full directly to the serving district.

HF1111—Krinkie (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Administration Department references updated; threshold project amount for designer selection board approval increased; and building code language modified.

HF1112—Adolphson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Veterans Affairs Department authorized to access certain state databases to determine eligibility for the state soldiers assistance program.

HF1113—Penas (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Warren; flood hazard mitigation project funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF1114—Kohls (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Purchase-money mortgage conveyance by spouses provisions modified.

HF1115—Hoppe (R)
Regulated Industries
Telephone assistance plan provisions modified.

HF1116—Walker (DFL)
Health & Human Services Policy
Large institute for children establishment, licensure, and public financing moratorium imposed, and study required on children and families whose needs are not being met by current child welfare or social services.

HF1117—Penas (R)
Transportation Finance
Pennington County joint use vehicle maintenance and storage building funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF1118—Buesgens (R)
Education Finance
Virtual schools funding mechanisms provided.

HF1119—Kielkucki (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Election deadlines, procedures, and requirements modified.

HF1120—Hornstein (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Airports Commission required to meet annually in airport noise affected neighborhood and report on noise mitigation, and advance notice of proposed budget required.

HF1121—Anderson, B. (R)
Transportation Policy
Transportation commissioner power to enter into agreements to share facilities modified.

HF1122—Adolphson (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Public notice and proceedings publication alternative methods provided.

HF1123—Smith (R)
Judiciary Policy and Finance
Criminal and traffic offenders surcharge increased, public defender applicants required to pay certain copayments, collection authorized through the Revenue Recapture Act, and money appropriated.

HF1124—Osterman (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Transitional housing loans funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF1125—Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Alcohol and drug counselor licensure provisions modified, and board of alcohol and drug counselors created.

HF1126—Haas (R)
State Government Finance
Shared technology systems funding provisions modified.

HF1127—Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Continuing care provisions modified.

HF1128—Finstad (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Human services state-operated services provisions modified.

HF1129—Kuisle (R)
Transportation Policy
Utility relocations necessitated by design-build transportation projects regulated.

HF1130—Howes (R)
Transportation Policy
Gross vehicle weights on interstate highways provisions modified, and nine-ton road weight limits in winter provided.

HF1131—Walker (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
International airport parking surcharge imposed, and airport impact mitigation account created in the general fund.

HF1132—Gerlach (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Entertainment agency laws repealed.

HF1133—Kielkucki (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Political subdivision compensation limit exception duties transferred, and state auditor fee authorized.

HF1134—Anderson, I. (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Koochiching County tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF1135—Lipman (R)
Civil Law
Data classification provided for computer data, bid and proposal information, and certain burial site data.

HF1136—Abeler (R)
Education Policy
Performance bonds provided for certain school district contracts relating to computer, information, and network systems.

HF1137—Atkins (DFL)
Taxes
College tuition cost income tax credit created.

HF1138—Clark (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Minneapolis authorized to issue an on-sale wine and malt liquor license to the Jungle Theater.

HF1139—Samuelson (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Human services technical changes provided, and long-term care report required.

HF1140—Soderstrom (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Nuclear materials regulation agreement under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 requirements modified.

HF1141—Samuelson (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Veterans homes statutory language updated and corrected.

HF1142—Anderson, B. (R)
Transportation Policy
Driver instruction permits and provisional drivers' license provisions modified.

HF1143—Severson (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Housing and economic development authorities authorized to create legal partnerships and corporations to engage in housing activities.

HF1144—Atkins (DFL)
Education Finance
Early retirement levy authorized for school districts.

HF1145—Seagren (R)
Education Policy
Crisis services coordinated with removal of certain students, district removal reporting provided, graduation rates of students with emotional or behavioral disturbance increased, and warning signs of mental illness required.

HF1146—Seagren (R)
Education Finance
Care and treatment facility operation of a charter school pilot project authorized.

HF1147—Kielkucki (R)
Education Policy
Postsecondary enrollment options courses authorized at nonpublic schools.

HF1148—Wilkin (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Health care providers qualified eligibility clearinghouses established to provided eligibility data.

HF1149—Seifert (R)
Taxes
Agricultural homestead county filing deadline provided.

HF1150—Wagenius (DFL)
Transportation Policy
Seat belt violation designated a primary offense, and all passengers required to wear seat belts.

HF1151—Hausman (DFL)
Transportation Policy
Drivers' licenses limited to including only personal information explicitly authorized, including height, weight, eye color, and gender; and reissuance of certain licenses and identification cards authorized.

HF1152—Haas (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Health care assistance funds disbursement regulated under public safety officer benefits program.

HF1153—Wagenius (DFL)
Taxes
This old house property tax valuation exclusion extended.

HF1154—Juhnke (DFL)
Education Finance
Limited English proficiency programs current funding clarified.

HF1155—Dempsey (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Goodhue County existing ICF/MR licensing change authorized.

HF1156—Juhnke (DFL)
Agriculture Policy
Animal Health Board emergency quarantine restrictions authority provisions extended.

HF1157—Rhodes (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Final portion of felony commitments authorized to be served in local correctional facilities, and request issued for proposals to provide facilities for persons committed to the state.

HF1158—Bradley (R)
Health & Human Services Finance
County nursing home payment adjustment increased.

HF1159—Jacobson (R)
Taxes
Roseville tax increment financing district extension authorized.

HF1160—Erickson (R)
Education Policy
Curriculum definition clarified under the school district process to plan, provide, and improve instruction and curriculum relating to the state's graduation standards.

HF1161—Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Treatment facility notice requirements when releasing persons held for detoxification clarified.

HF1162—Lipman (R)
Civil Law
State lottery electronic transmission data classified.

HF1163—Harder (R)
Health & Human Services Finance
Meals on Wheels and congregate dining program funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF1164—Johnson, S. (DFL)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Corrections Department biennial report to the Legislature required.

HF1165—Hausman (DFL)
Transportation Policy
High-speed rail transportation provided under the authority of the commissioner of transportation.

HF1166—Hackbarth (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Sales tax increase provided for natural resources funding, heritage enhancement fund created, and constitutional amendment proposed.

Wednesday, March 26

HF1167—Meslow (R)
Civil Law
Parental liability owed to a victim for certain acts of juvenile offenders increased and victim rights enhanced.

HF1168—DeLaForest (R)
Transportation Policy
User fees for single-occupant vehicles by high-occupancy vehicle "sane" lanes authorized, electronic toll collection allowed, fund deposit provided, petty misdemeanor penalty imposed, and transit improvement appropriations provided.

HF1169—Bernardy (DFL)
Transportation Policy
Collector vehicle usage for general transportation purposes authorized with payment of registration and minimum additional taxes.

HF1170—Sertich (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Central Iron Range sanitary sewer district established.

