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INSIDE: CLEAN WATER - A LASTING LEGACY, SCHOOLS' CORE MISSION, GOPHERS - GO FIGURE, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF1743-HF1947

SESSION Weekly

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On the cover: The post World War II statue, "The Promise of Youth," frames the Capitol building. Created by Alonzo Hauser, it is meant to symbolize the youth of a nation looking for the promise of peace. The statue was placed near the Veterans Service Building in 1958.

—Photo by: Sarah Stacke



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

One of the goals of the Clean Water Legacy Act is to assess the water quality in all of Minnesota lakes within the next 10 years, including this one in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

A lasting legacy

New direction and resources for clean water efforts

By NICOLE WOOD

Minnesota spends \$1 million a day on water quality issues. Yet it's not enough to keep up with the requirements of the federal Clean Water Act, according to proponents of a clean water proposal that's making waves at the Capitol.

Cleaning up the state's surface waters is going to take more money and better coordination, they say, to prevent the state from becoming the Land of 10,000 *Impaired* Lakes.

Advocates warn that noncompliance with the impaired waters provisions pose a triple threat of environmental degradation, litigation and increased federal regulation. Furthermore, it places economic development in a precarious position because there are restrictions to development where contaminated waters exist.

HF826, the so-called Clean Water Legacy Act, sponsored by Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), would establish both a policy framework and a funding mechanism to deal with the state's impending water quality woes.

The House Local Government Committee

approved the measure March 16. It now moves to the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

A companion bill (SF762), sponsored by Sen. Dennis R. Frederickson (R-New Ulm), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

The Clean Water Act of 1972

HF826 aims to protect, restore and preserve Minnesota's surface waters and ensure compliance with the federal Clean Water Act of 1972.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the federal entity charged with enforcing the act, it is "the cornerstone of surface water quality protection in the United States."

The responsibility for monitoring surface waters falls mainly on the states. In Minnesota, the task is delegated to the Pollution Control Agency (PCA). Every two years, the agency is required to submit to the EPA a report that summarizes the state's water quality information and a listing of those water bodies that are failing to meet the standards set for their designated uses.

Among the pass/fail criteria are chemical, physical or biological measures, but the big picture is not so complicated.

"Is it swimmable? Can you eat the fish out of it?" It can be a tough standard to reach but it's not a tough standard to understand, Ozment said.

The best science indicates that Minnesota could have 10,000 polluted water bodies by the end of the decade, according to PCA Commissioner Sheryl Corrigan.

There are already 2,000 water bodies on the state's impaired waters listing, and only 14 percent of the lakes and 8 percent of the streams have been assessed so far.

Once a water body is deemed impaired, the next step is to compile a document known as a "TMDL report" that determines the pollution sources and the amount of cleanup needed to restore the watershed, and then make reasonable progress toward restoration.

TMDL is the acronym for Total Maximum Daily Load. By EPA definition, a TMDL is "a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards, and an allocation of that amount to the pollutant's sources."

Put quite simply, a TMDL is a fix-it plan.

First Reading continued on page 4

Clean Water oversight and funding

When the impaired waters issue resurfaced in 2003, the Legislature ordered the agency to organize a group of people and agencies with a special interest in tackling the problem — including conservation organizations; local, state, federal, and tribal officials; farmers; business



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

With Rep. Dennis Ozment watching, Gordon Cumming, executive director of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, testifies March 14 before the House Local Government Committee as members hear about the Clean Water Legacy Act.

owners; builders and developers — and report back with a policy framework and financing ideas. The core group of stakeholders is commonly referred to as “the G16.”

Out of this broad, diverse coalition came recommendations that form the backbone of the bill: the creation of a Clean Water Council, fee and account.

Under the bill, an 18-member council would be created to coordinate the cleanup efforts. Membership would include representatives from state and local government, as well as business, agricultural and environmental interests.

To pay for the ramped-up water quality work, the bill would establish a clean water fee on all service connections to sanitary sewer

systems. The proposed fees are \$36 per year on residential units (including multi-unit dwellings and individual septic systems), with an exemption for certain low-income people, and a tiered fee on non-residential service connections of \$120, \$300 or \$600 per year based on discharge.

The fee would be collected by the public agency that currently collects sewer fees. The PCA would collect from the permitted facilities currently under its jurisdiction. Counties would be required to collect the fees from individual septic system owners and identify by Aug. 15, 2005, a list of all the people served by these systems.

The fees would be deposited in a clean water legacy account in the state treasury. The money could be used for grants and loans for impaired waters identification and restoration activities, wastewater and stormwater treatment projects, individual sewage treatment system upgrades and other preventive measures.

The opposition

It’s not as though opponents to HF826 are rallying in the Capitol Rotunda, carrying “Mercury Now” and “Phosphorus Forever” placards. Much of the opposition is a matter of process — the fee, its collection mechanism and disbursement plan — rather than policy.

Some of those concerns arose during the March 14 House Local Government Committee hearing.

“County officials do not feel that this bill clearly defines the nexus between the fee and the service that will be provided,” said Association of Minnesota Counties Policy Analyst Annalee Garletz. “The recordkeeping required for this fee will really place an

administrative burden on counties.”

The fee is imposed without regard to a payer’s contribution to the water quality problems and regardless of a community’s past efforts to clean up waters, said Kari Thurlow, a lobbyist for the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities. It would be more equitable to try to identify General Fund dollars, she said.

Craig Johnson, a League of Minnesota Cities intergovernmental relations representative and a G16 member, said the goal was to come up with a package that would at least meet enough of the criteria of the Legislature and the governor to move it forward as a legitimate proposal.

“Since none of us really felt it was a viable year to be coming into the Legislature and expecting you to just magically create new General Fund revenues out of existing revenue streams, we had to come up with some suggestion of how we would recommend that could be done,” he said.

Even the bill sponsor said he is “uncomfortable” with the fee in its current form. However, he is seeking alternatives rather than delete-all amendments.

“It is not fair to those who have spent two years putting the bill together to just delete their proposal from the bill and provide no alternative,” Ozment wrote in an open letter to House members and staff. “Please bring your ideas to the table on how to improve the G16 funding proposal.”

“The goal is to use existing government and current regulations at the state and local levels to develop methods to clean up all of our water. The clean up will take a long time but by using collaboration, common sense and quality science I believe it can be done efficiently and with accountability.”

Golden gophers

Capitol motif reflects striped squirrel sobriquet



Though some say Minnesota’s Gopher State nickname comes from the abundant numbers of the prairie critters, it seems the Legislature may have had a hand in earning the moniker.

According to *Cartoons of Minnesota Politics*, a 1976

Minnesota Historical Society publication, state lawmakers in 1857 accepted a federal land grant to build railroads in Minnesota by tacking it onto a bill designed to weed out the arch-nemesis of the farmer: the pesky gopher.

“Many jokes were made about this

‘gopher bill,’ which gave the state’s railroad companies a vast gift of land,” the account reads. When railroad lobbyists returned the next year seeking \$5 million in state capital investment, one St. Paul resident turned his ire into a political cartoon lambasting the railroad promoters. They are depicted as gophers pulling a “Gopher Train” full of lawmakers.

Never mind that Minnesota gophers are actually ground squirrels. The striped squirrel sobriquet stuck and gophers earned a permanent place among the lovely imagery and fine art in the Capitol motif.

(N. Wood)



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Decorative gophers dance along the third floor north railing overlooking the Capitol Rotunda.

★ **AGRICULTURE**

Curbing herbicides

It's banned in Europe and restricted in Wisconsin, but the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee has declined to take those approaches to regulating the herbicide atrazine in Minnesota.

The committee rejected three atrazine restriction bills on March 16:

- HF1224, sponsored by Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls), would establish a process for sampling groundwater and prohibit the application of the herbicide where atrazine contamination exists;

- HF1246, sponsored by Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls), would completely ban the sale or use of atrazine after Jan. 1, 2006; and

- HF1248, also sponsored by Ellison, would restrict the use of atrazine in several areas of the state beginning Jan. 1, 2006, and then prohibit the sale or use of atrazine on a state-wide basis beginning Jan. 1, 2008. It would provide an exemption for research purposes as long as surface and ground waters would be protected.

Atrazine is typically sprayed on 35 percent to 50 percent of Minnesota's 7 million acres

of corn crops, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department.

Proponents of its restricted use have cited health and environmental concerns.

"Do you really believe the U.S. EPA, under two administrations, one Democrat and one Republican, would disregard a real threat to human health and the environment?" said Jere White, executive director of the Kansas Corn Growers Association. "I respectfully suggest the premise behind these bills is severely flawed and should be rejected."

HF1224 has no Senate companion. The Senate companions to the Ellison bills, SF1187, sponsored by Sen. Ellen R. Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), and SF1048, sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), await action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.

A foreign-trade zone creates warehousing and assembly jobs, Paul Nevanen, director of the Koochiching County Economic Development Authority, wrote in a letter to the committee. The increased trade can help diversify the economy.

Mike Hanson, chairman of the Koochiching County Board, agreed. "Our economy is a natural resources-based economy driven by the timber and tourism industries," he said, and is subject to layoffs and decline.

A growing area is the number of trains and rail containers passing through the Port of Ranier, he said. Those goods are shipped from the Pacific Rim to the west coast of Canada, then sent by rail to International Falls.

A companion bill (SF1257), sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

★ **BANKING**



For information on a bill (HF997) sponsored by Rep. Larry Howes regarding a new bank branch for Burns Township, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ **CONSUMERS**

Advertising unclaimed property

If you're one of the more than 1 million Minnesotans who have unclaimed property, such as uncashed checks, dormant bank accounts or utility deposits, you might not be able to learn about it through the local newspaper.

Rep. Lloyd Cybart (R-Apple Valley) is sponsoring HF1398, which would give the Department of Commerce flexibility in how it notifies owners of unclaimed property.

The commerce commissioner could choose how to best provide public notice, which could include using the Internet or other media. Currently, the commissioner is required to publish the names and last known addresses of owners in newspapers.

The bill would also require cooperatives to notify the owner of abandoned property before donating it to charity.

The House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 15. An amendment requiring the commissioner to continue newspaper advertising in addition to other notification methods was not adopted.

Mark Anfinson, attorney for the Minnesota Newspaper Association, said only 25 percent of unclaimed property is returned to its rightful owners. The remaining 75 percent, estimated to be worth \$50 million to \$70 million, is returned to the state, he said.

He said newspapers are the most effective way to reach people about unclaimed property.

Anfinson suggested imposing a 2 percent to

★ **BUSINESS**

Foreign-trade zones can help

A foreign-trade zone can't help the economy if no one knows about it, so a bill that would provide money to promote Minnesota's zones might help.

Sponsored by Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), HF1601 aims to do that.

