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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AID

BUDGET FORECAST, COURT COSTS, AND MORE

HF668-HF773

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On the cover: The striking architectural features that are the grand arches of the Capitol Rotunda catch and echo the sounds of many daily visitors to the building Cass Gilbert designed.

—Photo by Tom Olmscheid

Restructuring funding

Pair of bills would alter the way that local government aid is allocated to Minnesota cities

By MIRANDA BRYANT

The system by which the state gives money to cities and counties for the provision of government services needs a major overhaul, according to top-level officials, including the governor himself.

A short-term fix has been proposed in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 2004-05 budget, which includes a deep \$1.16 billion cut in state aid. And while cities and counties continue to assess how the reduction would alter services provided to residents, two bills presented March 4 would create a longer-term solution.

Local government aid has two purposes: to reduce property taxes, and to bring equity to communities by providing state money for services, including police and fire, road maintenance, and administration.

Advocates say local government aid is critical to communities with low population growth and low property values, as well as for large urban cities with ever-growing needs. But critics say local government aid is flawed because it distributes money based on previous spending habits. Indeed, part of the complicated funding formula guarantees cities their 1993 state allocation.

The history of local government aid can be traced to a 1971 property tax reform measure called the "Minnesota Miracle," ushered in by Gov. Wendell Anderson, that relieved local property taxes of much of K-12 education funding. Likewise, local government aid also aims to keep property taxes in check by distributing state sales and income taxes to needy cities.

While the program began with provisions for cities, counties, towns, and special taxing districts, today only cities receive local government aid. Counties continue to receive state money, but since 1991 the

funds have been targeted for specific mandated programs, including Family Preservation Aid and County Criminal Justice Aid.

So exactly how is an individual city's aid allocation determined?

A two-part formula considered the "grandfathered" 1993 aid appropriation, and a city's "need" and its "ability to pay." The formula for determining need considers population, population decline, housing built before 1940, and commercial and industrial property values.

In 2002, \$565 million was distributed to cities. Many recipients rely heavily on the aid, including Albert Lea, Duluth, Willmar, St. Paul, and Minneapolis. And some get no aid, such as Edina, while others receive minimal amounts, such as Twin Cities suburbs Eagan, Woodbury, Shoreview, Plymouth, Mendota Heights, and Chanhassen.

Property taxes and local government aid are the two biggest revenue sources for most of the state's 850-plus cities.

HF172 and HF593 deal exclusively with city

aid formulas and do not address county funding. Both were presented by Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) to the House Taxes Committee March 4. No action was taken, but both bills may be included in the committee's larger omnibus tax bill, according to Rep. Ron Abrams, (R-Minnetonka), the committee chair and a co-sponsor on both bills.

HF172 would gradually remove the 1993 grandfathered amount from the formula — which is the most contentious portion — and replace it dollar-for-dollar with the "needs" vs. "ability to pay" component.

The most any one city stands to lose under HF172 is 3 percent annually of local government aid, Lenczewski said. However, some cities would eventually lose all state aid if the new formula finds a city doesn't need it.

Abrams said the bill appears to redistribute money from suburban and non-metro regional areas to smaller cities.

Lenczewski responded by asking members to focus on the bill's policy and not on the amount their community would lose or gain.

The bill, she said, would do away with two things: the argument that local government aid is unfairly allocated based on previous spending habits and not on need; and interest on the part of legislators and governors in tampering with the formula to make it fairer.

"We have a lot of members across the state who are in similarly situated cities where one gets a lot of aid and one doesn't and they can't really explain why," Lenczewski said.

She added, "I know this bill is threatening, but I think it's the right thing to do."

The bill, which has been introduced in prior years by both Republicans and DFL members, was enacted into law as part of a 1993 local government aid reform package, but was repealed in 1994 before it took effect.

HF593 is probably more controversial, Lenczewski said.

It would add to a city's tax base the monetary amount a city gives up by dedicating property taxes under tax increment financing to improvements in the TIF zone. Adding this amount to the formula



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

Lawmakers are grappling with proposed changes to the state's local government aid system, which cities use for such services as public safety. Gov. Tim Pawlenty and State Auditor Patricia Awada have recommended large cuts in aid to cities to help balance the budget for 2004-05.

would show that the given city has a greater ability to pay for its own government services, thereby reducing its need for state aid.

Tax increment financing is a development tool that allows the additional property taxes generated by a new or improved development to be used to pay for the costs of the development if the city finds that the development would not occur without such assistance. Thus, the added property taxes generated from a development could pay for land acquisition, site preparation or other development costs as opposed to general government services.

Lenczewski said that cities voluntarily engage tax increment financing, and should not be able to argue for more state aid as a result. "A municipality is voluntarily choosing to divert revenue when it decides — and no one can make them do this — to create the tax increment finance district," she said.

Abrams put it another way. A city could allow a department store to pay for its development costs under tax increment financing. Under current law, the city can then declare a larger need for state aid and a lesser ability to pay for its own governmental services — even if the property taxes it's diverting provide for installation of marble floors in that department store.

But Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) said that in 28 years of city government service he never heard of a city intentionally using tax increment financing to claim a larger need for state aid. If the issue is truly tax increment financing, then that matter should be addressed separately, he added.

Lenczewski argued, however, that the matters are intertwined in legislation. Some cities, she added, are not receiving aid they deserve because other areas have utilized tax increment financing. And some cities receive no aid, such as Edina, even though its taxpayers' money contributes to the larger state aid program.

"It's easy to say there's a drug out there and the state's addicted to it and if everybody's gonna have it well give me some, too," Lenczewski said.

Neither bill has a Senate companion.

Pawlenty's proposal would cut city aid by 29 percent, or \$435 million, leaving a \$1.07 billion appropriation in 2004-05. County aid would be cut 20 percent, or \$189.4 million, leaving a \$722.8 million appropriation.

His cuts did not go as far as the 43 percent city aid reduction recommended by State Auditor Patricia Awada to cities with populations larger than 2,500. 🐾

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



A multitalented Minnesotan

Miller served the state on the front lines, in the State Capitol, and elsewhere

The names Sibley and Ramsey dominate historical accounts of the state's early days and receive much of the acclaim for the success of the state in its early days.

And Ramsey can be partially credited for the impact of another early governor: Stephen Miller.

Miller served as the state's chief executive from 1864 to 1866 — during the trying times of the Civil War and the American Indian conflicts in the state.

He originally came from Pennsylvania, on the advice of his friend Alexander Ramsey who touted the positive effects the climate of Minnesota would have on Miller's health.

Miller spent more than half of his life in Pennsylvania, primarily near Harrisburg, where he added miller, merchant, editor, and county and state official to his list of credentials.

He moved to Minnesota and settled near St. Cloud in 1858, where he set up a mercantile. His political activism that began as editor of the Whip newspaper, the *Telegraph*, in Pennsylvania continued and in 1860 he was selected as a delegate to the Chicago convention for the newly formed national Republican Party. Miller was a strong supporter of Abraham Lincoln.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Miller and his son, Wesley, enlisted in the U.S. Army. Miller, 45, had no prior military experience, yet within a month of his enlistment he was appointed as lieutenant colonel of the First Minnesota Regiment of Volunteers, known for its willingness to support the Union's efforts in the war. Wesley would ultimately die among the thousands at Gettysburg.

"Colonel Miller seemed instinctively to grasp tactical matters and his personal bravery was never called into question," wrote future governor Joseph A.A. Burnquist. That bravery and resolve would be tested in December 1862.

Miller left the First Minnesota to accept the commission as colonel of the Seventh Regiment. An injury after a fall from a horse left him in charge of military camps in south-central Minnesota during the contentious days of the Dakota wars.

An incident on Dec. 4, 1862 forced Miller into what Burnquist called "a particularly difficult and delicate task." While stationed at Camp Lincoln, near Mankato, Miller was guarding about 300 Sioux Indians who had been condemned to death for war crimes. In one of many instances, a group of enraged settlers attacked the camp with the intentions of killing the Indian prisoners.

Wrote Burnquist, "Though in sympathy with the public sentiment against the Sioux murderers, Colonel Miller pledged to oppose mob law, and did so firmly."

President Lincoln would ultimately grant clemency to 265 of the Sioux, though 38 others were hung after Christmas that year in the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

Miller was promoted again, this time to brigadier general in late 1863, but resigned a short time later after being elected governor.

He was described as a plain and practical governor, and during his early days he drew attention to the financial plights of soldiers and their families. "His administration of a single term of two years was mainly devoted to closing Minnesota's connection with the various interests growing out of the Civil War," wrote Burnquist.

Minnesota ratified the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery under Miller's administration. And he also proposed that the state begin using development advances, such as gas lights in the State Capitol.

After leaving the governor's office, Miller worked first for the Minnesota Gold Mining Company and then took a job as a superintendent for the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad Company. In 1873, he was elected to the Minnesota House where he served one term.

In the last few years of his life, he lived in the southwest Minnesota communities of Windom and Worthington. Some accounts suggest his final years were lonely and economically poor ones for Miller. At age 65, he succumbed to gangrene, which had started in his left foot.

(M. KIBIGER)

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society



Gov. Stephen Miller

★ AGRICULTURE

Feedlot concerns

Livestock feedlots of all sizes continue to pose human health concerns and need to be closely monitored, according to a comprehensive Minnesota Environmental Quality Board study reviewed March 5 by the House Agriculture Policy Committee.

Such was one of 12 policy priorities from a recently released board study, which also recommended increased state funding for feedlot regulatory programs and research funding for air and water quality issues.

George Johnson, board project manager of environmental impact statements, provided a summary of the \$3 million, 7,000-page study, formally known as the "Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture." The 18-volume study was funded by the Legislature in 1998 following a series of feedlot controversies in rural Minnesota during the 1990s. The study wasn't intended to "give answers," Johnson said.

No action was taken by the committee regarding the report.

There are an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 poultry, swine, or cattle feedlots in the state. The lots, buildings, or a combination of the two, are for breeding and raising livestock. Regulated by state law for several decades, feedlots are in confined areas and include manure basins for the drainage of animal waste.

Although no specific examples were cited, Rep. Elaine Harder (R-Jackson), chair of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Committee, said she was troubled by the study raising health concerns regardless of a feedlot's size. She said the study expressed "a bias about living with livestock." Johnson said feedlot management, "not the size," determines its impact on environmental quality.

A number of committee members questioned Johnson and Gregg Downing, a research coordinator for the board, about citizen petitions that have halted some farm feedlot expansions in recent years.

State environmental law allows 25 individuals from anywhere to sign a petition and raise potential environmental concerns regarding feedlots. Farmers and farm organizations have complained to the committee that the petitions provide an easy way for environmental groups to block feedlots. Downing said four out of every five citizen petitions requesting environmental assessment worksheets are denied by the board. The study did not address that issue.

Feedlot impacts on air, water, and soil quality have been a longtime environmental concern since large farm operations have become dominant in agriculture during the last 25 to 30 years. Within the last 10 years, the state has lost "more than 6,000 farms," Johnson said. "We have fewer farms and they're becoming larger."

Besides health and environmental impacts of feedlots, the study includes extensive summaries on agriculture economics, government's role, soil, water quality and land use issues, as well as social and community concerns.

A 25-member citizens advisory committee, appointed by the board, provided oversight of the study and made 77 policy recommendations, including the 12 priority items.

Responding to possible cuts

Two semi-autonomous state agencies and a horticulture society that traces state funding support back to 1873 face major changes, under the Pawlenty administration's proposed 2004-05 biennium budget.

Representatives of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, and the Minnesota State Horticulture Society testified March 4 before the House Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Committee.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty recommends cutting the institute's two-year budget by \$5 million, trimming the animal health board by \$800,000, and eliminating state funding for the horticulture society. He also proposes that the animal health board and the institute become part of the Agriculture Department effective July 1, 2003.

The committee took no action on the governor's budget recommendations.

William Hartmann, state veterinarian and executive director of the animal health board, said the 28-employee agency's \$5.6 million budget was cut \$329,000 by the governor during the current fiscal year and faces an additional 14 percent cut for 2004-05. The board monitors state livestock herds for disease, conducts research and lab tests, and advises animal owners on disease prevention.

Hartmann is currently appointed each year by a five-member advisory board made up of three livestock producers and two veterinarians, all appointed by the governor. If the animal health board becomes part of the Agriculture Department, the agriculture commissioner would appoint the director.

The 1,500-member Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association opposes the proposed consolidation.

Ben Pomeroy, chair of the group's governmental affairs committee, urged agriculture committee members to oppose the governor's proposal, saying it would "destroy the independent status and effectiveness of the (animal health) board."

"Why change our effective program for an unknown?" Pomeroy said.

Institute Executive Director Edgar Olson said the proposed 67 percent cut to the non-profit organization's budget would render it "non-functional."

Created in 1987 by the Legislature, the institute conducts research and training for small and medium-sized, agriculture-related companies to help them develop value-added products, like the renewable fuel biodiesel and soy plastics. Olson said the group has projects in 73 of the state's 87 counties.

Perry Aasness, assistant agriculture commissioner, said the department would examine the institute's core functions should the agency be merged with the department. "We don't know what it would look like in the end," he said.

Members of the state Horticulture Society had been expecting \$164,000 from the state for fiscal years 2004-05, and said that eliminating the annual state subsidy the group has received for 130 years might trigger cuts in education programs to rural Minnesota, fewer issues of the group's magazine or elimination of children's programs. The group has 20,000 dues-paying members and publishes *Northern Gardener*, which generates advertising revenue.

★ BUSINESS

Chinese competition

Manufacturers in Greater Minnesota are facing increased competition from China. Yet most do not fully understand the degree to which China has made technological improvements to compete in a global economy.

Such are results of a recently completed study by Minnesota Technology Inc., a manufacturing and technology economic development group funded partially by the state. The report was discussed March 5 at a meeting of the tourism division of the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee.

Specifically, the study found that companies surveyed believed China was realizing

manufacturing gains simply because of a cheap labor pool. They indicated that China could not produce high-quality goods, and that the country's level of technology was inferior to theirs.

In addition, many Greater Minnesota manufacturers stated that they could address some of these competitive pressures through sales and marketing measures.

Such beliefs are seriously in error, indicated Minnesota Technology President Jacques Koppel.

There is, he said, "increasing recognition that the Chinese government, as well as companies setting up businesses in China are investing heavily in technology and building state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities."

To compete, Minnesota manufacturers must develop new business strategies, such as developing proprietary products and higher-tech processes.

For example, said Koppel, northwest Minnesota is the only area served by Minnesota Technology that has seen a slight increase in manufacturing employment, and that increase is only 0.5 percent. Koppel said this is due to companies like Arctic Cat recreational vehicles and Marvin Windows and Doors that own proprietary rights to their products.

Specifically, the survey found that 52 percent of manufacturing companies surveyed are facing Chinese competition. Fifty percent said that Chinese competition would hurt them, with the average business loss at 20 percent in 2003 and increasing to 35 percent in three to five years. And, 36 percent said tax breaks and tariffs are necessary to address competition.

The Minnesota manufacturing industry lost 38,000 jobs between its peak employment in August 2000 and August 2002. Losses came largely in industrial machinery and equipment, electronic equipment, printing and publishing, and air transportation.

The committee did not act on the report.

★ CHILDREN

Keeping children safe

Efforts to reduce child abuse and neglect would be hit hard under the governor's proposed cuts to county aid, according to those testifying Feb. 27 before the House Taxes Committee.

