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INSIDE: E-WASTE ANSWER, GAMING EXPANSION, BILL HEARING PROCESS, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF2121-HF2268

Session Weekly

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On the cover: An early spring rain greets a visitor to the State Capitol March 30.

—Photo by: Andrew VonBank

An answer to e-waste

Electronics recovery and recycling plan plugs along

By NICOLE WOOD

Minnesotans tune in and log on at impressive rates.

According to Office of Environmental Assistance (OEA) estimates, approximately 600,000 televisions, 700,000 computers and 265,000 laptops were sold in the state in 2003 alone.

All of this plugging in contributes to a growing electronic waste problem when the urge to upgrade strikes.

A 1999 National Safety Council (NSC) study determined 20.6 million computer monitors became obsolete in 1998. Of those, only 11 percent were recycled.

"NSC believes the lifespan of a personal computer has decreased from four to five years down to just two years, with nearly 500 million computers becoming obsolete between 1997 and 2006," cites the OEA on its Web site. "NSC anticipates that three-quarters of all computers ever bought in the U.S. remain stockpiled in storerooms, attics, garages, and basements."

Advancing technologies, such as the impending conversion from analog to digital television signals and the shortened useful lives of personal computers, are driving what some describe as an e-waste explosion.

This e-waste stockpile could be hazardous to the environment and human health when it hits the waste stream.

Televisions, computer monitors and video display devices contain cathode ray tubes that convert electronic signals into visual images. From a waste management perspective, cathode ray tube disposal is problematic in part because the phosphorescent coating around the tube contains lead that can be released into the environment when the components are crushed.

Among the known health hazards of lead are brain, kidney and reproductive problems.

According to the OEA, cathode ray tubes are considered the single largest source of lead in Minnesota's municipal waste. Lead makes up approximately 20 percent of each tube, which equals about 5 pounds to 8 pounds of lead per unit.

Cathode ray tubes will be banned from the state's solid waste facilities as of July 1, 2005.

With the ban just around the cor-

Spring cleaning is likely to turn up a number of televisions and electronic devices collecting dust in Minnesota basements. The Office of Environmental Assistance is a clearinghouse for information on recycling options for consumer electronics. For household collection events, lists of for-fee recyclers, retail and manufacturing recycling programs, or even donation opportunities, log on to <http://www.moea.state.mn.us/plugin/recyclershousehold.cfm>.

ner, HF1391, sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield), aims to get the e-waste stockpile out of Minnesotans' basements and garages and safely into a statewide disposal system.

The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the measure March 29. It now moves to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee.

A companion bill (SF1298), sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Product stewardship and the Producer Responsibility model

HF1391 promotes a "product stewardship" approach to video display device disposal, Cox said.

"Product stewardship means that everyone involved in designing, manufacturing, selling and using products takes responsibility for the environmental impacts at every stage of a product's life," according to the OEA. "When manufacturers share in the costs and responsibility for collecting and recycling products, they have an incentive to design products differently, to reduce toxic constituents and increase the use of recycled materials."

This is the third try for Cox on a statewide electronics recycling initiative.

Wait for a national program, opponents said in past years.

However, a National Electronics Product Stewardship Initiative has so far failed to reach a consensus on establishing a nationwide program. Minnesota was among the states participating in



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TOM OLMSCHEID

The National Safety Council estimates nearly 500 million computers will become obsolete between 1997 and 2006. A statewide electronics recycling proposal sponsored by Rep. Ray Cox aims to establish a safe, convenient way for Minnesota consumers to keep used televisions and computers out of the waste stream.

First Reading continued on page 4

the stakeholder group that also included manufacturers, recyclers and environmental groups. The group agreed on many of the underlying principles but failed to agree on a funding mechanism, it states in a 2004 resolution.

After a similar proposal stalled in 2004, lawmakers asked the OEA to meet with the interested parties during the interim and report back with a plan for e-waste. Participants discussed three models: a Producer Responsibility model, an Advance Recycling Fee and a hybrid of the two.

Register, reuse, recycle

HF1391 takes the Producer Responsibility approach.

Under the bill, manufacturers would be required to register with the OEA in order to sell video display devices in Minnesota. A video display device is defined as a computer monitor or television with a screen size greater than 8 inches measured diagonally.

The office would be allowed to collect a fee of up to \$3,000 per year from each registrant to cover administrative costs.

With OEA approval, local governments or private companies could voluntarily set up consolidation centers around the state that would serve as consumer drop-off points.

The bill would require manufacturers to pick up truckloads of used devices at

intermediate consolidation points and arrange for their recycling or reuse.

Retailers would be required to certify to the OEA that the devices they sell are clearly labeled with the name or brand of the manufacturer.

Civil and administrative penalties could be levied against manufacturers and retailers who fail to participate.

The bill also contains a procurement provision that would require state vendors to be in full compliance with the registration program.

The Minnesota model would automatically end if a national program for effectively taking care of e-waste were to be established and implemented in the state.

Pay up front

"No one wants to pay to get rid of a dead fish," said IBM Manager of External Programs and Public Affairs Valerie Halverson Pace, in opposition to the Producer Responsibility model.

Instead, she touted the Advance Recycling Fee approach. Putting the fee at the point of sale creates an incentive for everybody to participate in the system, Pace said.


Julie Ketchum, a lobbyist for Recycle America Alliance, a subsidiary of Waste Management, expressed concerns about the way in which recyclers would be compensated under HF1391.

"In looking at the manufacturer responsibility approach, we have concerns about being an intermediate consolidation point and whether we will get paid. If there are 1,100 brands or several hundred manufacturers and I'm a consolidation point and I'm a private industry do I get 1,100 checks from 1,100 different entities or several hundred different checks from the manufacturers?"

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) is sponsoring HF1996 that proposes an Advance Recycling Fee of \$10 for every video display device sold in the state. The committee did not hear the bill.

Cox said he would not sponsor an Advance Recycling Fee proposal, a key reason being the way in which manufacturers engineer environmentally sound products into the future.

"What is going to be the biggest incentive to keep them really involved in what products they are putting out and what elements they are putting in these products that they are selling to you?" he said. "Having them be responsible for end-of-life is the biggest one, I think.

"If all they have to do is count on you to put \$12 on the table or \$18 on the table or whatever it is and that would just get raised as people discover there is maybe more cost to this, it is not going to really promote a full review of the products." 

Midwest Masterpiece

Gilbert's dome soars to St. Peter's heights



Minnesota's Capitol dome is modeled in Italian Renaissance style after St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome.

But Michelangelo never met a Midwest winter.

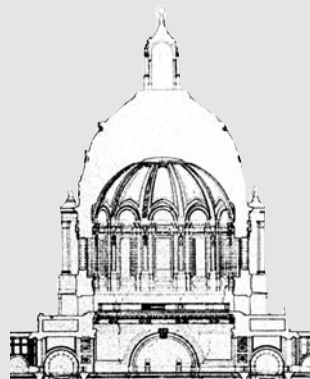
If Capitol architect Cass Gilbert had adopted a similar single-dome design, the inevitable freezing and thawing would have wreaked havoc with the marble and demanded expensive, frequent repairs.

Gilbert devised what Neil B. Thompson, in *Minnesota's State Capitol: The Art and Politics of a Public Building*, describes as "a unique solution to the problems of moisture and frost that had plagued dome builders since the time of Michelangelo."

Gilbert's design consists of three domes: a self-supporting outer marble dome, a

middle dome constructed of steel and brick and the inner dome that forms the ceiling high above the Rotunda.

Modern musings on the dome's beauty can hardly compare to the enamored



A cutaway image from Cass Gilbert's Capitol dome blueprints depicts the relative space between the inner and outer domes.

observations of one of the Capitol's artists.

"This is no dome of painted iron or gilded copper, it is of solid masonry and the material is a gray-white marble," wrote painter Kenyon Cox in an August 1905 issue of *The Architectural Record*. "In luminosity, in texture, in tenderness of gradation, in sweetness of light and shade, there is nothing which so nearly approaches the beauty of human flesh as does marble, or which affords so perfect a means of displaying form; and this great dome is a vast piece of sculpture upon which the light falls as caressingly as upon the white breast of the Venus of Milo, while, seen at a distance, it seems of the colors and almost of the very substance of the sky, in which it melts like a snow-peak on the horizon."

(N. Wood)

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

★ AGRICULTURE

Equine Dentistry 101

Horses chew side-to-side and as a result their teeth wear unevenly. The answer to any discomfort horses may experience from the uneven wear and tear is a procedure known as "floating" that files down the sharp enamel points. The term floating comes from carpentry and it means to smooth or level.

HF1620, sponsored by Rep. Lyle Koenen (DFL-Clara City), would allow a person who is not a veterinarian to perform the procedure if they have obtained a license through the Board of Veterinary Medicine.

The House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee approved the measure March 30. It now moves to the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

Equine dentistry is much more complex than floating teeth, said Julia Wilson, Minnesota Association of Equine Practitioners president.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Julia Wilson, president of the Minnesota Association of Equine Practitioners, shows the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee an informational video about the procedure of floating horses' teeth.

The horse is not exactly thrilled with the procedure and certainly having it done with sedation is much more preferable, she said. "I'm here representing the horse's point of view."

Jim Johnson, a farrier from Sacred Heart, said he worked on horse teeth for 15 years until last fall when the state ordered him to quit because he was not a veterinarian.

"This is not meant to be in competition against veterinarians," he said. "There are not enough practitioners to serve the horses in this state and if this is left to only vets there will be many horses that are forced to go without any care."

Jay Wood of Eden Prairie said he gets paid a lot of money to train horses on his Plato, Minn. farm and he's not going to just call in some guy off the street.

"Everybody has a specialty," he said. "The gentlemen who do this work ... they are more what I think of as a horse whisperer."

A companion bill (SF554), sponsored by Sen. Gary W. Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.



For information on a bill (HF1732), sponsored by Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls), that would add uniformity to livestock operation siting, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

Pesticide application records

A bill that would make it easier for citizens to gain access to pesticide application records failed to gain approval from the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee March 30.

HF1160, sponsored by Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie), would add private pesticide applicators to the list of applicators required to maintain records.

Applicators would be required to submit reports to the Department of Agriculture within 10 days after the end of a month in which an application has occurred.

The records collected by the department would be public.

Currently, pesticide application records are considered private.

Don Gemberling, former director of the state's information policy analysis division, spoke in favor of opening the data to the public.

"There clearly is, in this situation, a distrust about what the Department of Agriculture is doing," he said. "Whenever the government

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.

tries to keep information from the public, you ought to take a very good look at why that is."

Paul Liemandt, manager of the department's Environmental Response and Enforcement Division, said the bill would greatly expand the department's recordkeeping responsibilities at a cost of more than \$1 million per year.

Otremba said her county ranks 35th in the nation in cancer rates and more information is needed to determine whether pesticides are a contributing factor.

"I don't know if this is the cause and effect, and I don't know if the cancer piece in southwestern Minnesota has to do with water or air or what. But we've got to get a handle on some of this," she said.

"If there's nothing wrong, if there's nothing there, if you're not afraid of anything, why can't we do this?"

A companion bill (SF1049), sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.

Tracking livestock

When the first case of Mad Cow Disease was identified in the United States, the secretary of agriculture announced the implementation of a national animal identification and tracking system.