HF1171—Kohls (R)
Taxes
Long-term capital gain individual income tax exclusion authorized.

HF1172—Kuisle (R)
Transportation Policy
Archaeologist involvement limited to known archaeological or historic sites.

HF1173—Bradley (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Newborn health screening requirements modified.

HF1174—Erickson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Advisory committee expiration dates modified.

<p>HF1175—Otremba (DFL) Health & Human Services Policy Hearing instrument dispensers fee and reimbursement provisions modified and certain rule amendments required.</p>	<p>HF1185—Otremba (DFL) Education Finance Independent School District No. 213, Osakis, maximum effort capital loan principal amount reduced.</p>	<p>HF1196—Sertich (DFL) Jobs & Economic Development Finance Central Range Economic Development Initiative grant provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.</p>	<p>HF1206—Nelson, P. (R) Transportation Policy Government agencies authorized to act as commercial driver training schools.</p>
<p>HF1176—Kuisle (R) Taxes Mileage restriction in the definition of qualified small city eliminated relating to tax increment financing.</p>	<p>HF1186—Kuisle (R) Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy Average pay applied in determination of prevailing wage rate and workers for certain plants prevailing wage law exemption provided.</p>	<p>HF1197—Erickson (R) Civil Law Public employee city and county of residence information classified as private.</p>	<p>HF1207—Fuller (R) Higher Education Finance Higher education asset preservation provided, state bond sale authorized, and money appropriated.</p>
<p>HF1177—Otremba (DFL) Health & Human Services Policy Family planning special projects grants allocation modified and rulemaking required.</p>	<p>HF1187—Kuisle (R) Transportation Policy Highway construction interim pavement striping requirements removed from uniform traffic control manual.</p>	<p>HF1198—Anderson, B. (R) Taxes Monticello extension of time for certain activities in a tax increment financing district authorized.</p>	<p>HF1208—Abeler (R) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Racino; casino gambling at licensed pari-mutuel racetracks and licensed racetrack operation of casinos on licensed premises authorized, constitutional amendment proposed, and money appropriated.</p>
<p>HF1178—Johnson, S. (DFL) Judiciary Policy & Finance 911 access; cell phones for seniors program initiation by commissioner of administration required.</p>	<p>HF1188—Hilty (DFL) Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy Corporation officers and directors required to consider other factors in addition to the interests of shareholders.</p>	<p>HF1199—Abrams (R) Taxes Cigarette transportation for sale regulated.</p>	<p>HF1209—Pugh (DFL) Taxes Homestead property tax computation procedure modified and money appropriated.</p>
<p>HF1179—Wagenius (DFL) Ways & Means Public information technology systems, licenses, and infrastructure public debt allowed and constitutional amendment proposed.</p>	<p>HF1189—Erhardt (R) Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy Minors working as assistant soccer referees exempted from child labor minimum age restrictions.</p>	<p>HF1200—Lenczewski (DFL) Judiciary Policy & Finance DWI; alcohol concentration reduced to .08 for offenses of operating motor vehicles or watercraft, criminal vehicular homicide, hunting, handling explosives, or operating military vehicles.</p>	<p>HF1210—Thissen (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Reorganization of state government provided, governor's secretaries positions established, powers, duties, and agencies assigned, and implementation plan provided.</p>
<p>HF1180—Rukavina (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Giants Ridge recreation area card club authorized, and commissioner of public safety powers and duties provided.</p>	<p>HF1190—Hilty (DFL) Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy Convenience store security measures required and penalties prescribed.</p>	<p>HF1201—Bradley (R) Health & Human Services Finance Medical assistance asset and alternative care expenditure recovery provided, alternative care lien established, funding source for certain activities and MinnesotaCare changed, and children's mental health screening required.</p>	<p>HF1211—Mullery (DFL) Taxes Health insurance premium expanded individual income tax deductions authorized.</p>
<p>HF1181—Rukavina (DFL) Transportation Policy Failure to move vehicle safely away from stopped emergency vehicle fine surcharge provided and modifications to Minnesota driver manual required.</p>	<p>HF1191—Bernardy (DFL) Civil Law National Night Out event location classified as public data.</p>	<p>HF1202—Ozment (R) Agriculture Policy Feedlot environmental review modified.</p>	<p>HF1212—Mullery (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Policy Pollution Control Agency structure modified.</p>
<p>HF1182—Larson (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Finance Fish and dark house fees modified.</p>	<p>HF1192—Westerberg (R) Transportation Finance Trunk highway funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.</p>	<p>HF1203—Holberg (R) Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy Liability insurance provision to long-term care providers by joint underwriting association required.</p>	<p>HF1213—Cox (R) Agriculture Policy Organic food procedures and requirements modified and federal law compliance provided.</p>
<p>HF1183—Osterman (R) Jobs & Economic Development Finance Biotechnology and health sciences industry tax-free zone establishment authorized, tax exemptions provided, and tax benefit repayment provided.</p>	<p>HF1193—Hilty (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Policy Carlton County; Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa Indians provided first offer of tax forfeited land within the Fond du Lac Indian Reservation.</p>	<p>HF1204—Seifert (R) Transportation Policy Trunk Highway 23 from St. Cloud to I-90 designation as a high-priority interregional corridor and reconstruction as a multi-lane divided highway required.</p>	<p>HF1214—Nelson, P. (R) Transportation Policy Transportation Department provisions modified relating to state-aid highway and street status, recordkeeping, establishing new divisions within department, and other rulemaking.</p>
<p>HF1184—Osterman (R) Jobs & Economic Development Finance Minnesota employment center for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing funding provided, and money appropriated.</p>	<p>HF1194—Cornish (R) Judiciary Policy & Finance Criminal and traffic offender surcharge increased and funds used to supplement law enforcement agency responsible for conviction.</p>	<p>HF1205—Nelson, P. (R) Environment & Natural Resources Finance Taylors Falls fire and rescue operations funding provided for support of Interstate Park, and money appropriated.</p>	<p>HF1215—Rhodes (R) Judiciary Policy & Finance Terrorist-targeted nonprofit community-based organizations applications for anti-terrorism equipment and training grants authorized.</p>
	<p>HF1195—Sertich (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Municipal certificates of indebtedness for public safety and road maintenance equipment terms allowed increased.</p>		

HF1216—Rhodes (R)
Transportation Policy
Driver's license and identification card applicant information transferred from Department of Public Safety to Selective Service System.

HF1217—Clark (DFL)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
DWI; aggressive initiative against impaired driving and chemical dependency provided, alcoholic beverage tax increased, technical corrections provided, and money appropriated.

HF1218—Swenson (R)
Agriculture Policy
Agricultural and rural development funding provided; certain programs, activities, practices, assessments, fees, and accounts established, regulated, or modified; and money appropriated.