Heard March 16 by the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee, it was held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

A foreign-trade zone is a place where exports are not subject to the normal duties or taxes. The zones were created to offset the customs advantages foreign producers have over American exporters.

The bill would provide \$300,000 in fiscal year 2006 to get the word out about Minnesota's three foreign-trade zones: Duluth, International Falls and Minneapolis.

"This is a small investment but will pay big dividends," Ozment said. The money would be used to promote the benefits of a foreign-trade zone. Any money not used in fiscal year 2006 could be expended in 2007.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Dr. Tyrone Hayes, professor of Integrative Biology at the University of California-Berkeley, presents his findings on atrazine to the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee March 15.

3 percent service fee on each claimed property to fund newspaper advertising costs.

"That's new money to the state," he said. "That's a simple solution."

Sen. William V. Belanger Jr. (R-Bloomington) is sponsoring a companion bill (SF1360). It awaits action in the Senate Commerce Committee.

★ CRIME

Child abusers who murder

Lathen McDonald Sr. had a history of child abuse.

He shook a 5-year-old girl until she fell to the floor and struck her face. He used a hair-dryer to burn the face of a 1-month-old baby. He later killed his 7-month-old son, Lathen McDonald Jr., by hitting him so hard that he lacerated the baby's liver and caused internal bleeding.

Prosecutors could not charge him with first-degree murder because, under current law, the charge is limited to cases where the defendant later kills the same child he earlier abused, Hilary Caligiuri, representing the Hennepin County Attorney's Office, told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 16.

By simply changing the wording of statute from "the child" to "a child," HF741 would allow a first-degree charge to be applied to offenders who kill a child and have a past pattern of abuse against any child, said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake).

Child abusers can now escape the first-degree murder penalty if they "choose a different child to kill," said Caligiuri.

"Our office believes it's important to hold repeat child abusers accountable and to give greater protection to children," she said.

The committee will consider the bill for inclusion in its omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

Gas and go

Pump gas into your car and then intentionally leave a gas station without paying and your driver's license could be suspended for 30 days under HF1289, sponsored by Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls).

"If you steal gas, it's not funny and it's not a prank; it hurts all of us," Ellison told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 15.

The bill requires the Department of Public Safety to impose a 30-day driver's license suspension for anyone convicted of the theft of gasoline.

SuperAmerica stations in Minnesota lose an estimated \$100,000 a month because of drivers who gas and go, according to David Blatnik, state government affairs manager for Marathon Ashland Petroleum, who said his company owns approximately 178 of the 3,000 stations in the state. As gas prices rise, there is usually an increase in incidents of gas theft, he said.

Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) pointed out that a 30-day suspension could affect a person's ability to get to work.

Ellison replied that 30 days is a reasonable period of time and that people would have to join a carpool or take a bus. He considered a six-month suspension but decided that was too long.

If the legislation passes, Ellison hopes retailers will post information by pumps to let the public know about the law and the consequences of violating it.

The committee will consider the bill for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

Pirating movies

Recording a movie in a theatre would become a crime under HF695, sponsored by Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake).

"HF695 makes something a crime that I think most people assumed already was illegal," Meslow told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 16.

In 21 other states it is illegal to sneak a camcorder into a theatre and record a movie, but it is legal to do this in Minnesota, said Meslow.

The bill would make it a crime to knowingly record a motion picture in a theatre without the consent of the theatre's owner or lessee. Owners would be permitted to detain suspects in the same way that merchants can detain people suspected of shoplifting.

"Right now if we catch somebody in the movie theatre with a video camera there's nothing we can do except ask them to leave," said Dale Haider, representing the North Central Chapter of the National Association of Theatre Owners.

The bill would give theatre owners the right to call the police and detain suspects just as other businesses do, he said. "Unfortunately we don't have those same rights."

If people illegally record movies and pirate (sell) them, there is a loss of revenue for theatres, he said.

A first violation would be a misdemeanor, the second a gross misdemeanor and subsequent offenses would be a felony punishable by up to two years in prison and \$4,000 in fines.

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

A companion bill (SF672), sponsored by Senate President James P. Metzen (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

★ DEVELOPMENT

Design-build contracts

State construction projects could be contracted a different way, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 10.

HF1460, sponsored by Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee), would allow for design-build, a process by which a contract is established with a single company to perform both the design and construction of a project. It also authorizes construction manager at-risk and job order contracting methods for projects.

"Forty-two other states already do what we are asking statutory authority to do," said Beard. "This is not primarily a money saving thing, it's a time and governmental utilization saving thing."

Traditionally, state contracts have been a design-bid-build process, in which a contract with an architect is established to create the construction documents and then the project is bid out.

The design-build process, while not the cheapest, allows the owner and designer to become involved early in the process and derive the best value out of the project, said Bob Debruin, past president of the Society of American Institute of Architects of Minnesota.

The bill would also allow a construction manager at-risk, where the constructor has initial input during the design; it's faster than the traditional method of design-bid-build, added Debruin. By statute, the contract "shall include a guaranteed maximum price, construction schedule, and workmanship of the construction performed."

Also, under the bill, job order contracting is permitted on projects up to \$250,000. By statute, job order contracting "means a project delivery method that requests a limited number of bids from a list of qualified contractors, selected from a registry of qualified contractors who have been prescreened and who have entered into master contracts with the (administration) commissioner."

There was no opposition to the bill, although Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake) raised a concern. The bill authorizes the commissioner to develop a list of qualified contractors, which Olson said could be subjective.

The bill next goes to the House floor.

A Senate companion (SF1335), sponsored by Sen. Richard J. Cohen (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Millions proposed for partnership

Two bills seeking to position Minnesota as a world leader in medical technology would give millions of dollars to the Minnesota Partnership for Biotechnology and Medical Genomics.

Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield) is sponsoring HF434, which would appropriate \$15 million to the partnership each year for five years, starting in fiscal year 2006. HF1548, sponsored by Rep. Paul Kohls (R-Victoria), would make a one-time appropriation of \$15 million in fiscal year 2006 that would be available until expended.

The Technology, Bioscience and Medical Products Division of the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee approved both bills March 16 and referred them to the full committee.

Kohls' bill would also require annual reporting on fund spending to the House and Senate higher education committees. The bill was amended to include reporting to the Senate Environment, Agriculture and Economic Development Budget Division of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee.

Dr. Mark S. Paller, assistant vice president for research at the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center, said the bills would create job opportunities and help keep the partnership globally competitive.

"We will lose our position if we don't continue to invest," Paller said.

Rep. Barbara Goodwin (DFL-Columbia Heights) opposed Demmer's bill, saying there would be no accountability for the money and there are other priorities for the \$75 million it would spend over five years.

"Somebody else is going to lose," Goodwin said.

Dr. Karen R. Effrem, a pediatrician and EdAction board member, also spoke in opposition to Demmer's bill. She said the partnership does not provide for adequate patient consent for research projects.

A companion to Kohls' bill (SF1309), sponsored by Sen. Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. Demmer's bill does not have a Senate companion.



For information on a proposal (HF112), sponsored by Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher, concerning a Minneapolis development project, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ EDUCATION

Charter student extracurriculars

With a 30-day notice, students who attend public charter schools would be able to participate in extracurricular activities at their resident public school district under HF1544, sponsored by Rep. Karen Klinzing (R-Woodbury).

The bill is an opportunity to extend extracurricular activities to all public school students, Klinzing told the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 10.

The extension has already been made for students who are home-schooled and should also be made for students in public charter schools, she said.

Public schools would be able to charge charter schools for the proportional share of the direct and indirect costs of charter students' participation in extracurricular

activities. Charter school students would be responsible for the same participation fees that other students pay. School districts would not be required to provide transportation so that charter school students could participate.

"While some progress has been made in establishing voluntary cooperative agreements between charter schools and resident districts, some resident districts continue to deny access to public charter school students," said Jay Martini, executive committee president of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools.

Dan Pratt, a teacher and athletic director at Washburn High School in Minneapolis, said what's difficult is putting charter school and resident students on the same playing field. For example, Minneapolis has a grade point average requirement and some charter schools don't even give grades. Minneapolis also has an attendance policy and getting that information from charter schools can be difficult, he said. If this bill goes into effect, he said, "The job of athletic director becomes much, much more difficult to keep all things in focus and keep everyone on the same level."

The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Education Finance Committee. It does not have a Senate companion.

Driving attendance

Students who miss too much school might not be able to get, retain or renew a driver's license under HF1717, sponsored by Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Delano).

"The bill is appropriate, and I'm carrying it because it encourages our kids not only to stay in school, but to attend school," Emmer told the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 14.

The bill would apply to 16- and 17-year-old students, who are absent one or more class periods on seven school days without a lawful excuse.

Local school boards would decide whether to participate in the program. Individual students could apply for hardship exemptions.

Katherine Engler, with the Department of Administration Information Policy Analysis Division, said there might be some federal data privacy laws that could be obstacles to the bill. She offered to work with Emmer on the bill's language. Tom Deans, legal counsel with the Minnesota School Boards Association, agreed with her assessment.

The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee. There is no Senate companion.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Katie Houg, a freshman at TrekNorth High School in Bemidji, testifies March 10 before the House Education Policy and Reform Committee in support of a bill that would authorize charter school student participation in school district extracurricular activities.

ELECTIONS



Absentee voters

If a voter has a permanent illness or disability that keeps them from going to the polls on Election Day, that person can currently apply for status as an ongoing absentee voter.

Under HF1478, sponsored by Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson), any voter could apply for the status. It would continue until the voter's death, the voter requests in writing to have the status changed, the absentee ballot is returned as undeliverable, placement of the voter's registration on inactive status or the voter loses eligibility due to a felony conviction or finding of legal incompetence.

Hilty told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 16 that the bill will accommodate voters who, on very short notice, might be absent from their home on Election Day.

"This is an increasingly large category," Hilty said. "There are many people involved in sales that are typically on the road during the week." There are people who work away from home, such as truckers and construction workers, he said.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the elections omnibus bill.

A companion bill (SF1051), sponsored by Sen. John C. Hottinger (DFL-St. Peter), awaits action on the Senate floor.

Complex campaigning

Currently, the only person who can campaign or drop election literature in an apartment complex is the candidate running for office.

Under HF1566, sponsored by Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls), campaign workers authorized by the candidate would be able to do so as well.

"People in apartment complexes have just as much right to receive campaign materials as those in detached houses," Ellison told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 14.

He said that current law protects complex residents from those seeking to use the proposed law to do mischief by allowing management to ask for proper identification and requiring prior notice of a campaign visit.

Jack Horner, a lobbyist for the Minnesota Multi Housing Association, said the measure opens up all multi-housing, including nursing homes, to candidates, which he said is a broadly defined term covering anyone running for any public office.

