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SESSION Weekly

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES



INSIDE: PROCESS COMES TO THE PEOPLE, CONTENTIOUSNESS TO CIVILITY, MORE GAMBLING BILLS, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF1948-HF2120

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On the cover: A participant holds a Red Lake Nation flag during a March 22 Capitol memorial service for the victims of the Red Lake High School shooting one day earlier.

—Photo by Tom Olmscheid

House comes calling

Bringing the process to the people leaves an impression

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

When the House of Representatives comes calling, especially to Greater Minnesota, it's a big deal. And if it is to discuss a high profile issue, such as asking for an amendment to the state constitution defining marriage as only between a man and a woman, then there is a lot to consider.

The logistic wheels were set in motion when it was decided in January that the House Civil Law and Elections Committee would hear HF6 in Grand Rapids on March 18.

If you're the community's police chief, it means planning for the possibility that a rumored 2,000 protestors could show up. If you're a testifier, it's figuring out what you're going to say so that you can best articulate your side's point of view, and if you're the committee administrator, it is making sure that every detail is taken care of — that every eventuality is planned for.

Shortly after session began, House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) asked that committees, if possible, hold hearings in Greater Minnesota. Two committees responded, the

House Civil Law and Elections Committee, and on March 8, the House Education Policy and Reform Committee went to Crosby to learn how residents in that area are being affected by the teachers' strike.

It had been rumored that 2000, protestors would show up in Grand Rapids opposing and supporting the bill that asks for a constitutional amendment defining marriage only as a union between a man and a woman. According to the city's chief of police, a total of about 80 showed up to carry their signs at a designated intersection.

PHOTOS BY LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Police presence

Grand Rapids Police Chief Leigh Serfling had heard rumors that busloads of protestors would show up for the hearing on the controversial bill, sponsored by Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids).

Since the Reif Center, where the hearing was held, is connected to the high school, it was decided that an intersection along Highway 38 leading to the facility would be designated for protestors.

The hearing was scheduled for 10:30 a.m. and protestors from both sides of the issue began to gather at the corner around 9 a.m. "I suppose there were about 80, at that time," Serfling said. "But by the time the hearing had ended and lawmakers were headed home no more than two-dozen were left holding their signs."

With five state troopers stationed inside the Reif Center, and five Grand Rapids police officers, two police force reservists and two Itasca County Sheriff's deputies assigned to the detail, the law enforcement presence made quite an impression.

"People were very cooperative," Serfling said. While there were no arrests, two people were escorted from the facility after becoming upset because they didn't have tickets and they wanted to testify.

Choosing the right words

Deer River resident Carolyn McElfatrick, the mother of two grown children and two grandchildren, had a week to prepare her testimony in favor of bringing the issue to the voters.

Committee officials had decided the best way to ensure that both sides were heard was to involve two of the most vocal groups on the issue: OutFront Minnesota and the Minnesota Family Council. Both were given an hour to state their positions and they could decide who would carry their message. Most testifiers were from the Grand Rapids area.

McElfatrick was one of seven people testifying for the amendment. "I'm just a regular person, but I do feel strongly about the quality of family life for our children," she said in an interview.

If the intent of the Grand Rapids hearing was to bring the process to the people, it wasn't lost on McElfatrick. She has never participated in any legislative activity and was "fascinated" with the process. "I felt privileged to be there," she said.

Al Kruger was the last of 10 people testifying against the bill. Ask him if he's political and the answer is a resounding "yes," especially when it comes to issues of poverty. "There should be a constitutional amendment that no one will go hungry in the state," he said in an interview.

Kruger was more concerned that lawmakers were in Grand Rapids to play politics and not "address the real issues."

"You came up here to cook up some goodies and you are going to leave us with a big mess," he told committee members.

When he learned of plans for the hearing, he organized a gathering of residents at his home to speak with interested legislators about the issues affecting the area. "I thought if they wanted to come up here, they at least ought to get to know us."

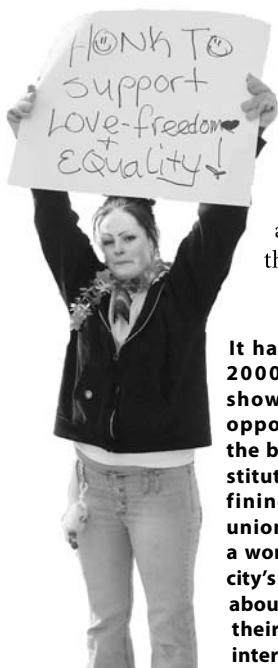
Reps. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park), Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood) and Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls) did attend. Kruger said he notified the office of Committee Chair Rep. Jeff Johnson (R-Plymouth), but no Republicans attended. Rep. Matt Dean (R-Dellwood) told Kruger that he would have attended, had he known about the meeting.

Best-laid plans

It was a month-long process deciding where to hold the hearing, said Committee Administrator Dennis Virden. "Some will say that we took that issue out because Rep. Jeff Johnson is running for attorney general. That just didn't factor in at all," said Virden who shares the same party affiliation as Johnson, Republican.

It was decided to take HF6 on the road because it is high profile. "How else are you

First Reading continued on page 17



Marriage bill amended

A bill (HF6) that would allow state voters to decide, through a constitutional amendment, if marriage should be recognized as a union only between a man and a woman took on a new look in the House Ways and Means Committee March 22.

Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), the bill's sponsor, asked the committee to approve his amended version, which tightens up language addressing the "legal equivalent to marriage." It did, sending the bill to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee.

The bill came before the committee to consider the fiscal impact to the state. According to the nonpartisan House Fiscal Analysis Department, the cost to the Office of the Secretary of State to put the question before voters would be about \$2,000. The statewide estimated cost to local governments for voters to consider the measure would be about \$122,000.

Several committee members were concerned that the new language stating that the "state and its political subdivisions shall not create or recognize a legal status similar to marriage," would bar benefits, as little as family memberships to the Minnesota Science Museum, which receives state funds, to as great as domestic partnership benefits such as those offered by the University of Minnesota.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) unsuccessfully asked that the measure be sent back to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee, which approved the bill at a March 18 meeting in Grand Rapids, for language clarification. "It looks to me to be a pretty significant change," she said.

Severson said the amendment was not considered in Grand Rapids because it arrived in members' hands a "tad late." He said he was

able to get the amendment to at least two DFL committee members before the trip, and it was decided that bringing an amendment to an open forum could be confusing.

Severson said, "They had the opportunity to see the amendment ahead of time ... had they really desired to debate that issue, they had the opportunity."

Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson), a member of the House Civil Law and Elections Committee, took issue with Severson saying there was no opportunity to debate the amendment. "What you told the committee was that you were not offering the amendment. Why would the committee debate an amendment that the author said he was not offering?"

A companion bill (SF1691), sponsored by Sen. Michele Bachmann (R-Stillwater), awaits action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Literal meets allegorical

Painter places nod to Capitol stewards within lunette mural



The grand allegorical paintings throughout the Capitol lend symbolic meaning to the people, characteristics and events that influenced the young state.

One of the murals composed by Edwin H. Blashfield in the Senate Chamber shows an allegorical female figure, representing Minnesota, being crowned by two genii, or guardian spirits of Roman mythology. She is seated on sheaves of wheat atop a grain cart pulled by two white oxen. In front of the oxen, walks a child bearing a tablet with the inscription: *HÆC EST MINNESOTA GRANARIA MUNDI* (This is Minnesota, the granary of the world).

Gazing at the painting, from right to left, your eyes encounter heavenly creatures, the Spirit of Patriotism and the Spirit of Agriculture, and your mind deciphers allegory, allegory, allegory — wait, who are those two literal figures?

At the left edge of the canvas looking on are Capitol Architect Cass Gilbert and State Capitol Commission Vice President Channing Seabury.

Seabury's daughter, Edith Seabury Nye, described the artist Blashfield as "mild mannered, courteous and kindly" in a 1936 account of growing up surrounded by the Capitol construction.

According to Nye, "He was several times elected President of the American Academy of Arts, had a school of men working under him, and had painted many large canvasses for public buildings all over the country,

and yet he was so unaffected and modest that when he first showed us the 'Minnesota Enthroned' picture, he told us almost apologetically that he had put in it two small heads, portraits of Mr. Gilbert and my father.

"He said, 'You know the great European masters put the donors of the madonnas in, so I thought it would be all right.'"

(N. Wood)



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The inset reveals an up-close view of Cass Gilbert and Channing Seabury within the *Minnesota the Granary of the World* mural in the Senate Chamber.

★ AGRICULTURE

Farm tax relief

The House Education Finance Committee heard three bills March 22 that would, in slightly different ways, relieve the property tax burden on agriculture land when voters approve referendums to raise money to build or improve school buildings.

Farms and cabins are already exempted from paying when schools pass referendums for operating expenses.

HF1412 is sponsored by Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield) and HF1413 and HF1414 are sponsored by Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague). Under all three bills, farmers would still pay taxes on their homes, garages and 1 acre of land but not on their other acreage.

"Right now one of the main interests in this is because it's difficult to pass bond referendums when it goes on farmland because farmers are paying so much an acre for that debt service," said Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior), the committee chair.

The committee passed all three bills to the House Taxes Committee without recommendation.

The committee also recommended that a joint task force take a look at the issue during the interim.

HF1412 has a companion bill (SF889), sponsored by Sen. Sheila M. Kiscaden (IP-Rochester), which awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

HF1413 has no Senate companion.

HF1414 has a companion bill (SF1324), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Neuville (R-Northfield), which awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

★ ARTS

Capturing another artifact

The portrait of the man who designed the State Capitol would remain longer in the building, under a bill approved March 21 by a House committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), HF1458 would require the Minnesota Historical Society to submit a request to the Smithsonian Institute Museum of American Art to keep the portraits of Cass Gilbert and his wife, Julia Finch Gilbert, on display in the current location when they are not publicly displayed elsewhere. The portraits are on loan

from the museum and displayed on the second floor of the Capitol.

The bill was approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee and referred to the House floor.

The first version of the bill was drafted in conjunction with Sen. Cal Larson (R - Fergus Falls), sponsor of SF1446. He told Kahn, "We shouldn't give 'em back, we should just treat it like the Virginia flag and just keep it," she humorously told the committee.

The Confederate battle flag of the 28th Virginia Infantry Regiment, recently displayed in the Capitol, is in the possession of the historical society, which has rebuffed requests by Virginia state officials and a Civil War enactment group to return the flag. Kahn said future loans from the institute could be made difficult if the society were to capture the portraits as well, so she amended the bill for a "kinder" version.

"The reason we have the Virginia battle flag is because we fought a Civil War. We want to deal with these paintings with a little less blood shed," said Patrick McCormack, deputy director for interpretive programs for the historical society. "Our preference would be to hold the legislation over," so the society can negotiate without the formal legislative request, he added.

The Senate bill awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

★ BONDING

Some progress on bonding bill

A week that began with cantankerousness ended with civility, but no agreement by the Capital Investment Conference Committee.