Under a state aid program, counties receive funds for certain mandated programs, including the Family Preservation Act and out-of-home placements. Family preservation aid aims to reduce the increased costs associated with removing children from their homes by

helping those families function better. When that fails, out-of-home placements are ordered.

The volume of out-of-home placements is unpredictable, making it difficult for counties to anticipate the number that will arise in a given year and the related cost. According to Jim Mulder, executive director of the Association of Minnesota Counties, counties spent \$180 million in 2002 on such placements.

Under Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed 2004-05 budget, a change in county aid funding formulas would eliminate the Family Preservation Act and out-of-home placement program in 2005. The former represents \$24 million; the latter, \$53 million, said Jim Koppel, director of the Minnesota Children's Defense Fund, a nonprofit organization devoted to children and working families.

The sum of these two cuts, Koppel said, represents 43 percent of the reductions counties would experience in state aid.

"Our concern is that while a lot of these programs are run out of the Department of Human Services, they end up really hitting the ground at the county level," Koppel said.

Every year about 11,000 children in Minnesota are reported as victims of abuse. And about 20,000 are removed from their homes, he added.

"This is going to strain local budgets and it's going to compromise those programs, and it's a compromise we can't afford," Koppel said. "We've never really gotten our arms around, in Minnesota, the whole issue of child abuse and neglect."

Pawlenty's proposal would reduce county aid by 20 percent. Individually, counties would realize cuts averaging 1.6 percent of total revenues in calendar year 2003, and 2.8 percent in 2004. Total aid to counties would total \$722.8 million in the next biennium, a reduction of \$189.4 million.

Koppel said the effect on children is broader when cuts to the state Health and Human Services budget are considered.

Helping through work

Youth who've obtained jobs and avoided lives of crime packed a hearing room March 4 to advise against budget cuts to four state-funded youth employment, intervention, and jobs skills programs.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 2004-05 proposed budget contains \$3.7 million in budget cuts to the programs. Participants in the programs of Minnesota Youth, Earn While You Learn, Youth Intervention, and the Minnesota Youthbuild Coalition testified before the House Jobs and Economic Development



LaRae Starr tells the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee March 4 about the effectiveness of the Learn to Earn youth program. Other participants in the program that testified are, from left, Aaron Walker, Amanda Tkaczik and Stacey Schleeter. The quartet encouraged members not to reduce funding for the program.

Finance Committee. They indicated more youth would be left to lives without direction if budget cuts were realized.

"The streets recruit very hard," said Kevin Dildy, who works with youth in South Minneapolis through Minnesota Youth Program.

Added participant Jennifer Robertson, "It turned my life around. It got me on track."

The governor's budget would chop \$2.5 million from Minnesota Youth Program, leaving it with a base budget for 2004-05 of \$10.8 million. Cuts to other programs include:

- Youthbuild, \$394,000 reduction, leaving \$1.3 million base budget;
- Youth Intervention, \$756,000 cut, leaving \$2.5 million base budget; and
- Earn While You Learn, \$110,000 cut, leaving a \$366,000 base budget.

Minnesota Youth provides economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth with employment and training services year-round. It works in all 87 Minnesota counties with participants ranging from 14 to 21. In 2002, about 5,039 youth were placed in jobs. Eighty percent of participants increased their reading and math skills, and 50 percent received academic credit.

Youth Intervention consists of community-based programs throughout the state that keep troubled youth living with their families and out of more costly correctional institutions, foster homes, and residential treatment facilities. An average of 21,000 youth participate annually.

Of the participants in 2001, 83 percent referred for truant behavior had improved their school attendance record. An additional 89 percent referred for illegal activities had no further involvement with the juvenile justice system six months after program completion.

Minnesota Youthbuild has nine programs throughout the state with participants building and rehabilitating low-income housing for communities. In the process, said spokeswoman Joyce Eissing, they work toward a

high school diploma or GED certificate and learn technical skills, work behavior, and the importance of civic engagement.

In 2002, participants constructed or renovated 150 units of low-income housing throughout the state, benefiting 401 homeowners and tenants and 195 homeless people.

Tina Sweatt, representing the Beltrami and Cass counties chapter, said Youthbuild is crucial in what are two of the poorest counties in the state.

"Rural kids need this program — there is virtually nothing else," Sweatt said.

The committee took no action on the budget proposals at the meeting.

★ CRIME

Handling proposed cuts

Minnesota Department of Corrections officials said that despite rapidly increasing prison populations, their agency will be able to absorb the cuts proposed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty for the upcoming biennium.

Under the governor's proposal, the department budget would be reduced by \$56.4 million. Most of that money will come from its operating budget and cuts in grants to local organizations. About \$19 million would come from housing short-term offenders in county jails and double-bunking cells at some prison facilities.

Corrections Commissioner Joan Fabian told the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee March 5 that Minnesota's practice of housing fewer inmates in favor of community supervision has saved the state money while still holding offenders accountable. Wisconsin has a prison population three times the size of Minnesota's and annually spends twice as much on its corrections department.

While he admitted to being initially against the idea of double bunking inmates in some facilities, Deputy Corrections Commissioner Dennis Benson said that he thinks the department can safely create up to 569 new beds by the end of the biennium by using the practice in parts of its Stillwater and St. Cloud prisons. Both prisons are considered "close" security, one step down from the highest level of security. The majority of inmates are already double-bunked at the department's medium-security prisons. Benson said double bunking could have benefits by encouraging good behavior.

"If people are coming (into prison) double-bunked and they can move to a single-bunk then certainly there is some value to having

that perk," he said.

Benson said the department will "walk, not run" in implementing the double-bunking policy, which should save nearly \$10 million in the next two years. He said an inmate has already filed a lawsuit against the department over the double-bunking proposal.

Among the programs eliminated under operating reductions are the Female Offender Planning Unit and the Restorative Justice Unit. Chemical dependence and sex offender evaluations, as well as education and religious services, would be scaled back under the proposal.

The committee took no action during the hearing.

★ DEVELOPMENT

Tax-free zones

Calling it the most important piece of legislation the committee will deal with this year, the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee approved a tax-free zone bill March 4 designed to give rural Minnesota a shot in the arm.

Sponsored by Rep. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton), HF3 now moves to the House Taxes Committee.

The bill would allow the state to designate 10 business zones of up to 5,000 acres each and five agricultural zones throughout Greater Minnesota in which businesses would be free of most taxes for up to 12 years. The idea is to stimulate economic development by creating high-paying jobs beyond the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

"We've gotta do something to make some changes here," Magnus said, referencing growing income and population disparities between Greater Minnesota and the metropolitan area.

Under similar programs, Michigan and Pennsylvania each have created 5,000 new jobs, Magnus said in a previous interview.

Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) agreed. "We will die out there, if we haven't already," Gunther said, noting school closures in his district. "We need this."

If approved, cities, counties, townships, and school districts could apply for a zone to the state Department of Trade and Economic Development later this year. Zones could be subdivided and be located in more than one government jurisdiction.

Qualifying zone businesses would forgo sales, income, and property taxes. Individuals investing in the zone business would be exempt from applicable income and capital gains taxes.

To qualify, 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. If neither measure is met, businesses must pay the waived taxes.

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

The program would cost the state \$4.7 million in lost tax revenue in 2004-05 and \$9.6 million in 2006-07.

Legislators indicated that the program's success may depend on where zones are designated.

A Senate companion bill (SF496), sponsored by Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits a hearing before the Senate Jobs, Housing, and Community Development Committee.

★ EDUCATION

Department name change

A bill that would restore the name, "Department of Education," to the state agency responsible for K-12 public schools and personnel was approved March 4 by the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield), HF517 was referred to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

In 1995, the former Department of Education was renamed the Department of Children, Families and Learning by the Legislature, which approved a state agency reorganization led by Gov. Arne Carlson. At the time, more than a dozen programs, including Head Start support, early childhood education, family services, child-care, child abuse, drug policy, and violence prevention were moved from six state agencies, and combined with K-12 education.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty recommended the department's name be changed in his Feb. 6 State of the State address. The name change "gets back to keeping the main thing the main thing," Demmer said, partially quoting Pawlenty's speech. "It's about educating kids."

The department is discussing reorganization and may recommend moving some programs under its jurisdiction to other state agencies, said Jim Bartholomew, the department director of government relations. He said an announcement could be made the week of March 10. "Our main focus is success in K-12," Bartholomew said.

If approved, the department's name change would cost an estimated \$38,000,

Bartholomew said, mainly for changing the name on legal documents and the sign outside the department's leased office building in Roseville. Existing stationery would be used until supplies are exhausted, he said.

Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood) said the name change and possible reorganization was causing "a lot of unrest" in the department because of potential impact on staff.

The bill's Senate companion (SF296), sponsored by Sen. Geoff Michel (R-Edina), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

Creating charter schools

The House Education Policy Committee approved a bill Feb. 27 that would make it easier for school districts to create charter schools.

Sponsored by Rep. Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington), HF452 would add a section to the state's charter school law and allow school boards "and one or more licensed teachers" to form a charter school without the approval of the commissioner of the state Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL).

The charter school, under the proposal, must implement the local school board's "strategic plan for public education." The sponsoring school board would select up to two members of the charter school's board of directors. "Elected school boards run schools every day," Seagren said. "They should have the capability to charter (a school) without going through the hoops of the CFL."

The bill was referred to the House Education Finance Committee, which Seagren chairs. There is no Senate companion bill.

There are 78 charter schools in the state, created under a 1991 state law. A school board; an education district; a non-profit organization that's registered with the state Attorney General's Office and has \$2 million of assets; or a public or private four-year university or college, community college, or technical college can create charter schools.

Joseph Graba, a senior education policy fellow at Hamline University, and former House member from 1971-77, testified in support of the bill. He said current charter school sponsoring organizations often don't operate the school as a priority. "They all tell us this is not our main business." He said the bill could potentially lead to "new models" of charter schools, founded by organizations solely focused on the school.

Seagren said fears that charter schools would take "the best and the brightest" students in a school district have not been realized. "It's been the opposite," she said. "Charters have been created for at-risk and high-risk students."

Seeking to be spared

Four meetings' worth of testimony from parents, school administrators, and lobbyists before the House Education Finance Committee has revealed more than a few points of contention regarding the Pawlenty administration's proposed K-12 education budget for the next two years.

Supporters of after school programs, extended-day/extended-school year programs, early childhood and family education, and English learning language programs — all proposed for cuts by the administration in the 2004-05 biennium budget — testified between Feb. 26 and March 5. The committee took no action on the budget proposal at the hearings.

"Please do not cut the after school program budget," said Khao Insiengmay, of Minneapolis, executive director of the Lao Parents and Teachers Association. "The southeast Asian student is not doing well at school," he said.

The Southeast Asian Community Council, which the Lao PTA works with, has received about \$40,000 from the state through After School Enrichment Grants to sponsor tutoring and homework help programs for students in Hennepin County, said Cha Lee, the council's executive director.

Pawlenty proposes to eliminate the after



Alex Stanley, left, of Bloomington plays with the microphone as his mother, Kim, asks the House Education Finance Committee March 4 not to cut funding for the Early Childhood Special Education program because her son, who is autistic, has special education needs.

school program grants in the 2004-05 budget and save \$11 million, while noting that federal funding may be available for after school programs. In the current fiscal year, after school grants were funded for \$5.5 million, but \$3.8 million of that amount was held by the state to help balance the 2003 budget deficit.

Kim Stanley, of Bloomington, brought her autistic son, Alex, to the March 4 meeting to testify in support of early childhood special education in her school district. The program helps children with learning disabilities "become functioning adults," Stanley said, while 3-year-old Alex had fun playing with the committee room microphones. "It's not the life he chose, but it is the life he lives," she said.

The governor's budget proposes no cut in Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) programs in fiscal 2004, but an \$11.8 million reduction for fiscal year 2005.

Pawlenty's proposal would keep early childhood programs, targeted for pre-school youth, at little or no cost for low-income recipients but require higher-class fees for parents with higher incomes. Critics of the proposal said it would harm the "universality" of the programs that are popular with parents in higher income suburban districts, as well as lower income parents in urban areas.

Jim Grathwol, representing Minneapolis public schools, said Pawlenty's proposal, "is really bad in some respects, but it could have been worse."

Cutting the funding formula for extended day and extended school year programs, as proposed by the governor, will hurt the district, Grathwol said, because Minneapolis has 10,000 students in after school programs and 16,000 in summer school.

A cap on the number of students enrolled in English language learning proposed by the governor could adversely affect 4,000 of the 12,000 Minneapolis students enrolled in those programs, Grathwol said.

Prevailing wages

The state's prevailing wage law for construction labor sparked some controversy March 4 before the House Education Policy Committee approved a bill that would release school districts from following that state requirement, among others.

Sponsored by Rep. Jeff Johnson (R-Plymouth), HF365 would also remove statutory restrictions that require school districts to reserve small percentages of their general fund budgets for teacher and staff development and class size reduction. The bill was referred to the House Education Finance Committee.

Johnson accepted an amendment that removed from the bill a proposed repeal of the

state's Jan. 15 deadline for teachers and school districts to negotiate contracts. He said it was a "toss up" whether the repeal would pass the committee, which includes a number of teachers.

State law requires school districts funding construction projects with any portion of state general funds to accept bids from contractors that pay prevailing wage rates for labor. The prevailing wage rate for workers in the building trades is determined for geographical areas through a survey conducted by the state's Department of Labor and Industry. Prevailing wages are paid to union-represented and non-represented workers on a construction project, according to Dick Anfang, representing the state's building trades unions. He testified against the bill.

Terry Tofte, superintendent of Northfield Public Schools, testified in support of the bill. He said it would allow districts to accept a construction bid from a prevailing wage contractor "if they choose."

Anfang said both the state and federal prevailing wage laws are supported by unions and building contractors. "It's not a union issue," Anfang said. The law "provides a level playing field" for contractors bidding on publicly funded projects.

When Anfang suggested that lower wages lead to less worker training and a "more dangerous work site," he was interrupted by Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview), who owns a non-union heating and cooling company. "I take some offense," he said. "To say my employees endanger other people is absurd."

"I'm not going to apologize," Anfang responded. He said he'd provide studies that prove his point.

An amendment proposed by Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) to remove the prevailing wage ban from the bill was defeated.

A companion bill (SF564), sponsored by Sen. Betsy Wergin (R-Princeton), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

School board primaries

A bill that would require school boards to hold a primary if there were more than two candidates for a school board position, or more than twice as many candidates as positions available, was approved March 5 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud), the sponsor of HF471, described a 2001 school board election in St. Cloud where 12 people were running for four seats. With so many candidates he said the "will of the majority is in question."

Bob Meeks, director of governmental relations with the Minnesota School Board Association, said that association members agreed with the primaries, but they were concerned about how the school districts would pay for them. Under HF471, the school district is responsible for the cost of the primary. He also said the bill would affect fewer than 15 districts.

Knoblach said that in his district for the last election, the cost would have been approximately \$30,000-\$40,000. Because the primaries are held once or twice in a decade, he said it's "not an unreasonable expense."

Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls) said the decision to hold a primary should be up to the school district, not the Legislature, since the action is not state funded.

The bill next goes to the House Education Policy Committee where Knoblach said he would take a closer look at the local costs of the bill.