HF1219—DeLaForest (R)
Transportation Policy
County exemption from permit requirements when reconstructing highway in existing right-of-way provided.

HF1220—Mullery (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Absentee ballot treatment provided following a vacancy in nomination because of death or catastrophic illness.

HF1221—Marquart (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Drainage projects special elections provided.

HF1222—Borrell (R)
Civil Law
School authorization to report certain alleged juvenile offenses to the juvenile justice system clarified.

HF1223—Howes (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Horseback riding trail user fee established and money appropriated.

HF1224—Meslow (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Volunteer firefighter retirement plan monthly benefit and monthly benefit/lump sum options support levels revised.

HF1225—Meslow (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Prostitution offenses aggregation of prosecutions allowed.

HF1226—Meslow (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Automobile theft prevention special revenue account fund usage expanded, structure of financial crimes task force and related policies modified, and sunset provision repealed.

HF1227—Meslow (R)
Education Finance
Student access to services that support academic success improved.

HF1228—Buesgens (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Staggered terms of Metropolitan Council members provided, and public meeting requirement to fill Metropolitan Council vacancies within 12 months of initial appointment eliminated.

HF1229—Smith (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Criminal and traffic offenses reclassified, and statutory reporting and case processing standards removed.

HF1230—Kahn (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Public Utilities Commission authorized to order public utility to initiate emissions reduction rider process or to proceed with an approved emissions reduction rider.

HF1231—Entenza (DFL)
Education Finance
Health and safety program expanded to include school safety costs associated with student support services.

HF1232—Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Bloomington fiscal disparities pool additional contribution obligation eliminated.

HF1233—Tingelstad (R)
Transportation Finance
Northstar commuter rail line funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF1234—Ruth (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Cemetery interment errors corrections provided.

HF1235—Ellison (DFL)
Taxes
Lead paint removal property tax valuation exclusion provided.

HF1236—Nelson, M. (DFL)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Employer misrepresentation of status of employees prohibited.

HF1237—Solberg (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Right to practice forestry act adopted.

HF1238—Solberg (DFL)
Transportation Policy
Seasonal highway zones authorized to allow operation of overweight vehicles on nine-ton roads in winter, and gross weights on vehicles hauling raw or unfinished farm or forest products regulated.

HF1239—Juhnke (DFL)
Transportation Policy
Centerline rumble strips required on certain highway projects.

HF1240—Magnus (R)
Regulated Industries
Wind energy eligible for incentive payments amount increased.

HF1241—Stang (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Early retirement incentives provided for teachers meeting certain conditions.

HF1242—Stang (R)
Higher Education Finance
State grants for higher education prohibited for summer academic terms.

HF1243—Jacobson (R)
Taxes
Estate tax abolished.

HF1244—Jacobson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Lawful gambling clarifying and technical changes provided, definitions provided and modified, resale of certain equipment authorized, and conduct of high school raffles and social dice games clarified.

HF1245—Strachan (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Indeterminate sentencing provided for certain convicted sex offenders and civil commitment prohibited.

HF1246—Seifert (R)
Education Policy
Teaching board authorized to grant annual waivers allowing licensed teachers in alternative schools to provide instruction in a content area outside their licensure.

HF1247—Greiling (DFL)
Education Finance
School building project B3 project guideline compliance required.

HF1248—Marquart (DFL)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Prevailing wage requirements modified.

HF1249—Seifert (R)
Taxes
Special agricultural homestead annual certification county filing required.

HF1250—Dorn (DFL)
Taxes
Electric generation facility personal property tax exemption provided.

HF1251—Samuelson (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Home care provider employees single background study authorized, licensed home care agencies excluded from supplemental nursing services law, and certain home care agencies exempted from state survey requirements.

HF1252—Gunther (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Barber Examiners Board fee provisions modified, and money appropriated.

HF1253—Brod (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local government pay equity reports required to be filed with the commissioner of employee relations every five years.

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HF1254—Harder (R)
Regulated Industries
Biogas; qualified on-farm biogas recovery facility definition expanded for the renewable energy production incentive.

HF1255—Erhardt (R)
Transportation Finance
County state-aid highway fund apportionment provided, motor fuel tax increased to fund trunk highways, transportation sales tax authorized for certain counties, major local projects account created, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF1256—Atkins (DFL)
Taxes
College tuition income tax deduction provided.

HF1257—Swenson (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Drainage authority authorized to compensate landowners for bridge removal.

HF1258—Peterson (DFL)
Civil Law
Domestic violence victims' advocate privilege established.