Conferees appear to have agreed on about \$880 million in general obligation bonds, but what comprises that total is under consideration. The original bills (SF1 and HF3) called for \$975.6 million and \$780.3 million, respectively.

"I'd say we're 90 or 94 percent of the way there," Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea), the House sponsor, said after a March 23 meeting. "There are a few sticking points that are more of where you view your priorities, but I think we realized we're not that far apart."

Committee leaders are optimistic a deal can be finalized shortly after legislators return to St. Paul March 29, and expressed concern if one isn't.

"We've got to keep the pressure on. I'm afraid we'll lose steam and momentum if we don't," Dorman said. Another concern is missing a second straight construction season, after no bill was passed last year.

Easter was the second unofficial deadline that legislators missed after earlier predictions that a bill would be completed by the end of February. Dorman and Sen. Keith Langseth (DFL-Glyndon), the Senate sponsor, were



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Holding up cutouts of a house during the March 23 meeting of the Capital Investment Conference Committee are, from left, Gordon Hebert, who is homeless, Kristin Titcombe of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, Sheila Husemoller, who is homeless, and Phil Christman of Catholic Charities Volunteer Corporation at the Dorothy Day Center. The quartet was offering support for \$20 million in permanent supportive housing loans.

asked why the sides could not come to an agreement.

"Because not everyone agreed with me," said Langseth. "Because not everyone agreed with Sen. Langseth," said Dorman.

That light-heartedness was a far cry from earlier in the week, when members on both sides seemed less willing to work together.

When the sides met March 21, a Senate proposal of nearly \$951 million in general obligation bonding was rejected, as was an \$880.2 million House proposal. Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings) pointed out that the House proposal was almost \$100 million more than its original plan, while the Senate went down just \$25 million from its original offer.

The Senate came back with an \$880.9 million offer one day later. The House countered with a \$880.7 million offer that included \$46 million less for higher education and, about \$6 million less for the Red Lake School District and flood mitigation, while increasing money for an expansion of the prison in Faribault, a nursing facility for sex offenders and the Minnesota Zoo. Langseth accused House conferees of trying to "sabotage" the bill with that proposal.

"If there was truly an effort to sabotage the bill, the document would look a lot different," Dorman said. He also said the proposal is approximately \$135 million more than the governor's proposal and that conferees need to be respectful of the governor and his veto power, while meeting the needs of Minnesotans.

"The problem isn't the 10 people here," Langseth said at the time. "The governor hasn't moved an inch. We should have come up with a decent plan and let the governor veto. Other people won't let us get the job done."

★ BUSINESS

Growing small businesses

Small businesses could get a financial boost to help implement technology and business improvements, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Connie Ruth (R-Owatonna).

HF1831 would establish the Small Business Growth Acceleration Program under Minnesota Technology, Inc. The program would assist manufacturing and manufacturing-related companies that employ fewer than 50 employees by helping them improve business and implement technology.

The program would receive \$1 million in each of the fiscal years 2006 and 2007. Program funds for a particular project would be capped at \$25,000 during a calendar year.

Minnesota Technology, Inc. would be required to report to the Legislature on the

actual financial impact of the funds awarded to companies.

The House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee approved the bill March 22 and referred it to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee.

A companion bill (SF1886), sponsored by Sen. Julie A. Rosen (R-Fairmont), awaits action in the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.

★ CONSUMERS

Omnibus liquor bill

Significant changes in policy are proposed in the omnibus liquor bill approved by the House Regulated Industries Committee March 22. It now heads to the House floor.

Rep. Joe Hoppe (R-Chaska) is sponsoring HF605, which would provide for a statewide 10 p.m. closing time for off-sale liquor and move, from noon to 10 a.m., the time on Sundays when alcohol, including 3.2 beer, could be sold.

The bill would also exempt brewpubs from the requirement to use only Minnesota-produced wort (unfermented beer) if their total sales of off-sale beer in any 12-month period do not exceed 10 percent of total beer production on the premises or 100 barrels, whichever is less.

Other provisions in the bill would allow for the issuance of liquor licenses, including:

- Minneapolis for the Guthrie Theater;
- Anoka for the Main Street Stage;
- Elko for Elko Speedway;
- Caledonia for the Four Seasons Community Center;
- Duluth for Enger Park Golf Course;
- Eden Prairie for the city center;
- Mankato for the Midwest Wireless Civic Center; and
- Mille Lacs for an exclusive liquor store in Eastside Township.

A companion bill (SF664), sponsored by Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), may become part of a Senate omnibus liquor bill.

★ CRIME

Data sharing

Law enforcement officials could more easily share case information through a statewide data system proposed in HF1810, sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville).

The bill calls for the creation of statewide data system, the Comprehensive Incident-Based Reporting System, which would be operated by the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the Department of Public Safety. The information would be made available only to

law enforcement agencies for use in criminal investigations and for background investigations required by state statute. Holberg said the system could be running by fall.

"I can't stress how important this is," Bloomington Police Chief John Laux told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 21. "If we can't share information on criminal investigations, we are literally working with one hand tied behind our back."

The bill addresses the data privacy issues that need to be worked out. "As you know, unless we classify otherwise, all information collected by the state is public," Holberg said.

System information would be classified as confidential for 10 days unless it was important to an active investigation, then that classification could be held for up to 120 days. The reporting agency could ask to have it extended.

Access to the information could only be achieved through certification from the BCA. Subjects of the data would have access to their data through a participating law enforcement agency or the BCA.

Rich Neumeister, a citizen advocate for data privacy issues, said that while he has been working with the bill's sponsor, he is still concerned about "how long some of the data will be retained."

The bill was approved and now moves to the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee.

A companion bill (SF1833), sponsored by Sen. Wesley J. Skoglund (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Legal scalping

Scalping tickets would no longer be a crime, under HF1854, sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls). Current state law, dating back to 1913, prohibits the reselling of tickets at inflated prices.

Kahn said she first became interested in the issue when the Minnesota Twins were in the 1987 World Series and scalpers were selling tickets for \$400 to \$500. Recent events in the news brought it to mind again.

Back in 1987, Kahn saw what she considered to be "an obscene diversion of the Minneapolis police force to go after ticket scalpers," she told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 22. During the four days of the series, 15 officers made 30 arrests for scalping. These were not simple arrests since they involved undercover work by officers, she said.

She called the current law an "unwarranted government interference with a free market system of resource allocation." Scalping is a voluntary activity. The buyer values a ticket more than the money it costs; the seller values

the money more than the ticket he has.

If scalping was legal, scalpers could be required to register with the state, declare their income and pay taxes, she said. Consumers could also be protected from counterfeit tickets.

Minnesota is losing business to states where scalping is currently legal, including California, Texas, New York and Wisconsin, she said.

If the committee wasn't comfortable with repealing the scalping prohibition, Kahn said she would agree to it being a petty misdemeanor, instead of the current misdemeanor.

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

There is no Senate companion.



The Minnesota Financial Crimes Task Force could see its funding continued through HF1568, sponsored by Rep. Doug Meslow. For more information go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ EDUCATION

Sharing administrators

Smaller school districts thinking about merging with other districts to save money but don't want to lose their own identity could have an alternative choice, under HF1454, sponsored by Rep. Rob Eastlund (R-Isanti).

"This bill helps school districts gain efficiencies by pooling resources to purchase administrative services," Eastlund told the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 17. School districts could save money by combining administrative functions while maintaining local control.

There are no geographic restrictions or requirements for student numbers. "Simply, if districts can get together and demonstrate they can create efficiencies, and they want to enter this kind of agreement, they can do it with the approval of the commissioner [of education]," said Eastlund.

The bill would allow school districts to save money on administrative costs and "free up money for classroom teachers," said Rep. Bud Heidgerken (R-Freeport).

Districts would have a two-year transition period before coming together under one administrative head.

Each administrative district would have a board with representatives from all districts involved.

Levy authority would be provided only to fund start-up costs for the first three years.

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

A companion bill (SF1436), sponsored by Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

Revamped computers for schools

The nonprofit Minnesota Computers for Schools would be added to the list of organizations able to acquire surplus state property, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 21.

HF1922, sponsored by Rep. Mike Charron (R-Woodbury), adds the organization to others able to receive surplus property, such as an Indian tribal government, any nonprofit and tax-exempt medical institution, hospital, clinic, health center, school, school system, college and university. The bill also says the commissioner of administration "may transfer state surplus computers," to the nonprofit for "refurbishing and distribution to any school, school system, college or university in Minnesota."

Inmates at the Stillwater correctional facility are trained to refurbish these computers and then the computers are made available to schools. In a later interview, Charron said the purpose of the bill is to make sure they have "crossed all the T's and dotted all the I's," in providing less costly computers to schools.

The Minnesota Computers for Schools Web site states the organization, "refurbishes donated computers and provides them to schools

at a minimal charge, a high quality alternative to purchasing new systems."

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

A Senate companion (SF1768), sponsored by Sen. Brian LeClair (R-Woodbury), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

An apple a day

Fresh fruits and vegetables, lowfat milk and whole grains are being added to some school lunches to make them healthier. Unfortunately, those good foods cost more than what is traditionally served in schools.

"HF1747 basically would allow schools to make choices for more healthy, wholesome lunches," Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield), the bill's sponsor, told the House Education Finance Committee March 21.

Under the bill, if school districts choose to become involved, they would receive an additional 10 cents per meal for each meal that exceeds federal nutrition standards and promotes healthier food choices.

A qualifying meal would include: at least three different fruits and vegetables (including one that is fresh), at least one whole grain item at least three days a week, healthier a la carte choices and reduced fat milk. A district would be required to do an annual evaluation of its school lunch program to receive the additional aid. The state cost is estimated to be about \$10 million.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

During her presentation for additional funding for school lunches, Polly Podpeskar, left, food services director for the Grand Rapids School District, tells the House Education Finance Committee that the milk container on the left appeals more to children than the traditional milk carton. Sherri Knutson, right, student nutrition services coordinator for Rochester Public Schools, also testified on the bill.

"It is clear we need to start teaching children better eating habits. School nutrition programs want and need to be part of the solution. We ask you to help us do that," said Polly Podpeskar, food services director for the Grand Rapids School District, who also discussed rising health problems for children because of obesity and diabetes.

She said about 55 percent of funding for school meals comes from payments from families. The federal government funds about 40 percent and the state funds about 5 percent.

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

A companion bill (SF1403), sponsored by Sen. LeRoy A. Stumpf (DFL-Plummer), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Religious meals

If more than 20 percent of students receive special meals based on their religious beliefs, then their school could join a two-year pilot project and receive additional money for the cost of those meals, under HF864.

The bill is directed at a problem that more Minnesota schools are experiencing as their students come from more diverse backgrounds, the bill's sponsor, Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), told the House Education Finance Committee March 21.

"As our population gets more diverse, and as more and more people have special dietary requirements, the current program for school breakfasts and lunches doesn't recognize the difference in costs to provide special dietary needs of students," said Abrams. People of many religions have dietary restrictions, including Catholics, Jews, Muslims and Hindus, he said.