The Senate companion (SF490), sponsored by Sen. Dave Kleis (R-St. Cloud), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

ELECTIONS



Political contributions

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee approved a bill March 5 that would prohibit legislators or constitutional officers from accepting campaign contributions from special interest groups or political action committees during a special session.

Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea), the sponsor of HF539, said legislators "should play by the same rules" during all times of session. The law currently applies only during the regular session.

Statutes prohibiting contributions apply to candidates for the Legislature or constitutional office, a candidate's principal campaign committee, or a party unit established by a party organization within the Legislature.

Those designated as groups who cannot contribute include a registered lobbyist, political committee, political fund, or dissolving principal campaign committee.

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids), the lone committee member to vote against the bill, said he was a part of the original conference committee in a previous session that created the current law. He said the reason they didn't include special session in the initial legislation was because a governor can call one at any time. Therefore, if a legislator has a scheduled fundraising event, it might have to be canceled or rescheduled. He said, "There's more implications than just good, clean

government" in the legislation.

Rep. Eric Lipman (R-Lake Elmo) said the bill could give the governor too much power.

He cited the situation last fall when former Gov. Jesse Ventura called a special session to deal with flood relief, and that those in competition for his job would have been unable to raise funds during the time if this bill were law at the time.

Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) reminded members that the bill would apply to special interest groups, but not a private resident.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, now moves to the House floor.

Question timeliness

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee approved a bill March 5 that would require potential ballot questions to be submitted by a deadline prior to an election to be considered for placement on the ballot.

Rep. Tony Kielkucki (R-Lester Prairie), the sponsor of HF504, says the legislation is to

SPECIAL ELECTIONS



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

John Dooley, legal council for the Minnesota Association of Townships, testifies before the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee March 5 in support of a bill that provides for a special election to fill the vacancy if a town board or appointment committee fails to do so.

clarify timelines that petition organizers must meet in order for their proposals to be considered.

Kent Sulem, an attorney for the Minnesota Association of Townships, said petitions have been received as late as one week before an election in the past. Because of a lengthy process to put the questions on a ballot, officials were unable to comply.

Because current election law doesn't specifically state that a petition must be submitted by a deadline, there isn't anything to show a resident why a question can't be accepted, said Sulem.

The bill doesn't require a city to schedule a special election when a submission is made, however Minnesota statute does require a special election if 20 percent of the voters at the last municipal general election signed the petition and the question hasn't been submitted in the previous six months.

Approved by the committee, the bill next goes to the House floor.

A Senate companion (SF384), sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), awaits action in the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Sprinklin' in the rain

It's home and garden show time across the state and many consumers are dreaming up construction and landscape plans for this summer.

If Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings) has his way, folks would set aside about 30 bucks to install a simple rainfall monitoring device on their new outdoor sprinkler systems.

McNamara brought a bill (HF335) before the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee Feb. 27 that would require all new landscape irrigation systems to be furnished with sensors to prevent sprinklers from operating during rainstorms and at times when the ground is saturated to a pre-programmed level.

"It has great environmental value," McNamara said, and it would reduce water bills.

The most common rain sensor on the market costs \$29.87, John Mickman of the Minnesota Nursery Landscape Association told the committee, and typically only one device is needed for a residential system.

"I'm sure you've all seen lawn sprinkler systems going off in a rainstorm," Mickman said. "It's like, 'Give me a break.'"

Although this is a common sense measure, Mickman said, many installers do not include

rain sensors in a competitive bidding situation.

Similar legislation passed the House and Senate in 1999, but was vetoed by then-Gov. Jesse Ventura.

"Citizens who are heavy users of irrigation systems and are concerned about the conservation of water should be willing to pay a little extra for these devices in return for lowering their water bills, without the burden of a government mandate that will be virtually impossible to enforce," wrote Ventura in his veto message. "Manufacturers who are concerned about being competitive would do well to either absorb the costs of these devices or demonstrate the value to consumers, without turning to government to force all competitors to act in a similar manner."

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) said she supports the concept and would like to see future discussions move toward mandatory installation on old sprinkler systems that draw from depleted groundwater sources.

The bill now moves to the House floor. The Senate does not currently have a companion bill.

Pay to protect and play

Minnesotans could pay more for winter aeration permits and to camp in state parks, under a plan presented by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee March 4.

The DNR issues approximately 250 to 300 permits per year to lakeshore property owners, lake associations, hunting and fishing clubs, and others to aerate public waters during the winter months.

Aeration is a management tool to prevent winterkill of fish in ponds and lakes, but it does present a public safety risk, said Ecological Services Director Lee Pfannmuller. Six people died and there were several accidents associated with open water caused by aeration systems before the DNR stepped up permitting efforts in 1988. There has been one fatality since then, and the aerator was not negligent, she said.

There is currently no fee for the program, although the department estimates that training, "Danger - Open Water" signs, and inspections cost the state an estimated \$62,000 annually. Under the proposal, the department would establish a \$250 permit fee to recoup those costs.

A second adjustment would increase three state park camping fees:

- forest campground camping would increase \$2, from \$9 to \$11;

- rustic camping would increase \$3, from \$8 to \$11; and

- semi-modern camping would also increase \$3, from \$12 to \$15.

Based on recent campsite occupancy figures, the change would generate an estimated \$734,000 annually.

Deputy Commissioner Mark Holsten explained that campgrounds are one of the department's biggest "cost drivers." When budget discussions came down to keeping parks open and supporting campgrounds, he said, the department determined it would have to increase some fees to match those increased costs.

Some committee members also questioned whether the DNR had looked at increasing state park daily and annual sticker fees.

The department currently charges a daily fee of \$4 at state parks and \$20 for an annual sticker. Sales figures for the annual sticker are 110,000 per year, according to Parks and Recreation Division Director Bill Morrissey.

"It seems to me it would help people make a market decision" to put surcharges on those parks that are heavily used and stressed, said Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), the committee chair.

Perhaps the daily fee at popular parks could be increased to discourage overuse and encourage people to switch from a daily to an annual sticker purchase, suggested Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls).

The department's proposed fee increases could be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill.

Soil and water semantics

The laws governing Minnesota's 91 soil and water conservation districts were first drafted in 1937 in response to Dust Bowl environmental conditions. A bill sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield) would update those policy statements to reflect modern land and water management concepts.

The bill (HF414) also would change the petition process to establish or terminate a conservation district and grant districts levy authority.

The House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee approved the bill Feb. 27.

According to the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, additional financing authorities would help districts address a variety of emerging areas, including the state's contribution to oxygen depletion, or hypoxia, in the Gulf of Mexico, leveraging conservation programs associated

with the 2002 federal farm bill, and implementing requirements associated with the pollutant load that water bodies can handle, known as the total maximum daily load.

Current law states that “improper land use practices have caused serious wind and water erosion of the land of this state, the runoff of polluting materials, increased costs to maintain agricultural productivity, increased energy costs and increased flood damage.”

The bill would strike that introduction and replace it with what proponents describe as more positive language.

“Maintaining and enhancing the quality of soil and water for the environmental and economic benefits they produce, preventing degradation and restoring degraded soil and water resources of this state contribute greatly to the health, safety, economic well-being, and general welfare of this state and its citizens,” the bill reads.

Members on both sides of the aisle questioned what the district representatives meant by “enhancing” soil and water quality and what kind of obligations the new language would place on the private owners who hold 78 percent of the land in Minnesota.

“I think it’s valid to question their ambiguity,” said Rep. Maxine Penas (R-Badger).

The bill now moves to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee with the understanding that Cox would continue to work with the Farm Bureau, Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers, and others on clarifying the intent of the proposed language.

Its companion (SF392), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits a hearing in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

★ FAMILY

Changing calculation formula

The way child support payments are calculated in Minnesota would change under a bill approved March 4 by the House Civil Law Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound), HF110 would use a so-called “income shares” model to determine the payments required of a non-custodial parent.

Under the system, courts hearing child custody cases would have to take both parents’ combined income into account when setting a payment rate for basic child support. The current system is based only on the income of the non-custodial parent.

To figure out the exact amount, the bill would direct judges to use statistics from a



Barbara Starr from Ham Lake testifies March 4 before the House Civil Law Committee about a bill that changes family law statutes, including provisions relating to marriage dissolution, child custody, child support, maintenance, and property division.

2001 U.S. Department of Agriculture report to dictate how much money it will cost to raise the child or children. The report lists the average cost of raising children for parents of various incomes. For example, the report specifies the average urban Midwestern family earning \$3,000 a month (\$36,000 a year) spends 22.5 percent of its income on raising a child, 36.3 percent if there are two children, and 41.9 percent for three.

That percentage would then be divided according to each parent’s contribution to the monthly income total to determine what the non-custodial parent must pay in child support. That amount would then be reduced by 20 percent in recognition of the higher cost of maintaining two separate households.

Smith said the system he proposes bases child support orders on “what it actually costs to raise a child” rather than on only one parent’s income.

Provisions in the bill also provide for separate child support calculations for low-income parents, parents with joint custody, and families with more than six children. Parents could agree on a separate division of child support costs with a judge’s approval.

The bill would also make it easier for parents to request a hearing six months after the initial court ruling to establish whether both parents are complying with the order.

Apart from the new child support system, the 177-page bill represents a massive recodi-

fication of existing family law. While most of the language in the state’s divorce and child custody laws would remain, it would be reorganized within the law books into sections Smith says would be simpler to understand and easier for judges and attorneys to navigate.

The bill next goes before the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee. It currently has no Senate companion.

★ GOVERNMENT

Deleting PrintComm

The Department of Administration’s printing and duplication services are slowly being eliminated.

Legislators in the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee heard testimony March 4 on how the division has continued to lose money for the state, and why it’s in the middle of a lawsuit between the state’s unions and the state itself.

Current law says the administration commissioner is appropriated money annually to operate a central duplication and printing service, called PrintComm. In addition, all state agencies must make reasonable efforts to determine if a state employee is available before entering into a contract for professional or technical services.

A bill (HF555) sponsored by Rep. Phil Krinkie (R-Shoreview) would repeal those statutes.

He said there are two reasons why the print shop let go 34 employees in December when administrators tried to shut the facility. Business has declined because people now have desktop printers, thereby eliminating a need for sending orders to the state division. Also, the department hadn’t spent large amounts of money to update equipment, so it’s more beneficial to contract out printing jobs.

Representing the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, Brian Bergson said, “PrintComm never had a fair shake.” Because the previous administrations ignored the statutes, the state unions sued over the portion of law relating to using state employees for services, he said.

Kirsten Cecil, deputy commissioner for the Department of Administration, said PrintComm has lost roughly \$200,000 since a judge issued an order for it to continue operations and about \$800,000 in the previous three years. Eight people work there now. She said private sector printing companies are also seeing a decline in business because printing is an optional expense.

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids)

asked if the department was violating the law by eliminating the majority of jobs in the printing division. Krinkie said by enacting HF555, the lawsuit would be void.

Rep. Bill Haas (R-Champlin) said the printing division has been looked at extensively and "it should be self sufficient, but it couldn't be," and therefore couldn't compete with the private sector. He also said the more responsible approach is to save money by contracting out printing to the private sector.

The bill was approved and goes to the State Government Finance committee. There is currently no Senate companion to the bill.

★ HEALTH

Notice before an abortion

Lawmakers on the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee approved this session's first abortion-related bill March 4.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), HF668 would require abortion providers to provide women with certain information at least 24 hours before performing an abortion.

Under the bill, a physician would be required to explain to a woman seeking an abortion, in person or over the phone, the risks associated with the abortion procedure, the probable age of the fetus at the time of abortion, and the medical risks associated with carrying a child to term.

Additionally, the bill would require that a woman be told about the father's obligation to support the child if it were carried to term and any state Medical Assistance benefits that might be available for prenatal, childbirth, and neonatal care. Women would also be given the opportunity to review pictures and printed information about the probable physical and physiological development of the fetus.

Women would be required to certify in writing before the abortion that they received the required pieces of information.

The bill would also define an "unborn child" as a human from fertilization until birth. Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) called the language vague and said it could apply even to embryos created in fertility clinics but never meant for producing a pregnancy. An amendment that would have stricken the definition from the bill was defeated.

A handful of other amendments sponsored by DFL representatives were also defeated. Among them was one moved by Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) that would have exempted rape and incest victims from the 24-hour information review requirement.



Andrea Rau, *left*, representing Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life, testifies before the March 4 meeting of the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee in support of a bill that would require women seeking abortions to be given specific information at least 24 hours prior to the procedure being performed. She is holding a photo, illustrating a living embryo. Testifying against the bill is Teresa Nelson, *right*, representing the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union.

Another, proposed by Rep. Neva Walker (DFL-Mpls), would have required abortion providers to also provide women with information about family planning and birth control options.

The bill has no Senate companion. It goes next to the House Civil Law Committee.

Safe drinking water

People interested in building or buying homes in one portion of Washington County would be informed that their drinking water is polluted, under a bill discussed March 4 by a House committee.

The House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee took no action on HF276, sponsored by Rep. Eric Lipman (R-Lake Elmo), and the committee is expected to continue discussing the bill at a future meeting.

The bill applies specifically to the Baytown special well construction area, which includes

portions of the cities of Bayport and Lake Elmo and the townships of Baytown and West Lakeland. The area was designated in 1987 with the discovery in the drinking water of trichloroethylene, a chemical agent used to degrease airplane parts and is known to cause cancer. At low levels, said Lipman, it can cause headaches and skin irritation. At higher levels it can knock a person unconscious.

The risk can be eliminated, however, through the use of carbon water filters that Lipman said cost \$2,000.

"It's not Chernobyl," said Lipman, but the risk is nonetheless significant.

The bill, he said, addresses how potential homebuilders and buyers should be informed of the pollutant and by whom. This is particularly important as the area develops, Lipman added.

Current statute, according to Cindy Weckwerth with the Washington County Public Health and Environment Department, requires that real estate agents, developers and land sellers disclose only the presence of a well



Cindy Weckwerth, program manager with Washington County's Department of Public Health and Environment, urged members of the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee March 5 to approve a bill requiring disclosure about the presence of trichloroethylene in their local drinking water, whenever property is sold within the Baytown special well construction area.

and its level of functionality. It does not require that potential buyers be told of contaminants.

The committee was given three letters written by homeowners who didn't know of the trichloroethylene until they began drilling wells on their property.

But Susan Dioury, representing the Minnesota Association of Realtors, said current disclosure measures simply need enforcement. The larger environmental problem shouldn't wait until the point of sale to be addressed, she added.

The pollution source is under investigation, but it's believed to be related to the dumping of several hundred gallons of recycled trichloroethylene off the Lake Elmo airport runway in the 1970s, Lipman said.

A companion bill (SF163), sponsored by Sen. Charles Wiger (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

★ HIGHER EDUCATION

Joint convention elects regents

The House and Senate met in joint convention March 3 to elect nine members of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents. Four of those elected were previously appointed by Gov. Jesse Ventura.

The 12-member board, which must be elected by the Legislature, governs the university. By law regents must be selected by May 7 of each odd-numbered year. Terms are staggered, resulting in one-third of the board coming up for appointment every two years.

This year's selection included so many candidates because the Legislature was unable to reach agreement on regents in 2001, and Ventura was left to appoint members that would be officially elected by the Legislature during the subsequent regular round of elections.