HF1259—Ozment (R) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Board of Adjustment and Appeals decision appeal to the county board authorized.	HF1270—Carlson (DFL) Taxes Golden Valley tax increment financing district extension authorized.	HF1281—Hausman (DFL) Transportation Finance Central corridor transitway project between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul funding reauthorized, and money appropriated.	HF1291—Klinzing (R) Education Finance School districts required to direct at least 55 percent of their operating revenue directly to regular instruction.
HF1260—Seagren (R) Education Finance Online learning program established, student eligibility defined, online course revenue provided, district review and certification required, and money appropriated.	HF1271—Gunther (R) Health & Human Services Policy Lead; childhood lead poisoning act adopted.	HF1282—Lindgren (R) Agriculture Policy Wild rice labeling provisions modified.	HF1292—Seifert (R) Education Finance Severance pay limited for school superintendents leaving employment.
HF1261—Holberg (R) Transportation Policy Driver's license re-issued eight weeks after cancellation due to diabetes-related driving episode.	HF1272—Gunther (R) Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy New plumbing installation inspection requirements established, and health commissioner allowed to charge fees to hire staff.	HF1283—Clark (DFL) Jobs & Economic Development Finance WomenVenture and the Metropolitan Economic Development Association grants provided, and money appropriated.	HF1293—Seifert (R) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Volunteer firefighter relief association deferred service pension interest crediting options modified.
HF1262—Clark (DFL) Health & Human Services Policy Medical care coverage required for pharmaceutical care.	HF1273—Meslow (R) State Government Finance Reverse auction procedures required for state purchasing.	HF1284—Mariani (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Capitol Area Architecture and Planning Board and designer selection board placed under the administrative control of the Board of Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience, and Interior Design.	HF1294—Seifert (R) Transportation Policy Transportation commissioner prohibited from requiring counties to lease or purchase mechanical shakers for testing aggregate material.
HF1263—Otremba (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Policy Well testing model notice required, notice disseminated, and information posted on the Department of Health Web site.	HF1274—Lindgren (R) Ways & Means State spending increase limits provided by proposed constitutional amendment.	HF1285—Severson (R) Health & Human Services Policy Hospital needs study required for central Minnesota.	HF1295—Marquart (DFL) Education Finance Education excellence revenue established as a funding mechanism for rewarding education results.
HF1264—Klinzing (R) Environment & Natural Resources Policy School site pilot program established to provide schools with more local authority and flexibility.	HF1275—Clark (DFL) Health & Human Services Policy Pharmaceutical care demonstration project required.	HF1286—Westerberg (R) Transportation Finance Hazard elimination safety account created in the local road improvement fund, local bridge replacement and rehabilitation and local road improvement program bonds authorized, standards provided, and money appropriated.	HF1296—Kahn (DFL) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy Casino; state lottery authorized to lease and operate a casino in the international airport, and money appropriated.
HF1265—Klinzing (R) Education Policy Student-teacher ratios clarified to include only teachers whose primary duty is to provide language arts, math, science, or social studies instruction.	HF1276—Jaros (DFL) Regulated Industries Duluth additional on-sale liquor license authorized.	HF1287—Mullery (DFL) Judiciary Policy & Finance Controlled substance sales crime offenders geographic restrictions policies established, increased sentences provided for repeat offenders in restricted areas, and criminal penalties imposed.	HF1297—Westerberg (R) Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy Mandatory automobile insurance enforcement provisions modified.
HF1266—Sykora (R) Education Finance Learning scholarships established for students with disabilities.	HF1277—Hoppe (R) Taxes State spending increase limits provided, rebate of excess revenues provided, and money appropriated.	HF1288—Cox (R) Higher Education Finance Higher education assigned student responsibility modified.	HF1298—Carlson (DFL) Higher Education Finance Higher education state grant proration procedures modified.
HF1267—Brod (R) Regulated Industries Interest rates paid on consumer deposits by utilities modified.	HF1278—Lipman (R) Judiciary Policy & Finance Predatory offender registration law definitions provided, crime victim input allowed earlier in plea agreement process, child abuse victim video interview disclosure conditions imposed, and rape examination law clarified.	HF1289—Kelliher (DFL) Regulated Industries On-sale and off-sale liquor license municipal limits removed.	HF1299—Buesgens (R) Education Finance Education funding classroom focus provided, efficiencies in state government increased, and duplicative programs eliminated.
HF1268—Severson (R) Transportation Policy Vehicle light display when visibility is impaired provisions clarified.	HF1279—Solberg (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Policy Itasca County tax-forfeited land sale authorized.	HF1290—Nornes (R) Health & Human Services Policy Hospital construction moratorium exception provided.	HF1300—Peterson (DFL) Education Finance Secondary schools qualifying for sparsity revenue or serving a defined large area revenue increased.
HF1269—Samuelson (R) Health & Human Services Finance Human services biennial information on asset diversion required, senior linkage line information expanded, excess home equity applied to long-term care costs, and income transfers prohibition extended.	HF1280—Mullery (DFL) Transportation Finance Minneapolis; Lowry bridge replacement funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.		HF1301—Peterson (DFL) Education Finance Minnesota economic opportunity grants funding reinstated, and money appropriated.

MONDAY, March 31

12:30 PM

Higher Education Finance

Room: 300S State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Doug Stang

Agenda: HF188 (Jaros) Minnesota State Colleges and Universities directed to adopt a policy requiring foreign language teaching students to study abroad, and University of Minnesota requested to adopt a similar policy.

HF742 (Wilkin) Legislative approval of certain student fees required.

HF999 (Olsen) Regent Advisory Council of the University of Minnesota membership expanded to include students.

Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: HF973 (Brod) Veterans Affairs Commissioner authorized to access taxpayer identification information to notify veterans of health hazards that might affect them.

HF1112 (Adolphson) Veterans Affairs Department authorized to access certain state databases to determine eligibility for the state soldiers assistance program.

HF912 (Kielkucki) State soldiers' assistance fund clarified limiting benefits to state residents.

HF1045 (Eastlund) Support obligations of certain persons called into active military service modified.

HF1099 (Kohls) State contribution for employee hospital, medical, and dental premiums limited.

Health and Human Services Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau

Agenda: Some bills may be added. Some bills may be withdrawn.

If additional time is needed, a session will be held 30 minutes after the floor session.

HF0029 (Bradley) Repeal of MinnesotaCare provider taxes; raise tax rates on cigarettes and tobacco.

HF1155 (Dempsey) Goodhue County existing ICF/MR licensing change authorized.

HF1044 (Brod) Health care professional boards costs and penalties relating to disciplinary proceedings clarified.

HF0865 (Powell) Psychology board independent examination of a practitioner required.

HF0866 (Powell) Psychologist emeritus registration provided.

HF0867 (Powell) Psychologist supervised practice provisions modified.

HF0868 (Powell) Psychology practice definition clarified.

HF0201 (Fuller) EMS registration provisions modified.

HF0528 (Fuller) EMS four-year contracts.

HF0436 (Holberg) Family planning grant funds use limited.

HF0279 (Abeler) Expanding authority of physician assistants.

HF0287 (Abeler) Regulating insurance coverage for communication aids or devices.

HF0346 (Abeler) Speech language pathology or audiology practice provisions.

HF0410 (Abeler) Alzheimer's Disease.

HF0551 (Abeler) Adult foster care license capacity expanded.

HF0632 (Abeler) Long-term care insurance availability and quality expanded, and legislative task force.

HF0662 (Abeler) Health coverage for handicapped children to require notice on termination.

HF0692 (Abeler) Pharmacists may administer flu and pneumococcal vaccine.

HF0774 (Abeler) Human Services Department background studies act adopted.

HF1127 (Abeler) Continuing care provisions modified.

3:00 PM

THE HOUSE MEETS IN SESSION

4:30 PM

Meeting Time Note: After session at the call of the chair

Ethics

Room: 400N State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Sondra Erickson

Agenda: Consider request to authorize subpoenas per Minn. Statutes 3.153.

Format of April 7 presentation and hearing.

5:00 PM

Meeting Time Note: One hour after session
Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Mary Murphy, commission secretary

Agenda: Election of commission officers: chair, vice chair, and secretary.

HF520 (Smith); SF618 (Pogemiller) MFRA; Executive Secretary Maximum Salary Amount (House Omnibus Pension Bill Vehicle Bill).

HF656 (Lenczewski); SF190 (Betzold) Hennepin County Supplemental Plan; Hardship Distribution Request Approval Authority Change (Senate Omnibus Pension bill vehicle bill).

Other items as designated by the commission chair.

TUESDAY, April 1

8:15 AM

Health and Human Services Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Fran Bradley

Bill(s) Added

Agenda: HF5 (Bradley) Prescription drug program established and money appropriated.
HF15 (Mullery) MinnesotaCare eligibility requirements modified for persons with continuation coverage.

HF403 (Solberg) Itasca County nursing home facility construction bonds authorized.

HF901 (Thao) Medical assistance reimbursement rates for certain outpatient rehabilitation services increased.