Most of the money for school meals comes from federal funds and commodities, but the state also contributes 8 cents for each school lunch served and 9 cents for each half pint of milk for kindergarten students. In addition, the state also pays 30 cents for meals for children whose family income qualifies them for reduced price meals and 55 cents for those who qualify for free meals.

The pilot project would be open to public, charter and private schools because they all currently receive state money for meals. The bill appropriates \$60,000 each year from the state's general fund to pay for the project.

"With freedom of religion comes the responsibility for believers to pay for the religion of their choice," said August Berkshire, public relations representative for the Minnesota Atheists. "It's not the government's duty or option to subsidize religious practices." He considers the bill to be unconstitutional for several reasons.

The precedent is already set, according to

Abrams, because specialized religious meals are provided with state money to nursing home residents and inmates of state prisons.

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

A companion bill (SF763), sponsored by Sen. Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Increasing school rigor

Reforms designed to increase academic rigor and better prepare students for further education after high school are included in HF1719, according to Rep. Karen Klinzing (R-Woodbury), the bill's sponsor.

Under the proposal, heard in the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 23, the Minnesota Basic Skills Test, first given to students in eighth grade, would be eliminated as a graduation requirement. Instead Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments would become the "high stakes" tests required for graduation. Current seventh-graders would be the first class to graduate under the new requirements.

School districts would also have the option to participate in a new program, Education Planning and Assessment System, offered through ACT, Inc., best known for its college entrance exams. The program would help students gauge if they're on track and taking the classes they need to prepare for post-secondary schooling. Students in eighth and 10th grades could take Pre-ACT tests, called Explore tests, with the test costs paid by the state.

As an incentive for high school students to take more academically challenging Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, the state would subsidize the costs of the exams for low-income students. Any money left over from the appropriation would be used to pay all or part of the exam fees for other students.

School districts starting new AP or IB programs could be eligible for one-time state funds, available on a competitive basis.

A new program called the College Level Examination Program would allow high school students to demonstrate college level achievement and receive college credit or advanced standing.

An amendment by Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) successfully removed private schools from receiving state funds through provisions of the bill.

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

A companion bill (SF1855), sponsored by Sen. Geoff Michel (R-Edina), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

★ EMPLOYMENT

Displaced Homemaker Program

The 52-year-old Duluth woman got a call from her husband, telling her he couldn't be married to her anymore.

"All I ever wanted to be, all I knew anything about, was ended," said Kimberly Pilgrim, an assistant with the Displaced Homemaker Program in Brainerd. She was relating the story of the woman, who received the program's services.

Pilgrim said the woman was divorced and ended up homeless in an alley. She was soon put in touch with the program, which provides pre-employment training to people re-entering the labor market after having been homemakers.

Most of the clients are over age 50 and 98 percent are women.

After an assessment, the woman took some computer training, and now works as a network administrator, making \$15 an hour with a company in Duluth. Pilgrim said without the program, the woman might still be homeless.

Rep. Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd) is sponsoring HF1536, which would provide \$1.5 million for the program. Gov. Tim Pawlenty's biennial budget proposal eliminates the program, but this bill would put it back by raising marriage and dissolution fees between \$10 and \$30.

The bill was heard March 23 in the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee and referred to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee.

A companion bill (SF1271), sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Job help for women, minorities

Two bills sponsored by Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls) would help women and minorities into the workforce.

HF1829, heard in the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee March 22, would appropriate \$900,000 for grants to nonprofit organizations for programs that encourage women to enter nontraditional careers in trades and technical occupations. The appropriations would be available until June 30, 2007.

To qualify for a grant, an organization would need to provide outreach to women in schools, community organizations and existing employment and training programs or assist women through training, child-care, transportation assistance, job placement assistance and job retention support.

The bill would require all state-funded employment and training programs to include information about opportunities for women

in non-traditional careers.

Rep. Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers) opposed the bill, saying it's not an appropriate use of money.

HF1830 would require the Department of Employment and Economic Development commissioner to develop an initiative to promote employment opportunities for minorities in Minnesota, with a focus on African-Americans.

The initiative would be required to significantly expand job training and promote substantial wage increases to minorities. It would have to be implemented by Jan. 10, 2006.

Some committee members said the bill should benefit all minorities, including American Indians, and not just target African-Americans.

The committee approved both bills and referred them to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee. Neither has a Senate companion.

State employee retirement options

Executive branch state employees who voluntarily work on a limited basis would be able to contribute to their retirement fund as if they are a full-time employee, as well as receive fund contributions from the state, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 22.

HF1953, sponsored by Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder), also includes a provision that allows for retired executive branch state employees to return to work on a reduced schedule, of at least 25 percent but not more than 1,044 hours (part-time), without penalty to their pensions.

"We're not looking at this as any kind of a cost containment, but we're looking more in the area of continuing to preserve the workforce that we think is vital in the continuation of our services," said Deputy Employee Relations Commissioner Paul Larson.

Larson expects an exodus of nearly 1,500 workers who will be eligible for retirement in the next five years. The bill gives the department an incentive to retain knowledge and expertise to "continue the quality services we provide," he added.

"This looks like we're trying to get to a part-time workforce," said Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul). "Although you've put it into nice terms ... I don't think it works from the perspective of helping the state maintain a good and healthy workforce with some longevity," he added.

The bill next goes to the House floor.

A Senate companion (SF1845), sponsored by Sen. Cal Larson (R-Fergus Falls), awaits

action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.



A \$1 million proposal (HF984) would help the Minnesota Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs fund a statewide job skills development program. For more information on the measure sponsored by Rep. Bob Gunther, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

ENERGY



For information on a proposal (HF1964), sponsored by Rep. Neil W. Peterson, that would allow the state to purchase energy in bulk over two-year periods, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

ENVIRONMENT

Sales taxes for habitat and water

It was known as the "3/16-bill" at one time. Past versions have proposed raising the state sales tax rate or not, but all would have dedicated various percentages of state sales tax dollars to the environment. Parks and trails and zoos have been in and out of the mix. The Senate at one time expanded it to include the arts and humanities.

The latest version, HF1909, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar), would propose the following constitutional amendment to voters in the 2006 general election:

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide funding beginning July 1, 2007, to provide hunter and angler access or improve, enhance, or protect game and fish habitat and to protect and restore the state's lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater by dedicating the sales and use tax receipts equal to the state sales and use tax of one-fourth of one percent on taxable sales?"

The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the measure March 22. It now moves to the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

If voters were to approve the measure, Game and Fish Heritage and Clean Water funds would be created in the state treasury. An 18-member Clean Water Council would be created to recommend Clean Water Fund expenditures.

Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would

have created a secretary of natural resources at the executive level of constitutional officers. He said it was an attempt to lend more transparency and accountability to the fund distribution.

"I'm uncomfortable with having appointed people appoint people to recommend the dollars," he said.

The bill is explicit that the revenue may not be used as a substitute for traditional sources of funding. Land acquired with Game and Fish Heritage Fund dollars must be open to public hunting and fishing during open seasons.

A companion bill (SF1721), sponsored by Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Minnesota River brims over

The Buffalo Ridge area in southwestern Minnesota has a unique topography that lends itself to recurrent flooding.

Nine counties in the area have worked together since 1978 to plan, design and install floodwater control projects. The group is formally organized as Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, Inc.

HF279, sponsored by Rep. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton), would direct \$280,000 in fiscal years 2006-07 to the program for flood plain management, water retention and administration of the joint powers group.

The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee reviewed the request March 23 and held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus environmental finance package.

Area II encompasses the terrain draining into the Minnesota River, from Ortonville to Mankato, along the south side of the river.

This upland, known as Buffalo Ridge, creates elevation differences of up to 80 feet per mile in the Lac Qui Parle watershed and 50 feet per mile in the Redwood River watershed, explained Project Coordinator Kerry Netzke.

"Due to these very steep slopes, flooding becomes an annual horror for the people who live there and try to make their living from the land," she said.

Plus, they battle what she described as "crossover flooding." The waters flow in a northeasterly direction to the river and a southeasterly direction down the plateau.

In addition to the fate of HF279, the Area II group is awaiting the outcome of a House-Senate bonding bill conference committee. The latest proposals from each body contain \$500,000 in capital investment dollars for dam repair and road retention projects.

A companion bill (SF405), sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), has been laid over by the Environment, Agriculture

GAZING GECKO



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

DFL Legislative Assistant Laurie Nistl views a leopard gecko in the Capitol Rotunda March 22. Volunteers from the Minnesota Zoo displayed numerous animals in an effort to garner support for continued zoo funding.

and Economic Development Budget Division of the Senate Finance Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus finance bill.



For information on a bill (HF1747), sponsored by Rep. Jeanne Poppe, that would help some homeowners in her district solve their sewage dilemma, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

FAMILY



Seeing adoption records

Gretchen Taylor, an adoptive mother and an adopted child, had been plagued by health problems throughout much of her life. She had a lung defect and decided against a transplant because she knew nothing about her family health history.

She tried to get information about her birth mother so she could find out about her health history, but ran up against a brick wall. Even-

tually, she found some relatives, and discovered there were several life-threatening health problems on both sides of her birth family.

She wants to spare other adopted people these problems, so she supports HF659, sponsored by Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover).

The bill would give people adopted on or after Aug. 1, 2005, and who are at least 19 years old access to their original birth record upon request. Currently, that information is only available with a court order. With adoptions made after April 1, 1982, adopted people can get the information if the birth mother doesn't object.

Under the bill, birth mothers who want their record to remain confidential could do that.

Heard over two days in the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee, the bill was referred without recommendation to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 22.

Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul) was concerned about breaking the promise of confidentiality to birth mothers. "Legislators 50 years ago gave their word. Fifty years from today, I don't want some wet-nosed legislator changing my word. All I have as a politician is my word. Every day when I go to work as a pipefitter, they tell me I'm a lying, cheating,

lowdown scum because I don't keep my word. I hope you understand how difficult it is (for us)," he said to those testifying for the bill.

A companion bill (SF1005), sponsored by Sen. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

Family planning grant funds

A bill to limit the use and eligibility for family planning grant funds passed the House in the last biennium, but was never signed into law. This year it returns as HF227, sponsored by Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls).

The bill would prohibit using the funds to subsidize abortion services or administrative expenses. It would also prohibit organizations receiving the grant money from referring patients who seek abortions to a group that provides them.

Independent audits of organizations applying for the grants would be required to ensure they are in compliance with the bill.

The bill was amended to exclude medical education funds awarded to the University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic and other clinical programs.

Andrea Rau, legislation associate for Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life, told the House Health Policy and Finance Committee March 23 that the bill would stop tax money from being used to subsidize abortions.

"They will no longer receive your or my tax money to do their work," she said.

Speaking in opposition to the bill was 24-year-old St. Paul resident Kirsten Klevan. She said the bill would restrict options for women and restrict what doctors can say to their patients.

"Women have the right to be informed about all options related to their health," she said.