Though some observers suggested this year's election might be contentious, there was relatively little discussion of the candidates during the joint convention's lengthy voting process. No other candidates were nominated other than the slates approved by the joint education committee Feb. 26, though several members abstained from voting or specifically named other candidates in their votes.

The members elected by the Legislature that were previously appointed by Ventura include:

- Peter Bell, current chairman of the Metropolitan Council, will represent the Fifth Congressional District for the remaining four years of his term;

- Lakeesha Ransom, at-large student representative to the board who is currently a graduate student at the Twin Cities campus, has four years remaining on her term;
- Frank Berman, at-large representative for four more years; and
- Richard "Pinky" McNamara, at-large representative with four years remaining on his term.

In addition, the Legislature elected current board chairwoman Maureen Reed to fill the remainder of a term vacated by the death of William Peterson. Reed was not renominated to fill the Sixth Congressional District seat she held previously. However, the education committee nominated Reed to fill the at-large seat that Ventura appointed former-Regent Jean Keffeler to fill in 2001. The full Legislature confirmed Reed's nomination.

In addition, three new members and one reappointed one, who will all serve six-year terms, were elected to the board:

- Dr. Patricia Simmons, a pediatrician from Rochester, will represent the First Congressional District;
- David Metzen, current regent from Sunfish Lake, will represent the Fourth Congressional District;
- John Frobenius, a retired health care executive from St. Cloud, will represent the Sixth Congressional District; and
- Clyde Allen Jr. of Moorhead, the state revenue commissioner under Gov. Al Quie, will represent the Seventh Congressional District.

Potential tuition costs

University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks said he cannot see how tuition at the university will not increase by at least double digits in each year of the upcoming biennium.

"We'll do all we can to keep tuition rates down and live within the 15 percent," he said, referring to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's request that tuition be capped annually at that percent increase to deal with proposed cuts to the university.

Speaking March 5 before the House Higher Education Finance Committee, Bruininks said tuition at the Twin Cities campus is currently \$6,280 annually, and about the same at the Crookston, Duluth, and Morris campuses. He said the total cost for a student with all associated costs, such as room, food, and books, is now in the \$12,000 to \$14,000 range.

As part of the governor's budget reduction plan for the 2004-05 biennium, the university is to be cut by \$179 million in general fund dollars (\$89.5 million each year) to \$540.7 million in fiscal year 2004 and nearly \$543.9 million in 2005.

Bruininks said that those base numbers, if approved, would be the lowest since 1998. Since that time, he said, tuition has gone up roughly 80 percent, including 30 percent in the last two years. A 15 percent increase would likely generate \$52.5 million annually.

He also expressed concern that higher tuition rates may force some top students to look to other states, especially in the areas of science, medicine, and technology — areas that he said are vital to helping position the future of the state. "I'm concerned that we'll lose the capacity to keep our quality of life and maintain our lifestyle," Bruininks said. "This is an historic opportunity to think about what kind of future we want for us all."

The university has a four-pronged approach to dealing with the financial woes, Bruininks said, meaning that students will not face the entire brunt of reduced state revenue.

Bruininks said other the areas include a reduction in administrative and operative costs; targeting eliminations, reductions, and consolidations; and enhancing institutional revenues, such as charging more for some services.

The university president isn't a fan of the Pawlenty plan to take \$30 million from the university and \$30 million from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and give it to the Higher Education Services Office to be used for state grants. "I'm not sure that it makes sense to take from our core budget," he said. He said 40 percent of the university's students are at the graduate, professional, or non-degree levels meaning they get no state grant dollars.

★ INDUSTRY

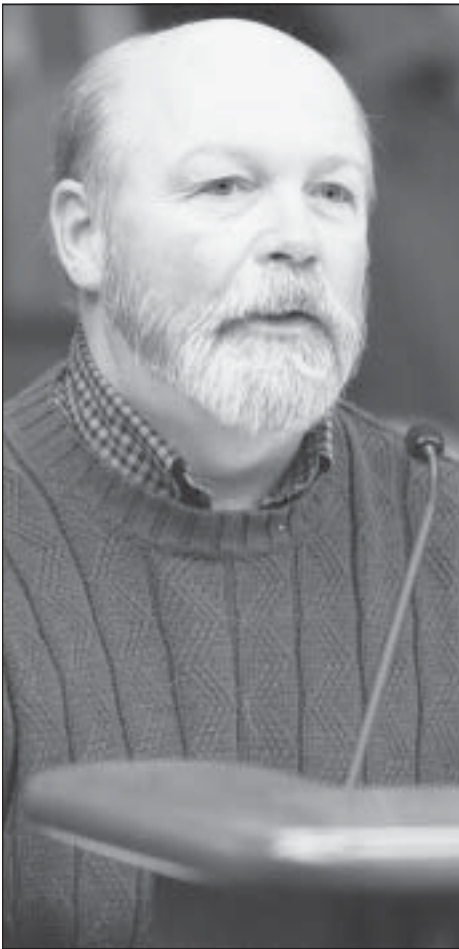
Keeping plants marketable

Mining plants closing due to bankruptcy and other factors would be required to complete specific maintenance duties to keep the plant salable, under a bill approved March 4 by the House Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), HF359 now moves to the House floor.

Current law, passed in 1993, specifies that plant owners must perform maintenance for two years following plant closure. The idea is to keep the plant salable while the state and economic development groups seek a new owner. But believing the bill lacked "teeth," changes have been recommended by steelworkers, many of whom won't testify for fear of losing their jobs, Rukavina said.

Jerry Fallos, representing the Steelworkers



Jerry Fallos, president of Local 4108 of the United Steelworkers of America, testifies March 4 before the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee in support of a bill that would specify duties mining owners and operators must perform when a mining operation is closed.

of America, said the bill could prevent a recurrence of a 1980s situation. Then, the Erie Mining Company plant (which later became an LTV Steel Mining Company plant) in Hoyt Lakes closed its south side. The owners' initial diligence to maintenance later waned, and the fine ore in the machines became like cement. Only jackhammers could clean it up.

"In essence it cost millions and millions of dollars to get the south side back into running shape," Fallos said.

When LTV closed again, this time in 2001 under different owners, many maintenance chores also were left undone, he added.

Under the bill, plant owners would be required to rotate major equipment, keep the facility heated to enhance machinery lubrication, and maintain fire prevention systems, security, and utilities.

Cliff Tobey, a National Steel worker, said such duties are not extraordinary and are typically performed during annual maintenance shutdowns.

Rep. Arlon Lindner (R-Corcoran) expressed

concern that the bill micromanages plant operations. And Bill Brice, director of the lands and minerals division of the Department of Natural Resources, said plant closures are best dealt with individually, and should not be dictated by statute.

However, Rep. Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) said the state could be left funding closure costs of about \$38,000 per plant. Two mining operation bankruptcies are pending on the Iron Range, he added.

A Senate companion bill (SF308), sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits a hearing before the Senate Jobs, Housing, and Community Development Committee.

★ INSURANCE

Ambulance costs

Insurance costs for ambulances have skyrocketed in the past year and operators want to know why, as well as what they can do about it.

They would get help in studying the situation through a bill (HF177) approved Feb. 27 by the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee. The bill now moves to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee.

According to O.J. Doyle, representing the Minnesota Ambulance Association, vehicle and malpractice insurance premiums for ambulances have risen so dramatically that some providers found it extremely difficult to obtain this year. The largest ambulance provider, unnamed by Doyle, saw general liability premiums rise from \$3,497 in 2001-02 to \$128,650 in 2002-03. Vehicle liability premiums shot up from \$31,251 in 2001-02 to \$112,473 to 2002-03.

There has not been a spate of lawsuits, leaving the industry perplexed at the increases, Doyle said.

The problem is exacerbated, he added, by changes in federal Medicare reimbursement policies for medical transportation.

In April 2002, ambulances throughout the United States were placed on a national fee schedule and are prohibited from billing Medicare patients for the non-reimbursable amount. Medicare accounts for about 40 percent of all ambulance revenue in Minnesota, he said.

"The ambulance services in Minnesota are facing a true crisis," Doyle said.

Ambulances are examining a myriad of cost reduction methods, including looking at insurance premiums. HF177, sponsored by Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston), would help the industry address this particular element.

The study would be overseen by the Department of Commerce. Two options exist — either a low-cost study by the House or Senate research staff, or a study by Department of Commerce staff at a cost of \$25,000. However, the committee was told the department does not have the time to perform a thorough study and would require the assistance of a consultant. In either case the Minnesota Joint Underwriting Association would also be asked for help.

Doyle said ambulance services would help gather study information, bringing down the cost.

The bill would require the study to be submitted to the Legislature by Jan. 10, 2004.

A Senate companion bill (SF299), sponsored by Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits a hearing before the Senate Commerce and Utilities Committee.

★ LAW

Public notice required

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy committee approved a bill March 4 that would require a public notice to be sent out when an administrative law judge uses the "good cause exemption."

Sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), HF534 would also allow the chief administrative law judge to review any disapproved rules by another administrative judge proposed under the exemption.

Kenneth Nickolai, chief administrative law judge in the Office of Administrative Hearings, said the process has created uncertainty in the public, because the agency doesn't have to inform the public when enacting an exemption, and has "lessened public trust in rulemaking." The mission of the office is to "provide a fair, prompt and impartial hearing process for citizens who disagree with actions taken by government."

According to its Web site, the office hears and decides cases in three main areas: Administrative Procedure Act (APA) state agency contested cases and rulemaking hearings, local government licensing and personnel cases, and workers' compensation benefit hearings.

The judges in the independent state agency can enact a "good cause exemption" in four sets of circumstances, including: to address a serious and immediate threat to the public health, safety, or welfare; and to make changes that do not alter the sense, meaning, or effect of a rule.

Under the bill, a public notice would include an electronic notice on the state's Web site, and a notice sent by mail or electronic mail to people who have registered to receive this type

of notification. The contents of the information must include an explanation of why the good cause exemption was justified, and a statement that interested parties have five business days to submit comments to the office of administrative hearings.

The bill now goes to the House floor. A companion bill (SF30), sponsored by Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley), was passed by the Senate March 3.

★ LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Paying more for a hospital

Cook County property owners could be subject to higher taxes for their district's hospital operations, under a bill approved March 4 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

HF312, sponsored by Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake), now moves to the House Taxes Committee.

Currently, the hospital district can levy for taxes up to \$300,000 in a year. HF312 would allow the hospital district to annually raise the levy by 3 percent for inflation without voter approval.

A similar measure was requested last year, but legislators were unable to agree on the matter, according to nonpartisan House research staff.

Rep. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester) expressed concern about the tax levy being raised without voter approval. But Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) said this provision could be discussed further in the taxes committee, which he chairs.

The hospital, located in Grand Marais, is the only hospital for many miles in any direction. The district operating the hospital was created in 1989 and is controlled by an elected board of directors.

A Senate companion bill (SF161), sponsored by Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits a hearing before the Senate Taxes Committee.

★ RECREATION

Twin Cities region jewels

The Twin Cities metropolitan area regional parks system includes 34 parks, 10 reserves, four special recreation areas, and 135 miles of multi-purpose trails.

"It's really our public jewel here for our quality of life in the region," said Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover) in support of a biennial regional parks funding bill she presented to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee March 5.

The bill (HF462) would appropriate \$8 million in 2004-05 to the Department of Natural Resources for grants to the Metropolitan Council to operate and maintain the regional parks system. In addition to state funds, park operations and maintenance are supported by local property taxes and user fees.

The system is jointly managed by the Metropolitan Council together with Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Ramsey, and Washington counties; the Three Rivers Park District of Hennepin and Scott counties; the cities of Bloomington and St. Paul; and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

"I find that they are very frugal in how they spend their money and that's very refreshing here at the Legislature," Tingelstad said of the park system management and volunteers. "This money goes a long way with our community and with our citizens."

Park visits have increased from 5 million per year when the system was first created by the 1974 Legislature to nearly 30 million annually.

"The parks attract tourism and the dollars that flow into the state from tourism," said Anoka County Parks and Recreation Director John VonDeLinde.

Other benefits of a thriving parks system include promoting fitness, reducing youth crime, and nurturing family ties, VonDeLinde said. Regional trails also offer alternative transportation routes and support 525,000 commuter trips annually, he added.

"The rationale behind state funding is that regional facilities serve the same function for metropolitan area residents that state parks do in other parts of the state, and that the state as a whole should pay its fair share of the acquisition and development of the regional system as it does for state parks based on visitor origin data and tax origin data," according to the Metropolitan Council's Regional Recreation Open Space Policy Plan.

The bill will be considered for inclusion in the omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill. The Senate companion (SF647) sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul) awaits a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee.

Young officials

Youths between ages 11 and 14 would be allowed to work as sports officials for youth sports events without filing for a child labor law exemption, under a bill approved Feb. 27.

The bill (HF446), sponsored by Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan), was approved by the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee. It now moves to the House floor.

Wardlow said the bill arose when youth

sports organizations were facing investigation from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry for employing children between 11 and 14 years old as referees, umpires, and officials.

The Child Labor Standards Act states that no child younger than 14 years old may be employed, save for as an actor or model, newspaper carrier, or in the agricultural field.

Exemptions can be granted by the state on an individual basis. The bill, however, would outright allow 11- to 14-year-olds to officiate at sporting events.

It includes safety mechanisms by restricting youth sports officials to overseeing games played by children younger than themselves. Adult supervision by a member of the relevant state or local sport organization would be required on the playing ground, as well as written acknowledgement by the child's parent.

Reps. Paul Kohls (R-Victoria) and Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake) wondered aloud if the bill wouldn't set a trap by prohibiting youth sports officials from overseeing older age bracket games. An unintentional violation, such as having a younger official fill in if a regularly scheduled official becomes ill, could subject the child's employer to a \$500 fine. Both representatives, however, voted for the bill.

Testifying in favor of the bill were the department and numerous Minnesota youth soccer and hockey organizations.

"With the growth of hockey within Minnesota, the local organizations rely on this age level to officiate for their younger games," said Bill Leslie, chief referee for Minnkota Hockey, a division of USA Hockey.

Added John Olson, president of the Lakeville Soccer Club, "It's a learning experience for them not only as players, but once they earn their certification as a United States Soccer Federation referee they also learn other aspects of the game that they haven't been exposed to previously."

No Senate companion bill has been introduced.

Trail connections

Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake) introduced himself at new member orientation last fall as the only legislator who drove a snowmobile to work that day.

He meets regularly with snowmobile clubs in the northeastern region of the state to discuss the "joys and concerns over recreational opportunities up there," he told the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee March 5 in support of a bill he is sponsoring that would help complete a 2,100-mile snowmobile trail around Lake Superior.

The bill (HF255) would provide the Department of Natural Resources with \$300,000 from the snowmobile trails and enforcement account in the natural resources fund to purchase easements between a Hermantown section of the Willard Munger State Trail and the North Shore State Trail just outside of Duluth.

Clubs must obtain formal permission from landowners to create trails along private property. These are friendly propositions in most cases, but snowmobile trail easements are "like a daisy chain," Dill said. "They can be interrupted anywhere along the line."

Although it is unusual to purchase a permanent snowmobile trail easement, Dill said, "the Hermantown land is in play at all times." Development pressures are making it more difficult to finalize negotiations, Dill said. "We are trying to close the final gap of 50 to 70 landowners."