"We realized that if we weren't able to trace that meat back to its herd of origin, we would have a lot of difficulty in assuring people that their meat supply is safe," William L. Hartmann, executive director of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 30.

The state has received a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to

begin implementing the program which will be done in three phases: identify every live-stock premise in the state, including farms, auction markets and slaughter houses; identify each animal in a uniform way; and track each animal through the marketing phase.

Through the process, a large amount of information about producers will be gathered. HF2039, sponsored by Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston), deals with how that information will be classified. Most of the information gathered through the process will be deemed private, under the bill, including the location of the feedlot or premises where animals are kept, and the names and addresses of feedlot applicants.

Hartmann explained that some farmers are concerned because of the marketing information that would be tracked. "This bill tries to address that, so that we can use the information for disease control, but that it is not available others who might want to use it for other purposes."

The committee approved the bill and sent it to the House floor. The bill has no companion in the Senate.

BANKING

Omnibus financial institutions bill

The Department of Commerce could see changes in the regulation of banks, credit unions and other financial institutions, under the omnibus financial institutions bill.

Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake) is sponsoring HF1824, which would regulate the investment authority of, and annual reporting for, certain financial institutions.

The House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee approved the bill March 30 and referred it to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee. A companion bill (SF1636), sponsored by Sen. Dan Sparks (DFL-Austin), awaits action in the Senate Commerce Committee.

Hamilton's bill would eliminate requirements that a bank file a copy of its annual financial audit report with the commerce commissioner and that the commissioner notify the credit union advisory council when a credit union's operations are suspended. A person who has been convicted of a crime involving dishonesty, breach of trust or money laundering would be prohibited from working as or for a residential mortgage originator.

Other provisions of the bill would convert the license of an insurance company from annually renewable to perpetual, subject to payment of related fees, and permit the voluntary dissolution of a fraternal benefit society, upon the commissioner's approval.

BONDING

Spending number OK'd

Following a day of meetings with legislative leadership, bill sponsors and the governor, a dollar amount has been reached for a bonding bill.

The Capital Investment Conference Committee agreed to the nearly \$945 million total March 30. Conferees were expected to meet late in the week to iron out language in the proposal. House and Senate leaders said they expect the bill before each body early next week.

"Hopefully we can have strong votes in the House and Senate," said Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea), the House sponsor.

The \$885.6 million in general obligation bonding nearly splits the difference between the original \$975.6 million Senate proposal and \$780.3 million House plan. The governor's original plan was just shy of \$744 million.

"I wish we could have done this last May or June, but nine months later we got the job done," said House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon). "Everybody can project a few things they don't like, but in totality this is a good bill for Minnesota."

Among the highlights are:

- \$213.6 million for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities,

- \$108.4 million for the University of Minnesota,
- \$98.7 million for the Department of Corrections, including \$84.8 million for an expansion of the Faribault facility,
- \$37.5 million for the Northstar commuter rail,
- \$22.6 million for the Minnesota Zoo, and forgiveness of a \$1.88 million debt payment;
- \$22 million for a Minneapolis planetarium,
- \$21.76 million for a University of Minnesota/Mayo Clinic biotech research facility;
- \$19 million for bioscience development; and
- \$18 million for the Red Lake School District for school renovation and construction.

While Gov. Tim Pawlenty would not guarantee that matching federal dollars would still be available for the Northstar rail line, which would run between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake, he said it is "very likely." However, without the bill he had been told the federal money would no longer be available.

After some early differences and tension among conferees, significant progress was made during a series of meetings March 21-23, most notably agreement on a target of about \$880 million.

"The tension was pure theatrics," said Sen. Keith Langseth (DFL-Glyndon), the Senate sponsor, with a laugh. "We love each other dearly."



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Gov. Tim Pawlenty, from left, and the chairs of the Capital Investment Conference Committee, Rep. Dan Dorman and Sen. Keith Langseth, are all smiles during a March 30 news conference to announce that a dollar amount has been agreed to for funding projects around the state.

Pawlenty explained why the final amount was increased by about \$6 million from what conferees agreed to.

"We worked through the spreadsheet line-by-line, and reached a conclusion that by going up a little bit we could smooth out some differences."

All involved said it was especially important to get this bill completed so another construction season is not missed.

"Bring on the bricks. Bring on the concrete. Bring on the steel," said Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson (DFL-Willmar).

A copy of the bonding spreadsheet is available at: <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/fiscal/files/bond05.pdf>.

★ BUDGET

A \$30 billion budget

The House narrowly adopted a budget resolution March 29 that sets the maximum limit on General Fund expenditures for fiscal years 2006-07 at \$29.84 billion.

The vote was 67-66.

The resolution, sponsored by Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud), also establishes the amounts to be set aside for the cash flow account and budget reserve at \$350 million and \$653 million, respectively.

The budget target would increase state spending by \$2 billion from the previous biennium, Knoblach said.

"That's \$400 for every man, woman and child in this state," he said. "That should be enough."

The resolution means every school district in the state will continue to make crippling cuts, said House Minority Leader Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul). It represents "a vision of averageness or below-averageness," he said.

Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have raised the spending level by \$358 million to \$30.19 billion. Though the budget resolution does not earmark money for specific areas of the budget, the additional money was intended for education.

"If you really want money for education you have to have as many balls in the air as possible," said Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) in support of the amendment. "It doesn't mean we have to spend it."

"If you vote for this amendment you are voting for a state tax increase," Knoblach said. "I can see the postcards now: Rep. (BLANK) voted to raise taxes."

The amendment failed 72-61.

Now that the budget resolution has been adopted, the House Ways and Means Com-

mittee has 14 days to send to the House floor budget targets for the major finance or revenue bills.

★ CRIME

Corrections board

When the state put sentencing guidelines into place nearly 25 years ago, it eliminated the state parole board.

HF928 would re-create a corrections board with the authority to parole inmates of state correctional facilities, Rep. Judy Soderstrom (R-Mora), the bill's sponsor, told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 30.

The board would work in conjunction with the sentencing guidelines and serve as checks and balances to the guidelines, she said. Four of the board's five members would be appointed by the governor, with no more than two from the same political party. The corrections commissioner would appoint the fifth member.

Once half their sentence had been served, prisoners who meet certain criteria would be able to apply for parole.

The bill recognizes that people can change, said John Stuart, the state public defender. "The system needs flexibility. Not all should serve the sentence on the (sentencing guidelines) grid."

Committee Chair Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound) expressed concern that 43 percent or more of felons now behind bars would have the option to apply for parole because chemical dependency had been a factor in their crimes.

"This would be a major policy change," said Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown), who said the issue deserves more time for discussion. She also wants more information on the fiscal impact of the proposal.

The committee sent the bill to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee without recommendation.

A companion bill (SF967), sponsored by Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Decriminalizing homelessness

The vagrancy law, now a misdemeanor, would be repealed under HF2032, sponsored by Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls).

"The law criminalizes homelessness," Ellison told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 30. Currently, people are considered vagrant when they are over 18 years old and able to work

but do not seek employment and have no means of support. That describes homeless people, he said.

"Homelessness should not be equated with being a criminal," said Rachel Callanan, representing the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. "Homeless people are down on their luck and need resources to get back on their feet."

One portion of the current vagrancy law, loitering in a public place with intent to participate in prostitution, would, under the bill, become a misdemeanor crime on its own.

The bill would also provide \$600,000 for grants to homeless outreach pilot projects in Hennepin and Ramsey counties and in one yet-to-be-named county in Greater Minnesota. The grants are meant to reduce recidivism and promote stronger communities.

"Homelessness is a significant statewide problem," according to Callanan. She said that 28 percent of homeless people live outside the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area; an estimated 20,000 people are homeless on any given day in Minnesota; 4,000 people are long-term homeless, living on the streets for a year or more; and 1,000 people are turned away from shelters every night. She added that 117 people died in Minnesota in 2004 because of their homelessness.

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

A companion bill (SF1877), sponsored by Sen. Jane B. Ranum (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Protecting the vulnerable

When Greg Roehl discovered that a 64-year-old man who had neglected his 89-year-old mother with dementia could only be charged with a gross misdemeanor, the Brooklyn Center police captain called his legislator.

The result is HF1848, sponsored by Rep. Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers), which would increase penalties for anyone convicted of neglecting vulnerable adults.

The crime is now considered a gross misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$3,000 fine.

"That's not acceptable," said Peppin who added the penalty for mistreating animals is up to four years in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

The bill establishes graduated penalties based on the severity of the harm to the vulnerable adult, Peppin told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 30.

If neglect results in death, the maximum penalty would be 15 years of imprisonment and a \$30,000 fine. If there were great bodily harm, the maximum penalty would be

10 years imprisonment and a \$20,000 fine. For substantial bodily harm, the penalty would be up to five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine.

The bill would apply to anyone responsible for the care of a vulnerable adult, including relatives and employees in care facilities.

Peppin said some nursing home employees expressed concerns about the bill and were willing to work with her on it. No one was present to testify against the bill.

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

A companion (SF1704), sponsored by Sen. Warren Limmer (R-Maple Grove), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

★ EDUCATION

Information savings

A working group would study and make recommendations for developing an efficient, accurate and cost-effective, Internet-based student information and reporting system that could serve all Minnesota school districts.

Rep. Maria Ruud (DFL-Minnetonka), sponsor of HF1210, told the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 29 that the working group would be expected to make its report to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2006.

Members of the committee would include representatives of several school districts of diverse size and location, charter schools, area learning centers, the Department of Education and up to three people with demonstrated expertise in information technology.

The system would have to be unified, secure, user-friendly and able to convert data from various sources, said Ruud. The system would be funded by the state. School districts would have the option of using it.

School districts are now required to report to the state a variety of information including pupil counts and test results.

Gregory Baufield, a member of the Wayzata School Board, estimates his school district could save \$100,000 with a better system, money that could instead be used for teachers.

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

A companion bill (SF731), sponsored by Sen. David Gaither (R-Plymouth), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

Subsidized tests

After high school students complete challenging Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, they can take exams and may earn college credits if their scores are high enough.

Under current law, the state pays the cost of the exam for low-income public and nonpublic school students. The state also pays a smaller portion of the exam costs for other students with any of the leftover appropriation.

HF1835 would expand the state subsidy to pay a greater share of the exam costs for all students — about 80 percent of the cost of AP exam fees and the total cost of IB exam fees.

The state would provide \$2.2 million in both fiscal years 2006 and 2007 for the exam fees, Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton), the bill's sponsor, told the House Education

Finance Committee March 30. Erickson said most of the funding for her bill would come from what the governor had proposed to pay in stipends to teachers whose students score well on the tests.

An estimated 29,000 AP exams and nearly 3,000 IB exams will be taken this year, according to Marlys Peters-Melius, AP/IB coordinator for the Department of Education. An AP exam costs about \$82 and an IB exam costs about \$185, she said later.

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

There is no Senate companion.

★ ELECTIONS

Voting accessibility

It never occurred to Judy Sanders, who is blind, that the day would come when she would be able to vote independently. That is until she learned about the voting machines that will make it possible.

Several bills making their way through the House address the implementation of the Help America Vote Act, passed by Congress in 2002 requiring state and local governments to reform election processes and systems to ensure equal treatment of and accessibility for all voters. Provisions of the bill must be in place in time for the 2006 general election.

The House Civil Law and Elections Committee heard two such measures March 30.