The committee took no action, but plans to take up the bill again next week.

A companion bill (SF330), sponsored by Sen. Betsy L. Wergin (R-Princeton), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

GAMBLING



Omnibus policy gaming bill

Modifying lawful gambling, regulating lottery service businesses, exempting games that simulate horsing racing as games of chance and legalizing Texas hold'em tournaments comprise the House Regulated Industries Committee's omnibus policy gaming bill.

The committee approved the bill March 22 and referred it to the House State Government Finance Committee.

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar) is sponsoring HF1801, that would also repeal bingo hall licensing, increase from 55 percent to 60 percent the maximum percentage of gross profit that may be spent on expenses for gambling other than bingo, authorize electronic bingo devices, authorize sports-themed tipboards and increase from \$500 to \$599 the maximum tipboard prize.

Another provision would regulate lottery service businesses, which are businesses that purchase lottery tickets for customers for a fee or commission. The businesses would be required to have registrations, disclose costs and give unclaimed prizes to the commissioner of public safety for deposit in the General Fund. The bill would also prohibit the businesses from accepting credit cards.

Video games or devices that simulate horse racing would not be considered a video game of chance, under the bill. This means playing the game would not be gambling.

The final section of the bill would add Texas hold'em to the list of games permitted in tournaments or contests under state law. Prizes for the game could not exceed \$200. Tournament organizers must make reasonable accommodations for players with physical disabilities. Accommodations would include announcing the cards visible to the entire table and the use

of Braille cards.

Sen. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope) is sponsoring the companion bill (SF1555). It was passed by one committee and awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Omnibus technical gaming bill

A bill that would establish a State Lottery Board and give the Minnesota Racing Commission more oversight of the card club at Canterbury Park was approved by the House Regulated Industries Committee March 22 and referred to House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Rep. Andrew "Andy" Westerberg (R-Blaine) sponsored HF514, which is the committee's omnibus technical gaming bill. The bill would create a lottery board, as recommended by the Lottery Organization Task Force. The board would consist of seven members appointed by the governor with the consent of the Senate.

Board members would serve three-year terms, although some initial members would only serve one or two years. The board would be responsible for reviewing lottery performance and operations and making recommendations to the director regarding operations, maximizing proceeds and assuring public confidence in the lottery.

Board responsibilities would include reviewing the lottery's annual budget, reviewing proposed rules, conducting annual performance reviews of the director and reviewing finances.

The bill would also require the racing commission to hire a director of card clubs for Canterbury Park. The director would be responsible for making the commission more directly involved in the oversight of card club activities.

A companion bill (SF406), sponsored by Sen. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope), awaits action by the full Senate.

At a bar near you

Gambling could spread across the state, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) that would permit up to five video lottery terminals in bars where lawful gambling, such as pull-tabs, already occurs.

Net revenues from the terminals would be taxed at 30 percent. Retailers would receive a commission equal to 33 percent of the net income in their establishments, 31 percent of which would be distributed to organizations conducting the lawful gambling.

Revenue would also be transferred to the state lottery and a compulsive gambling trust account. The remaining revenue would be split the same way as other lottery proceeds:

60 percent to the General Fund and 40 percent to the Environmental Trust Fund.

The proposal (HF1042) would not require a state investment, Rukavina told the Gaming Division of the House Regulated Industries Committee March 16, which took no action. A companion bill (SF964), sponsored by Sen. David J. Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.

"That's the good thing about this bill," Rukavina said. "There's no capital investment to get it up and running."

Colin Minehart, past president of the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association, said 7,000 establishments and the state could reap the benefits, which could include new jobs and higher salaries for bar employees.

★ GAME & FISH

Whooo's protected?

When Alice the great horned owl fell out of a 60-foot pine tree, she landed in a hazy area between state and federal protection status.

HF419, sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield), would remove the great horned owl from the state's unprotected bird list. It aims to clarify the protected status of great horned owls in Minnesota.

Alice and her handler, Houston Nature Center Naturalist Karla Kinstler, appeared before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee March 17 in support of the bill.

Unable to survive in the wild because of a broken wing sustained in the fall, Alice is a "human imprint," Kinstler said. "If she knew she was an owl, she would not be comfortable doing this."

Kinstler explained that there is confusion, even among state conservation officers, over the classification of great horned owls in Minnesota. Great horned owls appear on Minnesota's unprotected birds list, along with sparrows, blackbirds and pigeons. They are, however, protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The confusion came home to roost during a flap over construction of a city-funded nature center in Houston.

Because Alice was a symbol of the center, some opponents were threatening to shoot her, Kinstler said. When she approached a local state conservation officer, he told her he had no jurisdiction over the matter because the great horned owl is on the unprotected birds list.

The committee approved the measure and sent it to the House floor. A companion bill (SF628), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Neuville



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

George Googleye Jr., left, from the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and Erma Vizenor, right, of the White Earth Band of Chippewa, testify March 18 before the Gaming Division of the House Regulated Industries Committee in support of a bill that would provide for the operation of lottery gaming machines and the conduct of lottery games at a gaming facility.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Karla Kinstler, a naturalist from the Houston Nature Center, gives members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee an up-close look at Alice, a great horned owl. One of the bills heard at the March 17 meeting would modify the protection status of the great horned owl.

(R-Northfield), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

GOVERNMENT



For information on a bill (HF658), sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert, that would let state agencies purchase used goods, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

HEALTH



Governor's budget bill

The governor's comprehensive health and human services budget bill was held over by the House Health Policy and Finance Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

More than 30 people testified March 16-17 concerning HF1422, including some who oppose the proposed change in MinnesotaCare eligibility, which could cause more than 22,000 people to lose health care coverage. Critics of the proposal said the patients would end up seeking care in emergency rooms, driving up health care costs.

"Losing health care coverage will cause significant hardship for many working Minnesotans who do not have health insurance available through their employer or who suffer from chronic illnesses," said Kathy McDonough, attorney for Legal Services Advocacy Project. "Health care needs don't just go away because

a person doesn't have health insurance."

Dr. Mary Braddock, director of child health policy for Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, objected to the proposed payment reductions to hospitals for patients on Medical Assistance, Medicaid, GAMC and MinnesotaCare.

"Hospital payments represent 3 percent of state spending, yet we are hit with 23 percent of the proposed cuts," she said.

"The bottom line is that none of us want to have to make difficult choices," said Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester), the committee chair and bill sponsor. "In the end, we have to balance the checkbook."

Bradley encouraged committee members and testifiers to submit ideas for saving money while still providing quality care.

Cynthia Tregilgas, director of Minnesota's chapter of the National Organization of Circumcision Information and Resource Center, said defunding unnecessary infant circumcisions could save the state millions of dollars each year.

"Based on data I received from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, in 2002 alone, Medical Assistance paid over \$1 million for this unnecessary cosmetic surgery," Tregilgas said, noting the figure did not include indirect costs, such as complications and increased hospital stays, which would increase the amount eightfold.

A companion bill (SF1313), sponsored by Sen. Brian LeClair (R-Woodbury), awaits action by the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

Legislator options

Legislators would have a unique health care benefit; they could opt in and out of the state health plan as many times as they like as long as it's during the open enrollment period, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 23.

HF913, sponsored by Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee), initially was heard in the committee Feb. 22, but was laid over for changes. One of those included restricting the ability for legislators to opt in and out of the health care plan at any time, which currently is a benefit. An amendment by Beard changed it to during open enrollment periods only.

Elizabeth Houlding, director of the Insurance Division of the Department of Employee Relations, previously said that without the limit, "premiums skyrocket ... and those costs are spread across a smaller group."

Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul) said he researched whether legislators were actually doing what she described, and "not one has been found."

"We do have records that have been ... reviewed by the commissioner that indicate that we have, as I think I testified, three or four individuals that have come and gone from the program," Houlding responded.

Under the bill, the department would also be required to offer an alternative to the current more costly health plan to state retirees. Many are finding the continual yearly increase in premiums too costly to afford and requested the state offer a choice of plans.

The bill next goes to the House State Government Finance Committee.

A companion bill (SF1390), sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

No smoking

If you're receiving Medical Assistance or help from the Minnesota Family Investment Program, Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) believes you should not be smoking.

HF955 asks that those who smoke and receive assistance enroll in a tobacco cessation program or face an increase in co-payments. Heard March 17 by the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee, it was held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Seifert said he was amenable to talking about changes with members, or even using it as a pilot project in one or two counties. The bill relies on the honesty of the recipients when they complete their application, and does not provide for testing.

"This is a bill that simply does what a lot of people feel is common sense," Seifert said. "Does it make sense that we're paying for something that's detrimental to people's welfare? If you've got money for cigarettes there is money lying around somewhere in your discretionary income."

"I don't think anybody who smokes wants to. I think it's an addiction. I think in the long run, prevention will help," Seifert said.

Linden Gawboy, a member of the Welfare Rights Committee, spoke against the bill. She said if Seifert was going to go after poor people who smoke, he should also go after everyone who smokes, including department heads, veterans and police officers.

A companion bill (SF947), sponsored by Sen. Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

"Unborn Child Pain Prevention Act"

Before an abortion could be "performed on an unborn child who is 20 weeks gestational age or more," under a bill sponsored by Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie), the physician or physician's agent would need to inform the woman if an anesthetic would eliminate or alleviate pain to the unborn child caused by an abortion.

HF235, the so-called "Unborn Child Pain Prevention Act," would also require the physician or agent to inform the woman of risks associated with the anesthetic. With the woman's consent, the physician could then administer the anesthetic.

The House Health Policy and Finance Committee held the bill over March 23 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill, with some DFL members voting against it. A companion bill (SF331), sponsored by Sen. Michelle L. Fischbach (R-Paynesville), awaits action by the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

Otremba's bill would impose criminal penalties on doctors for not informing women about the anesthetic. The violation could result in felony charges. The penalty would not apply to the woman having the abortion.

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) unsuccessfully offered an amendment to reduce the charge to a misdemeanor.

Under the bill, civil damages could be sought by a woman who had an abortion, or the father or grandparents of the unborn child, against a person who knowingly or recklessly performed an abortion without providing the anesthetic information.

David A. Renner, director of state and federal legislation with the Minnesota Medical Association, said he opposes legislation that requires informed patient consent because

science and the needs of patients change, which could invalidate the information in the consent requirement.

He also opposed the provision that felony charges could be brought against doctors.

HIGHER EDUCATION



Funding programs

Administrators for the Program in Occupational Therapy at the University of Minnesota were directed last September to stop recruiting students for the fall 2005 class.

"Although no formal action has been taken to discontinue the program, blocking student admissions effectively blocks the program's existence," said Program Director Peggy Martin. Twenty-five students graduate with a Master of Science degree each year.

Sponsored by Rep. Margaret Anderson Keliher (DFL-Mpls), HF629 would appropriate an unspecified amount of money for the program and the medical technology program at the university. She is willing to work with all parties to determine a necessary dollar amount.