"Our problem is that there is no real accountability. Our fear is that anyone can come in to drop literature, register voters or

for non-campaign related activities. These are people's homes," Horner said.

Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) successfully offered an amendment requiring the candidate to give written authorization to the worker campaigning in multi-unit housing complexes.

The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus elections bill.

A companion bill (SF359), sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action on the Senate floor.

Electoral college changes

Nothing in current state law binds a member of the Electoral College to vote for a particular U.S. president and vice presidential candidate.

HF271, however, would align Minnesota with 29 other states and the District of Columbia in making that body's members accountable to the party to whose name the elector was elected to represent.

"Usually electoral votes are little more than a rubber stamp. But the closeness of recent elections shows the need to formally bind the electors," the bill's sponsor, Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague), told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 14. "This is designed to stop a renegade elector."

The proposal calls for the nomination of eight alternative members to the Electoral College. If an elector does not vote for the appropriate candidate or abstains, the vote would be invalidated and an alternate elector would be chosen.

Brod said that several states place sanctions on electors who cast a "faithless vote." For instance, in New Mexico it can be considered a fourth-degree felony, and in some states electors can be hit with a \$1,000 civil penalty.

The bill also calls for the electors to speak loudly and publicly affirm their choice of a candidate in a way that can be heard and not mistaken.

The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus elections bill.

A companion bill (SF289), sponsored by Sen. Wesley J. Skoglund (DFL-Mpls), awaits action on the Senate floor.

EMPLOYMENT



Health occupation training

The health industry has a desperate need for workers, especially nurses and nursing assistants. Poor and unemployed people served by the state's five Opportunities and

Industrialization Centers have a desperate need for jobs.

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) thinks it's a good match, and is sponsoring HF1515, which would provide \$500,000 in each of the next two fiscal years to the Minnesota OIC State Council to start and expand health occupation training at the five centers: North Minneapolis, South Minneapolis, St. Paul, Bemidji and Onamia. Possible jobs include nurses, nursing assistants, home health aides, phlebotomists and medical coding.

The bill was heard March 16 by the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Clients take classes in the centers or in nearby schools. The centers are dedicated primarily to those with low incomes, said William Means, executive director of the Minnesota OIC State Council. The centers are nonprofit organizations that receive state, federal and private money.

The first OIC was founded in 1964 in Philadelphia by Dr. Leon Sullivan, who said, "I know I will get my milk and honey in heaven. But I want to get some ham and eggs on earth."

"We provide the ham and eggs in the Phillips neighborhood," said Lee Antell, executive director of the American Indian OIC in the neighborhood. "We've put literally hundreds of people to work, dropping hundreds of people off welfare."

A companion bill (SF1618), sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.



HF1421, sponsored by Rep. Fran Bradley, would provide funding for employment services for the deaf. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

Money for training

Minnesota's jobs programs provide financial help to people between jobs, and gives them chances to go to school to learn new skills.

What they don't provide is training to people who have jobs.

"We've been told, time and time again, when we contact businesses there's a large demand for training," said Rick Caligiuri, employment and training director of the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

HF1487, sponsored by Rep. Judy Soderstrom (R-Mora), would change that. It was heard

March 16 by the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

The bill would create a new program that would allow employers to train employees with state money. The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Board would award grants to businesses for training.

The training must provide a measurable increase in job-related skills, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department. The board would establish performance measures and report annually to the Legislature. Employers would have to provide matching funding or in-kind services.

A companion bill (SF1373), sponsored by Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.



A bill (HF400), sponsored by Rep. Tim Mahoney, would make benefits available to school food service workers. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ ENERGY

Biomass energy

A bill to expand the definition of farm-grown closed-loop biomass failed to generate enough energy to pass out of the House Regulated Industries Committee March 15.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) is sponsoring HF1026, which would reflect changes made in a power purchase agreement for a biomass project in northern Minnesota that has been pending before the Public Utilities Commission since 2003. The commission would be required to approve the changes so the project can move forward.

The bill would expand the farm-grown closed-loop biomass definition that projects must meet to fulfill the state's biomass mandate by including biomass harvested from designated utility, railroad and road rights-of-way; brush harvested from lands managed in accord with the Department of Natural Resources' best management practices; slash and timber residuals harvested in compliance with Minnesota Forest Council guidelines; and trees and brush harvested for fire protection, disease, insect control or timber stand improvement purposes.

Farm-grown closed-loop biomass is biomass that is intentionally cultivated, harvested

and prepared for use as a fuel for generating electricity.

Under the bill, the average price over the term of a power purchase agreement with the Public Utilities Commission would be \$104 per megawatt-hour or less.

A companion bill (SF940), sponsored by Sen. David J. Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action in the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.

FAMILY

★ Child support changes proposed

For the first time in more than two decades, the state's child support laws could see an overhaul.

"Our child support guidelines are broke and they've allowed an unfair situation to exist," Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound), sponsor of HF1321, told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 16. The measure was approved and referred to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee.

Over the past three years, the Legislature



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Les Jobst, a father from Coon Rapids, testifies March 16 before the House Civil Law and Elections Committee concerning a bill that, in part, would reform Minnesota child support laws.

has heard various proposals addressing what proponents say is an archaic view of custody issues.

Les Jobst, a Coon Rapids father of a 5-year-old, told the committee that, while he is supportive of parts of the bill, he is concerned that the needs of the children are not being taken into consideration.

Legislators need to consider how to empower the children, he said. "Don't make it about how to empower one parent to consider their child as a financial award. Make it about each parent showing their child what they can accomplish based on their abilities."

Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul) and Rep. Rob Eastlund (R-Isanti) also proposed legislation (HF779 and HF1191, respectively). The significant issues addressed in those bills were successfully amended onto Smith's bill.

Both Eastlund and Mahoney would like the law to favor joint physical custody, which is not addressed under current law.

"We kind of raised the standard for what is expected of parents," Eastlund said.

The amendment calls for both parents to give the child love, affection, care and guidance. Addressing the state's diverse population, the measure calls for children of divorce to be raised in their culture, language or languages and religious background.

Language that Eastlund supports would make it easier for a father to gain custody of the child. The provision states that the court, when deciding custody, "may not use any one factor to the exclusion of all others and may not prefer one parent over the other on account of gender."

Smith's bill also addresses the issue of child support, calling for support to be calculated using the parents' combined income.

A companion to Smith's bill (SF630), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Neuville (R-Northfield), and the companion to Mahoney's bill (SF1408), sponsored by Sen. Sheila M. Kiscaden (IP-Rochester), await action in the Senate Judiciary Committee. There is no companion to Eastlund's bill.

★ HEALTH

Isolation and quarantine

The House Health Policy and Finance Committee approved a bill (HF1507) March 15 that would modify provisions for the isolation and quarantine of people infected or exposed to communicable diseases. The bill was referred to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee.

The bill is designed to protect people in the event of an emergency, including a bio-terrorism attack or an outbreak of a disease

such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), said Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka), the bill's sponsor.

If an emergency were declared, the health commissioner would be able to authorize vaccinations or the dispensing of drugs to protect the health and safety of the public.

The bill would require a peace officer to enforce an order for isolation or quarantine. They would be able to use all necessary and lawful means, except deadly force, to apprehend, hold, transport, quarantine or isolate the person subject to the order.

The health commissioner, when issuing a directive to isolate or quarantine without first obtaining a written order, would be required to specify the incubation or communicability period.

Individuals isolated or quarantined who are not represented by counsel would be able to request the court to appoint counsel at the expense of the Health Department or a local public health board. The counsel would not be required to pursue an appeal if he or she determines there is insufficient basis for proceeding.

A companion bill (SF1482), sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.



Reps. Jim Knoblach and Tim Wilkin have introduced bills dealing with health saving accounts. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Doctoral degrees

Minnesota is one of seven states with just one public doctoral degree awarding institution, and it is the only one in the Upper Midwest.

Under current law, only the University of Minnesota can offer such degrees, while state universities in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system can offer no degree higher than a master's.

Sponsored by Rep. Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud), HF165 would permit applied doctoral programs to be offered at state universities. "We need to expand in Minnesota where the demand is. The state universities are ideally suited being that they are spread across the state," he told the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 14. It will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Supporters say more programs are needed, in part, because a large number of psychologists, school superintendents and nurses are expected to retire in the next few years.

"One of the key bottlenecks we have in addressing the nursing shortage is the ability to attract nurses with a doctorate who can then train the master's level nurses, who then train students at the baccalaureate and two-year college nursing programs," Opatz said. To have an accredited baccalaureate or master's level nursing program, most, if not all, faculty need to be at the doctoral level, he said.

Speaking on behalf of the university, and against the bill, was Martin Sampson, an associate political science professor. He said the bill does not define an applied doctoral degree. "It could be understood as degrees that require no research. It could be understood as degrees that require research as part of the education of someone who will be a practitioner."

A companion bill (SF220), sponsored by Sen. John C. Hottinger (DFL-St. Peter), is being considered for inclusion in the Senate's higher education omnibus bill.

Immigrant tuition

Angela Fuentes, a senior at Bethlehem Academy in Faribault, wants to attend Rochester Community and Technical College next year to begin training to become a veterinarian.

However, the 18-year-old, who came to Minnesota from Mexico five years ago, is not a permanent resident.

Without citizenship, she and other immigrants must pay out-of-state tuition at most colleges and universities in the state, which can add thousands of dollars to the price tag. That may prohibit some students, such as Fuentes, from attending a postsecondary institution.

"Help people like me with dreams of a future," she told the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 16.

Fuentes was one of about a dozen people to speak in support of HF566, which will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Under the bill, sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield), students would be eligible for in-state tuition at all public higher education institutions if they meet four criteria: at least two years of attendance at a Minnesota high school, graduation from a state high school or attainment within the state of an equivalent, registration or enrollment at a public higher education institution and, in the case of a student without lawful immigration status, the filing of an affidavit indicating they have filed an application to legalize their citizenship or will at the earliest opportunity they

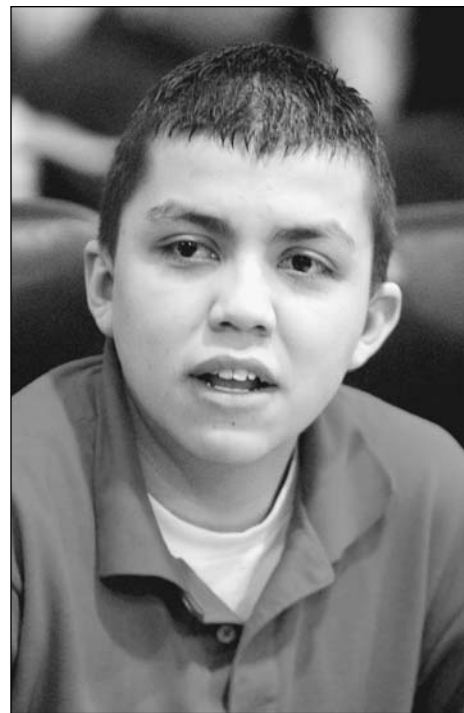


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Oscar Gomez, a sophomore at Bethlehem Academy in Faribault, testifies before the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 16 in support of a bill that would provide in-state tuition regulations for all Minnesota students attending colleges and universities in the state.

are eligible to do so.