HF622, sponsored by Rep. Chris DeLaForest (R-Andover), is short in language and has the support of the Office of the Secretary of State. It states that each "polling place in Minnesota must have voting equipment that treats every voter in the state equally by permitting every voter to vote independently and privately and to detect errors and change their votes before their ballot is cast and counted."

HF874, sponsored by Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague), is more detailed and has the support of many cities and counties.

As part of the federal mandate, the state will receive about \$18 million for the purchase of an assisted voting machine for every polling place in Minnesota. Each unit will cost about \$4,400.

Brod's measure appropriates another \$18 million from the Help America Vote Act fund to be used for grants to counties to purchase optical scan voting systems. Counties or municipalities could also receive funds, not to exceed \$450 per polling place, for hardware maintenance and training of county and municipal staff on the system.

Among concerns addressed by Deputy Secretary of State Tony Kielkucki is that



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Dana H. Babbitt, superintendent of South St. Paul Public Schools, listens March 30 as a member of the House Education Finance Committee questions the mission statement of international baccalaureate programs. The committee was hearing a bill that would fund a pilot program in the district for evaluating the impact of the elementary and middle school international baccalaureate programs on student achievement.

while training of county personnel is spelled out in Brod's bill, it doesn't address the cost of training voters, particularly the disabled about the new equipment. He expects there will be consensus on one bill as the measure moves through the process.

Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) successfully offered an amendment clarifying that a paper ballot would be the permanent record of the vote.

Both measures were passed and referred to the House State Government Finance Committee.

Brod's companion bill (SF290), sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee. The companion to DeLaForest's bill (SF715), sponsored by Sen. Dave Kleis (R-St. Cloud), awaits action in the Senate Elections Committee.

★ EMPLOYMENT

Working injured on the railroad

Members of the United Transportation Union, a bargaining agent for trainmen, conductors, locomotive operators and yardmasters, believes that some members have been injured while working, and that the railroad companies have delayed medical care.

HF1702, sponsored by Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound), would make that illegal. Violators could be fined up to \$10,000 per incident. It also prohibits companies from disciplining employees who request medical attention.

The bill was heard March 29 by the House Transportation Committee and referred to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee.

Phillip Qualy, state legislative director for the union, described one incident when he believes the railroad withheld medical care.

"A conductor was working on a train. She broke her ankle," Qualy said. Rather than stop, the train continued, and the woman ended up spending more than half of the shift with the broken ankle.

John Huber, director of government affairs for the Canadian Pacific Railway, disputed Qualy's account. "Canadian Pacific Railway flatly denies that description of events that happened last February," he said "I would hope we could stick to the facts."

A companion bill (SF1603), sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), has passed two committees and awaits action in the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.

★ FAMILY

Providing more information

A bill would give a parent considering licensed day care for their children access to more information about providers than is currently available under the Data Practices Act.

Dakota County Commissioner Nancy Schouweiler told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 29 that when parents call the county for information about daycare providers there is certain data that they may want to know, but it is deemed private. "Parents cannot access information that they think is important," Schouweiler said.

She brought the problem to the attention of Rep. Lloyd Cybart (R-Apple Valley), the sponsor of HF1074, after learning that Apple Valley parents, whose child was shaken at a daycare center and later died, had called the county for information about the provider before placing the child. The county wasn't able to disclose certain information that the parent's might have liked to know.

"There is the assumption that a daycare provider is safe because they are licensed by the county," Schouweiler said.

Under current law, basic information about the licensee is available; such as date of licensure, licensed capacity, type of dwelling, name and relationship of other family members and the existence and status of complaints.

The bill would make public the number of serious injuries to, or death of, individuals in the licensed program that were reported to

the commissioner of human services. Other facilities covered would include foster care and day care services for adults.

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

A companion bill (SF1023), sponsored by Senate President James P. Metzen (DFL-South St. Paul), is being considered for inclusion in a Senate data practices omnibus bill.

★ HEALTH

Birth certificates for stillborns

Parents who give birth to stillborn children may have the option of getting a birth certificate.

Rep. Karen Klinzing (R-Woodbury) is sponsoring HF947, which is modeled after Arizona's Missing Angels Bill. Currently, parents of stillborns in Minnesota can only receive a death certificate.

"My rationale for supporting this bill is that grief is a really difficult thing for parents dealing with the death of an infant," Klinzing told the House Health Policy and Finance Committee March 30. The committee approved the bill without opposition and referred it to the House floor.

She said a birth certificate recognizes the fact that the mother gave birth and helps families deal with the grief.

"How can a death certificate be given for someone who was never considered born?" asked Candy McVicar, founder of The Missing



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Candy McVicar, founder of The Missing GRACE Organization, gives testimony March 30 before the House Health Policy and Finance Committee on a bill that would provide for an optional record of birth resulting in stillbirth.

GRACE Organization. McVicar experienced a stillborn birth on Dec. 20, 2001.

The bill would require those responsible for filing a fetal death report to advise parents that they could request a record of birth, inform them the record is optional and explain how to obtain a record.

Under the bill, the state registrar would be required to prepare and file, within 30 days, a record of birth, upon request.

A companion bill (SF1029), sponsored by Sen. Michele Bachmann (R-Stillwater), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Free tuition

By statute, any state resident who graduates from the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind is entitled to free tuition at the University of Minnesota.

Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka) is sponsoring a bill (HF1674) that would waive any remaining tuition and fees for deaf students attending any public higher education institution after deducting any grants the student might obtain.

"The question is how do we create access for some of these folks that might not otherwise get to the system," he told the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 30. "To help them out with their tuition, I would suggest, is a good reason."

"It's very important that we are able to invest in the deaf and deaf children here in Minnesota," Mike Cashman, president of the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens, said through an interpreter. "Research shows that going to a postsecondary program helps people get off Social Security disability income services. It's really sad that some deaf people have to depend on the state and federal government for that kind of money."

He said there are currently about 1,200 deaf students in K-12 schools in the state, and in the last three years there have been an average of 88 graduates.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

A companion bill (SF1384), sponsored by Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), is being considered for inclusion in the Senate higher education omnibus bill.

Funding doctor training

It is widely accepted that not enough medical professionals are being trained to keep up with current and future health services needs of Minnesota, especially in family medicine in rural and urban areas.

To help, state appropriations now provide funding for residency programs operated by the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Foundation, including a partnership with St. Cloud Hospital to train physicians to practice in rural areas.

The United Family Medicine Residency Program in St. Paul also trains family practice professionals in underserved areas, but unlike the other programs it receives no state dollars.

"When we started the program (in 1992) we made a conscious decision to postpone requests for state funding until we really knew if we would be good at this, if we would be successful in terms of graduating classes," said Dr. Kathleen Macken, the program director. "We'd hope to see some equity and funding to continue our work."

She said that 85 percent of program graduates have stayed in Minnesota, including 36 percent in rural areas and 23 percent in underserved urban areas. It costs about \$189,000 to train a resident throughout the three-year program.

HF669, sponsored by Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul), would appropriate an unspecified amount in fiscal years 2006-07 to fund 18 resident family practice physicians in the program. Six residents are accepted into the program annually.

"I want to emphasize that we are not seeking state support at the expense of the other programs. We are looking for an increase in the state's commitment to this kind of work," Mariani told the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 30. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

A fiscal note associated with the companion bill (SF575), sponsored by Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), indicates the program is requesting \$20,000 annually per resident, for an annual appropriation of \$360,000. It is being considered for inclusion in a Senate higher education omnibus bill.



For information on a bill (HF1695), sponsored by Rep. Barb Sykora, that would change how the University of Minnesota Board of Regents is selected, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

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INDUSTRY



For information on a bill (HF1988), sponsored by Rep. Tim Mahoney, that would exempt biotechnology companies from plan review by any city in Ramsey and Hennepin counties, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

INSURANCE

Omnibus insurance bill

The 2005 omnibus insurance bill from the Department of Commerce that would make a series of technical changes to insurance regulations was approved by the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee March 30. It now awaits action by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan), HF1809 would regulate insurance agency terminations, coverages, fees, forms, disclosures, reports, information security and premiums.

The bill would require premium finance company refunds to be paid within 60 days after the contract is cancelled, increase the fee for filing insurance forms and premium rates from \$75 to \$90 and eliminate a \$250 filing fee for a worker's compensation large risk alternative rating option plan that meets a \$250,000 threshold in annual premiums from a single employer.

Other provisions in the bill would require insurance companies to implement a comprehensive security program to protect customer information, add MinnesotaCare to the list of acceptable waivers of coverage for small employer health insurance and increase the initial and annual renewal licensing fee for data service organizations from \$50 to \$1,000.

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls) offered a successful amendment that would prohibit insurers from changing or declining coverage in a homeowner's policy for a vacant dwelling if the vacancy is caused by the insurer being called to active duty by the military or National Guard.

A successful amendment was also offered by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) that would require insurers to provide a premium reduction of at least 5 percent on a snowmobile policy if the snowmobile has a hazard warning lighting system.

Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park) is sponsoring a companion bill (SF1783) that awaits action by the Senate Commerce Committee.

School district employee pools

Employee health insurance pools could provide a cost savings to school districts on their health insurance coverage, but critics argue the pools aren't the answer to rising health costs.

Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston) is sponsoring HF517, which would create a state-wide health insurance pool for school district employees. The bill arises out of legislation enacted in 2002 that created a group to study and design the pool.

Davids told the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee March 30 that creating a large insurance pool would help keep health care costs low by spreading costs over a larger population.

The bill would create a 14-member board by Aug. 1, 2005, to administer the pool. The board would report annually to the Legislature until 2010, then bi-annually.

The bill was amended to require the board to be a contributing member of the Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association and pay assessments. A second amendment prohibited a cash payment to employees in lieu of health insurance.

All eligible employers would be required to provide health coverage only through the pool, according to the bill. The pool would have to include a choice of plans and could include more than one level of premium rates charged to employers.

According to Education Minnesota, the bill would save approximately \$223 million during the first six years of implementation.

Carolyn Jones, director of health care and transportation policy for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, said the legislation doesn't address rising health care costs.

The bill was approved and referred to the House Education Policy and Reform Committee.

A companion bill (SF1459), sponsored by Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley), has moved through two committees and awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

LAW

Pay in dollars

Monetary court judgments transferred to Minnesota will need to be paid in U.S. dollars and conform to state law as to the length of the judgment and the interest rate being charged, according to a measure signed into law by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 25.

**Signed
by
the
governor**
★ ★ ★

Under current law, according to the non-partisan House Research Department, if a party has a judgment on a foreign money claim (money from another country), current law allows the party to choose between getting paid in U.S. dollars or the foreign currency.

Gary Larson, assistant chief judge for the Hennepin County Court, spoke in favor of the measure during a March 9 meeting of the House Civil Law and Elections Committee. "Our computers have our interest rates and our lengths of judgments in them," he said, adding that one person wanted their judgment entered in Euros. "Our computer doesn't even have a symbol for Euros let alone being able to enter a judgment in Euros. This just makes more sense," he said.

Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) and Sen. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope) sponsor the law, which takes effect Aug. 1, 2005.

HF1295/SF1210*/CH14

Serving on the Sabbath

When Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake) learned that a person couldn't be served with legal papers on Sunday, he went to the state statute and learned that "the problem was bigger than I realized."

