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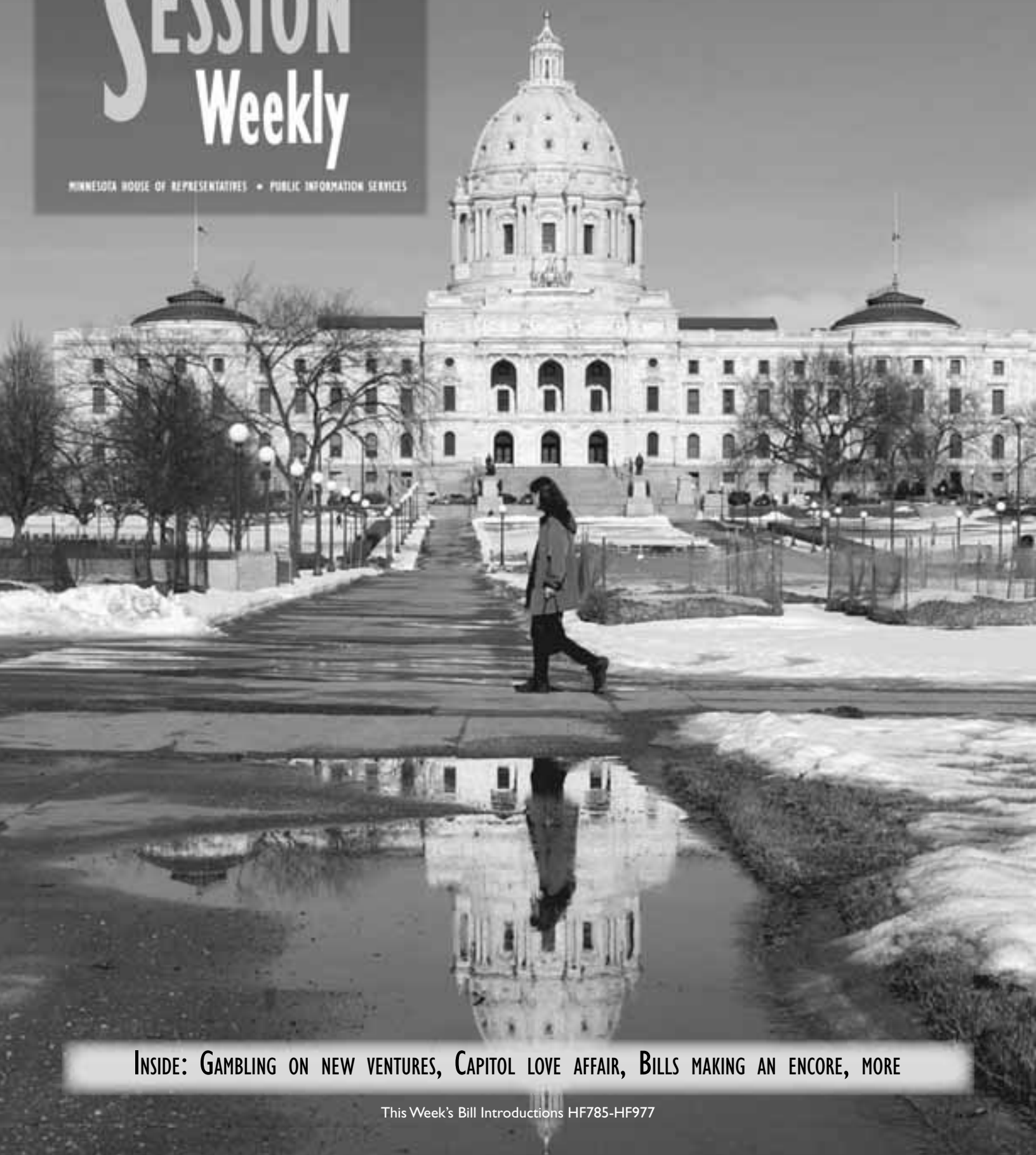
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SESSION Weekly

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

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INSIDE: GAMBLING ON NEW VENTURES, CAPITOL LOVE AFFAIR, BILLS MAKING AN ENCORE, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF785-HF977

Session Weekly

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On the cover: The Capitol is reflected in a puddle on the mall Feb. 4, a day that the temperature topped 50 degrees.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

Repeat performance

It can sometimes take many tries for an idea to become law

By Ruth Dunn

Just like The Little Engine That Could, some legislators persist in trying to get certain bills passed. It may be an uphill climb, but year after year they submit the same proposal in hopes that one day it will become law.

Bills can stall for many reasons. They might not be heard in committee – that's up to the chairperson. Even if a bill gets to the House floor, it might not be approved. Or if it is, it might be stopped by the Senate.

So why stick loyally to a bill proposal?

"Perseverance — it's the Iron Range work ethic," said Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia). "You never give up; you just keep working on something."

This is the third biennium that he has worked to pass a bill (HF238) requiring that all U.S. flags and accessories be manufactured in this country. He has also tried to amend the proposal onto numerous other bills during floor activity. "After Sept. 11, everyone was waving flags," he said. "The sad thing is that most were made overseas."