"This is a question of resources. It gets to the heart of the matter about what sort of university we're going to have when we're put in the devil's dilemma of which programs to continue and which programs to stop when there's a need for these professionals in our state."

The House Higher Education Finance Committee held the bill over March 21 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The university has the oldest baccalaureate medical technology program in the country, according to Karen Karni, the program director from 1984-2000. However, the program, which had 10 faculty members in 1985, now has two tenured and one non-tenured faculty members. Once open, the positions have been turned into medical school faculty positions, she said.

"The present model is not sustainable. One reason is a decrease in state funding. The current model that exists in the Academic Health Center cannot, and will not, provide the capacity that is required for the workforce in these two areas going forward. We don't have the faculty or the facilities," said Frank Cerra, senior vice-president for health sciences. The path now being pursued is partnerships, such as a nursing program expansion with the Mayo Clinic and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

A Senate companion (SF411), sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), is under consideration for placement in the Senate higher education finance bill.



For information on a bill (HF602), sponsored by Rep. Lyndon Carlson, that would keep \$35 million of unused funding in higher education, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

HUMAN SERVICES



For information on a bill (HF1569), sponsored by Rep. Tony Sertich, that would appropriate funds for Community Action Councils in Minnesota, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

HUMANITIES



Dignity for the dead

A cemetery located at Cambridge State Hospital would be renamed the Garden of Remembrance, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 21.

Sponsored by Rep. Rob Eastlund (R-Isanti), HF1820 now goes to the House floor.

One of about 15 state cemeteries that are often neglected and in out-of-the-way locations, the people buried at the Cambridge location primarily had developmental disabilities or mental illnesses. Their gravesites once had no identification or had numbered markers, said Jim Fassett-Carman, community organizer with Remembering With Dignity.

"We do not shun people with disabilities in society. Making state cemeteries respectable, accessible places, regularly maintained, marked with people's names is what we hope to accomplish at state cemeteries around Minnesota," he added.

Remembering with Dignity worked with the Department of Human Services, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the Minnesota Extended Treatment Options program in Cambridge, and churches in the area to place named grave markers in the Cambridge cemetery. The group works to honor those who have lived and died in state institutions.

A Senate companion (SF1868), sponsored by Sen. Sean R. Nienow (R-Cambridge), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

★ INSURANCE



For information on a bill (HF1669), sponsored by Rep. Tim Wilkin, that would make it easier for insurance companies to offer new products or change rates more quickly, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ MILITARY

Soldiers suspend care

Active duty soldiers and their dependents would be able to suspend enrollment in the state's health care program, MinnesotaCare, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 21.

HF1761, sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), would allow for the suspension of care, as well as premium payments, without having to reapply upon their return. Currently a lapse in coverage results in a four-month waiting period before being eligible to reapply.

Before he was deployed Michael W. Vogt, specialist in the Minnesota National Guard, said he contacted MinnesotaCare to suspend his care, but the person who helped him said there wasn't a process for suspension. He remained on the plan and paid the premium even though he was covered under military health care, which created a convoluted set of issues once he was injured overseas.

Vogt also said his premiums increased upon his return from Kosovo due to his combat pay allowance. Under the bill, an enrollee's gross income prior to active service or while in active service, but only counting the base military pay, can be used to calculate the premium. Previously all military pay, including combat pay allowance, was considered in setting premiums per an enrollee's income.

There was no opposition and the bill next goes to the House floor. A companion bill (SF1726), sponsored by Sen. Gary W. Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

★ RECREATION

Shooting ranges

Shooting range owners and local units of government have reached an accord on an issue that stalled at the Legislature in 2003 and 2004: how to protect shooting ranges from encroaching developments without unnecessarily restricting local planning and zoning authorities.

Representatives from both groups appeared together March 22 before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee in support of HF2006, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar).

The committee approved the bill and sent it to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee. There is no Senate companion.

David Gross, an attorney speaking on behalf of Faribault Rifle and Pistol Club and the Gopher Rifle and Revolver Club, described the troubles a Harris, Minn., shooting range is facing under so-called urban sprawl.

"When we built that range in 1971 it was a farming community," he said. "Now it's a bedroom community."

The bill would set noise standards and direct the Department of Natural Resources to develop performance standards for shooting ranges. It would protect those ranges that comply with the guidelines from nuisance lawsuits.

Under the bill, any development or structure approved after Oct. 1, 2005, within 750 feet of a shooting range's property line would not be allowed if that development would cause the range to fall out of compliance with the performance standards.

Furthermore, a shooting range operating in full compliance could not be permanently closed unless a range activity is determined to be "a clear and immediate safety hazard."

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) questioned whether that wording would create "an impossible standard to meet" if someone were to bring forward a safety concern.

Pay more to play

Cross-country skiers who venture onto Minnesota's public trails might have a little less money for wax and gear next year, under HF1518, sponsored by Rep. Larry Howes (R-Walker).

They might be spending that money on increased ski pass fees.

But a statewide ski organization is not complaining because they say the additional dollars would improve the condition of the trails.

The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee reviewed the proposal March 23 and laid it over for possible inclusion in its omnibus environmental finance package.

Currently, skiers 16 years and older must purchase a pass from the Department of Natural Resources to ski Minnesota's public trails.

Ski pass fees support the department's cross-country ski trail grant-in-aid program.

Under the program, local units of government and clubs are eligible for some reimbursement for their efforts to develop, groom and maintain ski trails across the state.

Last year the department sold 25,000 daily passes; 11,500 annual passes; and 2,200 three-year passes, according to Tom Danger, program manager for the department's Trails and Waterways Division.

Under the bill, the fee structure would be modified in the following increments:

- Daily passes would increase from \$2 to \$4,
- Annual passes would go from \$9 to \$14, and
- Three-year passes would be adjusted from \$24 to \$39.

The current fees raise \$210,000 annually and the increases would net an additional \$140,000, Danger said.

A companion bill (SF703), sponsored by Sen. Carrie L. Ruud (R-Breezy Point), awaits action in the Environment, Agriculture and Economic Development Budget Division of the Senate Finance Committee.

★ SAFETY



HF1881, sponsored by Rep. Duke Powell, would provide for Indian tribes to hold a license to operate an ambulance service.

HF121, sponsored by Rep. Steve Smith, would offer reimbursement to police officers purchasing their own bulletproof vests. For more information on these two bills, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ TAXES

Ticket exemption

When you go to an artistic event at the University of Minnesota, you don't have to pay sales tax on the ticket.

However, when you go to an arts event a state university or private, nonprofit college or university, you do pay the sales tax on the ticket.

Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) doesn't think that's right, so he is sponsoring HF406, which would expand the sales tax exemption to arts events at those other institutions. That exemption would be good as long as the event was sponsored by a nonprofit organization. The University of Minnesota has had that exemption since 1998.

The bill was heard March 22 by the House Taxes Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

In order to qualify, admission receipts must be recorded on the books of the sponsoring organization, and the sponsoring organization must receive at least 5 percent of its annual revenue from voluntary contributions. The actual beneficiary of the bill is the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. The impact in fiscal year 2006 is expected to be \$68,000, then \$69,000 in fiscal 2007.

Gunther said, "This is (usually) a theatrical performance by students to help organizations at the college. They're going to help defray some expenses and the withholding of sales tax is appropriate."

A companion bill (SF1576), sponsored by Sen. John C. Hottinger (DFL-St. Peter), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

Income-based property tax

Property values are increasing so rapidly that, for some, the tax bill that goes along with the higher valuation is surpassing their income.

Rep. Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake) is the sponsor of HF992, which provides that household income be the basis for determining property taxes, rather than market value. The bill was heard by the Property and Local Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee March 17 and held over for possible consideration in the division report. It has no Senate companion.

Under the bill, a homeowner's property tax liability would be 1.5 percent of household income, multiplied by the tax rate set by the local government.

Property taxes would be computed and collected by the Department of Revenue, rather than the counties. The impact on the General Fund, according to a department analysis, would be \$54.7 million in fiscal year 2007, \$36.9 million in fiscal year 2008 and \$27.6 million in fiscal year 2009. The bill applies only to homestead properties.

"Changes will be highly visible to taxpayers, and therefore provide greater discussion," said Marlowe Hamerston, chairman of the Property Tax Committee of the Minnesota Senior Federation. "There is no relation between the market value of the property and the property owner's ability to pay the tax. A 50-foot lot doesn't earn income nor does it equate to wealth."

Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) did not completely concur. "I think there is some relationship between the income and the house people live in. There aren't many people in poverty who live in a multi-million dollar home," she said.

Vandever pointed out, "We do have a problem that we haven't gotten to the bottom of yet."

TIF districts considered

Tax increment financing is still a popular way to encourage development, and representatives from four Minnesota cities pleaded their case March 23 before the Property and Local Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee.

All but one request was held over for possible inclusion in the division's report to the committee.

Property taxes normally go to a city's general fund. Under tax increment financing, a city rezones an area to encourage development. Property taxes created by the new development in that area pay for infrastructure, such as roads and sewers.

HF133, sponsored by Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield) would allow the cities of Elgin, Eyota, Byron and Oronoco, all with populations of less than 5,000, to qualify for a TIF district. Eyota city officials said potential developers lose interest when they discover there are no districts in the city. Ordinarily, cities with a population of less than 5,000 that are located within 10 miles of a city with a population of 10,000 or more may not qualify for a district.

A companion bill (SF183), sponsored by Rep. Sheila M. Kiscaden (IP-Rochester), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

HF176, sponsored by Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Red Wing), asks to extend the duration of a tax increment financing district in Wabasha for five years. A hotel and an eagle center are being built in the district, and they need more time to finish the \$13 million project. A total of \$10 million is coming from the hotel's developer.

A companion bill (SF231), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

HF825, sponsored by Rep. Debra Hilstrom (DFL-Brooklyn Center), would add three years to Brooklyn Center's district while the city is trying to redevelop the Brookdale shopping center area.

A companion bill (SF854), sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

A fourth bill, HF726/SF699*, sponsored by Rep. Connie Bernardy (DFL-Fridley) and Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley), would allow the city of Mounds View to establish multiple redevelopment districts. The bill, approved 62-0 Feb. 24 by the Senate, was tabled by the division due to time constraints.

TRANSPORTATION



Driving tests

Minnesotans that have problems following the rules of the road might find they have to take the written portion of the driving exam or even the road test if they want to keep their driving privileges.

Sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield), HF1701 was heard March 22 by the House Transportation Committee and referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

Warning letters now go out to drivers if they've been convicted of two misdemeanors or three moving violations in a two-year period. The letter states if it happens again, the license will be suspended, said Joan Kopcinski, central office coordinator for the Department of Public Safety.

"It's telling you it's time to clean up your act because we're going to take action at the next violation," she said.

Under the bill, those drivers would have to take the written test again when they renew their license. Those who get their license suspended are called habitual violators, and they would have to take their road test again.

Rep. Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd), who works in insurance, said this might get those who have lost their driving skills off the road. "When somebody starts having claims and they're older, they don't want to give up their driving privileges," he said. "This is an opportunity to see if they can drive."