Meslow came before the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 29 with HF665 that would repeal the section of state statute specifying that legal papers cannot be served on the Sabbath Day. "I reflected on Sabbath ... if Jewish, then you can't be served on Saturday, and if Christian, on Sunday, and if you're atheist, you can be served any day. I think that it is confusing," he said.

Under Meslow's bill, which was passed and sent to the House floor, papers could be served any day of the week.

The measure has no Senate companion.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Annexation bill stalls

The House Local Government Committee tabled a bill that would have addressed how cities and townships establish growth areas March 30.

HF1971, sponsored by Rep. Peter Nelson (R-Lindstrom), would have made several changes to the annexation process that has become contentious in several areas in the state.

Under the bill, cities would be required to provide, in summary, the proposed boundaries for a growth area, copies of all documentation used to determine the size and location of the proposed area and an outline of the city's plan to provide municipal services to all

property annexed for the area. The city would have also been required to state the intended use of land to be annexed.

Furthermore, a public hearing would have been required with gathered information to be submitted to an administrative law judge in contested cases. Information would include if the annexation would improve municipal services, like water and wastewater treatment services, and would be cost-effective.

The bill would decrease a city's ability to annex property and is anti-environment, anti-economic development and anti-property owner, testified Detroit Lakes Mayor Larry Buboltz.

"Cities have the right to grow," said Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), while noting that, under the bill, "contentions and polarizations would become even worse," between cities and townships.

Township representatives said the bill would even the playing field and argued cities abuse current statutes to annex property.

A Senate companion (SF1867), sponsored by Sen. David J. Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Growth determined by cities

Bills that would have limited township developments on property next to cities and created a land use council to monitor annexations in the state were heard in the House Local Government Committee March 30.

HF2061, sponsored by Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), would limit developments by townships, and designate city regulations to prevail over town regulations, in certain cases, if there was a conflict.

Cities should be allowed to plan for their growth and if townships want new developments, "perhaps they should incorporate and become a city," said Lanning.

Also heard was HF2060, sponsored by Rep. Tina Liebling (DFL-Rochester). It would create a land use council to monitor the state's annexation issues, strike current language of cities being able to annex 60 acres or less, change public hearing procedures, and require cities to update land use plans according to the addition of the proposed annexed land.

The state needs to be looking at an overall plan, rather than what entities are vying with each other to gain land, said Liebling.

The provisions would help "better accommodate economic development," testified Patty Gartland, Sartell city administrator.

The committee should be looking at balancing the statutes so townships have a voice in the annexation process, said Kent Sulem, an attorney for the Minnesota Association of Townships.

Neither bill has a Senate companion, and both were laid over with the expectation the committee will approach topics surrounding annexation later in the week.

MILITARY



Veteran's plates to tuition

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee approved a bill March 30 that contains the governor's initiative for veterans.

Among the items in HF682, sponsored by Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), are provisions for special license plates, the appropriation of funds for tuition reimbursement, and nearly \$7 million in bonding money for several military projects.

Included in the bill are:

- authorization of Support Our Troops license plates with funds from the plates going to support veterans programs,
- allocation of \$5.35 million in fiscal years 2006 and 2007 for the National Guard tuition reimbursement program and reenlistment bonuses,
- \$6.3 million for the Veterans Home Board for the maintenance and improvement of the state's veterans' homes, including \$6 million for asset preservation and \$306,000 for the Luverne Veterans Home dementia unit, and
- \$670,000 for the construction of a World War II veterans memorial on the Capitol Complex.

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls) questioned whether other military initiatives could be added to the bill that weren't part of the governor's initiatives. Any changes would have to be negotiated with the governor, Severson said.

The bill next moves to the House Transportation Committee.

A Senate companion (SF734), sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.



For information on a bill (HF2126), sponsored by Rep. Rob Eastlund, that would clarify the terms and conditions of pay for state employees ordered to active duty, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

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

VETERANS GRANTS



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Carol Jackson, left, executive director of the Vinland Center, listens as Michael Pugliese, deputy veterans affairs commissioner, tells members of the House State Government Finance Committee March 30 that veterans service grants could be better utilized by other veterans agencies. The committee was hearing a bill that would provide a grant to the Vinland Center to provide services to veterans for vocational rehabilitation, developmental disabilities and chemical dependency.

RECREATION



Paying for public access

Public access sites on Minnesota lakes could use a facelift, according to some boating and angling enthusiasts, and they're willing to pay for it through increased watercraft license fees.

HF1904, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar), would increase three-year watercraft license fees and place the funds in a dedicated account for boating facilities and public access improvements on public waters.

The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Committee reviewed the proposal March 30 and laid it over for possible inclusion in an omnibus environment finance package. There is no Senate companion.

Many of the boat license fees have not been increased since 1981, Hackbarth said. Those would be doubled, under the bill.

Others that were raised in 1999 by

50 percent would be raised another 50 percent, he said.

A sampling of current license fees and the proposed increases includes:

- canoes, kayaks and sailboats - \$7 to \$14,
- watercraft 19 feet in length or less - \$18 to \$27,
- watercraft 19 feet in length up to 26 feet - \$30 to \$45,
- watercraft 26 feet in length to 40 feet - \$45 to \$67.50, and
- personal watercraft - \$25 to \$37.50.

"It's going to cost my family some money. It's a user's fee — we're all in favor of that," said 86-year-old St. Paul angling activist Frank Schneider. The state has spent some "real good money" on public accesses, but it hasn't been able to keep them in good shape, he said.

"I've been fishing actively since before World War II and don't take our fun away from us. Us old farts, we need it."

SAFETY



Property protection

Last year, Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed a bill that would have protected private property cave owners from injury lawsuits by recreational explorers. The veto came in the wake of the April 27, 2004 deaths of three teenagers from carbon monoxide poisoning in St. Paul caves near the Mississippi River. In his veto message, Pawlenty said, "We've seen, firsthand, the dangers involved in cave exploration. This bill could decrease precautions to avoid tragedy in the future."

Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston), who sponsored the bill last year, told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 30 that if the bill had passed it wouldn't have applied in that case. He is giving the measure another go-round this year with HF221.

Under current law, a landowner making property available for recreational activities, without charge, has no responsibility to prevent individuals from harming themselves. Activities covered by the law include hunting, fishing, swimming and various winter sports. The bill would add rock climbing and cave exploration to the list. A successfully offered amendment defines each activity.

The measure now goes to the House floor.

Sen. Mady Reiter (R-Shoreview) is again sponsoring a companion bill (SF196), which awaits action in the Senate Judiciary 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.

In case of an emergency...

A bill that would allow peace officers with a Class D driver's license to operate any vehicle, or combination of vehicles, while on duty was passed March 29 131-0 by the House.

HF974, sponsored by Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina), now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing) is the sponsor.

It would also direct the Department of Public Safety to see if the bill would violate any federal laws, and if so, it would be required to seek a federal waiver.

The bill is needed for emergency situations, Erhardt said. Peace officers might only have a Class D license, which is the typical driver's license most people have. They might come upon a heavy vehicle that's blocking the road, and they need to move it. However, they might not have the proper license. "They want to be legal about it," Erhardt said.

A Class D license allows people to operate a passenger car and a few other vehicles. Heavier vehicles, such as trucks and buses, require Class A, B or C licenses.

TAXES

Stop hurting investments

When businesses spend money for a capital improvement, they pay the standard sales tax of 6.5 percent.

However, since 1984 they've been able to get that sales tax refunded, but according to the Department of Revenue, 80 percent to 85 percent of eligible companies do not apply for the refund.

Rep. Peter Nelson (R-Lindstrom) is proposing to do away with the sales tax altogether.

Under HF1807, the purchase of repair and replacement parts would not have a sales tax from July 1, 2005, to July 1, 2007. After that, sales taxes would no longer be collected on any capital equipment purchases used for mining, manufacturing, fabricating or refining. The cost to the General Fund could run to \$93 million in fiscal year 2008, then \$35 million in 2009.

The bill was heard March 30 by the House Taxes Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

"What the state has always wanted to do is encourage businesses to invest," Nelson said. "It actually does a good job of stifling growth. This is one way you could go about correcting some inequities. Our sales tax has morphed into something that is far from simple."

John Eagleton is president and chief executive officer of Northstar Aerospace, a precision machining business in Duluth. He said the

sales tax makes it hard for him to do business. "It's a particularly heavy burden with companies that have experienced large growth. We're purchasing a substantial amount of capital equipment. When you're buying \$1.5 million worth of equipment, the sales tax comes to around \$100,000. That's a lot of money I share with the state of Minnesota," he said.

A companion bill (SF1735), sponsored by Sen. David J. Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

Time for a tax increase

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) is sponsoring a bill that would raise taxes less than 1 percent, but would boost the General Fund coffers by as much as \$527 million by fiscal year 2009.

HF1516 was heard March 30 in the House Taxes Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill. Effective tax year 2006, the bill would raise individual income tax rates from 5.35 percent, 7.05 percent and 7.85 percent, respectively, to 5.7 percent, 7.62 percent and 8.5 percent, based on income levels.

According to a fiscal analysis from the Department of Revenue, more than 1.8 million Minnesotans would receive an average tax increase of \$115 in tax year 2005. For 2006, the average tax increase would be \$228.

"I believe if the economy wavers, the Legislature and governor should work together to do the right thing. Fifty-seven percent of the electorate believes we should solve our ongoing budget problems with cuts and taxes," Paymar said. "We are seeing signs of a diminished quality of life. In my district, our Early Childhood Family Education was closed because of budget cuts. Our school district is facing a \$20 million deficit."

Several people testified on behalf of the bill, including the Rev. Victor Balke, bishop of the Diocese of Crookston, who spoke for the Minnesota Catholic Conference, a coalition of Catholic bishops based in St. Paul.

"It's the way that 'haves' share with the 'have-nots,'" Balke said. "Because human needs require it and other resources are not available to meet these needs, we believe that it is right and proper to raise income taxes justly and equitably."

A companion bill (SF1333), sponsored by Sen. John C. Hottinger (DFL-St. Peter), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

TRANSPORTATION



Omnibus bill sent to the floor

An omnibus transportation policy bill that makes several changes to the state's transportation system but spends no money, was passed March 30 by the House Transportation Committee and sent to the floor.

HF945, sponsored by Committee Chair Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina), does everything from allowing state highway logo signs to display the availability of E85 fuel (an ethanol-gasoline blend), to encouraging Department of Transportation employees to plant low-maintenance vegetation along the side of the road to cut down on mowing costs.

Other notable parts of the bill, include:

- A section of Trunk Highway 371 near Little Falls would be designated as the Purple Heart Highway, in honor of veterans who were wounded while serving; a new bridge on Trunk Highway 10 between Fargo, N.D. and Moorhead would be designated Veterans Memorial Bridge; and the Trunk Highway 23 bridge over the St. Louis River would be designated the Biauswah Bridge in Honor of Native American veterans. Money for the signage of those new names must come from non-state sources.
- A five-axle vehicle or combination not exceeding 40 tons may operate on a highway not designated for that weight if the vehicle needs reasonable access to fuel, repair and rest facilities if within three miles of such a designated highway.
- Day activity center buses would be allowed to use their stop arm and warning signals to restrain traffic while passengers are crossing, as do school buses.
- The duration of learner's permits, given to drivers after they've passed their written test but before they take their road test, would increase from one to two years.