HF924 (Huntley) Compulsive gambling prevention and education funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF956 (Magnus) Veterans homes fund usage clarified relating to wood shops.
More bills may be added.

Environment and Natural Resources Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: Public Testimony on governor's budget proposal for Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Department of Natural Resources, Office of Environmental Assistance, Board of Water and Soil Resources, Minnesota Zoo, and Science Museum.

Contact committee staff to be placed on agenda (651) 296-5994.

Education Policy

Room: Room 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: HF936 (Nelson) Special education pilot program established to exempt school districts from special education mandates beyond those required by federal law.

HF680 (Urdahl) Hearing required for the termination or nonrenewal of a licensed or unlicensed coach or assistant coach.

HF822 (Buesgens) Direct judicial review of district exclusion and expulsion decisions allowed.

HF1145 (Seagren) Crisis services coordinated with removal of certain students, district removal reporting provided, graduation rates of students with emotional or behavioral disturbance increased, and warning signs of mental illness required.

HF1246 (Seifert) Teaching board authorized to grant annual waivers allowing licensed teachers in alternative schools to provide instruction in a content area outside their licensure.

HF982 (Klinzing) Charter school students allowed to fully participate in extracurricular

activities of resident school districts.

HFXXXX (Klinzing) Authorizing school pilot sites for independent management with agreement of the school board.

HFXXXX (Seagren) credentialing of paraprofessionals defined; requiring display of teaching licenses

Other bills may be added.

Meeting will continue at 4:30 p.m. in the Basement Hearing Room.

Bills not completed or heard will be carried over to Wednesday.

Transportation Finance

Room: 500S State Office Building

Chair: Rep. William Kuisle

Agenda: 2003 Road Needs Assessment Study (conclusion).

HF343 (Abeler) Used vehicle dealers sales to other dealers allowed and vehicle donation to individuals by licensed limited used vehicle dealers sales tax exemption provided.

HF986 (Zellers) Northwest busway connecting Minneapolis to Rogers funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HFXXXX (Ruth) Trunk Highway 14 funding provided.

HF484 (Thissen) Bloomington and Richfield I-494 expansion provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

10:15 AM

Education Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: HF1146 (Seagren) A bill for an act relating to education finance; authorizing a pilot project to demonstrate the effectiveness of a care and treatment facility operating a charter school. HF1109 (Krinkie) A bill for an act relating to education; modifying school board contracting for certain noninstructional services.

HF1088 (Eken) A bill for an act relating to education finance; creating a new component of general education aid to promote small school sustainability; eliminating alternative facilities aid; dedicating the growth in the statewide general property tax; appropriating money.

HF780 (Wardlow) A bill for an act relating to education; permitting school districts to pay insurance premiums for teachers on an extended leave of absence.

Environment and Natural Resources Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: To be announced.

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: HF175 (Davids) Caledonia public safety officer health insurance benefits reimbursed by the Department of Public Safety.

HF96 (Smith) Public safety officer health insurance benefit reimbursement policy modified, and specified claims reimbursed from available funds.

HF7 (Smith) Public safety officer death benefit paid to officer's estate if there is no eligible spouse or dependent.

HF784 (Powell) Emergency communications interference prohibited.

HF1066 (Zellers) State hazardous materials team provisions modified.

Other bills may be added.

Taxes

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: Complete testimony on HF495

(Johnson, J.) Metropolitan fiscal disparities law abolished; and, HF514 (Lenczewski)

Metropolitan Revenue Distribution Act

abolished (30 minutes maximum total time).

Hearing:

HF646 (Buesgens) Racino; gaming machines provided, and horse racing purse payments established.

12:30 PM

Transportation Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: HF643 (Kuisle) Department of Public Safety bill.

HF1071 (Seifert) Paved two-lane highway speed limits.

HFXXXX (Westerberg) Uninsured motorist.

Other bills will be added.

Please note Transportation Policy Committee hearing will be continued at 4:30 p.m. in room 200 State Office Building.

Agriculture Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Howard Swenson

Agenda: HF1202 (Ozment) Feedlot environmental review modified.

HF1213 (Cox) Organic food procedures and requirements modified and federal law compliance provided.

HF1096 (Harder) Rural economic infrastructure opportunities expanded, and annual appropriation established for ethanol production and other rural infrastructure.

HF1282 (Lindgren) Wild rice labeling provisions modified.

Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: HF775 (Westrom) Radioactive waste management provisions modified, dry cask storage at Prairie Island authorized, commission approval required for additional storage capacity for spent nuclear fuel, and renewable energy source funding required.

HF1020 (Haas) Casino authorized operated by the state, revenue sharing with Native American governments provided, tax imposed, revenue use specified, on-sale liquor license authorized, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Greg Davids

Agenda: HF894 (Pugh) Manufactured homes certificates of title provisions modified.

HF831 (Gunther) Unemployment insurance trust fund solvency provisions increased.

HF980 (Davids) Anti-skimming act adopted prohibiting use of electronic scanning devices to capture encoded information from a credit card.

HF1019 (Davids) Minnesota No-Fault Automobile Insurance Act applied to horse drawn vehicles and insurance requirements established.

HF996 (Wilkin) Automobile no-fault personal injury protection coverage modified, arbitration provisions changed, and insurance fraud reduced.

HF1005 (Westerberg) No-fault personal injury protection automobile coverage amended, health care provider prompt billing incentives provided, and insurance fraud reduced.

HF971 (Gerlach) Government-controlled or -owned insurance companies prohibited from transacting business.

HF984 (Swenson) Minnesota cooperative associations act adopted authorizing businesses to organize as cooperative associations.

*** PLEASE NOTE *** Tuesday, April 1 (Room 5, 4:30 p.m. - 12 midnight) *** The committee will meet during this time if the agenda from the normal committee time is not completed ***

2:30 PM

Meeting Time Note: Committee will begin meeting in Room 5, at 4:30 p.m., meeting will continue in room 300 N until 7:00 p.m., and then be continued in Room 10 from 7:00 p.m. until 12 midnight.

Regulated Industries

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Torrey Westrom

Agenda: 2:30 p.m. until 4:15 p.m. in Room 5:

HF671 (Gunther) Telephone company service promotions and packages regulated.

HF1115 (Hoppe) Telephone assistance plan provisions modified.

HF1027 (Hoppe) Emergency 911 telecommunications provisions modified governing fee submission procedures and audits.

HF 995 (Cox) Notice and plan requirements modified for excavating around utility facilities, emergency exception allowed, and damage report rules required.

4:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. in Room 300N:

HF794 (Gunther) Education telecommunications fund established, support provided to kindergarten

through grade 12 schools and public library telecommunications networks, access fee imposed, and money appropriated.

7:00 p.m. til Midnight in Room 10:

HF719 (Beard) Brewpubs authorized to make retail and wholesale sales, and municipal liquor license limit removed.