"A high school diploma is nice to have, but it's not enough," said Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul).

Similar bills have been enacted in eight states and 18 more are considering similar laws, Cox said.

Not everyone was supportive.

"The bill breaks the promise that property taxes and other education funding is to be used for Minnesota's students — our children, my children," said Minneapolis resident Dell Erickson. "Its primary purpose appears to be to further blur, if not eliminate, the distinction between Minnesota and American citizens and foreign nationals, especially of illegal aliens."

A companion bill (SF627), sponsored by Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), might be included in the Senate higher education omnibus bill.

HOUSING

Establishing a negotiation process

A bill that would require a negotiation process before a homeowner can file suit against a contractor for construction defects was laid over for further consideration by the

House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee March 15.

Sponsored by Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), HF1375 would require a 90-day period for the contractor and homeowner to resolve their differences before a suit can be filed. If an agreement cannot be reached during that time, the homeowner can proceed with a suit.

The bill would require a homeowner to notify the contractor of a claim. The contractor would then need to respond in writing within 30 days. The response must include a monetary settlement, making of repairs or inspection of property. If the contractor rejects the claim or fails to respond the homeowner can sue without further delay.

Pam Perri Weaver, executive vice president of the Builders Association of Minnesota, said the bill would improve communications between homeowners and contractors.

"We want to get these claims resolved," she said. "We don't want them sitting on the table."

Nancy Johnson, a member of Minnesota Home Watch, said a contractor damaged her Columbia Heights home. She opposed the bill, saying it doesn't benefit homeowners.

"This is not a bill for homeowners," Johnson said. "This is a bill designed by the building industry."

A companion bill (SF1287), sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

A safe place to live

Tia Frechette, 20, gave birth to her daughter in August 2003. At the time she lived with an extended family that included her daughter's father, her father and grandmother.

The family had some conflict and her daughter's father left before she eventually had to also leave. After staying in a series of friends' homes Frechette moved into Elim Transitional Housing Inc., which offers affordable transitional housing.

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, transitional housing programs provide housing designed for independent living to homeless people or families at a rental rate of at least 25 percent of family income for a period of up to 24 months.

Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood) would like to help more people like Frechette, so she is sponsoring a bill that would provide \$15 million to transitional housing and emergency services grants.

HF1198 was heard March 15 by the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Michael Dahl, executive director of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, then pointed out some frightening anecdotes. When juveniles are on the street, it is likely that they will be approached within 48 hours by someone who wants to use them for some illegal purpose.

They will resist the first time, he said, but not for long. "Needing a warm place and something to eat makes it an eventuality."

A companion bill (SF684), sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

HUMAN SERVICES



Grants for alternatives

Programs that provide information, referrals and services to assist women in carrying their pregnancies to full-term could receive their share of \$2.5 million in grant money in fiscal year 2007 as part of the Positive Alternatives Act.

Rep. Brad Finstad (R-New Ulm) is sponsoring HF952, which would make the money available only to groups that do not provide, promote or refer abortions. The health commissioner would be responsible for administering and monitoring the grants.

To be eligible, a program must be offered through a private, nonprofit corporation, be free of charge, have the purpose of assisting and encouraging women to carry their pregnancies to term and ensure none of the money is used for abortion counseling.

Some organizations oppose the abortion provision, saying the bill funnels money to groups that do not offer women all options for their pregnancy.

"As drafted, this legislation bars any organization that counsels women on all of her legal, medical options from receiving state funding," said Tina Smith, vice president of external affairs for Planned Parenthood. "No one in this room would knowingly submit themselves to a standard of care that gave them only half the truth."

The House Health Policy and Finance Committee amended the bill March 10 to include provider services that offer child-care assistance. An amendment to include adoption agencies that have been established in Minnesota for at least 10 years and do not encourage abortion as a best alternative was not approved.

The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee.

A companion bill (SF917), sponsored by Sen. Dallas C. Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

THE CHIEF



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Nathan Latz, 6, points at the voting board as he joins his father, Rep. Ron Latz, on the House floor March 14. During the House Higher Education Finance Committee meeting earlier in the day, Rep. Latz referred to his son as his chief political advisor.



An electronic information service for the blind would continue to see funding under HF1214, sponsored by Rep. Jim Knobloch. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

Changing terminology

The House passed a bill March 10 that would change terms in state law like "mental retardation," "mentally retarded" and "handicapped persons" to terminology more desirable to those with disabilities, such as "disabled persons."

Sponsored by Rep. Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud), HF487 passed 131-0. It now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Sheila Kiscaden (IP-Rochester) is the sponsor.

"What the bill does is direct the (Revisor of Statutes) wherever the revisor finds these terms ... and replaces them with more up to date and respectful terms, what we refer to as person first language," Opatz said.

The term "handicapped" originates from the European war when many of the decorated veterans were returning home as amputees and forced to beg in streets. They would take their caps off to beg with, so they were

notoriously known as the “handicappers,” Cara Ruff, president of the Minnesota Association of Centers for Independent Living, previously told a House committee.

“I don’t think anyone in this room, or any of our families, or any of our friends, certainly not our children, deserve to be referred to as a retard or an idiot, or as handicapped,” Ruff said.

There are nearly 400 pages in state law that would need modification to fall in line with a national campaign called “The People First,” that advocates for changes in descriptions of disabled persons, Opatz said in committee. “We shouldn’t refer to someone by some characteristic, we don’t say to someone who has cancer, that’s a cancerous person, it’s a person who happens to have the disease of cancer,” he added.

★ INDUSTRY



Rep. Denny McNamara is the sponsor of a bill (HF1370) that would require licensing of plumbers in communities of fewer than 5,000 people. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ LAW



A bill (HF1036), sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert, making several changes regarding the Office of Administrative Hearings, passed the House by a 132-0 vote on March 10. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Changing salary limits

Salary compensation limits for government employees could be removed, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 15.

It now goes to the House floor.

Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina) sponsors HF995 that would repeal the limit for employees of charter cities, counties and towns. He said placing caps on employees’ salaries makes it hard to keep quality workers. Minnesota is the only state with salary caps on local government employees and can’t compete nationally for workers, he added.

Currently, employees are limited to 95 percent of the \$120,303 governor’s salary.

With the state facing another budget deficit, removal of the salary cap is something the state cannot afford, testified Paul Larson, deputy commissioner of the Department of Employee Relations. The governor is against the proposal and “evidence says we are retaining our employees,” he added.

Smaller cities and towns can’t compete on a state level when bigger ones can offer higher salaries than smaller counterparts, said Rep. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Joseph).

A large portion of the state sales tax revenues comes from the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, Erhardt said. “We gladly share that to help you out and now we need some help in return.”

A Senate companion (SF953), sponsored by Sen. Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins), awaits action on the Senate floor.

★ MILITARY

Accruing benefits

St. Louis Park Police Officer Paul Barnes testified that when he returned home from a year of active military service with the Army Reserve in Iraq, the city wouldn’t give him his vacation and sick time he had accrued and had a right to under state and federal law.

Barnes went through a long fight with the city, and was recently awarded sick leave and vacation time after he went to the city council and his state representative for help, he told the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 16.

HF1575, sponsored by Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague), clarifies that a state or local public employee ordered into active military service continues to accumulate sick leave and vacation at the same rate from the time the person enters active military service until the date of reinstatement, when the accrued leave would be awarded. This would be done without regard to limits on accrued vacation or sick time.

Brod said she is sponsoring the bill so “soldiers returning from duty do not have to fight for what already belongs to them and has been a longstanding ruling since 1941.” The ruling was also clarified in 1945 by the state attorney general, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department.

The committee approved the bill without opposition and sent it to the House floor.

A companion bill (SF1624), sponsored by Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.



A bill (HF1778), sponsored by Rep. Greg Blaine, would allow and regulate rental of facilities at Camp Ripley near Little Falls. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

Retired personnel pay

Retired members of the Minnesota National Guard could be paid at a higher rank than when they retired if called back to duty, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 16.

HF1779, sponsored by Rep. Lloyd Cybart (R-Apple Valley), says the commander-in-chief or adjutant general may authorize a pay increase based on the person’s special skills or experience.

“It gives the adjutant general the ability to compensate them at a level that is commensurate with experience gathered in the private sector,” said Col. Denny Shields, special assistant to the adjutant general. There’s no specific case in mind with the bill, he said; it’s more of a result of the staff attempting to solve problems before they happen.

There was no opposition to the bill that next goes to the House floor.

A Senate companion (SF1625), sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.

Financial assistance

Families of active National Guard and Reserve members could see some help with paying their bills under HF229 heard March 10 in the House Taxes Committee.

The measure would allow taxpayers to designate on their tax returns that \$1 or more be paid into a Minnesota military families relief account. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Scott Newman (R-Hutchinson), was held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

The money would go to the Department of Military Affairs, and grants would be made to Guard or Reserve members (and their families) who have been ordered to active duty since Sept. 11, 2001, and have a financial need. The maximum grant would be \$2,000 for one year.

“In many cases, it does create a financial hardship. Not only for the member of the military, it’s for the families,” said Col. Denny Shields of the Minnesota National Guard.

He said some National Guard family members receive money from private individuals for food, clothing and some extras, but that can’t always be counted on.

Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls) said the need for the legislation is not likely to go away soon, but when it does, it would be easy to remove the check-off. "It's pretty simple for us as legislators to come in and take it off," he said.

If it becomes law, the legislation would take effect for tax year 2005. According to a fiscal analysis, putting the check-off on would cost \$284,000 the first year.

A companion bill (SF946), sponsored by Sen. Steve Dille (R-Dassel), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

★ RECREATION

Familiar terrain

All-terrain vehicle enthusiasts could see better education opportunities, stronger enforcement measures and another place to ride, under HF1547, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar).

The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the measure March 16. It now moves to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee.

The bill would allow conservation and peace officers to issue civil citations for wetlands violations with penalties set at \$100 for the first offense, \$500 for the second and \$1,000 for subsequent offenses.

"There are some violators for whom education won't do the trick," said Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy Forestry

Advocate Matt Norton. He would like to see vehicle forfeiture rather than cash penalties.

The bill would direct the Department of Natural Resources to establish an off-highway vehicle safety and conservation grant program. The purpose would be to encourage vehicle clubs to participate in safety and environmental training.