A companion bill (SF1089), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Seatbelt penalties

Minnesota's state troopers, sheriff's deputies and police officers are the ones who have to wake families up at 2 a.m. after a fatal traffic accident "and set them on a grief journey that's going to last them the rest of their lives," said Olmsted County Sheriff Steven Borchardt.

More often than not, the people killed in those accidents were not wearing their seatbelt, he said.

So it made sense that many of the state's law enforcement officers were at the March 29 meeting of the House Transportation Committee,

which was hearing a bill that would raise the stakes on seatbelt violations. The bill was recommended to pass and referred to the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee.

HF1087, sponsored by Rep. Duke Powell (R-Burnsville), would increase the fine for failure to wear a seatbelt from \$25 to \$50. It would also permit law enforcement officers to cite motorists for not wearing a seatbelt even if the violator was not being stopped for another offense.

Now, officers can only cite a person for not wearing a seatbelt if they are being stopped for another offense.

In other states where similar laws have been passed, the increase in use has been "immediate and sustained," Powell said. Use has gone up as much as 20 percent.

Seatbelt use in Minnesota is now just over 80 percent.

A companion bill (SF1070), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action on the Senate floor.

Keep off the shoulder

It's against the law to pass on the shoulder on Minnesota's highways, and it's been that way for years.

The law seemed clear while many of the state's shoulders were unpaved. But now, with so many paved shoulders, some people have seen fit to pass on them, even though it's still against the law.

The courts have felt that in the present form, the law is unclear, said Brian Erickson, captain with the Minnesota State Patrol.

Rep. Connie Ruth (R-Owatonna) is sponsoring HF2037, which clarifies that issue. In the section of state statute that prohibits driving on the shoulder, it adds the language, "whether paved or unpaved."

The bill was heard March 29 by the House Transportation Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

"We believe it is in fact a violation to drive on the shoulder," Erickson said, but this bill removes any question.

He said that even when paved, shoulders are not as thick as the road. Allowing motorists to drive on them would be disastrous. "We would destroy the shoulders faster than we do now," he said.

A companion bill (SF1386), sponsored by Sen. Mike McGinn (R-Eagan), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

LATE ACTION



"Marriage" proposal passes House

A proposal that would ask Minnesota voters if the constitution should limit the recognition of marriage or its legal equivalent "to only the union of one man and one woman" was approved March 31 by the House on a 77-56 vote.

House Republicans rallied behind Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), the sponsor of HF6.

"This bill is about defining marriage and stopping activist judges, and about the voice of the people being heard," Severson said. "The only way to protect the state from circumventing the will of the people by activist judges is to allow the voices of the people of Minnesota to be heard on the ballot in 2006."

The language of the bill, particularly the words "legal equivalent," came under intense questioning throughout the three-hour debate.

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) said that "activist judges" would look to legislative intent as they interpret the law. The "language is muddy, murky and sloppy. ... We are setting ourselves up for years of litigation and for years of confusion." He said that unclear language "gives judges more power, not less."

Severson said the intent of the bill is to allow the people to decide on the definition of marriage, not activist judges. And he is

concerned that if the constitutional amendment is not put in place, marriage would be lost as an institution.

"The Legislature determines the language, and I believe the legal challenges would go through the courts. I believe this is the strongest language to protect marriage," Severson said.

Rep. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park) said the vague language could put in jeopardy domestic benefits that are currently offered by businesses and some public institutions. "We have an obligation to tell the people what the question is that they are voting on."

Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake) said that ambiguity is created by "trying to get around current law. We have marriage, we have civil unions ... this (bill) eliminates ambiguity."

"The people have the right to know that you will take away our benefits, our legal contracts," said Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) the only openly gay House member. "You know how deep the harm will be. These are civil rights" and this is not the first time the minority has had the majority making decisions about their civil rights.

Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Delano) said the bill "does not mean there cannot be gay unions. It is not going to take away someone's rights. We are making sure that the definition is not changed by activist judges."

This bill now goes to the Senate where Sen. Michele Bachmann (R-Stillwater) is the sponsor.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Kathy Brown of Columbia Heights, right, leans over to talk to her mother, Lois Rothfusz of Rosville, as they hold their signs in support of a proposed Minnesota constitutional amendment that would specify that marriage be between a man and woman. Doug Benson of Robbinsdale, left, and Robert Halfhill of Minneapolis hold their sign opposed to the constitutional amendment outside the House Chamber prior to session March 29.

2005-06 Minnesota House of Representatives Members

District/Member/Party	Room*	Phone (651) 296-	District/Member/Party	Room*	Phone (651) 296-
48B Abeler, Jim (R)	509	1729	9A Lanning, Morrie (R)	593	5515
43B Abrams, Ron (R)	585	9934	63B Larson, Dan (DFL)	287	7158
19A Anderson, Bruce (R)	437	5063	44B Latz, Ron (DFL)	225	7026
3A Anderson, Irv (DFL)	321	4936	40B Lenczewski, Ann (DFL)	237	4218
39B Atkins, Joe (DFL)	217	4192	66A Lesch, John (DFL)	223	4224
35A Beard, Michael (R)	577	8872	30A Lieblich, Tina (DFL)	393	0573
51B Bernardy, Connie (DFL)	233	5510	1B Lieder, Bernie (DFL)	323	5091
12B Blaine, Greg (R)	545	4247	55A Lillie, Leon (DFL)	353	1188
29B Bradley, Fran (R)	563	9249	59A Loeffler, Diane (DFL)	307	4219
25A Brod, Laura (R)	581	4229	22A Magnus, Doug (R)	515	5505
35B Buesgens, Mark (R)	445	5185	67A Mahoney, Tim (DFL)	289	4277
45B Carlson, Lyndon (DFL)	283	4255	65B Mariani, Carlos (DFL)	203	9714
56A Charron, Mike (R)	571	4244	9B Marquart, Paul (DFL)	345	6829
61A Clark, Karen (DFL)	303	0294	57B McNamara, Denny (R)	431	3135
24B Cornish, Tony (R)	487	4240	53B Meslow, Doug (R)	531	5363
25B Cox, Ray (R)	413	7065	4A Moe, Frank (DFL)	369	5516
37A Cybart, Lloyd (R)	539	5506	58A Mullery, Joe (DFL)	367	4262
31B Davids, Gregory M. (R)	477	9278	6B Murphy, Mary (DFL)	343	2676
62A Darnie, Jim (DFL)	309	0173	46A Nelson, Michael (DFL)	317	3751
52B Dean, Matt (R)	417	3018	17B Nelson, Peter (R)	433	5377
49A DeLaForest, Chris (R)	503	4231	18A Newman, Scott (R)	569	1534
29A Demmer, Randy (R)	597	9236	10A Nornes, Bud (R)	471	4946
28A Dempsey, Jerry (R)	575	8635	16B Olson, Mark (R)	501	4237
6A Dill, David (DFL)	315	2190	15B Opatz, Joe (DFL)	277	6612
47A Dittrich, Denise (DFL)	371	5513	11B Otremba, Mary Ellen (DFL)	247	3201
27A Dorman, Dan (R)	517	8216	37B Ozment, Dennis (R)	479	4306
23B Dorn, John (DFL)	201	3248	42B Paulsen, Erik (R)	459	7449
17A Eastlund, Rob (R)	449	5364	64B Paymar, Michael (DFL)	253	4199
2A Eken, Kent (DFL)	329	9918	31A Pelowski, Jr., Gene (DFL)	295	8637
58B Ellison, Keith (DFL)	229	8659	1A Penas, Maxine (R)	579	9635
19B Emmer, Tom (R)	523	4336	32A Peppin, Joyce (R)	411	7806
64A Entenza, Matt (DFL)	267	8799	20A Peterson, Aaron (DFL)	351	4228
41A Erhardt, Ron (R)	591	4363	41B Peterson, Neil W. (R)	527	7803
16A Erickson, Sondra (R)	473	6746	45A Peterson, Sandra (DFL)	213	4176
21B Finstad, Brad (R)	379	9303	27B Poppe, Jeanne (DFL)	231	4193
26B Fritz, Patti (DFL)	239	8237	40A Powell, Duke (R)	407	4212
36B Garofalo, Pat (R)	429	1069	5A Rukavina, Tom (DFL)	279	0170
12A Gazelka, Paul (R)	529	4333	26A Ruth, Connie (R)	565	5368
50A Goodwin, Barbara (DFL)	331	4331	42A Ruud, Maria (DFL)	311	3964
54A Greiling, Mindy (DFL)	259	5387	2B Sailer, Brita (DFL)	327	4265
24A Gunther, Bob (R)	559	3240	50B Samuelson, Char (R)	415	0141
48A Hackbarth, Tom (R)	409	2439	54B Scalze, Bev (DFL)	241	7153
22B Hamilton, Rod (R)	423	5373	21A Seifert, Marty (R)	381	5374
39A Hansen, Rick (DFL)	221	6828	5B Sertich, Anthony "Tony" (DFL)	273	0172
66B Hausman, Alice (DFL)	245	3824	14A Severson, Dan (R)	553	7808
13A Heidegerken, Bud (R)	507	4317	57A Sieben, Katie (DFL)	215	4342
46B Hilstrom, Debra (DFL)	375	3709	44A Simon, Steve (DFL)	313	9889
8A Hilty, Bill (DFL)	207	4308	10B Simpson, Dean (R)	525	4293
36A Holberg, Mary Liz (R)	443	6926	55B Slawik, Nora (DFL)	357	7807
34B Hoppe, Joe (R)	537	5066	33A Smith, Steve (R)	543	9188
60B Hornstein, Frank (DFL)	227	9281	8B Soderstrom, Judy (R)	439	0518
47B Hortman, Melissa (DFL)	377	4280	3B Solberg, Loren (DFL)	349	2365
14B Hosch, Larry (DFL)	211	4373	28B Sviggum, Steve (R)	463	2273
4B Howes, Larry (R)	451	2451	33B Sykora, Barb (R)	485	4315
7A Huntley, Thomas (DFL)	335	2228	65A Thao, Cy (DFL)	359	5158
7B Jaros, Mike (DFL)	291	4246	63A Thissen, Paul (DFL)	301	5375
43A Johnson, Jeff (R)	401	5511	49B Tingelstad, Kathy (R)	403	5369
23A Johnson, Ruth (DFL)	389	8634	18B Urdahl, Dean (R)	521	4344
67B Johnson, Sheldon (DFL)	243	4201	52A Vandever, Ray (R)	583	4124
13B Juhnke, Al (DFL)	281	6206	62B Wagenius, Jean (DFL)	251	4200
59B Kahn, Phyllis (DFL)	255	4257	61B Walker, Neva (DFL)	209	7152
60A Kelliher, Margaret Anderson (DFL)	261	0171	38B Wardlow, Lynn (R)	491	4128
56B Klinzing, Karen (R)	567	1147	30B Welti, Andy (DFL)	387	4378
15A Knoblauch, Jim (R)	453	6316	51A Westerberg, Andrew "Andy" (R)	549	4226
20B Koenen, Lyle (DFL)	337	4346	11A Westrom, Torrey (R)	533	4929
34A Kohls, Paul (R)	421	4282	38A Wilkin, Tim (R)	551	3533
53A Krinkie, Philip (R)	365	2907	32B Zellers, Kurt (R)	557	5502

A winning hand or bust?