HF 979 (Beard) Alternative forms of regulation of telephone companies provisions modified.

Capital Investment

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Phil Krinkie

Agenda: HF575 (Gerlach) Art expenditures in state-financed buildings limited.

Civil Law

*** Note: *** Change in meeting room

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Mary Liz Holberg

Agenda: HF653 (Olsen) Postadoption services requirements modified to require release of nonidentifying history of birth family.

HF817 (Mahoney) Commissioner of health responsibilities eliminated relating to occupational safety and health, and certain penalty limits increased.

HF969 (Penas) Emergency food embargo authority provided to commissioner of agriculture in times of national security or peacetime emergency.

HF501 (Meslow) Travel clubs regulated.

HF754 (Osterman) Displaced person definition changed to correspond with federal law.

HF1001 (Boudreau) Adverse health care events reporting system established, certain health data classified, and money appropriated.

HF919 (Kielkucki) Nonprofit corporation residential treatment center, group home, and private child-placing agency liability regulated.

HF1135 (Lipman) Data classification provided for computer data, bid and proposal information, and certain burial site data.

HF1162 (Lipman) State lottery electronic transmission data classified.

HF906 (Holberg) Student survey notice requirements provided.

HF1032 (Slawik) Minnesota false claims act adopted.

Bills not heard will be carried over to the next meeting.

Meeting Time Note: The Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee

will recess at 4:15 p.m., and reconvene at 5:00 p.m. in Room 500 South if needed.

Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs
Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Jerry Dempsey

Agenda: HF883 (Wilkin) Metropolitan Airports Commission chair subjected to confirmation by the Senate, and members' terms of office clarified.

HF1228 (Buesgens) Staggered terms of Metropolitan Council members provided, and public meeting requirement to fill Metropolitan

Council vacancies within 12 months of initial appointment eliminated.

HF1042 (Wardlow) Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission name changed to Minnesota sports and entertainment commission, and commission membership modified.

HF932 (Vandever) Property appraisal provided every five years.

HF800 (Hackbarth) Fireworks regulation provided, fees authorized, and local regulation limited.

HF30 (Lipman) Comprehensive planning local control re-established, Metropolitan Council review of local plans repealed, and conforming changes provided.

HF199 (Anderson, I.) Koochiching County authorized to establish a port authority, and local government units authorized to apply for foreign trade zone powers.

HF889 (Hilstrom) Metropolitan Council project local approval required for projects for which real property will be acquired by eminent domain.

State Government Finance

Room: 500N State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Bill Haas

Agenda: HF624 (Seifert) Local government impact notes provided for state agency rule proposals, and aggregate cost of compliance determined.

HF619 (Rhodes) Sports board gambling authorized.

HF734 (Kielkucki) Linked bingo gaming provided.

WEDNESDAY, April 2

8:15 AM

Health and Human Services Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau

Agenda: Bills may be added. Some bills may be withdrawn. Some bills may be carried over from Monday's hearing. If additional time is needed, this hearing will be continued 30 minutes after the floor session.

HF1095 (Bradley) Construction deadline extended for previously approved nursing home moratorium exception projects.

HF590 (Haas) Child-care assistance fraud prevention provisions.

HF1026 (Kohls) Medical Assistance capitated payment option on waived services, day training and habilitation, and Intermediate Care Facility services for mentally retarded.

HF727 (Wilkin) Health coverage proposed mandates evaluation provided.

HF1016 (Wilkin) Medicare supplement insurance regulated and state law conformity with minimum federal standards.

HF326 (Samuelson) Payments for dental loan forgiveness program; donated dental services

program.

HF491 (Samuelson) Nursing facility regulatory requirements and standards modified.

HF572 (Samuelson) Adult foster care license capacity expanded.

HF1139 (Samuelson) Human services technical changes provided, and long-term care report required.

HF1141 (Samuelson) Veterans homes statutory language updated and corrected.

HF1251 (Samuelson) Home care provider employees background check; home care exempt from survey requirements.

HF885 (Seifert) Food establishments exempted from equipment design or construction rules.

Environment and Natural Resources

Finance

*** Note: *** Change in meeting room

Room: 500N State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: To be announced.

Education Policy

*** Note: *** Change in meeting room

Room: Room 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Continuation of Tuesday's agenda (if needed). Bills may be added. Meeting will continue at 4:30 p.m. in Room 5 (if needed). Bills not completed or heard will be carried over to Thursday.

Transportation Finance

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. William Kuisle

Agenda: HF4 (Westerberg) Trunk highway improvement bonds issued, and money appropriated. ***Delete-everything amendment will be offered to insert the language of HF1192 (Westerberg) Highway bonds authorized and money appropriated.

HFXXXX (Beard) Transportation coalition funding proposal.

HF1255 (Erhardt) County state-aid highway fund apportionment provided, motor fuel tax increased to fund trunk highways, transportation sales tax authorized for certain counties, major local projects account created, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

10:15 AM

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: HF381 (Strachan) Corrections prohibition on double bunking inmates at custody level five and six institutions eliminated.

HF1157 (Rhodes) Final portion of felony commitments authorized to be served in local correctional facilities, and request issued for proposals to provide facilities for persons committed to the state.

HF1053 (Seifert) Double bunking in jails allowed and sheriffs and boards of county and regional

jails contracts with private prisons for care, custody, and rehabilitation of jail inmates authorized.
HF502 (Seifert) Prison privatization proposals requested, prison services contracting standards established, and report required.
HF1036 (Seifert) Inmate meal frequency provided, and desserts to inmates prohibited.

Education Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: HF1118 (Buesgens) A bill for an act relating to education finance; providing funding mechanisms for virtual schools.

HF202 (Olsen, S.) A bill for an act relating to education finance; expanding the referendum equalization aid program; eliminating alternative facilities aid.

HF1291 (Klinzing) A bill for an act relating to education finance; requiring school districts to direct at least 55 percent of their operating revenue directly to the classroom.

HF206 (Seagren) A bill for an act relating to education; repealing the January 15 contract deadline date and penalty.

Environment and Natural Resources Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: To be announced.

Taxes

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: Hearings on bills to be announced.

12:30 PM

Transportation Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: HF399 (Kuisle) Special license plate authorization.

HF1007 (Erhardt) Highway 62 treatment as interstate system.

HF1214 (Nelson, P.) Repeals obsolete rules.

Other bills will added.

Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: HF1074 (Kielkucki) Casino authorized in the seven county metropolitan area by constitutional amendment, tax imposed, and money appropriated.

HF830 (Kahn) Sports wagering, pools, and bookmaking authorized under the state lottery; bookmaking tax imposed; and Minnesota active recreation fund established.