Dill assured the committee that easement funds would come strictly from snowmobile dollars generated by registration fees and the gas tax. Easement rights would be held by St. Louis County.

The bill will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill. The Senate companion (SF173) sponsored by Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook) awaits a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee.

Seasonal property leases

Escalating lease rates on prime state-owned property could drive a few elderly tenants away from their cabins along the North Shore, the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee was told March 5.

A bill, sponsored by Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake), would modify the lease rates for three seasonal properties on Horseshoe Bay in Cook County.

"It is absolutely one of the most beautiful places in all of Minnesota," Dill said of the land in question.

Rates for the current leases are based on appraisal values, Dill said, and two of the three lessees are very near forfeiting at this point because of rates that have risen more than 60 percent to \$4,500 per year.

The current lease agreements are finite and the land will return to the state when the lessees die and their heirs are reimbursed for the value of the structures and improvements to the property. The bill (HF498) would not modify those terms, but it would adjust the rate structure.

Dill said the proposal was not something he would normally present to the Legislature given his background in civic affairs, but his

initial reservations were tempered by the knowledge that these are the only cases in Lake, Cook, or St. Louis counties.

The lessees live on fixed incomes, Dill said, and sometimes public policy decisions should be made "erring toward accommodating people and their lives."

"I had some sensitivity to this," he explained, because similar concerns caused his mother to give up land in Voyageurs National Park.

Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings) said the bill would set a bad precedent. It's sad, he agreed, but the issue is bigger than these examples.

"We've set bad precedent before," countered Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder). "It helps us look more humane" to show compassion for people in their elderly years.

The state could lose between \$3,000 and \$8,000 per year under the modified rates, according to Paul Pojar of the Department of Natural Resources Lands and Minerals Division. The department does not feel this is a good policy, but due to the circumstances will not oppose the bill, Pojar said.

McNamara suggested that the committee could look at other ways to restructure the terms such as recouping the lost lease income from the final payoff to the lessees' beneficiaries.

The bill will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill.

A Senate companion (SF465), sponsored by Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), has been referred to the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

SAFETY



Extinguishing costs

Fire departments would gain another mechanism to be reimbursed for extinguishing car fires, under a bill approved March 4 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

The bill now moves to the House Transportation Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls), HF213 requires the commissioner of transportation, as a last option, to reimburse fire departments for expenses incurred while extinguishing motor vehicle fires in trunk highway or interstate rights-of-way. The maximum reimbursable amount is \$300 per incident.

However, fire departments would be required to employ other reimbursement methods prior to seeking money from the account. The bill creates another such method by

allowing fire departments to ask county auditors to add the vehicle fire fee to the person's property tax bill.

Currently, most vehicle owners pay fire department fees resulting from vehicle fires through their auto insurance policy. If the vehicle owner doesn't have comprehensive insurance coverage or simply ignores the bill, the fire department can turn to a collection agency. But this is often an expensive endeavor, said John Dooley, legal counsel for the Minnesota Association of Townships.

The new provision allowing a property lien would not work, however, if the vehicle owner is a renter or does not otherwise own taxable property, Dooley said. It is in this situation that fire departments would most likely seek reimbursement from the state account, he said.

The account would not receive any state money, but would instead be funded by fire service bills paid by people whose vehicles caught on fire.

However, it's unlikely that the commissioner of transportation would collect much money for the account from bill payers, Dooley said.

In response to a question, Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) was told by Dooley that HF213 could lead to similar legislation allowing fire departments to seek reimbursement for responding to vehicle accidents.

A Senate companion bill (SF78), sponsored by Sen. LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Thief River Falls), was approved by the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee and referred to the finance committee.

A similar bill was passed by a number of House and Senate committees last biennium, but failed to survive when the Senate transportation funding bill died.

TAXES



Pay more for cigarettes

Minnesota is missing out on a revenue enhancer and health care cost reducer by not raising cigarette taxes, according to the Minnesota Smoke-Free Coalition.

The non-profit entity, representing more than 300 organizations, testified Feb. 27 to the lack of a cigarette sales tax increase in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed 2004-05 budget.

Raising the tax by \$1 would generate an additional \$260 million annually and save the state \$1 billion in long-term health care costs, Jeremy Hanson, the group's advocacy director, told the House Taxes Committee. More importantly, he added, is how the increased cost could prevent 63,300 children from smoking.

Every year 5,600 Minnesotans die from

tobacco-related illnesses. "That's like having a small town, like my home town, Ada, Minn., disappear completely from the state every six months," said Hanson.

Since 1992, Minnesota has imposed a 48-cent sales tax on a 20-cigarette pack. Tobacco products, such as cigars, pipe tobacco, snuff, and chewing tobacco, are subject to a separate tax that equals 35 percent of the product's wholesale price.

According to nonpartisan House Research staff, the two tobacco taxes will generate \$182 million between fiscal years 2002 and 2005.

Hanson said 21 states increased their cigarette tax in 2002 and each saw a decrease in cigarette consumption and an increase in state revenues.

A 2002 statewide poll found that 63 percent of Minnesota voters support a \$1 tax increase. "In fact, the cigarette tax is possibly the only tax that voters actually like to increase," Hanson said.

The Minnesota Smoke-Free Coalition recognizes that many legislators have taken a no-new taxes pledge, Hanson said. But, he added, legislators could raise the cigarette tax while decreasing other taxes.

Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester) has introduced a bill (HF29) that would raise the cigarette tax by \$1 in order to repeal the gross earnings and health insurance gross premium taxes charged of MinnesotaCare hospitals and health care providers. A Senate companion bill

(SF114) has been introduced by Rep. Sheila Kiscaden (IP-Rochester). Both await committee hearings.

★ TRANSPORTATION

Replenishing the airports fund

The House Transportation Finance Committee is considering a bill that would replenish any funds taken for budget-balancing purposes from the state's airports fund.

The bill (HF251), sponsored by Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee), was heard March 5, and will be considered for the committee's omnibus finance package.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty had proposed taking \$15 million from the balance of the state airport fund to balance the 2003 budget. However, the move would have required legislative action, and since the Legislature did not reach agreement on the 2003 cuts, Pawlenty could only unallot general fund money – which does not include the airports fund.

The airports fund is administered by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), specifically by the office of aeronautics, which also takes its operating money from the fund. Revenue collected from three major areas supports the fund: aviation fuel tax, airline flight property tax (imposed on commercial airlines in lieu of property taxes), and aircraft registration taxes.

The fund has a balance of \$16.5 million.

Beard said the intent of the bill is to recover



Brian Ryks, chair of the Minnesota Council of Airports, testifies March 5 before the House Transportation Finance Committee in support of a bill that would restore state airport funds if they are used to help balance the budget. Others appearing before the committee are, *from left*, Bill Towle, general manager of the St. Cloud Airport, and Glenn Burke, vice chair of the Minnesota Council of Airports.

any money in the fund that may be used to help balance the 2004-05 budget whenever surpluses again become available – whether that's at the end of fiscal year 2005 or some future biennium.

"This is a specific user group," Beard said, referring to the fact that the fund is fully supported by aeronautics-related taxes. "This is not general fund money."

Brian Ryks, executive director of the Duluth Airport Authority and chair of the Minnesota Council of Airports, testified about the airports fund situation on behalf of the Minnesota Council of Airports. The organization presented specific issues they hope the Legislature will address with regard to the fund:

- Borrowing up to \$10 million from the fund for budget-balancing in 2004-05, to be repaid by July 1, 2006;
- Increasing flexibility for airports to meet matching requirements for state and federal funds;
- Spending unreserved balances in the fund for construction and maintenance grants;
- Increasing the capacity for the hangar loan program; and
- Appropriating \$1.5 million in the coming biennium from the fund to complete a long-range radar system in Alexandria.

TAXING DISCUSSION



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Tax Research Director Dick Gebhart, *right*, explains the Department of Revenue's 2003 Tax Incidence Study during a March 5 hearing of the House Taxes Committee. Assistant Commissioner of Revenue Raymond Krause, *left*, and Rod Hoheisel, tax research assistant director, also appeared before the committee.

Glenn Burke, director of the South St. Paul airport, said the airport council is concerned about the lack of traffic control coverage in the Alexandria area.

"It's the black hole of Calcutta," Burke said, describing how the Federal Aviation Administration only allows one plane in the area at a time because there's no other way to assure safety without radar.

Ray Rought, director of the aeronautics office for MnDOT said the project was slated for 2004-05, prior to the Pawlenty plan to use the balance in the airports fund to reduce the general fund deficit.

The committee took no action on the bill at the meeting. Its Senate companion (SF223), sponsored by Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

MnDOT cutbacks questioned

Members of the House Transportation Finance Committee received a more detailed breakdown to the proposed reductions to the Transportation Department's state road operations budgets March 4.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget proposes \$53.5 million in reductions to state road operations for 2004-05, all paid for from the trunk highway fund. The reductions represent about 3 percent of the \$1.9 billion state road budget.

Department officials testified that the reductions would not affect road construction projects, but are intended to accommodate any additional road construction funding the governor may propose. The cuts would be absorbed by three general areas of service in the department: infrastructure investment and planning, infrastructure operations and maintenance, and electronic communications.

Dick Stehr, program support director for the department, discussed the \$17.5 million in proposed reductions to infrastructure investment and planning. The cuts would

specifically reduce administration and district operating costs, as well as reduce central support for district operations in such areas as training, troubleshooting for project development, and other technical problem solving.

In addition, the proposed reductions would slow the replacement cycles for equipment, including computers, Stehr said.

Also, materials and research to support the MnRoad data collection and analysis project would be reduced.

Stehr said the MnRoad project, which has been in operation for about 15 years, helps the department time its seasonal weight restrictions and has extended pavement life as a result. He estimated at least \$20 million in savings from the research.

In the areas of operations and maintenance, the department proposes trimming \$35 million, primarily in reduced service levels to maintenance and operations activities such as snow and ice removal, roadside mowing, and litter and graffiti removal along state highways and interstates. The proposal also includes closing some rest areas in the state to save about \$4 million.

Bob Winter, district manager for the department, said the reductions would affect a number of performance measures for the division, including travel time reliability, pavement marking visibility, rest areas, and the life cycle of vehicles in the maintenance fleet.

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) questioned how the department chose the reductions it did, particularly when they could affect safety.

"Safety is a paramount concern," Winter said. The department is trying to keep the state positioned "to continue to develop and expand our existing system," and those considerations drove the decision-making, he said.

In addition, the governor's budget proposes a \$1 million reduction to electronic communications functions in the department. Andy Terry, director of the office, said the department provides the primary technical support

for high-frequency radio and electronic communications for all state agencies, though the agencies purchase their own equipment and contract for service.

The reductions, Terry said, would slow replacement of general equipment by 50 percent, and eliminate about 90 percent of the department's scientific equipment replacement budget. He said the reductions could have long-term implications regarding the ability of public safety radio systems to be able to communicate with one another statewide. He emphasized, however, that the department's primary goal with regard to the communications system is public safety.

The committee took no action on the proposals at the meeting.



NOTES

The conversation in the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee March 4 strayed ever so briefly to speculate on the cause of fatalities on Minnesota's frozen lakes.

"Gender, alcohol, and snowmobiles," declared Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls).

Committee chair Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount) said he could see a "Kahn bill" coming, in reference to some of her past proposals, including a bill that would eliminate the prohibition of marriage between first cousins.

"So, if I want to marry my first cousin...?" asked Rep. Joe Hoppe (R-Chaska) in jest.

"Don't do it on a snowmobile while you're drunk," replied Kahn.

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About the same

February forecast represents smallest anticipated change in a decade, some additional reductions necessary

By PATTY JANOVEC

At the Feb. 27 release of the state's February forecast, state Finance Commissioner Dan McElroy said that although "there are no big surprises" in the financial document, both Minnesota and the nation as a whole face an uncertain economic future.

As the budget situation now stands, the state will have to make up to \$125 million in reductions to balance the budget through fiscal year 2005.

Finance Department officials explained to members of the House Ways and Means Committee that the forecast indicates an additional \$25 million deficit from the previous forecast. However, the department accelerated forecasts for human services and educational programs so Gov. Tim Pawlenty could include some of those numbers in his budget recommendations Feb. 18. As a result, an additional \$100 million in reductions must be made to Pawlenty's 2004-05 budget recommendations.

As a result, the new forecast deficit is \$125 million more than the previous \$4.2 billion projected for 2004-05.

Assistant Commissioner Peggy Ingison testified that Pawlenty accounted for the reduced spending projections in human services and education, but information regarding decreased revenues was not yet available when he put together his budget recommendations. That created the \$100 million difference.

McElroy told the committee that the additional \$11 million in cuts for fiscal year 2003 could be expected from the governor in early March, along with any other adjustments he will make to the budget. He also emphasized the February forecast was the "smallest change between two forecasts in a long time." The last forecast was done in November 2002.

Various sources are used to determine the state's outlook including how much the state spends, how much is collected in revenue, and the state's budget reserves.

Reductions in spending account for part of the balancing act in the current and next

biennium. The forecast shows a reduced \$80 million in K-12 education funding, based on fewer pupils in the system for calculation purposes. Health and human services spending show a \$40 million reduction due to drops in spending associated with the General Assistance Medical Care program, and Medical Assistance long-term care waivers.

Forecasts also measure the overall economic outlook both nationally and in Minnesota, where the economy continues to lag behind the national averages for employment growth.

More than 64,000 jobs have been lost in the past two years in Minnesota, about 40,000 of those are in manufacturing.

The forecast says employment in transportation, communications, and the utilities sector fell significantly more in Minnesota than nationally and government in Minnesota, while growing, did not increase as rapidly as national averages.

The forecast indicates that the national recession appears to be over, but the U.S. economy is emerging slowly and continues to struggle. However, the impending war with Iraq, said State Economist Tom Stinson, makes this forecast the most uncertain since the November 1990 forecast prior to the Gulf War.

The Department of Finance used forecasting models by an economic consulting company, Global Insight Inc. The company's predictions depend on two factors, possible war with Iraq and a federal economic stimulus package.

On those topics, the models assign

probabilities to how the economy will react to both factors. As a result, the models suggest there's a 60 percent chance of a short, successful war with Iraq and substantial economic stimulus package in late 2003 or early 2004; a 20 percent chance of a favorable victory without war scenario; and a 20 percent likelihood of a pessimistic outlook with war extending until at least summer 2003. The latter also contains a two-quarter recession for 2003.

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids) asked Stinson if he would "bet the farm on it" referring to his confidence in the predictions. Stinson said he would not.

Explaining the outcomes further, Stinson said when he last talked with Global Insight

representatives, they were less optimistic, but he doesn't know where they are today. Furthermore, he said, a no-war scenario isn't necessarily good for the economy unless one of two things happen: Saddam Hussein has a heart attack, or the United States continues to posture as if we're going to go to war.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL BATTAGLIA


The Department of Finance's February forecast shows that Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 2004-05 proposed budget does not account for another \$125 million in cuts necessary to balance the state's budget by June 2005.

Stinson explained there will be a special forecast done in the fall to see if anything material has changed. McElroy indicated one could be done before the end of the legislative session if necessary.

Both House Republicans and Senate DFL responded in press conferences to the forecast.

Senate DFL leaders said although not much has changed, the outlook doesn't look as positive as the governor continues to assume.