A companion bill (SF233), sponsored by Sen. Dave Kleis (R-St. Cloud), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Ethanol content requirement

Following two days of hearings, the House Transportation Finance Committee tabled a bill March 22 that would eventually require all gasoline sold in Minnesota to contain a 20 percent mix of ethanol.

Committee Chair Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) said the committee would take up HF223/SF4*, sponsored by Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston) and Sen. Dallas C. Sams (DFL-Staples), one last time March 29. She said there would be no further public testimony and that members should be ready to either defeat the bill or send it to the House Ways and Means Committee.

As of now, gasoline sold in the state must contain at least 10 percent ethanol. Supporters hope that it will eventually reduce the reliance on foreign oil.

The committee tacked on several amendments.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Donald Brown, left, shows his support for a bill that would increase the use of ethanol. He is posted outside a hearing of the House Transportation Finance Committee as Jim Pearson, right, enters the March 17 meeting. Brown's sign claims his minivan runs great on ethanol.

The original deadline for compliance would be 2015. That was amended to 10 years after the Environmental Protection Agency acts on an application to allow the ethanol mix, or 60 days after at least 60 percent of new cars can use the ethanol mix.

Others would have the agriculture commissioner review effects of E20 on the development of Minnesota's ethanol industry and the effects of E20 on Minnesota consumers, would continue subsidies for ethanol producers and would require an environmental impact statement for an ethanol plant fueled by a coal-fired boiler.

The latter amendment would not take effect until July 1, 2007.

Amendments rescinding the 20 percent mandate have also been included in the bill.

The mandate would be rescinded if:

- The Environmental Protection Agency cannot determine conclusively by Dec. 31, 2010, the ethanol mix won't harm engines;
- It becomes apparent Minnesota will lose federal highway funds; or
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission doesn't assure by Dec. 31, 2010, that the ethanol mix won't cause product hazards.

Minus the amendments, the bill passed the Senate 54-12 Feb. 7.

More special plates

Bills that would provide special license plates for two groups were heard in the House Transportation Committee March 22 and referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

Rep. Connie Ruth (R-Owatonna) is sponsoring HF178, which would make veterans eligible for special personalized plates. They would not be charged a fee other than the regular cost of the plate. A companion bill (SF757), sponsored by Sen. Sheila M. Kiscaden (IP-Rochester), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

HF2058, also sponsored by Ruth, would allow members of the Knights of Columbus, a Roman Catholic men's service organization, to receive special license plates for a \$10 fee, plus the cost of the license. A companion bill (SF1904), sponsored by Senate Minority Leader Dick Day (R-Owatonna), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

There have been several bills introduced this session allowing for veterans' license plates, Rep. Bernard Lieder (DFL-Crookston) said. While he appreciates the groups for the work they do, he thought special license plates had reached their limit.

"We're getting to the point where we can't see the license (number) on the vehicle. You need it for law enforcement. The state patrol has to have the ability to read the license plate from here to there," he said.

Willard Strand, state coordinator for the Knights of Columbus, said the group has 44,000 members in the state. In 2003, it raised more than \$3 million for charities.

Paying for toll roads

A measure to ensure that tolls instituted to pay for new road construction are stopped once the road is paid for is being sponsored

by Rep. Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake).

HF888 was heard March 22 by the House Transportation Committee and referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

Vandever said people have been told the tolls would end when the roads are paid for. "We could call it truth-in-advertising," he said.

However, Betsy Parker, director of the Office of Government Affairs for the Department of Transportation, said in other states, tolls are still needed after construction. A study being done in Minnesota indicates they might also still be needed.

"In Minnesota, we probably don't have enough congestion to pay for the entire road system with the tolls," she said. "Only people willing to pay the toll use it."

Vandever said, "We can see that the temporary tolls will not be temporary. Taxpayers will help build the road but only if they pay the toll. We have been told as part of our indoctrination that they'd be temporary. It's not a fee in any sense of the word, it's a tax."

A companion bill (SF1170), sponsored by Sen. Michele Bachmann (R-Stillwater) awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

The movers may move

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A company that was helping to move the furniture of resettled families for free can now do so legally, according to a new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Effective March 20, 2005, the law allows movers providing a charitable service to operate outside their geographic area. It exempts them from complying with rates filed with the Department of Transportation.

The issue grew out of the work by a company called Two Men and A Truck in Bloomington, 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.

Rep. Neil W. Peterson (R-Bloomington) and Sen. William V. Belanger Jr. (R-Bloomington) sponsored the law.

HF298/SF75*/CH12

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

First deadline near

The first of three committee deadlines set by House and Senate leadership is fast approaching:

- **Tuesday, April 5** — Bills must be out of policy committees in the house of origin.
- **Tuesday, April 12** — All House and Senate files must be out of all policy committees in the other body.
- **Friday, April 22** — Omnibus finance bills must be out of House and Senate finance committees.

Additionally, there will be no floor sessions or committee activity April 25, the day after Passover.

To find out who represents you at the Capitol . . .

Call House Public Information Services at (651) 296-2146 or 1-800-657-3550

CALLIGRAPHY CRAFTSMAN



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Ik Tong Yoo demonstrates Korean calligraphy in the Rotunda March 18 as part of Asian Pacific Week. Activities at the Capitol allowed members of the Asian community to engage with their legislators on issues of concern to Asian families.

Speaking of the House



At a March 18 press conference announcing a plan to increase the maximum limit on General Fund expenditures by \$750 million with the money going toward K-12 education, **Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville)** said, “This is where the rubber meets the road.”

That brought a smile to the face of **Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea)**, who owns a tire dealership, and is also a lead supporter of the proposal.

“We’re talking about tires. That’s beautiful.”



The contentiousness of the March 21 Capital Investment Conference Committee was typified when **Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul)** pointed out that **Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea)** may have never previously chaired a “major conference committee” and later noted that **Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague)** had never served on a “major conference committee.”

In response, Dorman said, “I could point out maybe that’s why not a lot of stuff happened when you get people that have been

on too many of them trying to run the show. If you want to get into that debate I guess we could go down that road. I don’t know that it’s helpful, but I guess I could point that out and say ‘Boy, no wonder the place is goofed up. Look what’s been happening.’ We could go back and forth and you could belittle us for not having the experience in years that you have, and we could say ‘Well, maybe that’s why we’re in some of the mess we’re in.’”

Conferees began to better work together in the following days. 🏛️

First Reading continued from page 3

going to get people out for a hearing?” he said.

Viriden, who has served in that partisan position for seven years, said five cities were talked about as possible sites for the hearing — Moorhead, Rochester, Bemidji, Brainerd and Grand Rapids.

Critics say Grand Rapids was chosen because of politics — it is a DFL stronghold currently represented by Rep. Loren Solberg and Sen. Tom Saxhaug. But Viriden says the decision was based more on logistics. “We knew there would be a

large turnout, and we had to find a place that was available during a specific timeframe.”

A ticket was required for those attending, like last year when a similar bill was heard at the State Office Building in St. Paul. With 1,000 people expected, and only seating for 650 in the Reif Center, tickets again were required. The tickets were available through OutFront Minnesota or the Minnesota Family Council.

Viriden received criticism from some who were uncomfortable with having to align himself or herself on one side or the other in order to get a ticket. “That’s a valid point,” he said.

For the most part, onlookers saw how a

committee is run in St. Paul. However, during committee hearings, legislators are able to ask questions of testifiers. In Grand Rapids, that didn’t happen. Instead, each lawmaker was allowed to make a short statement about the bill.

Slawik, the DFL committee lead, said not being able to ask questions was frustrating. “If you are going to take a committee on the road, people should be able to see how it actually works.” She did say, however, that sometimes when there is debate on the issue, “you run out of time, and it was good that each committee member was given the opportunity to be heard.” 🏛️

A "Gustie" blows in

Johnson gets to the heart of education issues

By RUTH DUNN

She didn't know it back then, but being the daughter of a Lutheran pastor turned out to be good training for political life, according to Rep. Ruth Johnson (DFL-St. Peter). The formation of the weekly messages, the commitment to public service and the interactions with people are important with pastors and also with politicians, she said.



Rep. Ruth Johnson

Johnson was re-elected last fall to her third non-consecutive term. She was first elected in 1996, after a former Gustavus Adolphus College classmate, Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville), urged her to run when an incumbent decided to retire. A whirlwind first term picked up speed when a tornado cut a 1.25-mile swath through St. Peter in March 1998.

Johnson was the House sponsor of a \$27.6 million tornado relief bill, which moved through the legislative process with bipartisan speed and showed public and private partnerships at their best, she said. "It was a united Minnesota effort to get the job done and help people at the worst moments of their lives."

Her efforts caught the attention of 1998 gubernatorial candidate Mike Freeman who selected her as his running mate for lieutenant governor. The team was not successful, but the experience gave her many memories, like the overwhelming response when she spoke to DFL state convention delegates in four languages: English, Spanish, German and Ojibwe.

Gustavus has always been a special place to Johnson. She was a "Gustie" baby when her father was a student at the college. Later, she attended the college and majored in religion. She completed a career in college administration by returning to Gustavus in 1982 and eventually became associate dean of students

DISTRICT 23A

2002 population: 36,889
Largest city: North Mankato
Counties: Nicollet, Sibley
Top concern: Education

Rep. Ruth Johnson didn't know it back then, but being the daughter of a Lutheran pastor turned out to be good training for political life.

before she retired in 1999 as a consultant.

"Schools are the heart of rural communities," said Johnson. That's why education has always been one of her legislative priorities. She believes education is a basic Minnesota value that has helped provide a high quality of life in the state.

"There's a wonderful quality of life in small communities," said Johnson. She enjoys the quieter pace and how people know each other. She loves opera, classical music and dance and finds plenty of arts events near her home because there are four colleges and universities in the area.

Solution seeker

An avid outdoorsman, Moe comes inside for session

By RUTH DUNN

The best Friday night stress buster is a moonlit ride on a dog sled over snowy trails through the woods, according to Rep. Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji).



Rep. Frank Moe

It's also the time he puts the challenges of the week behind him and reminds himself why he's serving in the Legislature and what he's working to accomplish in St. Paul.

Running for office was not an item on his "to do" list for life. He lived for sports and, growing up, dreamed of playing professional football.

College friends would jokingly introduce him by saying, "This is Frank Moe and he's running for president in 2020," only because he was so social.

While studying at Carleton College, Moe had

a professor named Paul Wellstone who had a big influence on his life. "We didn't always agree on issues, but I was inspired by him," says Moe.

Moe was motivated to run for the House two years ago after hearing a speech by then-Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji). "He was not fighting for the things I thought were important, like education, health care and the environment," said Moe. "I wanted to become more a part of the solution." Last November he defeated Fuller by 7.1 percent.

To win the seat, he pulled together a coalition of supporters that included college students, American Indians and "others who wanted change." Moe says he won because turnout was 3,500 voters greater than the previous presidential election and those new voters were his supporters.

Moe teaches physical education at Bemidji State University, including outdoor education, first responder training and environmental studies.