Both sides sound off on proposed gaming expansion

By BRETT MARTIN

A new day of gaming may be dawning on Minnesota, but not without stiff opposition.

Proposals worth hundreds of millions of dollars that would expand gaming to include a casino and a racino drew standing room only crowds, dozens of testifiers and hours of debate at March committee hearings.

HF1817, sponsored by Rep. Andrew "Andy" Westerberg (R-Blaine), is the governor's proposal for the state to enter into a contract with tribal governments to operate a casino. The state would own the gaming machines and be responsible for operations. The tribal entity would need to pay a \$200 million licensing fee and bear all facility-related costs. It would manage the casino's day-to-day operations.

Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) is sponsoring HF1664, which would allow gaming machines at racetracks that have conducted live racing for five consecutive years. The racetrack would have to pay \$100 million to the state's General Fund upon entering into the contract, and a set percentage of annual profits thereafter.

Proponents of the bills say the gaming expansion would give the state much needed revenues and create fairness in the state casino industry. Opponents say the bills would hurt some American Indian tribes and create social ills.

The House Regulated Industries Committee approved the bills March 29, and referred them to the House Taxes Committee, despite opposition from DFL members.

On March 30, the state attorney general's office said the provisions of HF1817 are inconsistent with Minnesota's constitution.

"Accordingly, should the governor and the Legislature wish to pursue a state-operated casino, I recommend that they first seek approval of a constitutional

amendment from the voters," according to the letter signed by Kristine L. Eiden, chief deputy attorney general.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty later said he "respectfully disagrees with the attorney general's opinion."

Tribal partnership

Westerberg's bill would allow the state to partner with American Indian tribes that have demonstrated financial need. The three largest tribes in the state, Leech Lake, White Earth and Red Lake, meet the need criteria and plan to form a tribal entity for the casino venture.

George J. Goggeley Jr., chairman of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, said the casino revenues would help the tribes with housing, unemployment, education and health care. "It's a chance for us to make a difference in the lives of our people."

Under the bill, the state would pay the tribal entity 64 percent of adjusted gross revenues. Initial projections are that the total tribal



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

One gambling proposal being considered this session would make Canterbury Park a racino offering slot and video gaming. The facility currently offers live and simulcast horse racing and a card room.

Some 2005 gambling-related bills

- HF179: Compulsive gambling prevention and education
- HF211: Gambling tax rate reduced
- HF215: Specifies uses for some gambling profits
- HF401: Certain raffles not required to register
- HF463: Referendum required for gambling facility in town or city
- HF485: Noon hour bingo restrictions removed
- HF514: Omnibus technical gaming bill
- HF519: Texas hold'em legalized
- HF767: Permitting pull-tab purchases by employees of organization lessors
- HF791: Video game of chance modified
- HF803: Raffle definition modified
- HF934: Compulsive gambling prevention and education funding
- HF968: Sports wagering pool established and bookmaking licenses authorized
- HF989: City approval of gambling facility required
- HF1009: Operating a casino in the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport
- HF1042: Operating video lottery terminals in bars
- HF1092: Sports-themed tipboard games provided
- HF1099: Gambling fraud crime provision clarified
- HF1179: Racing Commission card club duties clarified
- HF1208: Referendum required for gambling facility in town or city
- HF1361: Lottery proceeds percentage deposited in natural resources and recreation fund
- HF1570: Operating gaming machines in hospitals
- HF1664: Permitting gaming machines at racetracks
- HF1770: Social and economic costs of gambling study and report required
- HF1801: Omnibus policy gaming bill
- HF1817: Tribal-state casino for Twin Cities metropolitan area
- HF2154: Compulsive gambling prevention and treatment



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

A pair of bills that would expand gaming, including one that would help three American Indian tribes, were approved by one House committee and await action in the House Taxes Committee.

earnings would be between \$100 million and \$178 million annually for the first five years.

Not all American Indians support the partnership. Wally Storbakken, a member of the Leech Lake Band, said gambling would not solve tribal problems such as poverty and unemployment.

"If you want to help us, find another way," Storbakken said.

John McCarthy, executive director of the Minnesota Indian Gaming Association, said the proposal puts all gaming at risk because the state would not be able to stop expansion once it starts.

"Minnesota would become dependent on gambling," he said.

A new casino in the Twin Cities metropolitan area would also cause more than 1,000 job losses in rural casinos, McCarthy said.

The bill would allow a temporary casino to be operational within six months of legislative approval and a permanent facility to be built within two years. Once a site is chosen, that city would have 60 days to adopt a resolution if it does not want to host the casino.

Playing the slots and the ponies

Buesgens said his bill would allow for the next step in the evolution of Canterbury Park — the addition of slot and video gaming, making it a racino. The privately financed expansion would include a 250-room hotel and conference center and a world-class equestrian center with two indoor arenas, three outdoor arenas, a cross-country jumping course and new stalls for show horse events.

Shakopee Council Member Joseph Helkamp said local support is crucial for the racino.

"I can assure you that Canterbury Park has that support," he said. "This proposal will enhance our community."

Pro and con

The hospitality industry supports both bills, said Jaye Rykuny, president of UNITE HERE Local 17. She said the gaming expansion would create good paying union jobs and allow employees a better quality of life.

"Workers in the hospitality industry want to achieve the American dream," she said.

Doreen Hagen, president of the Prairie Island Community Tribal Council that owns and operates Treasure Island Resort & Casino near Red Wing, opposes both bills.

"We're told it's a matter of fairness," she said. "As a community that has endured more than its share of injustices, it's difficult for us to accept being lectured to by others about fairness."

The racino would cause 400 job losses and \$12 million in lost wages for Treasure Island, she said. Area businesses would lose nearly \$16 million in revenues.

"In the past, the governor and many other lawmakers have opposed expanded gambling as a matter of good public policy," Hagen said. "Budget challenges and what appears to be a desire by some to punish certain tribes are not justification for changing this policy."

Brian Rusche, executive director of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, said most casino revenues come from 4 percent of people who are problem gamblers. He said new casinos would exacerbate the problem.

A divided committee

"This bill is about fairness," Westerberg said of his proposal, pointing out that 85 percent of American Indians receive little benefit from current gaming.

Voicing support for the racino, Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton) said it would help the state's \$1 billion horse industry. "This is a phenomenal opportunity for a fast growing industry in the state."

Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) said

Gambling activities by Minnesotans in the past year

Any activity	83%
Minnesota lottery	60%
Raffle	49%
American Indian casino	41%
Social bets	28%
Cards (non-casino)	27%
Pull-tabs	26%
Sports	18%
Bingo	13%
Nevada casino	12%
Dice	9%
Horse race	6%
Internet	2%

Source: Minnesota State Lottery

Minnesota is the seventh richest state and should not have to rely on gaming to fund essential programs.

"We've sunk to the level that we have to fund K through 12 education with gambling money," Huntley said.


For Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) the issue was finances.

"These [facilities] are really going to have a tough time making it," he said. "The math just simply doesn't work."

Atkins unsuccessfully offered more than two dozen amendments between the meetings, including increasing the percentage the state receives from the casino, forbidding tribal governments from using casino money to provide payments to individual tribal members, requiring the host city or town to approve a casino in an election, requiring principal to be paid on bonds that finance the casino and requiring a full waiver of sovereign immunity by the tribal governments. The amendments were defeated along party lines or withdrawn.

Atkins did offer a successful amendment to HF1817 that would require any change of ownership in the tribal entity to be approved by the Legislature.

Rep. Kurt Zellers (R-Maple Grove) successfully offered amendments to both bills to make the gaming machines accessible to people with disabilities, including people with sensory impairments.

Senate Minority Leader Dick Day (R-Owatonna) sponsors a companion bill (SF1609) to Buesgens' bill and Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul) is sponsoring a companion (SF1978) to Westerberg's bill. Both await action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee. 

Holding the gavel, control

Committee chairs serve as gatekeepers to the House floor

By BRETT MARTIN

Of the 2,268 bills introduced in the House, as of March 31, just 17 had become law. Most of the remaining bills are waiting to get through the committee process.

Before a bill can be voted on by the full House, it usually has to be approved by a committee, sometimes several committees. However, not every bill gets a committee hearing.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) said that he's been trying, in some cases several years, to get committee hearings on his bills, including raising the minimum wage, requiring American flags to be made in the United States and requiring an insurance reduction for snowmobiles with hazard lights.

Rukavina said he could have offered his snowmobile bill as a successful amendment last session, but he withdrew it thinking he could get a committee hearing this session.

"Now I can't get a hearing," he said.

However, Rukavina successfully amended a snowmobile insurance reduction provision to an omnibus insurance bill March 30.

The power to choose

Committee chairs serve as gatekeepers who determine which bills get hearings in their respective committees. Some make a conscious effort to keep partisan politics out of that process.

Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake), chair of the House Local Government Committee, has initiated a system where bills are ranked by members and those with the highest ratings get the nod.

"If you want to influence which bills we hear, you have a chance. If you don't want to, you have that prerogative. At least everyone in my committee has a voice, regardless of party," Olson said.

Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston) said he also wants his committee to run without parti-

san politics. As a goodwill gesture to the minority caucus, he always hears a DFL-sponsored bill as the first bill of the session.

"Ag issues aren't partisan issues," said Davids, who currently chairs the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. Before that he had chaired the commerce committee for six years.

Davids said his committee would hear most bills referred to it this session, although he tends to deny a hearing to bills that are political rather than policy.

"Ag issues are so important to the state that there's not room for playing party politics," Davids said. "There is a time to send campaign flyers. The committee is not that time."

He hears bills that he doesn't agree with, such as three bills to regulate atrazine.

"If something fails, it got a fair hearing," he notes.

With the first committee deadline of April 5 rapidly approaching, time is becoming more crucial. Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior), chair of the House Education Finance Committee, said she's already heard well over 60 bills in her committee, and she still has more than three-dozen requests for bill

hearings.

"The trouble is that some bills are controversial, and that takes a lot of time," she said. "You can't predict how many questions you'll get."

Sykora said if bills are similar, she won't hear all of them.

"I'll listen to one that does something; not to the six or seven others that do the same thing," she said. "I like to hear new ideas. It might be the answer to an issue."

Some bills do get fast-tracked, such as gubernatorial initiatives and those impacting communities.

Bills referred from other committees also get preference.

"We're respecting the time the other committees have put into it already," Olson said.

Getting heard

Despite efforts by some chairs to keep the process balanced, not everyone feels all voices are being heard. Rep. Barbara Goodwin (DFL-Columbia Heights) is the chief author of 11 bills this session, yet only one has been heard in committee.

"I'm very frustrated," she said. "Party politics get in the way of legislators doing what we're supposed to be doing."

All bills require a time investment for research, writing, talking to people, and reviewing pros and cons, whether the bills are heard

or not, she said.

"We're all elected," Goodwin said. "We all deserve equal opportunity to have ideas heard and represent the people we were elected to represent."

"Party politics get in the way of legislators doing what we're supposed to be doing."

— Rep. Barbara Goodwin

Olson agrees that the current system stifles ideas.

"I don't believe the process is set up to assure each member has an equal voice in the process," he said.

He said the process underwent a radical change about 40 years ago. From territorial days until the 1960s, when a bill was first introduced on the House floor and someone objected to it, the question was asked, "Shall the bill be rejected?" Now, no bill can be objected to upon its introduction.