Senate Majority Leader John Hottinger (DFL-St. Peter) said there are a lot of "ifs" in the budget forecast with the potential for continual downfall in Minnesota's economy. "Details do make a difference," Hottinger said.

Republicans continue to hold the line on "no new tax burdens" for Minnesotans said House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon). Sviggum said the additional cuts make it "more difficult rather than less difficult." 

Court concerns

Officials paint a dire picture for what governor's funding proposal would mean for timely justice in the state

By JEFF JONES

The difference between what Gov. Tim Pawlenty is proposing for the state's judicial system in the next biennium and what officials say they need could have a dire effect on the way cases are handled in Minnesota, court system officials say.

The Minnesota Constitution requires the governor, as head of the executive branch, to recommend a balanced budget. However, the other branches may also submit budgets to legislators for consideration. For that reason, two separate budget proposals for the state's judicial branch sit side by side in legislators' thick budget books — one from the governor, and one from the courts themselves.

For his part, Pawlenty recommends a 10 percent cut from the base budget of

In a letter accompanying the governor's budget, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz said the state runs the risk of running afoul of the state constitution if anything less than current funding levels are maintained. In fact, she suggests an overall increase in court budgets in order to maintain "core justice operations."

State Court Administrator Sue Dosal said the governor's proposal would result in a 30 percent reduction in court staff due to rapidly rising insurance prices, the high cost of layoffs, and fixed costs like rent and judges' salaries that cannot be reduced.

In a court system already stretched to the limit, such massive layoffs would have a devastating effect, Dosal said. "The bottom line today is we are handling a mountain of cases," she said. A recent report from the legislative auditor found that Minnesota judges handle 49 percent more cases each year than comparable states. Iowa, with a smaller population than Minnesota, has more judges.

Even at current funding, the report found, significant delays in case processing are caused by too few judges, too few public defenders, and little time for attorneys to prepare for cases.

Despite delays, Second District Chief Judge Thomas Mott said the system has handled the problem well so far, but can't be asked to sustain any more cuts. "We have clearance rates of cases of about 100 percent. As many cases that come in a year, we resolve in a year and go out," he said. "This 30 percent reduction in

staff will mean the annual clearance rates for all cases will drop to 78 percent." After a year, Mott anticipates 500,000 cases would be backlogged. "Do that for two years, and we're buried so far under in the mess, that you'll never get out," he predicted.

Mott said backlogs would result in slowdowns in child custody hearings, delays in issuing restraining orders for battered women, injured people unable to collect damages, contract disputes put on hold, and criminal cases dismissed for lack of reliable evidence.

"You've got cases deteriorating over time, witnesses disappearing, memories fading," he said. And he fears fewer out-of-court settlements would occur because attorneys wouldn't face the urgency of going before a jury.

Besides the administrative mess that could result, court officials say that delays of such magnitude could be in direct conflict with the Minnesota constitution. Among the state's Bill of Rights, is the guarantee of judicial remedy in civil and criminal actions that occurs "promptly and without delay."

"The upshot of all this is that it results I think in a very clear constitutional violation," Mott said. "This is not to say that we're going to be irresponsible about the way we approach this. We will look at case processing priorities and certainly a homicide case is going to take priority over a speeding trial."

Federal requirements that courts appoint a *guardian ad litem* to all children in all cases of child abuse or neglect have never been met, according to Blatz, putting the state at risk of losing some federal funding. State requirements that judges appoint similar guardians in cases of truancy and run-away children are also expensive. Committee Chair Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound) suggested the committee could look into giving judges more discretion in such cases. Mott said without such relief, courts would incur \$2.9 million in further expenses.

Other suggestions include increased use of video or telephone conferencing in trials, closing some court facilities in Greater Minnesota, changing certain laws to reduce caseloads, and raising court user fees or filing fees.

As for raising fees, Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls) said courts need to retain the right to waive filing fees in cases of hardship.

The committee took no action at the hearing.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Court officials are concerned that Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed budget cuts for the judicial branch will create backlogs of thousands of cases.

Minnesota's judiciary for the next biennium. A letter from Finance Commissioner Dan McElroy says the governor suggests the courts should "individually redesign their operations to increase efficiencies while minimizing the disruption to public services as much as possible."

Court officials told the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 27 that is impossible.



Guided by his past

Backgrounds in business, religion, transportation have led Beard to the House of Representatives

BY JEFF JONES

Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee) says even a cloudy day is a nice day in Minnesota.

That might be easy to say for an amateur pilot like Beard, who enjoys soaring above the clouds at least as much as driving beneath them, but that optimism has deeper roots.



Rep. Michael Beard

Growing up in the foothills of Pennsylvania, Beard often lived in the shadow of mountains. “The sun would come up at 6:30 in the morning, but you wouldn’t see it ‘til after nine,” he said. “The sun might not set ‘til eight in the middle of the summer but the last you saw of it was after six.”

And on cloudy days? “They’d be right down in the hills and we just felt kind of claustrophobic. Here (in Minnesota), the clouds can be 600 feet above the ground and you can still see halfway to Hutchinson. It looks like a nice day to me.”

When he and his wife, Karen, came to Minnesota to attend Bible college, they knew they wanted to spend their lives here. “There was more of an entrepreneurial spirit about the place,” Beard said. “We liked it, we wanted to come back here and raise our kids.”

It also gave him the opportunity to work for himself.

He started Beard Communications, which produces a variety of Christian publications, in 1987 and purchased the nondenominational *Minnesota Christian Chronicle* newspaper in 1995. Now 25 years old, the publication has a bi-weekly circulation of more than 20,000.

Beard professes great respect for anyone trying to “make a go” in business. “You have to be out there every day selling yourself, selling your concept, your services, your business, your idea,” he says. “Whether you’re selling corn or you’re selling newspapers.”

Operating and building a company hasn’t

always been easy. One of his business ventures failed and he has presided over difficult budget decisions to make ends meet. “I’m intimately familiar with fear and terror,” he says. “Like, ‘Yikes, it’s payday and I don’t have any money in the bank.’ That’s a terrible thing to face.”

Those experiences guide his work as a freshman representative while the Legislature tries to balance the state’s budget for the upcoming fiscal year. “Cutting budgets is never any fun, but it’s a very necessary thing,” he says. “And after you’ve done it for 10 or 12 years — fattening up in the good times and cutting back in the lean times — you get a little less emotional about it.”

“We’ve got a great state that has done a lot of things. Some great things. Some good things. But a budget crunch like we’re in now gives us an opportunity to get connected to reality. What is the best stuff? We may have to sacrifice the good to retain the best.”

— Rep Michael Beard

Along with his business experience, Beard brings a strong faith background to his work as a legislator. His daughter, Amy, is the bookkeeper and general manager for the *Minnesota Christian Chronicle*, where her father still serves as publisher. “He wants to make the world a better place,” she says. “He isn’t in charge, but he’s a tool being used.”

Beard says his relationship with God keeps him from thinking too much of himself. “He’s the king, I’m a creature, I understand the relationship there,” he said, laughing.

His employees have seen his faith at work. “He spends a lot of time in prayer before he makes a big decision,” says Michael Norman, the *Chronicle’s* graphic designer. “He likes to know all sides of a problem before making a decision.”

Lisa Beard calls her father a visionary. “He has big ideas,” she says. “His ability to network is amazing.”

Beard is happy to be sitting on the House Transportation Policy and Transportation Finance committees. “If it floats, if it rolls, if it

flies, I enjoy it. I’m in love with it,” he said.

After college, Beard returned home and worked as an engineer trainee for the Pennsylvania Central Railroad, which he calls the best job he ever quit.

He left the job after a couple of years to come to Minnesota, but admits to missing it at times. “There’s something about rolling through town and blowing your whistle and waving at the kids that’s just every boy’s dream come true. There’s nothing like pulling that throttle and feeling 14,000 horsepower kick you in the butt.”

Transportation is among the things government ought to be about, Beard says. When it comes to building roads and infrastructure, maintaining a court system, and providing quality education, state dollars are well spent. Beyond that, though, he suggests taking a hard look at the way sales taxes are collected from cities and counties, the way money is distributed to local governments, and the way social services are administered.

“We’ve got a great state that has done a lot of

things. Some great things. Some good things,” Beard said. “But a budget crunch like we’re in now gives us an opportunity to get connected to reality. What is the best stuff? We may have to sacrifice the good to retain the best.”

DISTRICT 35A

2002 population: 36,485

Largest city: Shakopee

County: Scott

Location: southwest Twin Cities metropolitan area

Top concern: “We have an excellent opportunity to withdraw from things that we shouldn’t be in and reorient government to the issues at hand: education, transportation and the judicial system. We must be about those.”

— Rep. Michael Beard

Part of the plan

From the time she was a little girl, Brod has been preparing for her a life of public service and her new role as legislator

BY PATTY JANOVEC

While the siblings of Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague) were watching cartoons, she turned her attention, during her formative years, to the news of the day. She said that her father claims she has been interested in government since the tender age of 5.



Rep. Laura Brod

Her attention to the functions of local government led her into urban and regional studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She said that education helped her land a position on the New Prague City Council, an experience, she said that helped in her understanding of how local government works.

Said Jerry Bohnsack, city administrator for New Prague, "She was only with us for four years, but we miss her."

When Brod was first elected to the council, Bohnsack said she reminded him of a "little girl," listening and gaining knowledge on issues. Later, he said, she tackled a street reconstruction project and, "she asked questions you wouldn't think of." Her perspective, he said, lent valuable insight into a complex situation.

Bohnsack said Brod would later stand up to a Citizen's League report that surveyed taxes in several communities, including New Prague. The report labeled the city with the highest taxes in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. He said Brod "got to know the tax system, asked a lot of questions" and the city was eventually excluded from the survey after she found that potentially unfair comparisons were made. He says she is "super intelligent, but yet has a lot of common sense."

As a legislator Brod now represents a district comprised of small towns, where the largest population of any municipality is nearly 5,000. "It's a fabulous collection of small towns that are individual," she said. "They each have

their own different characteristics."

Brod said that her campaign agenda included focusing on economic development, which can draw young people back to the rural areas, like New Prague with its welcoming and warm atmosphere. That's exactly what she and her husband, Wade, decided to do when they had two children — now ages 7 and 5. Following redistricting and discussion with her family, she decided to run for state office. Brod admits that balancing family life is a challenge, but she said, "luckily I have extended family that live in my town, and my husband has a flexible job."

Along with her job as a legislator, Brod is an appraiser of agricultural and residential property. Because of the experience, she said that

communities would be at the greater end of the cap" in her district, Brod said.

Much like she did as a new city councilor, Brod has spent much of her time as a new legislator "really getting my arms around the mechanics of this place."

"I'm on a quest for information, a quest for understanding how the Legislature works from the inside," Brod said. "Once I understand that I'll be able to present my arguments, present my issues, and represent my district better than if I just dove in."

The first bill Brod sponsored (HF450) would give people who drive vehicles operating on fuel with an 85 percent ethanol blend the ability to use the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. Brod said a citizen brought forth the idea at a town meeting.

She said that at a time of possible war alternative fuels are important and that the state needs to increase the ethanol market by understanding the need to reduce reliance on foreign oil.

HF450 awaits a hearing by the House Transportation Policy Committee. Its Senate

"I'm on a quest for information, a quest for understanding how the Legislature works from the inside. Once I understand that I'll be able to present my arguments, present my issues, and represent my district better than if I just dove in."

— Rep. Laura Brod

she understands market values, growth, and tax issues. And with two children in public schools, she said she can relate to the educational needs of the area, as well.

Schools, education, and economic development are all important to her district, Brod said. But transportation is also coming more to the forefront since more residents drive into the Twin Cities metropolitan area to work. Minnesota needs to get people moving, she said, and "if there is a way we can increase the ability for people to get to their jobs without losing money by sitting on a highway, I'm all for it."

Also becoming important, Brod said, is local government aid. She said her area, like many rural communities, depends heavily on those funds. Although Gov. Tim Pawlenty has proposed caps on the cuts, "most

companion (SF466), sponsored by Sen. Thomas Neuville (R-Northfield), also awaits a committee hearing.

DISTRICT 25A

2002 population: 36,729
 Largest city: New Prague
 Counties: Le Sueur, Scott, Sibley
 Location: south-central Minnesota
 Top concern: "When I talk to people, the budget is definitely one, two, three and four. We're talking about the specific cuts, the ways government can work better, ways that government is being wasteful, quality of employees that work in government."

— Rep. Laura Brod

Unlikely lawmaker

From aspiring priest to city prosecutor, Lesch hopes to connect with constituents as new member of the House

By MICHELLE KIBIGER

Rep. John Lesch (DFL-St. Paul) says he never really imagined himself as a lawyer, or even a legislator. In fact, as a teen, he began studying to become a priest.



Rep. John Lesch

But a few key experiences in his life led him to the Minnesota House of Representatives and gave him a passion for public service.

He was initially drawn to the Legislature through an internship with former Rep. Andy Dawkins during the 1997-98 session. Lesch said he became fascinated with the legislative process and the commitment to public service that members exhibited, including Dawkins.

“He was not a typical legislator,” Lesch said of Dawkins. “He had an idea and he ran with it, no matter what people thought of it.”

Now Lesch says he’s trying to employ the same principles in his new role as legislator. He has established two goals for this term: one successful piece of legislation addressing a need among his constituents, and meeting more residents of District 66A, which includes parts of north and east St. Paul.

“Many people don’t feel connected to what’s going on at the Capitol because they’ve never been asked what their opinion is,” Lesch said. “And I tried to do that when I went out to hit the doors (last) summer. But that was before I was elected, too, so I want to get to know a lot more of the folks.”

Lesch grew up in Brooklyn Park. When he was 17, he moved to Madison, Wisc. to attend Holy Name Seminary. During those formative years, Lesch said he learned some important values that he carries with him today.

He said he was always taught to be the kind of person who means what he says, says what he means, and is true to his word.

“If I say I’m going to do something, I (try to) follow through on it or break myself trying,” he said. “And there are times that I haven’t

followed through on it – just the guilt is overwhelming. Being raised that way is, I think, really important, because there’s the perception that people like lawyers and politicians overpromise and underdeliver.”

He said he hopes to reach a balance in that.

Fellow freshman member Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake) has become a close colleague of Lesch’s, whom Lesch says he enjoys bouncing ideas off of to get Meslow’s conservative viewpoint, and to help hone the idea and refine it.

“I know that I can trust what he says, and when John tells me that’s the way it is, then that’s good enough for me,” Meslow said.

“Many people don’t feel connected to what’s going on at the Capitol because they’ve never been asked what their opinion is. And I tried to do that when I went out to hit the doors (last) summer. But that was before I was elected, too, so I want to get to know a lot more of the folks.”

— Rep. John Lesch

“I think John is going to be a star in the House – a bright guy who is very committed to what he is doing.”

After seminary, Lesch said the order sent him to Saint Louis University to continue his studies. But after meeting and seriously dating the woman who would become his wife, Lesch decided not to continue pursuing the priesthood, and ultimately he returned to the Twin Cities to attend the Hamline University law school. Lesch and his wife, Tina, settled into an apartment near the Hamline campus. The couple now have a young daughter.

He said over the next several years they have chosen to stay in the neighborhood, moving about a half-mile east in each of their new residences.

“The district that he lived in and that he volunteered in and he got known in was the district he was elected in,” Dawkins said.