DISTRICT 4A

2002 population: 36,727
Largest city: Bemidji
Counties: Beltrami, Cass, Itasca
Top concern: Education

"We all have different ideas and priorities, but it's important we come to consensus on how to accomplish things. We were elected to do the job."

— Rep. Frank Moe

Besides being an avid dog sled musher, Moe is a triathlete, rock climber, fishing guide and camper.

Moe has family roots in southern Minnesota, graduated from high school in Bloomington and now lives in northern Minnesota with his wife, Sherri, and their nine dogs.

Moe said his faith helps him see that all legislators share a commitment to public service. "If they didn't have that commitment, they would not be here away from their families, working long hours for peanuts."

Monday, March 21

HF1948—Holberg (R)

Education Policy & Reform

Public school employee usage of public funds and resources to promote or defeat a political candidate or question prohibited.

HF1949—Opatz (DFL)

Local Government

Stearns, Benton and Sherburne county boards initiation of process for the change of county boundaries by resolution authorized.

HF1950—Holberg (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Data obtained by scanning driver's licenses, permits and identification cards regulated.

HF1951—Bradley (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Long-term care provisions modified.

HF1952—Olson (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Patient care expense information required for certain public health coverage programs.

HF1953—Cornish (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Post retirement employment option created for state employees and voluntary hours reduction plan authorized.

HF1954—Hausman (DFL)

Taxes

Educational instruction qualifying property tax exemption provided.

HF1955—Gunther (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Power plants siting and routing, wind energy conversion system and pipeline authority transfer from the Environmental Quality Board to the Public Utilities Commission provided.

HF1956—Finstad (R)

Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Citizenship requirements for the general assistance and MFIP programs modified.

HF1957—Johnson, J. (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Comprehensive incident-based reporting system data treatment procedures provided.

HF1958—Wagenius (DFL)

Capital Investment

Information technology public systems, licenses and infrastructure public debt authorized and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1959—Zellers (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Premium finance transaction refund calculation procedures modified.

HF1961—Dorman (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Prevailing wage requirement exemption for qualified businesses in job opportunity building zones provided.

HF1962—Mullery (DFL)

Civil Law & Elections

Low-income apartment property class reinstated, housing certifications qualifying for reduced property class rate provided, civil penalties established, rulemaking authorized and exemption specified.

HF1963—Thissen (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Comprehensive health insurance plan minimum benefits regulated.

HF1964—Peterson, N. (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Energy savings program established and Department of Administration usage of energy forward pricing mechanisms for budget risk reduction authorized.

HF1965—Dean (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Ballot certification provisions modified.

HF1966—Dean (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Legislative regular sessions in even-numbered years prohibited.

HF1967—Finstad (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Nursing facility closure and alternative service development process provided, appropriation bond issuance required, critical access nursing facility designation established, moratorium exception process updated and money appropriated.

HF1968—Charron (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Stillwater correctional facility bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1969—Clark (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Unreasonable blocks of customer access to credit capacity on credit or debit card prohibited.

HF1970—Samuelson (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Center of nursing start up money appropriated.

HF1971—Nelson, P. (R)

Local Government

Alternative local government annexation process provided.

HF1972—Marquart (DFL)

Health Policy & Finance

Intermediate care facility payment system exception for persons with mental retardation and related conditions created.

HF1973—Gunther (R)

Local Government

Metropolitan area county formation of economic development authorities authorized.

HF1974—Erhardt (R)

Education Finance

Certain levy authority restored.

HF1975—Zellers (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Rental vehicle insurance coverage regulated.

HF1976—Gunther (R)

Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Human services and economic development programs established and modified; accounts, assessments, and fees provided; children and family programs modified and money appropriated.

HF1977—Smith (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Criminal Justice and Juvenile Information Policy Group modified, annual report required and grant requirements established.

HF1978—Ruth (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Teachers retirement association prior service credit purchase authorized.

HF1979—Jaros (DFL)

Taxes

Sales to counties that support certain judicial functions tax exemptions provided.

HF1980—Murphy (DFL)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Flammable liquids, explosives, and fireworks provisions modified; smoke detector requirements provided and obsolete state fire code provisions removed.

HF1981—Murphy (DFL)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Uniform Fire Code name changed to State Fire Code.

HF1982—Dill (DFL)

Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance

North Shore Management Board grants provided.

HF1983—Sertich (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Legislative day references removed and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1984—Eastlund (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Fingerprinting of certain persons involved in criminal justice process required.

HF1985—Latz (DFL)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

DWI-related offense requirement that 48 hours of jail time be consecutive deleted.

HF1986—Emmer (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Security information and data classification and dissemination procedures provided.

HF1987—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Deer management zones and youth special hunts establishment required and penalties provided.

HF1988—Mahoney (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Plan review exemption for certain biotechnology manufacturing firms provided, piping system installation supervision study initiated and report required.

HF1989—Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Cass Gilbert and Julia Finch Gilbert portrait display in Capitol continuation request by Minnesota Historical Society required.

HF1990—Solberg (DFL)**Transportation**

Commodities transport corridor pilot project created; work group establishment required; and study, report and pilot project implementation mandated.

HF1991—Murphy (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Fire code adoption process technical changes provided.

HF1992—Murphy (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

State fire marshal provisions modified.

HF1993—Powell (R)**Local Government**

Metropolitan Radio Board earlier responsibility transfer date provided.

HF1994—Moe (DFL)**Local Government**

Shared hospital or ambulance service purchasing provision modified.

HF1995—Davnie (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Notice of certain independent candidate expenditures required and spending limit agreement exemption provided.

HF1996—Thissen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota Electronics Recycling Act of 2005 enacted, rulemaking authorized and penalties provided.

HF1997—Walker (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

State health care program capitation rate withhold for blood lead testing performance targets required.

HF1998—Hilty (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Children and community services funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1999—Thissen (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Case management of persons with mental retardation or related conditions procedures modified.

HF2000—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Cesarean sections Medical Assistance coverage provisions modified.

HF2001—Nelson, M. (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Housing Finance Agency funding provided for the Homeless Management Information System and money appropriated.

HF2002—Emmer (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Balance billing prohibited by health care providers and certain no-fault automobile insurance medical claims, and health care providers made the party at interest in certain no-fault arbitrations.

HF2003—Knoblach (R)**Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 742, St. Cloud, fund transfer authorized.

HF2004—Blaine (R)**Transportation**

Municipal administrative enforcement provided for minor traffic offenses.

HF2005—Newman (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

County jail construction amount raised before corrections commissioner review.

HF2006—Hackbarth (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Shooting Range Protection Act adopted.

HF2007—Dean (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

K-3 teachers grant program established to allow teachers to decide on classroom expenditures for improving instruction and learning, funding allocated and money appropriated.

HF2008—Peppin (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Gasoline sales below cost regulation provision repealed.

HF2009—Soderstrom (R)**Transportation**

Motor vehicle registration provisions modified.

HF2010—Soderstrom (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Drug treatment facility incarceration required for specified offenders and request for operation proposals issued.

HF2011—Soderstrom (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Recall list of specified grounds eliminated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2012—Soderstrom (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Judicial diversion program for drug offenders established, expungement of certain records authorized and request for proposals for secure chemical dependency treatment facilities issued.

HF2013—Bradley (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Rochester; university development committee established, development account created and money appropriated.

HF2014—Hilty (DFL)**Taxes**

Large retail establishment gross receipts tax imposed.

HF2015—Brod (R)**Taxes**

Market value assessment reduction provided for energy-efficient new commercial property.

HF2016—Abeler (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Positive educational behavioral supports authorized, including physical intervention and isolation time-outs.

HF2017—Clark (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Reasonable bank account fees provided and lifeline checking accounts required.

HF2018—Sailer (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Computer-based adaptive assessments provided and student portfolio demonstration project established.

HF2019—Bradley (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Medical Assistance recovery from trusts and annuities authorized.

HF2020—Heidgerken (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Stearns, Sherburne and Benton counties nursing facilities reimbursement rates increased.

HF2021—Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Police and fire pension income tax exclusion provided.

HF2022—Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Research credit extended to the individual income tax, portion of the credit made refundable and money appropriated.

HF2023—Wilkin (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Health maintenance organizations assessed for purposes of the insurance fraud prevention account; rates, claims and filing practices regulated and expanded provider network requirements eliminated.

HF2024—Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Federal income tax conformity provided, state contracts prohibited with certain vendors, liquor and rented vehicle taxes provided, homestead market value credit modified, other tax provisions specified and money appropriated.

Tuesday, March 22

HF2025—Hoppe (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Public employees police and fire retirement plan service credit purchase authorized.

HF2026—Hoppe (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Public employees police and fire retirement plan service credit purchase authorized.

HF2027—Walker (DFL)

Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

American Indian advisory councils reinstated.

HF2028—Heidgerken (R)

Local Government

Pope County recorder and auditor-treasurer offices provided by appointment.

HF2029—Holberg (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Forfeiture law appropriate agency definition clarified.

HF2030—Johnson, J. (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Social Security number disclosure prohibited as a condition of receiving a service or product.

HF2031—Thissen (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

University of Minnesota police officers excluded from the public employees police and fire fund.

HF2032—Ellison (DFL)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Prostitution crimes expanded to include loitering with intent to participate in prostitution, pilot projects to reduce homelessness provided, vagrancy crime repealed and money appropriated.

HF2033—Ellison (DFL)

Taxes

Local government aid city formula modified, funds dedicated to police and public safety purposes and city aid appropriation adjusted.

HF2034—Cornish (R)

Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Blue Earth County; Riverbend Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation funding provided and money appropriated.

HF2035—Nelson, P. (R)

Transportation

Public Safety Department authorized to remove records of certain old liens on passenger automobiles.

HF2036—Samuelson (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Nursing assistant and home health aide training curriculum review and update required.

HF2037—Ruth (R)

Transportation

Vehicles prohibited from driving onto the shoulder to pass on the right.

HF2038—Westrom (R)

Taxes

Agricultural products defined to include short rotation trees for purposes of the agricultural property tax classification.

HF2039—Davids (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Feedlot permit data classified.

HF2040—Magnus (R)

Local Government

County economic development authority nine-member boards authorized.

HF2041—Heidgerken (R)

Education Policy & Reform

School milk program milk required to be provided in single service plastic containers, by the glass or from bulk containers.

HF2042—Cornish (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Project Riverbend Board eliminated.

HF2043—Cornish (R)

Education Finance

Marginal cost pupil units and equalized debt service levy calculations modified.

HF2044—Finstad (R)

State Government Finance

Minnesota Racing Commission regulatory and administrative expenses funding provided and money appropriated.

HF2045—Welti (DFL)

Agriculture & Rural Development

Ethanol combustion efficiency research grants provided and money appropriated.

HF2046—Krinkie (R)

Taxes

Federal income, corporate franchise, property tax refund and estate tax conformity provided.

HF2047—Krinkie (R)

Taxes

Special taxing districts for light rail transit funding authorized.