Other provisions of the bill include the opening of a 55-mile segment of the North Shore State Trail to all-terrain vehicles and the ordering of a study of the amount of unfunded gasoline tax attributable to all-terrain vehicle use in the state.

A companion bill (SF1442), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Saving lives with lifejackets

Children under 10 years of age would be required to wear a lifejacket while boating on state waters, under a bill the House passed March 14. The vote was 101-31.

The Senate refused to concur with the House amendments March 17 and requested that a conference committee work out the differences.

"The purpose of this bill is to save lives, the lives of children," said Rep. Char Samuelson (R-New Brighton), the House sponsor of HF590/SF1116*. "And if, through this bill, we could save the life of one child it would definitely be worth it."

The bill would provide exemptions for

commercial watercraft and boats that are anchored.

It specifies that warnings could be issued to the watercraft operator for noncompliance during the first year after enactment; tickets would be issued thereafter.

Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake) successfully offered an amendment that changed the penalty from a misdemeanor to a petty misdemeanor.

Current state law requires readily accessible flotation devices for everyone on board. It does not state that the lifejackets must be worn.

Federal law requires that children under the age of 13 (who are not in the cabin or below deck) must wear a personal flotation device on waters under federal jurisdiction. This includes Lake Superior; Canadian border waters; the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers; and Cass, Leech and Winnibigoshish lakes.

Paying to snowmobile

Driving a snowmobile on a state or grant-in-aid trail may cost Minnesotans a little cash.

Under HF1605, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar), a \$30 sticker would need to be purchased by everyone wanting to sled on the estimated 20,000 miles of state or grant-in-aid trails. The money would then be put into an account to help private clubs maintain the trails.

Currently, a \$15 fee is charged only to out-of-state snowmobilers for a trail sticker.

"This would create an ongoing mechanism for the state to work with local clubs to keep the trails," Doug Franzen, an attorney representing the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association, told the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee March 10.

Clubs now receive state reimbursement for 65 percent of their maintenance costs, with the rest coming from volunteer work. The bill would increase the state's contribution to 90 percent. "We believe the \$30 is sufficient to meet the expenditures we envision in this bill," Franzen said.

Clubs are struggling to find volunteers so they have to pay people to perform the work, while, at the same time, the costs for grooming machines, gas, maintenance and insurance continue to rise.

"We're tired of selling hot dogs, we're tired of raffles," said Harold Brace, association president. "We want this to be paid for by the snowmobiler."

Brace said Michigan charges \$25 and western states, such as Idaho, charge \$20-\$30. He recently returned from a snowmobiling trip through some northeastern states where all



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

During the March 15 House Environment and Natural Resources Committee meeting, Cheryle Young, All Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota office administrator, holds a photo showing the training the association provides for young people.

snowmobilers pay \$100 per state. "I could really see a difference in the trail conditions."

The bill would also create a trails acquisition coordinator position in the Department of Natural Resources. That person would be responsible for acquiring easements for permanent recreational snowmobile trails. An annual appropriation of \$500,000 would be provided for acquisitions.

The approved bill was referred to the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

A companion bill (SF1534), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.



Critical habitat license plates could be available for recreational vehicles and camping trailers under a bill (HF684), sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.



For more information on a bill (HF275), sponsored by Rep. Al Juhnke, that would provide seed money to help Minnesotans "Go Fishing," go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

Commission abolishment

A bill that would abolish the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and replace it with a new foundation was approved by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee March 16.

HF1467, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar), would abolish the commission and transfer the responsibilities to a new entity, the Minnesota Conservation Heritage Foundation.

The bill is an initiative from the governor and would provide for long-term environmental benefits, said Mark Holsten, deputy commissioner for the Department of Natural Resources. The commission currently operates on a two-year financial plan with monies from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Under the bill, the foundation would operate on a 10-year plan and it "provides for the foundation to take ownership of the trust fund in a way we believe the citizens had meant it to be used," Holsten added.

The bill has stronger legislative audit language and legislative checks and balances than the current commission has, said John Curry, legislative director for the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy.

"Two things really bother me about this,"

said Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls). Legislators who serve both on the commission and on the environment committee would not be part of the foundation, and there is less citizen involvement under the bill, she added.

"This bill is out here to get some discussion going," said Hackbarth. It has a long way to go before a final product is made, he added.

The bill next goes to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee. It has no Senate companion.

SAFETY



Shocking hearts

Charlie Butruff of Rochester was tired after a shopping trip in November 2003, so he sat in his favorite chair and drifted off to sleep. While he was napping, his heart stopped beating. Luckily, his wife realized what was happening and called 911. Even luckier, the first rescue workers who arrived had an automated external defibrillator with them and were able to shock Butruff's heart back to life.

A defibrillator would be placed in every Minnesota State Patrol vehicle, under HF1156, sponsored by Rep. Duke Powell (R-Burnsville). The proposal would save lives, he said, especially in Greater Minnesota where defibrillators are not as readily available.

Under the bill, the purchase of the life-saving equipment would be funded by nearly \$1 million from the state's trunk highway fund.

Defibrillators send an electric shock to a heart that has gone into sudden cardiac arrest to get it started again, and are most effective when used as quickly after the incident as possible. The machines are reusable and would be a valuable life-saving tool in state patrol cars, Powell told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 10.

The proposal is an initiative of the Minnesota chapter of the American Heart Association and not the state patrol, according to O.J. Doyle, a volunteer with the organization.

The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

A companion bill (SF1121), sponsored by Sen. Dallas C. Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

TAXES



Designated contributions

A bill that would allow taxpayers to direct certain portions of their taxes to education, transportation, health care or the environment

was held over for possible inclusion in the House Taxes Committee omnibus bill.

HF919, sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield), would allow individual and corporate taxpayers to direct that at least \$5 of their taxes be used for one of six areas, effective for tax years 2005 and 2006.

The six areas, which would be listed on individual tax forms, are:

- Education, for technology and capital improvement grants;
- Higher education, for assistance to students based on need;
- Transportation, for local roads and bridges;
- Health care, for public health programs;
- Nursing home assistance, for state reimbursement of nursing home costs; and
- Grants to cities for wastewater treatment.

Cox told the committee March 10 that he developed the list from conversations with constituents.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) said the bill was innovative, but doesn't go far enough. "We're in a world of hurt in this state. We have to do something. There are problems in this state and we'd better address them," he said.

Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) said she was appreciative of the bill. "I don't think we'll bring in much revenue, but I thank you for bringing the bill forward."

A companion bill (SF1195), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Neuville (R-Northfield), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

TRANSPORTATION



There's the ethanol

Gasoline sold in the state must contain at least 10 percent ethanol, which is derived from corn. Supporters hope that it will eventually reduce the reliance on foreign oil and be a boost for farmers.

Some stations offer the more potent blend of E85 (85 percent ethanol, 15 percent gasoline), but in order for it to gain in popularity, people have to know where it can be purchased. That's sometimes hard, because the approximately 100 gas stations across the state that sell it don't always make a point of displaying the fact that it is for sale.

HF1612, sponsored by Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake), would require the Department of Transportation to include a notification on the service signs it places near freeway and interstate exits. The notification for a station with ethanol would be E85. Businesses would not be charged extra for the logo.

The bill was heard March 16 by the House Transportation Committee and referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Robert Moffitt, communications director for the American Lung Association of Minnesota, testifies March 16 before the House Transportation Committee in support of a bill that would require the Department of Transportation to indicate on specific service signs those businesses that sell E85 at retail.

Robert Moffitt, communications director for the American Lung Association of Minnesota, said referral signs in other parts of the country have increased usage. Ethanol burns cleaner than regular gas, he said, but only approximately 20 vehicle models on the road now can use it.

There is no Senate companion.

Keeping data private

In mid-May, Twin Cities metropolitan area commuters will have the option of driving solo on the Interstate 394 express lanes, but only if they purchase a new MnPASS.

To use MnPASS, drivers will need to open a prepaid account with their credit or debit card and then install a small electronic device on the inside of their windshield which will allow access to the express lanes at anytime. Orders are scheduled to be accepted beginning April 11.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), and approved by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 14, HF1204 would classify the user's credit card information as private. It now goes to the House floor.

Barbara Forsland, data practices compliance officer for the Department of Transportation, said it was important that system users have complete assurance that their name and home address would not become public data.

"We feel it could become a barrier to

participation," she said. "We feel it is critical for Minnesota to receive good participation in the program so we can evaluate whether this is something the state needs to pursue as a means to help finance the roads."

Another provision in the bill would keep private the data that the department uses when it undertakes a design-build transportation project when the short list of qualified contractors is announced. This data could include scoring methodology and evaluation criteria.

A companion bill (SF1425), sponsored by Sen. Julianne E. Ortman (R-Chanhassen), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Increase that speed

On most Twin Cities metropolitan area freeways, motorists can cruise along at 55 mph, sometimes 65 mph.

An exception is a section of Interstate 35E in St. Paul, where the speed limit is 45 mph between downtown and West Seventh Street.

Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) unsuccessfully introduced a bill in 2003 to increase that speed, but it failed to become law. HF1219 sets the speed limit at 55 mph, unless the Department of Transportation determines that the switch would be unsafe.

He said increasing the speed would have that stretch of freeway coincide with everything else inside the Interstate 494-694 beltway.

The bill was heard March 16 by the House Transportation Committee and referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

Wilkin said when I-35E was built through St. Paul in the 1980s, community residents sued and an environmental impact statement followed. There were negotiations, and the result was noise walls and a 45 mph speed limit.

However, some drivers may be going back on the agreement. Betsy Parker, director of the Office of Government Affairs for MnDOT, said tests show the average speed in the area is 55 mph.

Rep. Dan Larson (DFL-Bloomington) said he would oppose the bill because the speed limit was negotiated years ago, and it wouldn't be fair to change it. "I drive it every day. It's an inconvenience. I'd like to drive faster. I've got to come down on the side of sympathy with the neighborhood," he said.

Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls) agreed. "It seems the community has sacrificed quite a lot," he said. "They went to the (negotiating) table and this is what came out. To go back on an agreement to save a few minutes on a commute makes no sense."

If there was a move to change the speed limit, an environmental impact statement might be necessary, Parker said.

A companion bill (SF302), sponsored by Sen. Mike McGinn (R-Eagan), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Moving to the governor

A company that was helping to move the furniture of resettled families for free may soon be able to do so again, this time without violating the law.

HF298/SF75*, sponsored by Rep. Neil W. Peterson (R-Bloomington) and Sen. William V. Belanger Jr. (R-Bloomington), awaits the signature of Gov. Tim Pawlenty. It was passed 132-0 by the House March 10, and 62-0 by the Senate four days later.