Now a prosecutor with the city of St. Paul, the 30-year-old Lesch works with community

law enforcement programs – the kind that work to enhance the livability of neighborhoods by reducing crimes such as prostitution and drug dealing.

He said he hopes to stay connected with his district by continuing to stay active in the community and listen to the needs of his constituents. He also said he will work to stay aware of their concerns, such as housing, jobs, economic development, and public safety.

Lesch said he’s keenly aware that a number of people in his district live paycheck to paycheck. He said all they want is the opportunity to have a good paying job and a roof over their heads.

“When they need something like busing or when they need employment or when they need housing, it’s critical,” he said. “It’s the difference between stability and poverty in a single paycheck.”

In addition, Lesch said, he thinks that government has been standing in the way of developers who are willing to build quality

housing in the locations that need them most. He hopes to help ease regulations so builders can provide the housing that people need.

DISTRICT 66A

2002 population: 36,523

Largest city: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Location: north and east St. Paul

Top concern: “You hear employers, Republican business owners, complaining about housing, because they also know that part of the reason we don’t have housing is because government has regulated it out. You can’t even approach the job issue, until you have a housing arrangement at least. That’s number one.”

— Rep. John Lesch

True to his roots

From township board to St. Paul, Lindgren wants to continue sculpting quality legislation for his area

BY TOM LONERGAN

Wherever Rep. Doug Lindgren (R-Bagley) goes, a bit of his creativity is not far behind.

In his House office in St. Paul, there's a small reception table Lindgren welded together from car engine parts. On the campaign trail last year, a 1963 Jeep that Lindgren restored pulled a caterpillar-like 16-foot-long welded piece of empty Freon tanks. Painted green, Lindgren's "recycle-pillar" had spark plugs for antennas. The piece "became a visual trademark of my campaign," he said. "The kids got a kick out of it."



Rep. Doug Lindgren

Lindgren has made a number of art pieces from car parts and other scrap material readily available from the family-run gas station he owns in Bagley, west of Bemidji.

Creating legislation as a freshman representative, Lindgren said, may prove to be a bit more challenging than his sculpture. "It's really hard coming down here and getting hit with this huge budget deficit," said the 52-year-old Navy veteran. "A lot of your pre-conceived notions are stripped away."

For 18 years, Lindgren served on the Copley Township Board of Supervisors. His wife, Colleen, is the Bagley city clerk and accountant for the family business. His first taste of making government work, Lindgren recalled, came when he wanted a road repaired in front of his house. "I was told, 'Run for the township board and fix it yourself,'" Lindgren said.

As with many new Republican representatives, Lindgren was encouraged to run for the House by Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon). "I didn't know him," Lindgren said. "He called and said he wanted to meet me." After lunch and a week to think about it, Lindgren said he was "hooked." He won last November's election by just 443 votes (2.94 percent).

Lindgren said he's the first conservative elected from the district in many decades. Yet, during his introduction to the House, he said

he's found a different tone than strict partisanship. "I'm finding out it's more issue-based," Lindgren said. His committee assignments include the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance, Environment Policy, and Agriculture Policy committees.

The difficulties small towns in Greater Minnesota are having due to declining population and slack economic development will be uppermost in his approach to issues, Lindgren said. Jobs are scarce in towns like Bagley, and the southern portion of his district – which includes popular recreation areas like Itasca State Park – offers mostly seasonal jobs, he added.

State tax breaks for new or expanding busi-

nesses in economically depressed areas are important, Lindgren said, "but I'm not for giving stuff away." He favors approaches like tax increment financing which, he said, has been "a boon for Bagley." The incentive approach helped the town land Team Industries, a company that makes transmissions for Polaris. In a tax increment district, a company's tax bill is relieved initially, but eventually paid as the business prospers, Lindgren said.

He said he plans to take a "strong look" at the funding formula for local government aid. "I have a hard time understanding why Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth get local government aid when they have a tax base and can create revenue," Lindgren said.

"How does Bagley create a tax base? It's just not there," he said. With a population of just over 1,000, losing 60 people a year is "a big deal" in Bagley.

And education is a key issue, with a son in college and a daughter in high school, he said. Lindgren's gas station, which he worked at as a young man and now run by his son, Jeremiah, provides service at the pump, with windshield washing, an oil check, small repairs, and daily shoptalk. Lindgren said the latter helped him develop a "common sense" approach to issues.

"He sure has a knack for that political thing," Jeremiah said. "He's a pretty good talker and he really, really listens to people."

"During the campaign we heard from a lot of

"I have a hard time understanding why Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth get local government aid when they have a tax base and can create revenue."

— Rep. Doug Lindgren

He said Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposal to create up to 10 tax-free zones for businesses in rural Minnesota, "sounds like a good deal but it could create a lot of controversy between different cities." But, Lindgren added, the state needs to respond to neighboring states like South Dakota "enticing business away with tax breaks."

Local government aid is another issue that hits close to home. The state's financial assistance provides 30 percent of Copley Township's annual budget, he said. "We didn't like unfunded mandates" from the state, Lindgren added, "but then I get here and see why they happen."

people that lawmakers in general seem more concerned about the Twin Cities area and lump everywhere else as Greater Minnesota." Jeremiah said. He said his father will "represent this area and he's serious about listening to people here."

Asked if he or his dad is the boss when they work together, the younger Lindgren said, "Mom's the boss. She writes the paychecks."

DISTRICT 2B

2002 population: 36,482

Largest city: Park Rapids

Counties: Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Pennington, Polk

Location: northwest Minnesota

Top concern: "Government is moving away from the common man. I don't like what that looks like. Common sense and accountability has left government and we need to bring that back."

— Rep. Doug Lindgren

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Unofficial list as of 1/15/03

Monday, March 3

HF668—Holberg (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Woman's right to know act requiring informed consent of a female upon whom an abortion is performed, and providing civil remedies.

HF669—Holberg (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Woman's right to know act requiring informed consent of a female upon whom an abortion is being performed, and providing civil remedies.

HF670—Holberg (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Woman's right to know act requiring informed consent of a female upon whom an abortion is performed, and providing civil remedies.

HF671—Gunther (R)
Regulated Industries
Telephone company service promotions and packages regulated.

HF672—Gunther (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Trade and economic development redevelopment account funding provided for grants in and out of the metropolitan area, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF673—Haas (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Comprehensive health association authorized to offer policies with higher annual deductibles, writing carrier contract extension permitted, and other provisions clarified.

HF674—Latz (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Local impact notes for state-mandated actions provisions expanded to include school districts.

HF675—Clark (DFL)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Right to obtain judicial review of DWI-related vehicle forfeiture notice required to be printed in Somali language.

HF676—Boudreau (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Persons who qualify as voluntary patients for treatment of a mental illness clarified as not subject to civil commitment.

HF677—Erickson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Licensure requirements modified for architects, engineers, surveyors, landscape architects, geoscientists, and interior designers.

HF678—DeLaForest (R)
Civil Law
Civil commitment technical correction provided.

HF679—Anderson, B. (R)
Ways & Means
Claims against the state payment provided for persons injured while performing community service and sentencing to service work, and money appropriated.

HF680—Urdahl (R)
Education Policy
Hearing required for the termination or non-renewal of a licensed or unlicensed coach or assistant coach.

HF681—Urdahl (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Greenleaf Lake State Park established in Meeker County.

HF682—Kielkucki (R)
Education Policy
School bus safety training, safety responsibilities, and type III vehicle standards modified.

HF683—Harder (R)
Agriculture & Rural Development Finance
Agriculture and food sciences academy pre-design and design funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF684—Erickson (R)
Education Policy
Special education; Congress and the president memorialized by resolution to stop unfunded mandates and laws that support the over-identification of children with mental disorders in special education.

HF685—Ozment (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Minnesota Zoological Garden; Phase I of the facilities and business master plan funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF686—Fuller (R)
Regulated Industries
Sale of alcohol to underage persons minimum administrative penalties provided.

HF687—Simpson (R)
Regulated Industries
Public Utilities Commission membership required to include at least two members from outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

HF688—Krinkie (R)
Transportation Policy
Regional rail authorities in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area abolished.

HF689—Buesgens (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Council use of energy forward pricing mechanisms authorized.

HF690—Knoblach (R)
Civil Law
Guardian and conservator licensing provided, licensing board established, fees limited, and notices required.

HF691—Hausman (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
St. Paul Como Park Conservatory restoration project funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF692—Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Pharmacists scope of practice modified to include administration of influenza and pneumococcal vaccine.

HF693—Thissen (DFL)
Health & Human Services Policy
Municipally operated ambulance services exempted from certain license application requirements.

HF694—Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Massage and Asian bodywork therapist registration system established, rulemaking authorized, and criminal penalties imposed.

HF695—Marquart (DFL)
Taxes
Proposed property tax notice earlier delivery required.

HF696—Lesch (DFL)
Judiciary Policy and Finance
Criminal sexual conduct in the third- and fourth-degree crimes expanded.

HF697—Sykora (R)
Education Policy
Charter school eligible sponsors expanded to include certain nonprofits.

HF698—Opatz (DFL)
Education Policy
Profile of Learning repealed, state standards for educational excellence set, and legislative approval required.

HF699—Opatz (DFL)
Education Policy
Profile of Learning repealed, state standards for educational excellence set, educational accountability provided, and legislative approval required.

Thursday, March 6

HF700—Eastlund (R)
Civil Law
Civil action immunity provided for good faith reports to or requests for assistance from law enforcement.

HF701—Opatz (DFL)
Health & Human Services Policy
Wholesale drug distributor requirements modified to include reporting of pricing criteria.

HF702—Hausman (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
St. Paul Raspberry Island and Upper Landing improvements funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF703—Krinkie (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Legislators removed from various executive branch boards.

HF704—Brod (R)
Taxes
Motor vehicle dealers authorized to pay sales tax or use tax for use of a vehicle other than for demonstration purposes, and loaner vehicles exempted from the motor vehicle sales and use tax.

HF705—Severson (R)
Regulated Industries
Sartell authorized to issue additional on-sale liquor licenses.

HF706—Severson (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Municipal ordinance authority clarified relating to affordable housing.

HF707—Thao (DFL)
Civil Law
Hmong marriage solemnization form provided.

HF708—Stang (R)
Higher Education Finance
Higher Education Services Office, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, University of Minnesota, and Mayo Medical Foundation appropriations provided with certain conditions.

HF709—Thao (DFL)
Health & Human Services Finance
Hennepin County new chance program funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF710—Atkins (DFL)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Obsolete mandatory retirement language deleted.

HF711—Dill (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
St. Louis County tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF712—Vandevier (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Washington County ditch maintenance provided.

HF713—Hornstein (DFL)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Video game sale or rental to minors prohibited for certain games defined as restricted.

HF714—Seifert (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Counties permitted to keep proceeds from forfeited bail.

HF715—Greiling (DFL)
Education Finance
HIV/STI education in schools regional training site funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF716—Rhodes (R)
Transportation Policy
Taxicab vehicle qualifications requirements provided for the Metropolitan Airports Commission, quarterly payment of fees permitted, and permit transfers authorized.

HF717—McNamara (R)
Regulated Industries
Hastings authorized to issue additional on-sale liquor licenses.

HF718—Beard (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Scott County surplus state land sale authorized, funds deposited in the wildlife acquisition account, and money appropriated for wildlife acquisition.

HF719—Beard (R)
Regulated Industries
Brewpubs authorized to make retail and wholesale sales, and municipal liquor license limit removed.

HF720—Dempsey (R)
Taxes
Long-term care individual income tax credit increased.

HF721—Sykora (R)
Education Finance
Referendum revenue voter-approved adjustment authorized.

HF722—Erhardt (R)
Transportation Policy
Weight restriction exemptions provided for garbage trucks and recycling vehicles.

HF723—Erhardt (R)
Transportation Policy
Seat belt law exemption provided for certain garbage trucks.

HF724—Latz (DFL)
Transportation Policy
High-occupancy vehicle lane usage by certain other vehicles allowed.

HF725—Biernat (DFL)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Fire marshal permit required for indoor fireworks displays.

HF726—Hackbarth (R)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 15, St. Francis, student safety improvements funded through proceeds from sale of certain school property.

HF727—Wilkin (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Health coverage proposed mandates evaluation provided.

HF728—Clark (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
HIV/AIDS in the workplace education provided and money appropriated.

HF729—Smith (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Judicial standards board money appropriated.

HF730—Howes (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Statutory home warranty exclusions for liability of vendor and home improvement contractor amended, statutory cure of defects provided, and limitation of actions based on breach specified.

HF731—Kohls (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Property manager background checks on Minnesota computerized criminal history system provided.

HF732—Brod (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Rural challenge grant program modified, contamination cleanup grant program administrative funding limitations increased, and obsolete references eliminated.

HF733—Walker (DFL)
Taxes
Volunteer assistance delivery to low-income taxpayers facilitation grant money appropriated.

HF734—Kielkucki (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Linked bingo gaming provided.

HF735—Marquart (DFL)
Civil Law
Background study requirement exclusion for spouses provided.

HF736—Marquart (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Lake improvement district board of directors election procedure provided and certain notices required.

HF737—Lesch (DFL)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Defendant attorney fee for certain appeals payment by government units not required.

HF738—Howes (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Reforestation bonds authorized and money appropriated.

HF739—Borrell (R)
Civil Law
Certain University of Minnesota claim data and food safety regulatory data classified as nonpublic.

HF740—Hilstrom (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
General employees retirement plan certain retiree revocation of retirement annuity applications and disability benefit adoption allowed.

HF741—Howes (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Motor vehicle dealer advertising regulated.

HF742—Wilkin (R)
Higher Education Finance
Legislative approval of certain student fees required.

HF743—Greiling (DFL)
Education Policy
Nonpublic school compliance with state high school graduation requirements required under certain conditions.

HF744—Erickson (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
State Building Code municipal reporting requirements modified.

HF745—Adolphson (R)
Transportation Policy
Southwest metropolitan area transit corridor certain rail and bus transit actions by commissioner of transportation, Metropolitan Council, and Hennepin County regional rail authority prohibited.

HF746—Cox (R)
Higher Education Finance
Meningococcal disease information reception and signature of written waiver by higher education students residing in on-campus housing required.

HF747—Greiling (DFL)
Education Policy
Pupil fair dismissal law compliance by nonpublic schools required in certain instances.

HF748—Gunther (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Economic development, housing, jobs, and state government finance funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF749—Haas (R)
State Government Finance
Legislative and general administrative state government expense funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF750—Smith (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Corrections, public safety, courts, and other agencies funding provided; and money appropriated.

HF751—Abrams (R)
Taxes
Job opportunity building zone establishment authorized, related tax incentives, zone aid, and levy limits provided; and money appropriated.

HF752—Harder (R)
Agriculture & Rural Development Finance
Environmental, natural resources, and agricultural funding provided; and money appropriated.

HF753—Knoblach (R)
Ways & Means
Transportation funding transferred and previous appropriations cancelled, and money appropriated.

HF754—Osterman (R)
Civil Law
Displaced person definition changed to correspond with federal law.

HF755—Abeler (R)
Agriculture Policy
Monitoring agricultural chemicals in groundwater responsibility transferred to commissioner of health, definition of pollutant modified, pesticide restrictions authorized, pesticide fee increased, money appropriated.

HF756—Rhodes (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
County levy authority modified to fund statewide public safety radio system.