HF1244 (Jacobson) Lawful gambling clarifying and technical changes provided, definitions provided and modified, resale of certain

equipment authorized, and conduct of high school raffles and social dice games clarified.

HF943 (Rhodes) State finance practices and procedures modified, and state treasurer duties transferred to the commissioner of finance.

HF873 (Dorman) County records examination by private accountants authorized and state audit mandate by state auditor removed.

HF975 (Jacobson) Local government pay equity responsibilities transferred to the state auditor, and rulemaking and fees authorized.

HF1133 (Kielkucki) Political subdivision compensation limit exception duties transferred, and state auditor fee authorized.

HF1003 (Strachan) Political subdivision compensation limit exclusion provided.

HF1006 (Boudreau) Help America Vote Act conformity provided, complaint process created, and penalty imposed.

HF777 (Klinzing) Voting equipment grant account distribution modified.

HF1064 (Samuelson) State employee technical and housekeeping changes provided.

HF1111 (Krinkie) Administration Department references updated; threshold project amount for designer selection board approval increased; and building code language modified.

HF1024 (Kuisle) State contracting and state printing services provisions modified.

HF793 (Gerlach) Public employee salary and wage rate freeze instituted.

HF1152 (Haas) Health care assistance funds disbursement regulated under public safety officer benefits program.

HF283 (Vandever) Income tax checkoff provided to fund benefits for survivors of law enforcement officers and firefighters and to maintain peace officer and firefighter memorials.

HF1040 (Wilkin) Health care nonprofessionals classified as essential employees.

HF1035 (Strachan) DWI breath-testing instruments provisions modified.

HF772 (Swenson) Minnesota Agriculture Education Leadership Council expiration date eliminated.

HF230 (Abeler) Licensed professional counseling board established, license requirements provided, and money appropriated.

HF931 (Sykora) Public contracting requirements modified relating to labor organizations.

HF864 (Stang) Higher Education Services Office modified.

HF1145 (Seagren) Crisis services coordinated with removal of certain students, district removal reporting provided, graduation rates of students with emotional or behavioral disturbance increased, and warning signs of mental illness required.

HF785 (Buesgens) Metropolitan government provisions modified relating to reporting requirements, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission abolished, and dischargers directly assessed wastewater treatment user fees. More may be added.

Agriculture Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Howard Swenson

Agenda: Continuation of the April 1 agenda plus additional bills to be announced.

Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Greg Davids

Agenda: HF946 (Johnson, J.) Insurance guaranty association regulation provided.

HF 854 (Rhodes) Mechanical contractors bond requirement established and filing fee authorized.

HF1039 (Davids) Financial institution exam, applications, loans, and organizational provisions regulated, standard nonforfeiture law for individual deferred annuities revised, and obsolete rules repealed.

HF 851 (Stang) Motor vehicle sales and distribution regulated.

HF 896 (Johnson, J.) School conference and activity employment leave technical clarifications provided.

HF 1234 (Ruth) Cemetery interment errors corrections provided.

*** PLEASE NOTE ***Wednesday, April 2 (Room 300S, 4:30 - Midnight) ***The committee will meet during this time if the agenda from the normal committee time is not completed. ***

Higher Education Finance

Room: 300S State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Doug Stang

Agenda: HF862 (Seifert) State grant eligibility for students attending private, for-profit higher education institutions eliminated.

HF1242 (Stang) State grants for higher education prohibited for summer academic terms.

2:30 PM

Meeting Time Note: Committee will begin meeting in Room 5, at 4:30 p.m. meeting will continue in room 300N until 7:00 p.m., and then be continued in room 10 from 7:00 p.m. until 12 Midnight.

Regulated Industries

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Torrey Westrom

Agenda: 2:30 p.m. until 4:15 p.m. in Room 5:

HF958 (Krinkie) Hydrogen energy economy goal declared, incentive payments for hydrogen production provided, hydrogen energy research and development supported, and fuel cell and motor vehicle excise tax exemption provided.

HF964 (Beard) Cleaner innovative energy sources permanent pilot program established; financial and regulatory incentives, eminent domain, and tax exemptions provided; and customer purchase of power supply services from pilot projects authorized.

4:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. in Room 300N: Continuation of agenda.

7:00 p.m. until midnight in Room 10:
Continuation of agenda.

State Government Finance
Room: 500N State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Bill Haas
Agenda: To be announced

Meeting Time Note: The Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee will recess at 4:15 p.m., and reconvene at 5:00 p.m. in Room 500 South if needed.

Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs
Room: 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Jerry Dempsey

Agenda: HF561 (Gerlach) Tobacco sales to minors uniform mandatory penalties imposed, mitigating circumstances defined, and electronic age verification required.

HF473 (Olson, M.) Local government opt out procedures provided regarding certain state mandates.

HF929 (Brod) Metropolitan Mosquito Control District provisions modified to include the rest of Carver County, property tax levy base restored, per diems eliminated for commissioners, and other conforming changes provided.

HF1122 (Adolphson) Public notice and proceedings publication alternative methods provided.

HF1253 (Brod) Local government pay equity reports required to be filed with the commissioner of employee relations every five years.

HF389 (Hornstein) Minneapolis City Council authorized to establish unclassified service positions.

HF171 (Lenczewski) Casino; state-operated or state-licensed gambling facility prohibited in a city which has adopted a resolution of disapproval.

Civil Law

Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Mary Liz Holberg

Agenda: HF933 (Borrell) County local welfare agency reporting of at-risk newborns provided, and Hennepin County Mental Health Services data sharing authorized in certain circumstances.
HF1084 (Borrell) Federal contracts and agreements data classification provided.

HF852 (Lipman) Motor vehicle retail installment sales regulated.

Any bill not heard will be carried over to the next meeting.

Bills may be added to this schedule.

THURSDAY, April 3

8:15 AM

Education Policy

Room: Room 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Continuation of Tuesday's agenda. Bills may be added.

Environment and Natural Resources Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: HF407 (Howes) Minnesota Conservation Corps transferred to the Friends of the Minnesota Conservation Corps, assets transferred, and money appropriated. Other bills may be added.

Health and Human Services Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau

Agenda: HF0961 (Smith) Human services program hearing procedures established.

HF1128 (Finstad) Human services state-operated services provisions modified.

HF1140 (Soderstrom) Nuclear materials regulation agreement under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 requirements.

HF1148 (Wilkin) Health care providers qualified eligibility clearinghouses established to provide eligibility data.

10:15 AM

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: To be announced.

Environment and Natural Resources Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: To be announced.

Education Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: To be announced.

Taxes

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: Hearings on bills to be announced.

12:30 PM

Agriculture and Rural Development Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Elaine Harder

Agenda: To be announced.

Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Greg Davids

Agenda: To be announced

FRIDAY, April 4

10:30 AM

Civil Law

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Mary Liz Holberg

Agenda: HF444 (Swenson) Municipal contract judgment awarding of attorney fees authorized in certain cases.