The bill allows movers providing a charitable service to operate outside their geographic area and exempts them from complying with rates filed with the Department of Transportation.

The issue grew out of the work by a Bloomington-based company called Two Men and A Truck, a small, six-truck moving company. The franchise has a corporate philosophy of donating eight hours of community service work each month. That service was helping to move the donated furniture of newly arrived families.

However, another mover apparently reported them to MnDOT. The caller claimed that by offering the service for free, the company was creating an unfair disadvantage.



The family of Bradley Waage would like to see a bridge named after him. For more information on a bill (HF626), sponsored by Rep. Frank Moe, that would do just that, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

Speaking of the House



When Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) presented his bill (HF1042) to allow video lottery terminals in bars to the Gaming Division of the House Regulated Industries Committee March 16, Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake) asked if terminals would be available for blind or handicapped people.

After answering that such terminals are probably available, Rukavina continued, "Oh, and by the way, when we were playing poker the other night, I really didn't have the flush I told you I had."

Westrom, who is blind, answered, "I know. I read your cards when I dealt them."

Bill sparks discussion

What should be the core mission of schools?

By Ruth Dunn

What's a school district to do in the 21st Century? With dollars stretched and resources limited, should a school district stop trying to do everything and focus on academics? Or, should school districts continue to educate the whole child including athletics and the fine arts along with academics?

Committee chair Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) and Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) posed those questions with the introduction of HF1090 in the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 10. Buesgens is the chief sponsor and Greiling is a co-sponsor.

Although the bill was tabled until next session, the sponsors hope to keep the discussion alive.

They're asking the legislative auditor to evaluate the financial costs and educational benefits of high school sports and fine arts activities. Results of the research would "help policy makers decide on the relative importance of sports and fine arts activities in light of their impact on students' educational performance and the reality of increasingly constrained and stretched school revenues," the bill's sponsors wrote in a letter to Legislative Auditor James Nobles.

The bill would shift responsibility for non-curricular athletic and fine arts activities from school districts to local governments. The transfer would allow school districts to focus on academics, said Buesgens. Programs would remain the same, but paychecks to coaches, advisors and athletic directors would come from cities instead of school districts.

"We're not proposing eliminating co-curricular activities, we just want to explore the governance so all kids have the opportunities," said Greiling. "We would never propose getting rid of these opportunities for kids."

The bill would affect noncurricular (sometimes called extra-curricular and co-curricular) activities regulated by the Minnesota State High School League, including sports, debate and speech.

Buesgens said he and Greiling introduced

the bill to start a discussion about the mission of schools — should schools specifically focus on academics or have a wider focus on the whole child.

Since it began meeting in January, Buesgens said the House Education Policy and Reform Committee has heard testimony from several people who have studied the current education system. "We have seen data on how the educational system is serving young men and women; about how society itself is changing,"



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Jeffell Tate from Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis, from left, Emma Paskewitz from Southwest High School in Minneapolis and Keegan Connor and Amanda Nisleit from Woodbury High School testify March 10 before the House Education Policy and Reform Committee on a bill that would transfer noncurricular athletic and fine arts activities for youth from school districts to local governments. Behind them are Rep. Mark Buesgens and Rep. Mindy Greiling, two of the bill's sponsors.

he said. "Those who spoke have alluded to concerns as to whether or not the [educational] system we created almost 100 years ago can now serve the needs that we as society and we as politicians have placed on the system."

Buesgens said he passionately believes in the benefit of noncurricular activities for young men and women. "I just don't see how one can make the case that the only place for those lessons to be learned is inside school walls," he said. "Learning happens all over the place in our daily lives."

Co-curricular activities are a huge and vital part of his school's core mission of educating the whole child, said Matt Kraft, associate principal

and activities director at Henry Sibley High School. "If you take [co-curricular activities] out of the schools you miss an opportunity to educate the whole child."

"Co-curricular activities enrich classroom academics," said Kraft. They are an extension of the classroom and allow students to experience the reality of many lessons they learn in the classroom.

"The core missions don't match," said Rich Dippel, activities director at South St. Paul High School, who used to work in city recreation. The core mission of cities is to provide public services like roads, water, sewer and police and fire protection. "The core mission of schools is to provide for students and help them become strong, young adults."

City recreation departments operate on shoestring budgets, he said. Some rural cities

don't even have them.

Amanda Nisleit, who plays on the basketball and volleyball teams at Woodbury High School, said she's participated on summer non-school teams and the players never got close. "It's all about the camaraderie of the team," she said. School teams are very close and share team goals and attitudes. She worries that she'd lose that closeness if school teams are moved to city ones and that school spirit would diminish.

A companion bill (SF1381), sponsored by Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.



Ascending the ladder

Lillie moves from city to state government

By MATT WETZEL

After a decade on the city council, Rep. Leon Lillie (DFL-North St. Paul) saw an opportunity to take his experience to the state level.



Rep. Leon Lillie

“I wanted to make sure we kept a strong voice for the area,” he said.

And his campaign for the House seat was a family affair. “My wife and the rest of my family got involved. It was

a fun thing to do that. Getting out there and being with them,” he said.

A major issue in District 55A, which includes Maplewood and North St. Paul, is education. “It’s important to the people in my area that higher education is affordable,” Lillie said. “You don’t want to see where the less affluent won’t

have access to higher education.”

Health care is also a concern. “I would try to make health care available to everyone. How we get there, obviously, that’s the sticking point,” he said.

Transportation is on the minds of his constituents, also. “The need (for new roads) is very great,” he said.

But again, the key issue is funding. Lillie said that raising the gas tax one-half cent and then dedicating the proceeds to roads is an option.

“I’m comfortable with making the choices,” he said. “I think there’s support out there and I’m willing to ask.”

If he could have sponsored the first bill of the session, it would have been the bonding bill. “That was important. Voters are disappointed with us for the work (the Legislature) did last session.”

Lillie, who defeated former Rep. Scott Wasiluk in the primary, said he wants to work

DISTRICT 55A

2002 population: 36,753
Largest city: Maplewood
County: Ramsey
Top concerns: Education, health care, transportation and jobs

“People need decent jobs. I realize businesses need to be viable. Quality of life is kind of what I’m all about.”

— Rep. Leon Lillie

with his colleagues on both sides of the aisle. “I’m trying to build friendships. I realize by working together, hopefully we can keep that perspective,” he said.

Lillie is a union man, and he believes jobs are important. “People need decent jobs. I realize businesses need to be viable. Quality of life is kind of what I’m all about.”

A member of the International Association of Machinists, Local 1833, Lillie works as a ramp agent for Northwest Airlines at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

Governance with patience

Peterson takes on new role to serve familiar constituency

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Bow ties.

Rep. Neil W. Peterson (R-Bloomington) wears them for a reason. “You remember me, don’t you?”



Rep. Neil W. Peterson

It’s not that he’s trying to draw attention to himself; the ties are more of a personal statement. It’s his way of saying the stereotypical life of a retiree is not for him — he’s living life his way. And that is to

continue a life of public service.

Representing a portion of Bloomington is a continuation of his long years of service to that constituency. He served three terms as the city’s mayor, and four terms as a city councilor. During some of that time, he steered the city through the opening of the Mall of America.

Peterson had very little time to make his decision to run for the House. Six-term representative Alice Seagren was appointed commissioner of education by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on the last day candidates could file to run for the Legislature.

“My wife suggested I run, and so did an acquaintance. So I jumped in, and here I am.”

Now that he’s at the Capitol, he’s exercising patience with the process. “I don’t have an agenda. Good governance is important, and I think that means not opening your mouth first, but instead, observe what is going on and listen to your constituency and instincts.”

Although his district covers the western portion of Bloomington, if, on the east side of the city, a casino becomes part of any Mall of America expansion, it would impact his constituents. He explained that the hospitality industry, with more than 8,000 hotel rooms along Interstate 494, has a huge impact on the

DISTRICT 41B

2002 population: 36,523
Largest city: Bloomington
County: Hennepin
Top concern: Transportation

“I don’t have an agenda. Good governance is important, and I think that means not opening your mouth first, but instead, observe what is going on and listen to your constituency and instincts.”

— Rep. Neil W. Peterson

local economy.

His sense is that the people there do not want a casino, nor is he in favor of balancing the state budget on gambling revenue.

Peterson describes his district, which also includes a portion of Edina, as mature, second-ring suburbs with a population that is older and high income. He sees good connecting roads as one of the area’s greatest concerns.

Monday, March 14**HF1743—Blaine (R)****Agriculture & Rural Development**

Vending machine sales of milk and water exempted from sales tax.

HF1744—Sykora (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Teacher alternative compensation provided and school staff development requirements provided.

HF1745—Lesch (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

One-week waiting period eliminated from unemployment insurance benefits eligibility.

HF1746—Urdahl (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at the University of Minnesota funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1747—Poppe (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Agriculture best management practices loans limits modified.

HF1748—Hoppe (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State employee grievance appeal procedures modified and correctional employee medical examination provision eliminated relating to working past mandatory retirement age.

HF1749—Zellers (R)**Taxes**

Income tax check-off provided to fund benefits for survivors of law enforcement officers and firefighters and to provide for maintenance of memorials, advisory council established and report required.

HF1750—Solberg (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Town election voting system exemption provided for ballot question on changing the town election to coincide with the county general election.

HF1751—Newman (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Career and technical levy modified and money appropriated.

HF1752—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Child neglect and endangerment offense expanded to include a penalty for leaving a child unattended in a car.

HF1753—Wardlow (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Correctional employee retirement contribution rates increased.

HF1754—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State Patrol retirement fund contribution rates increased.

HF1755—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public Employees Retirement Association contribution rates increased for certain covered employees and employers.

HF1756—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public Employees Retirement Association police and fire plan contribution rate modifications proposed.

HF1757—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State employee retirement contribution rates increased.

HF1758—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public Employees Retirement Association augmentation rates modified for covered members.

HF1759—Meslow (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Early childhood development screening expanded, school readiness kindergarten assessment initiative established and money appropriated.

HF1760—Tingelstad (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Trafficking in persons crimes specified, forfeiture of property provided, sex trafficking included in the promoting of prostitution crime and forfeiture proceeds distribution formula modified.

HF1761—Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Active military personnel allowed to suspend MinnesotaCare enrollment without a lapse in coverage and MinnesotaCare eligibility determinations and premium payments modified for persons in active military service.

HF1762—Marquart (DFL)**Regulated Industries**

Detroit Lakes; on-sale liquor license authorized.

HF1763—Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Methamphetamine treatment grants provided and money appropriated.

HF1764—Cybart (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Hepatitis C educational materials made available through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

HF1765—Cybart (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

May 2005 designated as "Hepatitis C Awareness and Education Month" in Minnesota.