HF757—Tingelstad (R)
Transportation Policy
Special license plate authorization and issuance procedures established and "Rotary member" license plates authorized.

HF758—Sertich (DFL)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 695, Chisholm, fund transfer authorized.

HF759—Abrams (R)
Taxes
Property, income, corporate franchise, sales and use, gross earnings, and other taxation administrative changes and corrections provided and obsolete laws and rules repealed.

HF760—Abrams (R)
Taxes
Income, property, estate, sales and use, cigarette and tobacco product, and other taxation policy and administrative changes made, Internal Revenue Code conformity provided, civil and criminal penalties provided.

HF761—Blaine (R)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 486, Swanville, fund transfer for handicapped access improvements to school buildings authorized.

HF762—Vandever (R)
Transportation Finance
Significant local roads and local road improvement fund bonds authorized and money appropriated.

HF763—Vandever (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Congress memorialized to work to protect America's savings permanently.

HF764—Vandever (R)
Taxes
Congress memorialized to permanently repeal the death tax.

HF765—Davnier (DFL)
Education Policy
Sexually transmitted diseases program provision modified.

HF766—Greiling (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Arden Hills, Blaine, Circle Pines, Mounds View, New Brighton, Roseville, and Shoreview multi-city housing authority established.

HF767—Sertich (DFL)
Education Finance
Alternative facilities program district eligibility expanded.

HF768—Anderson, J. (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Military certificates of discharge classified as private data, and release procedures provided.

HF769—Erhardt (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Public safety radio communications operators included in definition of essential employee.

HF770—Solberg (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Aitkin County Long Lake Conservation Center fund made a separate county enterprise fund.

HF771—Solberg (DFL)
Health & Human Services Policy
Itasca County capitation payments recalculated.

HF772—Swenson (R)
Agriculture Policy
Minnesota Agriculture Education Leadership Council expiration date eliminated.

HF773—Hilty (DFL)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Electronic security system company employees and license applicant background checks required, procedures provided, discharge authorized, license endorsement disqualification authorized, and criminal penalties imposed.

Where to find information

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MONDAY, March 10

12:30 PM

Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: HF391 (Olsen, S.) School districts authorized to convert, by election, from election by district to election at large.

HF390 (Erickson) Elections conducted by mail; county auditor approval requirement eliminated.
HF612 (Knoblach) Legislative candidate expenditure reporting requirements provided.
HF212 (Abeler) Health occupations advisory committees extended, including acupuncture, respiratory care practitioner, licensed traditional midwifery, and health professionals services program advisory committees.

Higher Education Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Doug Stang

Agenda: Higher Education Services Office (HESO) response to governor's FY04-05 budget.
Witness: Robert Poch, Director, HESO

Health and Human Services Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau

Agenda: Informational hearing on the economics and market structure of radiation oncology.

3:00 PM

THE HOUSE MEETS IN SESSION

TUESDAY, March 11

8:15 AM

Transportation Finance

Room: 500S State Office Building
Chair: Rep. William Kuisle

Agenda: Conclusion of MnDOT budget presentation: federal funds, general support and buildings.
Metro Transit budget presentation.

Environment and Natural Resources Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: Department of Natural Resources budget.

Jobs and Economic Development Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Bob Gunther

Agenda: Governor's Workforce Council.
Luke Weisberg.

HF176 (Davids) Rushford Institute for Nanotechnology grant provided, and money appropriated.

Health and Human Services Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Fran Bradley

Agenda: Continuation of Presentation of governor's budget proposal by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Education Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Presentation of preliminary work of the Academic Standards Committee by Commissioner Cheri Pierson Yecke and department staff.

HF580 (Erickson) School district curriculum and instruction required premised on abstinence until marriage.

10:15 AM

Education Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: Continuation of governor's 2004-2005 budget review.

HF160 (Abeler) A bill for an act relating to education finance; reducing the revenue reserved for staff development activities from 2 percent to 1 percent of a district's basic general education revenue.

HF422 (Abeler) A bill for an act relating to education; removing certain restrictions on distribution of staff development revenue.

HF423 (Abeler) A bill for an act relating to education finance; reducing the required

revenue reserved for staff development activities from two percent to one percent of a district's basic general education revenue.

HF558 (Abeler) A bill for an act relating to education; authorizing school districts to pursue additional revenue sources.

Taxes

Room: 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: HFXXXX Department of Revenue Technical Bill.

Possibly other bills to be determined.

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: HF110 (Smith) Family law reform and recodification including provisions relating to marriage dissolution, child custody, child support, maintenance, and property division.

HF664 (Eastlund) Child support guidelines provided.

Environment and Natural Resources Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: HF681 (Urdahl) Greenleaf Lake State Park established in Meeker County.

HF327 (Hackbarth) Shooting range generally accepted practices defined; and relation to local ordinances, closing and relocations, and nuisance liability provided.

12:30 PM

Agriculture and Rural Development Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Elaine Harder

Agenda: Overview of renewable fuels.

Transportation Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: Presentation by MnDOT on congestion management.

Presentations by transit advocacy groups.

Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: HF426 (Kuisle) Water quality assessment process rulemaking required.

HF517 (Demmer) Department of Children, Families and Learning renamed the Department of Education.

HF564 (Borrell) Open meeting law violations administrative remedy provided, and civil penalties prescribed.

Commerce, Jobs and Economic
Development Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Greg Davids

Agenda: HF645 (Paulsen) Technology business licensing provisions modified.

HF547 (Davids) Farm implement dealers warranty work payment regulated, and definition of heavy and utility equipment modified.

HF710 (Atkins) Obsolete mandatory retirement language deleted.

2:30 PM

Capital Investment

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Phil Krinkie

Agenda: Department of Administration: Update on status of long-term lease-purchase agreements for Health, Agriculture, and Human Services office facilities authorized in Laws 2002, Chapter 393, Section 13, subs 7 & 8.

State Government Finance

Room: 500N State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Bill Haas

Agenda: Fiscal overview of the Legislature and Legislative Coordinating Commission.

Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Jerry Dempsey

Agenda: HF415 (Borrell) Rockford removed from the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council.

HF554 (Buesgens) Title examiner alternative means of compensation provided.

HF444 (Swenson) Municipal contract judgment awarding of attorney fees authorized in certain cases.

Civil Law

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Mary Liz Holberg

Agenda: Overview; cost shares child support reform, R. Mark Rogers, economic consultant.

HF513 (Kohls) Seat belt evidence admissibility prohibition repealed.

Regulated Industries

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Torrey Westrom

Agenda: HF687 (Simpson) Public Utilities Commission membership required to include at least two members from outside the metropolitan area.

HF317 (Hackbarth) Anoka County facilities use for commercial wireless service providers authorized, and lease of sites for public safety communications equipment permitted.

HF671 (Gunther) Telephone company service promotions and packages regulated.

WEDNESDAY, March 12

8:15 AM

Environment and Natural Resources
Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: Department of Natural Resources budget.

Transportation Finance

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. William Kuisle

Agenda: Presentation by the Association of Minnesota Counties.

Jobs and Economic Development Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Bob Gunther

Agenda: National Federation of the Blind, Jennifer Dunnan; Blind Incorporated, Dick Davis; Blind Citizen, Wally Hinz.

Health and Human Services Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau

Agenda: HF321 (Cox) Authorize Northfield to establish and operate related medical facilities at a site outside the city limits.

HF441 (Kohls) Carver County hospital construction moratorium exemption provided.

HF647 (Swenson) Nicollet county nursing home construction moratorium exception provided; special moratorium exceptions modified.

HF437 (Bradley) Alternative quality assurance licensing system expanded, sunset eliminated, and money appropriated.

10:15 AM

Education Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: To be announced.

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: Overview of governor's recommendations by Uniform Laws Commission and Ombudsman for Corrections HF432 (Meslow) First-degree murder definition modified relating to child abuse.

HF550 (Hilstrom) Life imprisonment without possibility of release penalty provided for persons causing the death of a child under 14 with premeditation and intent.

12:30 PM

Agriculture Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Howard Swenson

Agenda: HF649 (Swenson) Chronic wasting disease control and wildlife health management provided, and money appropriated.

Legislative Report on Chronic Wasting Disease.

Governmental Operations and Veterans
Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: To be announced.

Transportation Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: HF500 (Erhardt) Eminent domain; increasing the limit for reimbursement of appraisal fees.

HF532 (Howes) Modifying provisions governing use of highway right-of-way by snowmobiles. Other bills may be added.

2:30 PM

Capital Investment

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Phil Krinkie

Agenda: Description of Higher Education capital project ranking/scoring methodologies: University of Minnesota; MNSCU.

Civil Law

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Mary Liz Holberg

Agenda: HF668 (Holberg) Woman's right to know act requiring informed consent of a female upon whom an abortion is performed, and providing civil remedies.

State Government Finance

Room: 500N State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Bill Haas

Agenda: HF407 (Howes) Minnesota Conservation Corps transferred to the Friends of the Minnesota Conservation Corps, assets transferred, and money appropriated.

HF294 (Eastlund) Military reserve; state employees called to active duty authorized to receive payment of a salary differential, and local governments authorized to pay similar salary.

Regulated Industries

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Torrey Westrom

Agenda: To be announced.

THURSDAY, March 13

8:15 AM

Environment and Natural Resources
Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: Department of Natural Resources budget.

Reflections

Education Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: HF697 (Sykora) Charter school eligible sponsors expanded to include certain nonprofits. HF471 (Knoblach) School district election primaries required.

HF509 (Fuller) Indian scholarship program authority transferred to the Higher Education Services Office.

Jobs and Economic Development Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Bob Gunther

Agenda: To be announced.

Health and Human Services Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Fran Bradley

Agenda: HF151 (Seifert) Children eligible for adoption assistance exempted from the prepaid medical assistance program.

HF278 (Bradley) Health care provider expenditure reporting requirements eliminated. HF412 (Abeler) Council on Disability sunset removed.

More bills may be added.

10:15 AM

Environment and Natural Resources Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: HF340 (Cornish) Natural Resources Department enforcement authority modified relating to recreational areas.

HF648 (Swenson) Private wildlife shooting preserves authorized anywhere in the state.

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: To be announced.

Taxes

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: Bills, to be determined.

12:30 PM

Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Greg Davids

Agenda: To be announced.

Higher Education Finance

Room: 300S State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Doug Stang

Agenda: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) response to the governor's FY04-05 budget.

Witness: James H. McCormick, Chancellor, MnSCU.

Laura King, Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer, MnSCU.

With its strong Scandinavian heritage is it any wonder that the Minnesota Legislature has been filled with those whose last names end in "son" or some close variation?

A record 87 lawmakers since 1858 have carried the Johnson surname and an additional three held the name of Johnston. The first Johnson in the Territorial Legislature was Parsons K. Johnson from St. Paul (1849 and 1856). In 1859 R.M. Johnson from Anoka became the first Johnson to serve in the state's Legislature.

The Legislature now has four individuals with Johnson as a surname: Sen. Dean Johnson (DFL-Willmar), now in his seventh term, and three members now serving their second term: Sen. Debbie Johnson (R-Ham Lake), Rep. Jeff Johnson (R-Plymouth), and Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul).

Despite the popularity in the Legislature, just one person named Johnson has served in the state's top post. That was Gov. John A. Johnson from St. Peter who served one term in the Senate before he became the first governor to occupy the new Capitol building in 1905.

Of the 11 John Johnsons who served, another John A. Johnson from Preston, served eight years in the House, including three terms as Speaker of the House (1925-31). He then returned as a senator for another eight years. Two other Johnsons – Alfred I. (1941-58) and George W. (1925-36) – also served as speakers, from 1955-58 and 1935-36, respectively.

Minnesota has also had two people named Johnson represent the state in Congress: Dewey W. Johnson from Minneapolis (1937-39) and Magnus Johnson of Kimball (1923-25, 1933-35). Both also served in the Minnesota House, and Magnus Johnson also served in the state Senate.

Harold J. Anderson, who recently called to renew his *Session Weekly* subscription, is one of 59 Andersons who has served in the Legislature.

He represented Minneapolis from

1951-61 and 1963-71. For 12 of his 18 years in the House, he shared his first and last name with Harold R. Anderson (1949-1965) from North Mankato.

The two were in the Legislature in 1955 when the Chief Clerk's office had the duty of not only keeping accurate voting records for the two Harold Andersons, but for four other Andersons, as well. In the Senate, the clerks had three Andersons to keep track of that year.

The first Anderson elected to state office in 1859 was John A. Anderson from La Crescent. The newest Anderson to hold office is freshman Rep. Jeff Anderson (R-Austin).

At the other end of the longevity scale is Rep. Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls) now serving his 16th non-consecutive term. His 30 years of experience tie him for being the most senior member in the House.

Irv and Jeff are currently joined in the Legislature by two others with the same surname: Rep. Bruce Anderson (R-Buffalo Township) in his fifth term, and Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul) in her fourth term.

Three lawmakers — two Andersons and one Andersen — also served as governors of the state: Wendell Anderson (1971-76), C. Elmer Anderson (1951-55), and Elmer L. Andersen (1961-63).

Also, one Anderson (Sydney) and one Andersen (Herman C.) represented Minnesota in Congress. Herman Andersen was a state House member in 1935 before he was elected to Congress in 1939. Sydney Anderson served in Congress from 1911 to 1925.

Only one other Andersen served in the state Legislature: Rep. Richard Andersen from New Brighton (1967-74).

While a prolific number of Andersons and Johnsons have contributed to the legislative process over the years, hundreds of others with very different names and backgrounds continue to contribute to the well-being of the state by making laws.

— LECLAIR GRIER LAMBERT

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: STEVE SVIGGUM
 MAJORITY LEADER: ERIK PAULSEN
 MINORITY LEADER: MATT ENTENZA

MINNESOTA INDEX

Unemployment in Minnesota

The state's unemployment rate in January 2003 (not seasonally adjusted),

as percent	5.1
Percentage in January 2002	5.2
Percentage in January 1993	6.3
Percentage in January 1983	10.3
National unemployment rate in January 2003	6.5
Percentage in January 2002	6.3
Percentage in January 1993	8.0
Minnesota's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2002,	
as percent	4.3
State rank	42
National percentage rate	6.0
December 2002 (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rate in	
Duluth-Superior area, as percent	4.1
St. Cloud area	4.0
Twin Cities metropolitan area	3.5
Rochester area	3.0
Unemployment rate in highest counties in December 2002 (Marshall and	
Red Lake), as percent	10.4
Percentage in lowest counties (Clay and Jackson)	2.3
Estimated number of job vacancies in Minnesota from October to	
December 2002	55,200
Number in the Twin Cities metropolitan area	32,100
Approximate number of jobs available for every 10 unemployed	
workers in fourth quarter of 2002	5
One year earlier	7
Percentage decline in the number of job vacancies in Minnesota	
between the fourth quarters of 2001 and 2002	31
Percentage decline between the second and fourth quarters of 2002	16
Of vacant jobs in the fourth quarter of 2002, percentage that were full-time	57
Median wage offer for all job vacancies in the fourth quarter of last year,	
per hour	\$9.50
In 2001	\$9.31
Of all job vacancies in fourth quarter 2002, percentage in healthcare area	22
Percentage in retail trade	18
Manufacturing	7

Sources: *Fourth Quarter 2002 Minnesota Job Vacancy Survey*, Minnesota Department of Economic Security, Minnesota WorkForce Centers, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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