HF1045 (Eastlund) Support obligations of certain persons called into active military service modified.

HF778 (Smith) Family law omnibus bill.

HF971 (Gerlach) Government-controlled or owned insurance companies prohibited from transacting business.

Additional bills will be added to this schedule.

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Continued from page 19

transportation and child care. The group receives and distributes donated cars to those in need, and provides low or no cost car repairs to individuals who qualify.

Cliff Korkowski, executive director of the group, testified that occasionally the group receives a vehicle, such as a four-wheel-drive pickup truck, that would be too expensive for typical recipients of the group's vehicles. In those cases, Korkowski said, the group would like to be able to sell that vehicle to a dealer and use the money to repair more economical vehicles.

The bill would allow such groups with a "limited use vehicle dealer" license to sell vehicles directly to dealers, rather than going through the auto auction process as they are required to do under current law. In a letter submitted to the committee, Korkowski suggested the dealer auctions are overloaded with vehicles, so direct sale to another dealer is a better option.

In addition, the bill would provide that any vehicle donated by a nonprofit to an individual be treated as vehicles given to others as gifts, and therefore be exempt from motor vehicle sales tax.

The bill's Senate companion (SF262), sponsored by Sen. Leo Foley (DFL-Coon Rapids), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

VETERANS



Preserving history

The House passed a bill March 24 that would designate Victory Memorial Drive as a historic district. The vote was 134-0.

Bordering Minneapolis and Robbinsdale, the drive established in 1921 is one of the longest World War I memorials in the country stretching approximately three miles.

Originally, 568 elm trees were planted in straight military style rows in memory of the fallen soldiers from Hennepin County. In 1928, a marker was placed in front of each tree with the name, rank, and company of a soldier. Dutch Elm disease forced some trees to be cut down and replanted.

The bill (HF456) allows the drive to be eligible for historic preservation grants by designating it an historic district. Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls), the bill's sponsor, said the grant monies would help with the cost of maintenance.

The bill now moves to the Senate, where it is sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls).

Reflections

Nebraska — being the first, and presently the only, state to function with a unicameral legislature — was not the first state to elect its members without party designation. That honor goes to Minnesota, which in 1913, became the first state to have its legislators' names placed on the ballot with a nonpartisan label.

Nebraska's legislature did not vote to have nonpolitical party affiliation until it reorganized in 1934 and became a one-body system.

Minnesota's nonpartisan Legislature, which lasted until 1973 in the House and 1975 in the Senate, evolved from a movement to reform government, both statewide and nationally.

As Republican and Democratic lawmakers with progressive viewpoints went into the state's 1913 session, their ideologies of whether the state or counties should be alcohol wet or dry complicated the process of making laws. The issue went beyond party lines as, in addition to being called by their party affiliation, all lawmakers came to be known by their beliefs as "wets" or "drys." Drys were in the majority, as well as the Republicans who controlled the House and Senate in the Legislature, the executive branch and the judicial branch.

The plan to eliminate party designation began in 1912 when Sen. Julius E. Haycraft, a progressive Republican, introduced a bill to extend that year's nonpartisan primaries law to include judges, and all city and county officers.

Sen. A. J. Rockne, a conservative Republican, opposed the bill by arguing that political parties were necessary to the democratic system of American government. Rockne believed he could kill the bill — with assurance from House Speaker Henry Rines — by having it die in the House Elections Committee with an amendment attached that would add legislators to the list of nonpartisan county officials.

Haycraft opposed the amendment and got assurance from Speaker Rines that the bill would not pass the House or go to conference committee if the bill included legislators. With general knowledge that the amended bill would die in the House Elections Committee, the bill passed the Senate 53-8.

However, the elections committee removed the provision for legislators and city officials.

But progressives and lobbyists for the liquor and beer industry seized the opportunity by convincing the drys, which were mostly Republicans in the majority, to vote in favor of the bill. The bill reached the House floor with the exclusion of county officials and state lawmakers, but those positions were restored to the list by an amendment on the House floor, before the bill was passed by that body.

Only after Haycraft reported that he was still opposed, but would go along with the majority did it pass out of the subsequent conference committee.

When it again reached the floor in the House, member attendance was light and it could have failed with no absolute majority available. With much parliamentary maneuvering, a motion to reconsider was passed. Although the drys tried unsuccessfully to adjourn when the bill was once again presented, it passed on a vote that split within the ranks of wets and drys. The Senate subsequently adopted the report.

In the final analysis, C.J. Buell, a writer and prohibitionist said, "It is to be hoped that the time is near when (public officials) will be chosen ... upon their honesty and fitness instead of national issues that have no relation to state and local affairs."

— LECLAIR GRIER LAMBERT

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Talkin' baseball

Year the Minnesota Twins franchise began as the Washington Senators	1901
Year the team moved to Minnesota	1961
Twins record on opening day	20-22
Times the Twins and Detroit Tigers have met on opening day, including this year	6
Attendance at Metrodome in 2002	1,924,354
In 2001	1,782,926
Number of Twins to be named American League Most Valuable Player	3
Cy Young Award winners	2
Rookies of the Year	5
Number of uniform numbers the team has retired, including Jackie Robinson's	6
Rod Carew's batting average in 1977388
Last year the Twins played in Metropolitan Stadium	1981
Distance, in feet, of Harmon Killebrew's home run on June 3, 1967 at Metropolitan Stadium	520
Career record of Twins television analyst Bert Blyleven	287-250
Record as a Twin	149-138
Terry Felton's career record as a Twin (1979-82)	0-16
Consecutive road losses in the World Series by the Senators/Twins franchise	14
Last year they won a road World Series game	1925
Team record for consecutive wins against an opponent (Boston 1965-66)	17
Air miles the Twins were scheduled to fly in 2002	26,581
Amount the team spent lobbying the State Legislature in fiscal year 2002	\$826,489
Year the Minneapolis Millerettes played in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League	1944
First year of the Minneapolis Millers	1884
Final year	1960
Members of the Baseball Hall of Fame who were with the Millers at one time	17
Batting average of Willie Mays during 35 games with the Millers in 1951477
Year of St. Paul's first entry in the Western League	1884
First year of the current St. Paul Saints	1993
Year the St. Paul Gophers defeated the Chicago Leland Giants for the unofficial championship of Negro baseball	1909
Number of NCAA championships won by the Minnesota Gophers	3
Year of the last title	1964

Sources: Minnesota Twins 2002 Record and Information Book; www.twinsbaseball.com;
www.spsaints.com; www.stewthornley.com; *Lobbying Disbursement Summary July 2001 to June
2002*, State of Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board; *Official 2003 Baseball
& Softball Record Records*, National Collegiate Athletic Association.

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