HF1766—Hornstein (DFL)**Taxes**

Wind-generated electricity purchase income tax deduction provided.

HF1767—Hornstein (DFL)**Transportation**

Toll facilities plan required and non-compete provisions in toll facility development agreements prohibited from restriction development, design, construction or operation of public transit.

HF1768—Hornstein (DFL)**Transportation**

Counties authorized to submit proposals for toll facilities, development agreements made available to the public, restrictions provided, requirements imposed and number of facility development agreements and collection of tolls limited.

HF1769—Hornstein (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

No Child Left Behind Act and other student testing laws evaluated by the Office of Educational Accountability.

HF1770—Hornstein (DFL)**Regulated Industries**

Social and economic costs of gambling study and report required and money appropriated.

HF1771—Westrom (R)**Transportation Finance**

Greater Minnesota elderly and disabled transportation pilot project established where transit is limited or nonexistent, report required and money appropriated.

HF1772—Hornstein (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Minneapolis Teachers Retirement Fund Association service credit purchase authorized.

HF1773—Hornstein (DFL)**Education Finance**

Student achievement grant program established, school sites assisted in training parents and community leaders in holding the school district accountable for high academic standards and money appropriated.

HF1774—Hornstein (DFL)**Taxes**

Carsharing group membership income tax credit provided.

HF1775—McNamara (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Hunting and fishing license fees adjusted to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index.

HF1776—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Professional counselors licensing transition period provided.

HF1777—Seifert (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State-owned vehicles study required, proposal required to outsource certain functions related to vehicles and money appropriated.

HF1778—Blaine (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Camp Ripley facility rental authorized.

HF1779—Cybart (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Retired National Guard personnel ordered to active duty pay and allowances provided.

HF1780—Bradley (R)**Taxes**

General fund income tax contribution check-off provided.

HF1781—Hornstein (DFL)**Regulated Industries**

Renewable development fund grants eligibility regulated.

HF1782—Ruth (R)**Transportation**

Personalized veterans license plates authorized.

HF1783—Bradley (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Child-care assistance modified by limiting absence days.

HF1784—Demmer (R)**Taxes**

Streets added to municipal improvements that can be subsequently reimbursed for earlier costs incurred.

HF1785—Emmer (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Election terms clarified; registration procedures, requirements, and election judge duties modified; delivery of ballots provided; absentee ballot boards provided in certain counties and canary ballots modified.

HF1786—Sertich (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

MinnesotaCare covered health services modified and limited benefits for certain single adults and households without children repealed.

HF1787—Sertich (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Health plan companies required to file reports including director and employee compensation costs.

HF1788—Sertich (DFL)**Education Finance**

School levies authorized for the difference between the maximum certified levy and the maximum levy quoted by the commissioner of education.

HF1789—Abrams (R)**Taxes**

Marriage penalty relief federal tax conformity provided.

HF1790—Dorn (DFL)**Taxes**

Mankato local sales tax expiration date modified.

HF1791—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Sustainable agriculture grants funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1792—Hausman (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Antibacterial soap sales generally prohibited.

HF1793—Urdahl (R)**Taxes**

Postsecondary tuition and fee expenses income tax deduction provided.

HF1794—Dill (DFL)**Transportation**

Orr; 30 mph speed limit established for trains.

HF1795—Otremba (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Irradiated food in schools formal policy required.

HF1796—Larson (DFL)**Local Government**

Metropolitan Airports Commission meetings prohibited from being held within an airport security screening perimeter.

HF1797—Otremba (DFL)**Taxes**

Property tax class rate reduced for certain property bordering public waters.

HF1798—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Regulated Industries**

Utilities required to meet certain renewable energy standards.

HF1799—Wardlow (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Volunteer firefighter statewide retirement plan task force established and money appropriated.

HF1800—Howes (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

School year start prohibited before Labor Day.

HF1801—Hackbarth (R)**Regulated Industries**

Lawful gambling definitions amended and technical and conforming changes provided.

HF1802—DeLaForest (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State labor agreements, arbitration awards, compensation plans and salary increases ratified.

HF1803—Sertich (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

State higher education grant program application deadline extended.

HF1804—Sertich (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Child-care license fees temporarily suspended.

HF1805—Clark (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Businesses that possess personal data required to notify persons whose information has been disclosed to unauthorized persons.

HF1806—Clark (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Foodshelf program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1807—Nelson, P. (R)**Taxes**

Capital equipment sales tax exemption made an up front exemption in two phases.

HF1808—Eken (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Bridges Medical Services in Ada; employees added to Public Employees Retirement Association privatization coverage.

HF1809—Wilkin (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Insurance agency terminations, coverages, fees, forms, disclosures, reports, information security and premiums regulated.

HF1810—Holberg (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Comprehensive incident-based reporting system law enforcement data access and classification provided.

HF1811—Penas (R)**Education Finance**

Telecommunications/Internet access equity aid provided and money appropriated.

HF1812—Abeler (R)**Regulated Industries**

Racetrack and horsepersons' organizations agreements provided and simulcasting and card club operation restrictions modified.

HF1813—Huntley (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Group residential housing supplemental rate expanded.

HF1814—Huntley (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

Higher education programs for underserved students funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1815—Lanning (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Crime victim services funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1816—Emmer (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Mental health services coverage extended and children's mental health and civil commitment provisions modified.

HF1817—Westerberg (R)**Regulated Industries**

Lottery gaming machines and games operation provided at a gaming facility, license and fee provided and gaming transaction fee imposed.

Wednesday, March 16

HF1818—Olson (R)

Transportation

Transportation providers not receiving subsidies exempted from various taxes, transit bus restriction on use of freeway and expressway shoulders eliminated and Metropolitan Council required to allow transit providers to use its bus stops.

HF1819—Wagenius (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Aquaculture license requirements imposed.

HF1820—Eastlund (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Cambridge State Hospital cemetery named the Garden of Remembrance.

HF1821—Jaros (DFL)

Higher Education Finance

Immigration History Research Center grant-matching funds provided to the University of Minnesota and money appropriated.

HF1822—Carlson (DFL)

Higher Education Finance

State higher education grant surpluses distributed equally to the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and money appropriated.

HF1823—Eken (DFL)

Taxes

Income tax rates modified, credit provided for nursing home residents and money appropriated.

HF1824—Hamilton (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Financial institution investment authority and annual reporting requirements regulated, obsolete references removed, residential mortgage originators regulated and insurance license renewals provided.

HF1825—Beard (R)

Transportation

Ten-ton vehicle loading authorized under certain circumstances, and 7-ton vehicle loading authorized during spring weight restrictions under certain circumstances.

HF1826—Mullery (DFL)

Taxes

De minimus tax exemption provided for specified goods.

HF1827—Mullery (DFL)

Taxes

Local government aid additional city aid base provided for certain cities, city aid appropriation limit increased and aid required to be used for certain purposes.

HF1828—Samuelson (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Counties required to process certain medical assistance applications within specified timelines.

HF1829—Mullery (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Nontraditional career programs for women grants provided and money appropriated.

HF1830—Mullery (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Minority job training and wage increase initiative required.

HF1831—Ruth (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Small business growth acceleration program established and money appropriated.

HF1832—Davids (R)

Transportation

High-occupancy vehicle lanes access extended to vehicles fueled regularly with E85 fuels.

HF1833—Davids (R)

Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Ethanol-derived hydrogen fuel research grant provided and money appropriated.

HF1834—Hackbarth (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Game and fish heritage fund established, sales tax portion dedicated to the fund and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1835—Erickson (R)

Education Finance

Advanced placement and international baccalaureate exam fees funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1836—Ellison (DFL)

Taxes

Lead hazard reduction property tax valuation exclusion provided.

HF1837—Paymar (DFL)

Local Government

Civil rights or human rights departments authorized for cities of the first class and enforcement powers provided for housing discrimination cases.

HF1838—Blaine (R)

Transportation

Local governments authorized to permit low-speed neighborhood electric vehicles to be operated on residential roadways.

HF1839—Ruth (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Water use prohibition on once-through use permits provision modified.

HF1840—Abeler (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Physician assistants physician review modified and telephone information contained on prescriptions requirement eliminated.

HF1841—Penas (R)

Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Turf grass research in northern climates continuing research grant provided and money appropriated.

HF1842—Beard (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Scott County land sale wetland development restriction clarified.

HF1843—Beard (R)

Transportation

Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport safety zones and land use restrictions defined for runway 17-35.

HF1844—Klinzing (R)

Transportation

St. Paul to Stillwater transportation corridor bus rapid transit study required.

HF1845—Johnson, J. (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Attorney fee awards reasonableness factor provided.

HF1846—Nelson, M. (DFL)

Taxes

Brooklyn Park economic development tax increment financing district duration extended.

HF1847—Powell (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Medical assistance special transportation services coverage criteria specified, special transportation reimbursement rates increased, prohibition on brokers to manage services extended and review of special transportation services required.

HF1848—Peppin (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Neglecting a vulnerable adult criminal penalties provided.

HF1849—Cornish (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Fugitive Apprehension Unit authorized to seize property under the forfeiture law and limitations on unit's participation provided.

HF1850—Abeler (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Healthy Minnesotans bio-monitoring program established, reports required and money appropriated.

HF1851—Jaros (DFL)

Taxes

Mortgage interest income tax deduction limited.

HF1852—Klinzing (R)

Education Finance

Teacher content-based professional development grant provided to the Minnesota Humanities Commission and money appropriated.

HF1853—Severson (R)

Transportation

Mud flaps on trucks and trailers regulated.

HF1854—Kahn (DFL)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Ticket scalping prohibition repealed.

HF1855—Simpson (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Shoreland and lake comprehensive management provided.

HF1856—Tingelstad (R)

Education Policy & Reform

Law enforcement teachers required to be licensed as peace officers.

HF1857—Urdahl (R)
Agriculture & Rural Development
Licensed food handler violation penalties application modified.

HF1858—Sykora (R)
Taxes
Tuition organization contribution income tax credit provided.

HF1859—Wilkin (R)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Workers' Compensation Advisory Council recommendations adopted.

HF1860—Abeler (R)
Education Finance
School district pilot program authorized to spend compensatory revenue at school sites with low test scores.

HF1861—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Health care best practices guidelines modified and quality improvement investment program established.

HF1862—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Health care provider expenditure reporting requirements modified, separate procedure established for procedures over \$5 million, certain medical referrals restricted and money appropriated.

HF1863—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Electronic medical record system loan program fund established, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1864—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Coordinated statewide health improvement action plan provided, health plans required to issue coverage to all applicants and charge community rates, income tax deduction provided, coverage maintenance required and money appropriated.

HF1865—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Dental licensure provisions modified and fees established.