HF2048—Peterson, A. (DFL)

Taxes

Nursing home resident income tax credit provided and money appropriated.

HF2049—Carlson (DFL)

Taxes

Postsecondary tuition and related expenses income tax credit provided.

HF2050—Anderson, B. (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Health care records access modified.

HF2051—Ruud (DFL)

State Government Finance

Internal service fund balances specified and transfer of certain amounts provided to the general fund.

HF2052—Abeler (R)

Education Finance

Pupil transportation cost equalized aid and levy authorized.

HF2053—Abeler (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Coroner or medical examiner notification of death of a nursing home patient required.

HF2054—Severson (R)

Taxes

St. Cloud area cities local option sales taxes authorized and revenue uses specified.

HF2055—Latz (DFL)

Taxes

Tax preparers required to notify clients of the non-game wildlife check-off.

HF2056—Peterson, A. (DFL)

Taxes

Gasoline and special fuels tax rate indexed and recomputed annually.

HF2057—Vandever (R)

Transportation Finance

Metropolitan Council; Hiawatha light rail transit line fare collection system installation required.

HF2058—Ruth (R)

Transportation

Knights of Columbus special license plates authorized.

HF2059—Davids (R)

Taxes

Education funding increased, local government aid formula modified and increased, motor vehicle sales tax portion dedicated to transit eliminated, local sales tax or property tax levy for transit authorized and money appropriated.

HF2060—Liebling (DFL)

Local Government

Land use advisory council established, duties provided, certain annexation limits removed and alternative annexation procedures established for cities in certain cases.

HF2061—Lanning (R)

Local Government

Urban development limited on unincorporated property that abuts a municipality in certain cases and city land use controls extended.

HF2062—Smith (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Seatbelt use or failure to use admissibility of evidence provided, insurance actions regulated and direct liability imposed and recovery regulated.

HF2063—Holberg (R)

Transportation

Commercial motor vehicle provisions modified including traffic regulations and driver's license provisions, identification card issuance prohibited to holder of permit and driver's license classifications and restrictions modified.

HF2064—Holberg (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

CriMNet data definitions provided and public defender access to criminal justice data provided.

HF2065—Clark (DFL)

Education Policy & Reform

Native Language Eminence Credentialing Task Force established.

HF2066—Clark (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

University of Minnesota employee health care costs report required.

HF2067—Clark (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Environmental justice tracking system development required in order to track health risks caused by toxic substances according to census tract data.

HF2068—Clark (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Learn to earn, Minnesota youth and Youthbuild programs funding provided; and money appropriated.

HF2069—Dorman (R)**Taxes**

Education funding increased, motor vehicle sales tax dedicated to transit eliminated, property tax levy for transit authorized and money appropriated.

Wednesday, March 23

HF2070—Loeffler (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public access to the Internet and Internet-based public information and applications assessment directed.

HF2071—Holberg (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Minnesota Safe and Secure Railroad Transportation Act of 2005 adopted authorizing railroad company police, prohibiting trespass on railroad tracks and imposing criminal penalties.

HF2072—Hosch (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Salary decreases provided for legislators and constitutional officers.

HF2073—Hosch (DFL)**Taxes**

St. Joseph local sales tax authorized.

HF2074—Hoppe (R)**Regulated Industries**

Wine importer wholesale exclusive agreements eliminated.

HF2075—Davids (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Health plan-pharmacy and health plan-pharmacy benefits manager contracts limited.

HF2076—Cybart (R)**Local Government**

Municipalities authorized to contract with the Metropolitan Council to join the metropolitan transit district and property tax levy authorized.

HF2077—Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Ammunition possession prohibited by persons under age 18.

HF2078—Charron (R)**Education Finance**

Education price index created and annual computation of basic revenue provided.

HF2079—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Fire safety surcharge established in fire premiums and assessments.

HF2080—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State Patrol retirement fund member definition expanded to include Commerce Department Division of Insurance Fraud Prevention employees.

HF2081—Westrom (R)**Regulated Industries**

Electric transmission company certificate of need proceedings cost recovery authorized.

HF2082—Westrom (R)**Regulated Industries**

Electric transmission companies regulated.

HF2083—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Pharmacist explanation of benefits requirements modified.

HF2084—Marquart (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Cell telephone use during legislative meetings penalties provided.

HF2085—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

HIV testing of sex offender victim notification procedure clarified.

HF2086—Beard (R)**Local Government**

Metropolitan Airports Commission appointment Senate confirmation required, term limits imposed, aviation knowledge and experience required and nominating committee created.

HF2087—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Teachers Retirement Association extended leave of absence program conforming changes provided for first class city teacher retirement fund associations.

HF2088—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Teacher Retirement Association sabbatical leave service credit provision updated for first class city teacher retirement associations.

HF2089—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public pension plan annual administrative expense reporting itemized detail specified.

HF2090—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public Employees Retirement Association collection procedures clarified relating to charter schools.

HF2091—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Legislators retirement plan provisions recodified.

HF2092—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Elective state officers retirement plan defined as the portions in effect on the date of termination of service.

HF2093—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Statewide and major local retirement plan exemptions from process and taxation clarified.

HF2094—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Retirement plan language usage and style updates provided and various provisions and cross-references clarified.

HF2095—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Teacher retirement associations of cities of the first class required to periodically file updated copies of articles of incorporation and bylaws.

HF2096—Smith (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Summary real estate disposition judgment information requirements provided, judgments recorded and pension plans subject to marital property division identified.

HF2097—Holberg (R)**Transportation**

Motor vehicle registration tax refunds regulated, registration procedures modified and technical and clarifying changes provided.

What's on the Web

What could be easier than e-mail? Join the growing ranks of MyBills subscribers

MyBills, the personalized bill tracking system on the legislative Web site, now offers an even handier component: e-mail notification of every official action taken on House and Senate bills.

The system simply requires the one-time registration of a username and password (www.house.leg.state.mn.us/leg/billslogin.asp).

MyBills keeps track of House and Senate legislation by bill number, subject or author. Users enjoy the benefit of viewing bill status with items of significant current action highlighted. The status is updated daily, and users can modify their lists at any time. Lists are retained through the legislative biennium.

Under the new e-mail notification element, MyBills subscribers receive a message from the House webmaster address every time the system logs an official action on a bill. The subject line reads: Legislative action was taken on HFXXXX or SFXXXX (insert your favorite bill number here).

The body of the message keys users into the short description of the bill and provides a direct link to the bill status Web page.

Currently, the MyBills system has 5,678 subscribers, according to House Web Manager Mike Speiker. Only 45 of those subscribers have opted out of the e-mail function.



HF2098—Knoblach (R)**Taxes**

St. Cloud and Waite Park local sales taxes authorized.

HF2099—Johnson, J. (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Vouching for another individual for Election Day registration limited to three proof-of-residence oaths per Election Day.

HF2100—Lesch (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Domestic abuse no contact order applicability expanded.

HF2101—Murphy (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Higher education individual retirement account plan investment option provision modified.

HF2102—Liebling (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Children's Freedom to Breathe Act adopted prohibiting employment of minors in establishments where smoking is permitted and imposing civil penalties.

HF2103—Powell (R)**Regulated Industries**

Emergency 911 communication provisions modified.

HF2104—Lieder (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Community notification provided for out-of-state offenders and community notification scope expanded for predatory offenders not sentenced to prison.

HF2105—Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Forfeiture of conveyance device used in controlled substance crimes expanded to allow for state or local forfeiture ordinance.

HF2106—Carlson (DFL)**Education Finance**

Basic education formula allowance increased, early childhood family education program revenue restored and money appropriated.

HF2107—Smith (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Child support guidelines established and separate household adjustment provided.

HF2108—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Theft crime definition expanded and clarified relating to taking property with or without having a legal interest.

HF2109—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State salary limitation exceptions provided for pension purposes.

HF2110—Smith (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Custody and parenting time domestic abuse hearings safety focus provided.

HF2111—Sailer (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Intermediate care facilities for persons with mental retardation division of costs modified.

HF2112—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Judges' retirement plan provisions clarified and revised and obsolete provisions eliminated.

HF2113—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Statewide and major local retirement plan references to actuarial services clarified in determining actuarial equivalence.

HF2114—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Statewide and major local retirement plan omitted salary deduction provisions updated and clarified.

HF2115—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Statewide and major public pension plan final average salary defined.

HF2116—Emmer (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Campaign finance disclosure requirements increased; contributions to political committees,

funds and party units limited; release from spending limits provided in case of certain independent expenditures; and party expenditures limited.

HF2117—Brod (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Prescription drug program; I-Save Rx program participation established.

HF2118—Nelson, P. (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Precinct election summary statement requirements modified.

HF2119—Olson (R)**Higher Education Finance**

University of Minnesota-Duluth personal rapid transit safety facility funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2120—Westrom (R)**Regulated Industries**

Large electric energy facility site permits and route permits modified and payment of fees provided to the Environmental Quality Board.

RED LAKE MEMORIAL

PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Sharon G. of Leech Lake holds her 3-year-old granddaughter, Trina Staples, as they prayed for the victims of the Red Lake High School tragedy at a March 22 memorial service on the steps of the State Capitol.

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

MINNESOTA INDEX

Government spending

Number of commissioners now overseeing a major state department	21
Salary for 20 of them	\$108,400
Range in 1999	\$85,000-\$98,000
Range in 1995	\$60,000-\$78,500
Full-time executive branch employees in July 2004	36,206
In July 2000	35,507
In July 1995	30,837
Average pay per hour	\$23.21
Appropriation in fiscal year 2005 to state judicial branch, in millions	\$241
State employees of appellate courts, district courts and judicial agencies	3,005
Appropriation to state legislative branch, in millions	\$58.7
Legislative branch permanent employees	609
Annual salary for a House or Senate member	\$31,140
Percent of last pay increase in January 1999	5
Daily per diem for living expenses for House and Senate members	\$66
Increase from last year for House members	\$10
Billions in state spending in fiscal year 2005, excluding federal funds	\$17.57
Billions in fiscal year 2003	\$17.7
State tax collections in fiscal year 2005, in millions	\$14.89
Percent that is individual income taxes	41.4
Percent that is sales taxes	32.2
Respective percentages in fiscal year 1999	43.5, 33.3
Percentages in fiscal year 1995	41.4, 33.6
State debt, as of Nov. 1, 2004, in billions	\$8.22
Billions as of Nov. 1, 1998	\$5.95
Billions as of Oct. 1, 1994	\$4.61
Times reverse auction has been used by the Administration Department since 2001	151
Estimated savings to the state through fiscal year 2005, in millions	\$1.9
Estimated extended potential savings, in millions	\$4.6
Annual rent for non-state owned space for state agencies and boards, in millions	\$126.2
Departmental leases of state-owned space, in millions	\$24.7

Sources: House Research Department, including *Minnesota Data Book for Legislators, January 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2005*, and *State Elected Officials' Salaries, August 2001*; Department of Administration, including *Minnesota Guidebook to State Agency Services 2004-2007; 2005-06 Legislative Manual*, Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State.

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