Deciding which bills are heard was once done by the entire body, Olson said. Now, it's done by a minority of people, usually the committee chairs.

"When you create minority control, you're violating members' rights to hear a bill," he said.

Committee chairs can pick and choose which bills fit their agendas and which ones will ultimately pass, Olson said. As an example, he said that from 1989 to 1994, 1,859 bills passed the House and only 10 failed.

There is an avenue available to members who feel they can't get a committee hearing.

Continued on page 23

Sending a cultural message

Kong is a leader in the Hmong community

By Ruth Dunn

Soliving Kong, who works with representatives every day in his position as assistant postmaster for the House, is also a representative, of a different kind.

Kong is among 18 Hmong clan leaders in Minnesota, being selected by 70 families with the last name of Kong, to represent their clan. In Hmong culture, clans are organized by last name.

Clan leaders are selected based on knowledge and experience. They tend to be well-known. "My job is to represent men, women and children," said Kong. His leadership philosophy is, "Respect others if you want to get respect."

As Kong clan leader, he also is a member of the Clan Council, which meets monthly and

hunters in Wisconsin last November.

While holding press conferences are not normally a part of the Hmong culture, the group has recently done so. It's a case of when in Minnesota, do as Minnesotans do. Kong and two other clan leaders also recently appeared on "Almanac," the public affairs program on public television, and they've installed a hotline phone at the council office so people can call with questions or concerns.

Kong hopes people realize that just because one or two Hmong men might have done bad things, not all Hmong are bad. "We hope people understand these are individuals; not the group," said Kong. "There may be one or two bad apples but the rest of the apples are still good."

Kong estimates there are about 60,000 to

"I tell refugees, 'You are so lucky. We are here to do everything we can to help you.' It's a lot easier for them than it was for us," he said.

Kong, 49, was forced to flee Laos in 1975 when Americans left Southeast Asia because his ties with the CIA put his life at risk. He arrived in Minnesota in 1980 and saw his first snow. In 1986, his neighbor, former Rep. Steve Trimble, recommended him for work at the Capitol and he's been here ever since, including 17 years as assistant postmaster.

As clan leader, Kong helps newcomers adjust to life in Minnesota — and it's a huge adjustment to learn to live in this country successfully, he said. "When you arrive, you don't know the language and everything you hear sounds like mumbo jumbo." The hardest part for him was homesickness — missing his country and the family left behind.

Another part of his role as clan leader is to help people live together and learn from each other and other cultures.

"You think of this as a free country but there are so many rules and regulations here," said Kong. "My country (Laos) was a free country. We could do anything we wanted to there."

Kong mediates conflicts among spouses, parents and children. A huge generation gap can develop when tightly-knit family-oriented Hmong move to America.

"Hmong of my generation think of themselves as Hmong-Americans while our children, who were born here, think of themselves as American-Hmong," said Kong.

Tension has developed at times in Kong's own family. He and his wife, a professional seamstress, have four grown sons and a daughter. "Sometimes parents have no choice. The children grow up and have their own choices," admits Kong. Kong estimates that Hmong people lose about 75 percent of their culture when they come to the United States so they want to tightly hold on to the remaining 25 percent.


Kong sees the progress Hmong people have made in Minnesota. "We only arrived 30 years ago, but we have improved our lives," he said, adding that more Hmong are going on to higher education and going into professional careers, and there is a Hmong-American in the House, Rep. Cy Thao (DFL-St. Paul), and another in the Senate, Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul). Kong would like to see more Hmong-Americans elected to city councils, school boards and county boards. 



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

House Assistant Postmaster Soliving Kong stands in the House post office. Kong, who was forced to flee Laos in 1975, is now a Hmong elder in the Twin Cities.

has an office in St. Paul. The council recently launched an effort to counteract negative publicity after a Hmong-American working for the city of St. Paul was allegedly involved in financial mismanagement and another has been charged in the shooting deaths of six

80,000 Hmong in Minnesota, a number that increases every year. He's a board member of the Hmong American Partnership, a Hmong refugee agency, which sponsors a lot of new arrivals. He understands how newly arrived immigrants feel and what they are going through.

Tuesday, March 29

HF2121—Johnson, J. (R) Civil Law & Elections

Business notification of persons whose personal information has been disclosed to unauthorized persons required.

HF2122—Goodwin (DFL) Health Policy & Finance

Social services for children with serious emotional disturbances specified.

HF2123—Abeler (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Prescription drug purchases by state employee health insurance plan from one pharmacy benefits manager required, local government participation in drug purchasing program authorized and money appropriated.

HF2124—Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Interaction with third-party consultant regarding bond underwriting services by bonding authorities and political subdivisions prohibited.

HF2125—Davids (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Minnesota health care purchasing authority established and report required.

HF2126—Eastlund (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Pay differential law for state employees ordered to active military service clarified.

HF2127—Huntley (DFL)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Clinical trial health plan coverage study and report required.

HF2128—Sykora (R)
Education Finance
Regular special education revenue restored and state budget reserve priority added.

HF2129—Beard (R)
Regulated Industries
Horse racing electronic wagers provided.

HF2130—Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Card club operations gross receipts tax imposed.

HF2131—Gunther (R)
Local Government
County issuance of capital improvement bonds for rehabilitation or demolition of tax-forfeited commercial property permitted.

HF2132—Gazelka (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Student eligibility maintained when participating in Minnesota State High School League activities in another district during a teachers' strike.

HF2133—Peppin (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Lease of state property at 168 Aurora Ave. in St. Paul as a child-care facility authorized.

HF2134—Otremba (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Minnesota Family Investment Program family cap repealed.

HF2135—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Tobacco use in certain health care settings permitted.

HF2136—Simon (DFL)
Transportation
Driver's license reinstatement surcharge imposed to fund trauma care centers.

HF2137—Westrom (R)
Regulated Industries
Hydrogen usage as energy resource promoted and money appropriated.

HF2138—Hosch (DFL)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 741, Paynesville, fund transfer authorized.

HF2139—Mullery (DFL)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Prevailing wage violations investigator employment by commissioner of labor and industry required, investigation procedures clarified and notification of violations required.

HF2140—Ellison (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Medical Assistance coverage of environmental investigations for children with elevated blood lead levels required.

HF2141—Wilkin (R)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Definition of "wage" modified.

HF2142—Wilkin (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Duplex first-time homeowner construction funding study required.

HF2143—Tingelstad (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
President, Congress and United States memorialized by resolution to maintain current levels of postal service.

HF2144—Simpson (R)
Taxes
Vendor sales tax allowance provided.

HF2145—Severson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Veterans' postsecondary education rights expanded.

HF2146—Soderstrom (R)
Agriculture & Rural Development
Anhydrous ammonia additive feasibility study to prevent illicit use of methamphetamine required.

HF2147—Soderstrom (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Methamphetamine offender education material development and sheriff distribution of methamphetamine education materials to inmates required.

HF2148—Bernardy (DFL)
Transportation Finance
County Road J and Airport Road lane addition and noise barrier improvement bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2149—Bernardy (DFL)
Transportation Finance
Highway interchange reconstruction at Interstate 35W and County Road J and Lake Avenue improvement bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2150—Clark (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
At-risk youth out-of-wedlock pregnancy prevention program money appropriated.

HF2151—Huntley (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Marijuana medical use and penalties provided.

HF2152—Holberg (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Bullying behavior private educational data disclosure authorized.

HF2153—Tingelstad (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Husband of mother by assisted reproduction or artificial insemination treatment as biological father of resulting child provided.

HF2154—Mullery (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Compulsive gambling prevention and treatment services money appropriated.

HF2155—Gunther (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Weights and measures standards updated, petroleum tank release cleanup provisions delayed and Petroleum Tank Release Compensation Board rule adoption for consultant services authorized.

HF2156—Demmer (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Financial planner usage in preparing a conservator's inventory for the court and certified public accountant audit usage provided.

HF2157—Johnson, R. (DFL)
Transportation
Highway construction adherence to a 10-ton standard required in certain instances.

HF2158—Johnson, R. (DFL)**Education Finance**

Middle school math and science initiatives money appropriated.

HF2159—Hackbarth (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Environment advisory boards modified and report eliminated.

HF2160—Eastlund (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities; Board of Trustees innovations fund money appropriated.

HF2161—Eastlund (R)**Higher Education Finance**

University of Minnesota; Board of Regents research support money appropriated.

HF2162—Slawik (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Online learning information provision to students by school districts required, online learning funding provided and money appropriated.

HF2163—Vandever (R)**Taxes**

County supermajority vote to transfer certain local assessment responsibilities required.

HF2164—Vandever (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Free speech for faculty and students bill of rights enacted.

HF2165—Davnie (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Principals' leadership institute establishment grant authorized and money appropriated.

HF2166—Samuelson (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Committee termination date extended.

HF2167—Anderson, B. (R)**Transportation**

Novice driver safety education program established, driver instruction permits and provisional driver's license provisions modified and money appropriated.

HF2168—Gunther (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Minnesota redevelopment accounts modified.

HF2169—Walker (DFL)**Taxes**

Nonprofit entity grants to facilitate delivery of volunteer assistance to low-income taxpayers established and money appropriated.

HF2170—Hoppe (R)**Local Government**

Carver County; designation of county auditor, treasurer and recorder positions as appointive offices authorized.

HF2171—Tingelstad (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Fridley; Springbrook Nature Center redevelopment bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2172—Bradley (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Licensing and alternative quality assurance task force established.

HF2173—Larson (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Bloomington Fire Department Relief Association funding deadline extended and interest rate assumption increased.

HF2174—Larson (DFL)**Local Government**

Metropolitan Airports Commission implementation of specified sound mitigation efforts in designated areas required.

HF2175—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Statewide health improvement plan and grant program established, health coverage maintenance required, tobacco tax increased, health plan essential benefit set provided, health care provisions detailed, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2176—Hackbarth (R)**Transportation Finance**

Elk River and Minneapolis commuter bus service money appropriated.

HF2177—Cornish (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Compulsory instruction of children between 5 and 16 years of age provided and special provisions for children under age 7 established.

HF2178—Krinkie (R)**Taxes**

Definition of "tax" specified.

HF2179—Welti (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Emergency state government meetings facilitation by telephone or other electronic means authorized.

HF2180—Marquart (DFL)**Education Finance**

General education basic formula allowance and declining enrollment funding increased, levy reinstated, alternative teacher compensation programs promoted, school district Internet access funding authorized and money appropriated.

HF2181—Vandever (R)**Taxes**

Alternative minimum income tax for individuals and corporations abolished.

HF2182—Carlson (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

University of Minnesota; Board of Regents size established and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2183—Davids (R)**Taxes**

Local city sales tax imposition authorized.

HF2184—Dittrich (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Northwest Regional Curfew Center grant money appropriated.

HF2185—Charron (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Shooting range protection act established and expedited rulemaking required.

HF2186—Demmer (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Dodge County; drug court money appropriated.

HF2187—Abrams (R)**Local Government**

Hennepin County Medical Center governance provided, and county subsidiary corporation providing healthcare and related services created.

HF2188—Jaros (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Military honor guard member pay or reimbursement grants provided.

HF2189—Ellison (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Definition of "public place" for purposes of prostitution law provided.

HF2190—Hackbarth (R)**Regulated Industries**

Horse racing; Class A license requirements amended.

HF2191—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Office of Mental Health Practice oversight authority transferred, report required and money appropriated.