HF1866—Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Foreign operating corporation, royalties subtraction and deemed dividend deduction tax definitions modified.

HF1867—Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Bloomington fiscal disparities repayment extended by eight additional years.

HF1868—Mullery (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
MinnesotaCare eligibility requirements modified for persons with continuation coverage.

HF1869—Mullery (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Cockfighting, dogfighting and other domestic animal fighting criminal penalties imposed; procedures established for disposition and care of animals; hearings provided and admissibility of certain evidence clarified.

HF1870—Mullery (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Criminal penalties imposed for selling drugs in public places.

HF1871—Mullery (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Controlled substance criminal offenders geographic restrictions policies established and increased sentences provided for offenders who commit further drug sale crimes in restricted area.

HF1872—Slawik (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Legislative and budget proposal data preliminary draft definition clarified.

HF1873—Powell (R)
Health Policy & Finance
MinnesotaCare provisions modified to align with practice.

HF1874—Peppin (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Armory boards eligibility extended to military personnel beyond officers.

HF1875—Bradley (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Human services agency technical amendments provided relating to children and family services, health care and continuing care programs.

HF1876—Huntley (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Nursing home license surcharge reduced and cigarette tax increased.

HF1877—Seifert (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
State government competitive bidding provisions modified.

HF1878—Finstad (R)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 836, Butterfield, fund transfer authorized.

HF1879—Finstad (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Campaign finance reporting requirements modified, inactivity redefined, assumption of liabilities required and public subsidy distribution requirements modified.

HF1880—Johnson, J. (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Local correctional fees provided.

HF1881—Powell (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Ambulance service provisions and first responder and emergency medical technician requirements modified and emergency suspension of certain requirements provided.

HF1882—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Alcohol and drug counselor licensure transition period modified and temporary permit fee increased.

HF1883—Severson (R)
Transportation Finance
Federal-aid highway funds distribution provided to state and local bodies.

HF1884—Hamilton (R)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 177, Windom, account transfer authorized.

HF1885—Marquart (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Clay County nursing facility rate increase provided.

HF1886—Ellison (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Property crime dollar threshold amounts study committee established.

HF1887—Simpson (R)
Taxes
Prefabricated homes subjected to the sales tax.

HF1888—Entenza (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Confidential and private data government disposal requirements provided.

Thursday, March 17

HF1889—Wilkin (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Child protection, child welfare, child-care and child and family support provisions implemented.

HF1890—Brod (R)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Manufactured and industrialized/modular home sales licensure provided.

HF1891—Sailer (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Fathers' adoption registry timely registration provision clarified.

HF1892—Thissen (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
HIV prevention and health care access program established and money appropriated.

HF1893—Simpson (R)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Tobacco product sales and deliveries regulated, penalties imposed and remedies provided.

HF1894—Clark (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Unsubsidized employment hours requirement decreased for job training and education opportunities.

HF1895—Loeffler (DFL)
Agriculture & Rural Development
Shade tree definition expanded relating to metropolitan area disease control and money appropriated.

HF1896—Westrom (R)
Transportation
Recreational vehicle combinations redefined to include certain combinations hauling horse trailers and related vehicles, maximum gross weights increased on non-interstate highways and permits required.

HF1897—Ellison (DFL)

Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
 Minneapolis; North Minneapolis summer youth employment funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1898—Finstad (R)

Health Policy & Finance
 Pharmacy benefits managers certificate of authority required, powers and duties to state agencies granted, data access authorized, disclosures required and responsibilities provided for pharmacy benefits managers.

HF1899—Lanning (R)

Taxes
 State general levy shares fixed for noncommercial seasonal recreational property and commercial-industrial property.

HF1900—Lanning (R)

Taxes
 Limited market value extended for two additional years.

HF1901—Slawik (DFL)

Education Policy & Reform
 Early care and education programs coordination provided.

HF1902—Lesch (DFL)

Taxes
 Housing opportunity area tax abatement program provided.

HF1903—Poppe (DFL)

Taxes
 Mower County local sales tax authorized.

HF1904—Hackbarth (R)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Watercraft license fees increased and revenue dedicated to public access on public waters.

HF1905—Thissen (DFL)

Taxes
 Pre-kindergarten scholarship granting organization contribution income tax credit authorized.

HF1906—Simon (DFL)

Taxes
 Marriage penalty relief in income tax federal conformity provided.

HF1907—Ruth (R)

Taxes
 Motor fuel tax rates increased.

HF1908—Vandevor (R)

Taxes
 Low-income apartment property tax class created.

HF1909—Hackbarth (R)
Environment & Natural Resources

Heritage enhancement and clean water funds and councils established, sales tax percentage dedicated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1910—Peppin (R)

Education Policy & Reform
 Independent School District No. 728, Elk River, election authorized to form two separate school districts.

HF1911—Thao (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
 Translation services state contracts preference given to native speakers.

HF1912—Larson (DFL)

Civil Law & Elections
 Subscriber data classified for government entity electronic newsletters and electronic municipal utility billing.

HF1913—Samuelson (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions
 Flavored cigarettes, cigars and smokeless tobacco sales prohibited.

HF1914—Clark (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions
 Failure to pay a discharged employee within 24 hours penalty increased, failure to pay benefits or wage supplements penalty modified and violation of migrant worker payment requirements increased.

HF1915—Zellers (R)

Health Policy & Finance
 Maple Grove hospital construction moratorium exemption provided.

HF1916—Meslow (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance
 Crime victim service programs and battered women's shelters funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1917—Tingelstad (R)

Local Government
 Local government investment of funds in certain securities authorized.

HF1918—Finstad (R)

Health Policy & Finance
 Physical therapist assistant, aide, and student definitions provided; license provisions modified and penalties provided.

HF1919—Sailer (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
 Beltrami County tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF1920—Abrams (R)

Regulated Industries
 Minneapolis; Guthrie Theater on-sale liquor license authorized.

HF1921—Wilkin (R)

Health Policy & Finance
 Medical treatment of minors consent provisions modified, parental access to minor's records authorized and minor consent agreements provided.

HF1922—Charron (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
 Minnesota Computers for School authorized to acquire surplus property for the state.

HF1923—Ellison (DFL)

Health Policy & Finance
 Lead Poisoning Prevention Act modified.

HF1924—Ellison (DFL)

Taxes
 Paint excise tax provided.

HF1925—Dean (R)

Health Policy & Finance
 Human services licensing provisions modified.

HF1926—Knoblach (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance
 Burglary crimes expanded.

HF1927—Solberg (DFL)

Education Finance
 School district refunding bonds made eligible for taconite production tax revenue payments.

HF1928—Nelson, P. (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
 Rush City correctional employee retirement plan service credit purchases authorized.

HF1929—Klinzing (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
 Construction code inspectors competency and certification criteria required, and continuing education provided.

HF1930—Seifert (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
 State agency real property leasing conditions specified.

HF1931—Heidgerken (R)

Civil Law & Elections
 Ski area operators and skiers responsibilities and rights and liabilities between skiers defined, legal actions for injuries resulting from the inherent dangers and risks of skiing prohibited.

HF1932—Severson (R)

Education Finance
 Independent School District No. 748, Sartell, garage lease levy extended.

HF1933—Cornish (R)

Environment & Natural Resources
 Game and fish license and stamp issuing fees modified.

HF1934—Wardlow (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
 Supplemental pension and deferred compensation plan exceptions clarified.

HF1935—Abeler (R)

Health Policy & Finance
 Audiologist hearing instrument dispenser certification requirement eliminated.

HF1936—Fritz (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
 Minnesota State Retirement System service credit transfer authorized.

HF1937—McNamara (R)

Agriculture & Rural Development
 Plant pest, nursery stock and wildflower provisions modified.

HF1938—Johnson, S. (DFL)

Regulated Industries
 Public Utilities Commission authority to assess utilities for revenues to develop an electronic filing and retrieval system authorized.

HF1939—Solberg (DFL)**Local Government**

Group health insurance arrangement of local governments to provide the same coverage to each participating governmental unit permitted.

HF1940—Knoblach (R)**Transportation**

Aviation planning chapter in state transportation plan required and aviation planning advisory council created.

HF1941—Brod (R)**Transportation**

Kids First license plate issuance authorized and money appropriated.

HF1942—Koenen (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Clara City rail container load-out facility study required.

HF1943—Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Consumer credit report security freeze authorized, identity theft and Social Security number protections, credit monitoring, personal record destruction and civil and criminal penalties provided.

HF1944—Johnson, R. (DFL)**Education Finance**

St. Peter; school district usage of health and safety revenue for an energy recovery system authorized.

HF1945—Charron (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Charter school sponsor duty to monitor and evaluate fiscal and student performance clarified, voluntary termination of charter school contract authorized and charter school evaluation study required.

HF1946—Peterson, S. (DFL)**Education Finance**

School finance system provided and money appropriated.

HF1947—Peterson, S. (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Desegregation/integration plan learning opportunities clarified.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

State Aqua

Number of lakes in state larger than 10 acres	11,842
Depth, in feet, of deepest natural lake in state, Lake Saganaga in Cook County	240
Acreage of Red Lake (both Upper and Lower).....	288,800
In square miles.....	451
Acreage of Lake Mille Lacs.....	132,516
Leech Lake acreage	111,527
Number of natural rivers and streams in state	6,564
Miles of natural rivers and streams, as approximate	69,200
Length of Mississippi River through state, in miles	680
Minnesota River, in miles.....	370
As of Feb. 11, 2005, Adopt-a-River cleanups reported for 2004	134
Pounds of trash removed from state waters	121,716
Dates of National River Cleanup Week.....	May 14-22
Millions of acres of wetlands in the state in 1850	18.6
Millions in 2003.....	9.3
Total surface water area in state, in millions of acres, including wetlands	13.1
Thirty-year average for annual precipitation in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, in inches	29.4
Inches in International Falls	23.9
Percent of pollutants found in stormwater runoff coming from the first inch of precipitation	90
Percent of state's annual stormwater pollution as a result of the first large spring snow melt	65
Gallons of water used, on average, per minute of showering	4
Year the Safe Water Drinking Act was passed by Congress to set health and safety standards for public drinking water	1974
Minnesotans, in millions, served by public water systems.....	3
Number of public water supply systems statewide, as approximate.....	8,300
Approximate number of non-community systems, which provide drinking water in places like factories, schools and restaurants	7,300
Number of community systems, which provide drinking water to people in their place of residence	965
Of those, number that are municipal systems.....	720
Community water systems that use surface water drawn from lakes or rivers.....	23
Tests conducted in 2003 by the Department of Health for pesticides and industrial contaminants in community water systems.....	19,389
Systems exceeding drinking water standards for the contaminants.....	0

Sources: 2005-06 Legislative Manual, Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Health; Board of Water and Soil Resources.

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