Wednesday, March 30
HF2192—Tingelstad (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Human services rules required relating to affidavits of disclosure and nondisclosure and medical history forms related to birth parents of adopted children.

HF2193—Cox (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Mercury emissions limits imposed for coal-fired electric generating facilities and grant program established to research mercury reduction technology for taconite processing.

HF2194—Mariani (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Mercury emissions limits imposed for coal-fired electric generating facilities, and grant program established to research mercury reduction technology for taconite processing.

HF2195—Nelson, P. (R)**Transportation**

Motor vehicle headlamps and taillamps required to be illuminated at all times when vehicle is operated on highways.

HF2196—Charron (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public Employees Retirement Association general plan service credit purchase authorized for a period of prior employment as a public defender.

HF2197—Vandever (R)**Taxes**

Levy limits imposed on counties and certain cities.

HF2198—Mariani (DFL)**Education Finance**

Charter school pupil transportation formulas modified.

HF2199—Johnson, R. (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Suicide prevention program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF2200—Sertich (DFL)**Transportation**

Floodwood; safety rest area authorized to sell beverages and snack foods.

HF2201—Thissen (DFL)**Local Government**

Real property appraisal data classified relating to eminent domain, appraisal provisions modified, time when a party may challenge public purpose or authority specified, relocation benefits clarified and other procedures specified.

HF2202—Hilty (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Campaign and candidate committees prohibited from having certain public officials serve as chairs or treasurers.

HF2203—Samuelson (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Long-Term Care Task Force recommendations implemented, nursing facility beds excess capacity reduced, savings allocated to home and community-based services and services for elderly and caregivers expanded.

HF2204—Ruth (R)**Taxes**

Active military service compensation individual income tax deduction provided.

HF2205—Ruth (R)**Transportation Finance**

Southern Minnesota rural transit services funding provided and money appropriated.

HF2206—Bernardy (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Fridley; Springbrook Nature Center redevelopment funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2207—Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Federal income tax update provided, government contractors prohibited with certain vendors, liquor and rented vehicle taxes provided, sales tax exemptions modified, homestead market value tax credit modified and money appropriated.

HF2208—Lenczewski (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund service credit purchase authorized for prior city employment as a permit employee.

HF2209—McNamara (R)**Education Finance**

School district requirement to reserve revenue for cooperative programs removed.

HF2210—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Farmer-reserved seed storing mechanism provided for planting in subsequent crop years, fee authorized and penalty imposed.

HF2211—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural Resources Department required to obtain permits for construction activities in watershed districts.

HF2212—Tingelstad (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Sesquicentennial commission established to plan activities relating to the 150th anniversary of Minnesota statehood and money appropriated.

HF2213—Carlson (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Health provider payment disclosure required, disclosure of and limiting certain charges to the uninsured provided and provider recourse limited.

HF2214—Emmer (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Identity theft; commissioner of public safety required to adopt rules to protect victims of identity theft from invalid criminal suspicion.

HF2215—Marquart (DFL)**Education Finance**

Education excellence revenue provided as a mechanism for rewarding results and money appropriated.

HF2216—Thissen (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Notaries public maximum fees increased.

HF2217—Howes (R)**Taxes**

Hubbard County lodging tax authorized and municipalities within the county prohibited from imposing a separate tax.

HF2218—Davids (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Insurance producer compensation and producer-agency relationship disclosure required.

HF2219—Fritz (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Public employees police and fire fund service credit purchase authorized.

HF2220—McNamara (R)**Taxes**

Aggregate resource preservation property tax program established and classification provided for property containing unmined aggregate.

HF2221—Dorman (R)**Taxes**

Clothing sales tax exemption eliminated.

HF2222—Thissen (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State agencies encouraged to use open-source software.

HF2223—Cornish (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Criminal Gang Strike Force funding provided and money appropriated.

HF2224—Nornes (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Minnesota academic excellence scholarship modified and tuition benefits clarified for senior citizens.

HF2225—Cox (R)**Education Finance**

Resident school district's obligation to charter schools for unreimbursed special education costs limited and state required to pay 70 percent of a charter school's remaining special education costs.

HF2226—Lanning (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Voter registration application deadline extended, proof of residency documentation clarified, application form specified, civil rights restoration notice required and other election and voting provisions modified.

Thursday, March 31

HF2227—Klinzing (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Independent School District No. 625, St. Paul, post-retirement health insurance coverage restoration required for specified retired teachers.

HF2228—Abrams (R)**Taxes**

Revenue commissioner general powers recodified and clarified, criminal penalty recodified and money appropriated.

HF2229—Clark (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Minnesota Family Investment Program employment services requirement modified for participants with children less than 12 weeks old.

HF2230—Peterson, N. (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Statewide and local retirement plans marriage dissolution public pension benefits division modified.

HF2231—Loeffler (DFL)**Transportation Finance**

Hennepin County; bridge crossing the Mississippi River funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2232—Ellison (DFL)**Taxes**

Alcoholic beverage tax increased, proceeds dedicated to county grants to provide probation supervision and treatment services for offenders and money appropriated.

HF2233—Seifert (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Private prison housing of inmates authorized, pilot project to house short-term offenders established and proposals requested.

HF2234—Liebling (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Prescription drug bulk purchasing program established.

HF2235—Hansen (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Meatpacking industry workers rights established.

HF2236—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Public health care program performance reporting and quality improvement payment system established.

HF2237—Abeler (R)**Local Government**

North Suburban Hospital District expanded and district authorized to levy taxes and issue bonds.

HF2238—Abeler (R)**Local Government**

Long-term care voluntary purchase arrangements authorized for employees of political subdivisions.

HF2239—Samuelson (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Fridley; Springbrook Nature Center redevelopment funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2240—Vandevor (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Financing statements expedited judicial review provided and civil and criminal liability established for fraudulent or improper statements.

HF2241—Lieder (DFL)**Transportation**

Transportation, Metropolitan Council, and public safety activities funding provided, trunk highway bonds issued, vehicle registration tax and fee provisions modified, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2242—Lieder (DFL)**Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 2609, Win-E-Mac, fund transfer authorized.

HF2243—Seifert (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Office of enterprise technology established and money appropriated.

HF2244—Abeler (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

County postretirement benefit cost payments abolished.

HF2245—Cybart (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Speed contests prohibited, observing a speed contest as a spectator penalty specified and criminal penalties imposed.

HF2246—Cornish (R)**Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 2071, Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial, fund transfer authorized.

HF2247—Cornish (R)**Taxes**

Major league sports franchise transfer sales tax imposed.

HF2248—Penas (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Snowmobile metal traction device sticker fees funds allocated and money appropriated.

HF2249—Penas (R)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Organic Advisory Task Force extended.

HF2250—Moe (DFL)**Taxes**

Bemidji economic development abatement extension authorized.

HF2251—Krinkie (R)**Transportation**

Freeway transit passenger loading study provided and money appropriated.

HF2252—Opatz (DFL)**Local Government**

Central Minnesota county consolidation study and report required.

HF2253—Latz (DFL)**Local Government**

Local government meetings held by telephone or other electronic means authorized.

HF2254—Slawik (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Minnesota false claims act adopted.

HF2255—Severson (R)**Transportation**

Motor vehicle insurance company reporting requirements provided, vehicle insurance verification program and account established, database provided to identify uninsured motorists, sampling program discontinued and money appropriated.

HF2256—Solberg (DFL)**Transportation**

First hauls of manufactured wood products exempted from highway gross weight restrictions.

HF2257—Welti (DFL)**Taxes**

Feedlot environmental compliance individual income and corporate franchise tax credit provided.

HF2258—Goodwin (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Health care provider payment disclosure required.

HF2259—Goodwin (DFL)**Regulated Industries**

Phone cards required to clearly state expiration dates.

HF2260—Goodwin (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Fridley; Springbrook Nature Center redevelopment funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2261—Seifert (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Major political party definition modified related to the campaign finance public subsidy program.

HF2262—Welti (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Employee energy savings suggestions incentives provided for state agencies and higher education institutions.

HF2263—Knoblach (R)**Ways & Means**

Finance Department provisions updated.

HF2264—Knoblach (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Minneapolis Teachers Retirement Association investment in the supplemental investment fund authorized, administrative expense surcharge revised and additional funding required by members and recipients in the event of underperformance.

HF2265—Knoblach (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Children with special health needs coverage provided and money appropriated.

HF2266—Poppe (DFL)**Local Government**

Mower County alternative publications for required notices authorized.

HF2267—Jaros (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

St. Louis County easement conveyance authorized.

HF2268—Knoblach (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Local government referenda on bonding and levy questions required to be put before voters only at the general election, ballot questions regulated and reports required.

Continued from page 18


House rules allow the chief author to request the bill be returned to the House and referred to another committee or heard on the floor. The process is rarely used.

Some members feel the 24-hour rule for committee amendments, imposed by some chairs, also suppresses the process.

Most people don't see a bill until committee, and they'd like the opportunity to offer amendments and act on the bill, Rukavina said. "That's what the process is all about. That's the purpose of the committee."

Olson said he's not a fan of the 24-hour rule either, but he understands the reason behind it. "The rule is intended to get to people who bring in controversial amendments to catch people off guard."

For Davids, the responsibility of the chair is not lost on him.

"It's a great honor and responsibility to hold that gavel," he said. "The decisions we make, make a difference in people's lives." 

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MINNESOTA

I N D E X

Play Ball!

Year the Minnesota Twins were founded as the Washington Senators	1901
Team's first season in Minnesota	1961
Times the Twins have opened the regular season against Seattle	3
Years prior to 2005	1978, 1982
Team record in season openers	22-22
Air miles the team is scheduled to travel this season	30,184
Number of Twins players all-time born in Minnesota	26
Years that Herb Carneal has been the team's radio voice, including 2005	44
Managers in the history of the Minnesota Twins	12
Not including interleague or postseason games, Twins pitchers who have batted since the designated hitter began in 1973	4
Number that struck out	4
Triple plays turned in Twins history	10
Distance, in feet, of 1984 home run by Kent Hrbek in Metrodome	480
Feet short of stadium record set by Milwaukee's Ben Oglivie one year prior	1
Amount, to the nearest \$20,000, that the Twins spent lobbying the Legislature in 2004	\$340,000
In fiscal year 2003	\$960,474
Estimated 2004 net worth of Twins' Owner Carl Pohlad, in billions	\$2.3
Rank among Americans	92
Cost to build the Metrodome from 1979-82, in millions	\$68
Outdoor temperature, in degrees, the day of the first Twins regular season game in the Metrodome	28
Cubic feet of air pressure per minute needed to keep the Metrodome roof inflated	250,000
Weight of Metrodome pitching mound, in pounds	23,000
Acres of Teflon-coated fiberglass that covers the Metrodome	10
Year the latest version of the St. Paul Saints began	1993
Number of runs the Saints scored in the bottom of the ninth inning of the deciding game to become 2004 Northern League champions	7
Members of Minnesota AAU baseball	5,900
State rank	2
Year amateur baseball started in state	1857
Average for Willie Mays in 35 games with the Minneapolis Millers in 1951477
Year the Minneapolis Millerettes played in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League	1944

Sources: Minnesota Twins, including 2005 Minnesota Twins Record and Information Book; St. Paul Saints; Minnesota Youth Athletic Services; Minnesota Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame; Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board; Forbes magazine.

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