Rukavina is also passionate about raising the state's minimum wage. It hasn't been increased since 1997 although he has submitted a bill (HF48) every biennium since then. "This year it has become a popular issue. The time is right," he predicts. "If it can get to the floor, it will pass this year."

Windows of opportunity

Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie) is thinking the time may also be right for his perennial bill (HF820) on initiative and referendum that he's introduced every biennium since he was first elected in 1994. "I've always been a true believer in it," he explains.

Since he first championed the bill, Paulsen has reshaped the proposal based on success in the other 24 states that have it.

The biggest obstacle he's faced is educating legislators about his proposal. Every two years, there is a new group of legislators so every two years there must be a new education process. "People fear that the proposal would be wide

open like it is in California but that's not the case," he said.

The bill never even got a hearing for several years. Then in 1998 it passed the House with bipartisan support before hitting a roadblock in the Senate.

Paulsen sees reason for hope this year mainly because Gov. Tim Pawlenty mentioned initiative and referendum in his State of the State address. "That's a significant milestone," said Paulsen. "This could be a window of opportunity to engage the public on this issue." He met with the governor recently to talk about it and Paulsen is optimistic the proposal will be on the ballot in November 2006 as a constitutional amendment. "Then, the voters can decide."

"Anytime you try to reform government with this or other proposals like a unicameral legislature, it's not something that happens easily," he said.

This is the fourth time in five years that Rep. Mike Jaros (DFL-Duluth) has introduced a bill limiting cell phone use in cars. His current bill (HF18) requires cell phone use to be hands-free. "It's a bill that eventually will be

passed," predicts Jaros. "It's just a matter of time. First, other states will do it, then we'll do it here."

He believes public awareness is already increasing. He points to the 2004 Minnesota State Fair poll conducted by the House Public Information Services office that shows 53.7 percent of people agree that talking on a cellular phone while driving should be illegal.

"Using cell phones in vehicles is definitely dangerous. The public just needs to become more aware," he said. "We didn't used to have DWI laws until it kept getting worse and people finally saw the problem."

Stick with it

Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar) is giving up on the death penalty bill, which he carried for several years after picking up the torch when Rep. Hilda Bettermann left the House.

"It's not going anywhere. There is no appetite for it so it's time for me to move on to other bills." Last year was the best attempt with support from the governor and lots of publicity with the Dru Sjodin murder case, he said. This year, he's not even introducing the bill.

One bill he's definitely not giving up on is one he's helped promote since 1999 to protect shooting ranges from encroaching development. "We've downsized the bill and

First Reading continued on page 4



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

After several years of trying, Rep. Tom Hackbarth was able to get a bill passed last session that created a mourning dove hunting season for the first time since 1947.

First Reading continued from page 3

removed some contentious issues in hopes it will pass this year.” An avid outdoorsman, Hackbarth claims he’s not retiring until it does and jokes that could be an incentive for some to pass it. He said his latest bill would be introduced next week.

“If you feel passionate about an issue, stick with it,” advises Hackbarth. “We finally got the mourning dove season passed last year.” That’s a bill he pushed for several years and other legislators had carried since 1947. “There is great satisfaction in finally getting a bill passed.”

After surgery for ovarian cancer, Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) first sponsored a bill four years ago requiring screening for women at high risk for the disease. The proposal didn’t even get a hearing for the first three years but then the tide turned. Clark credits bipartisan support, especially from Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston), along with growing

grassroots support from the public with making the difference. The bill became law last year.

“Some bills are ahead of their time,” said Clark. “People eventually come to understand the issue and gain the courage to support it.”

Listen and learn

“Very often bills don’t pass on the first try. I’ve seen many good ideas not listened to the first time,” said Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), an 11-term member who has chaired a number of committees, including the current House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.


“A bill might not be successful on the first, second or even third time, but if it’s important to you then be persistent, keep pushing.” Once a bill has passed the House it’s often “alive for other avenues” even if it doesn’t pass the Senate, said Ozment. “I’ve seen successful outcomes

with amendments.” He knows of one legislator whose bill didn’t fly as solo legislation but got attached to five other successful bills.

Even if a bill is a long shot, proposing it will earn it exposure and will also prompt advice. “Listen to concerns; incorporate changes. When there is opposition, address it,” said Ozment.

Legislation may stall because others lack an understanding of what the bill is trying to accomplish. “Get out there and educate,” he said.

He advises legislators and constituents who are passionate about their issues to be patient. “Don’t lose your temper or get frustrated because then the focus shifts from your issue to you,” he said.

A bad attitude can stop legislation, but a positive one can propel it. Ozment said, “I’ve seen some bills that were extremely controversial in the beginning become some of the best laws in the state.” 

Capitol Love Affair

Collectors share State Capitol souvenirs in honor of centennial



The pride Minnesotans felt upon the completion of the Capitol in 1905 resulted in hundreds of souvenirs and collectible items bearing its image.

“It represented to them that Minnesota had finally come of age as a state,” said Sheila Smith, a member of the newly formed Minnesota State Capitol Collectors. “See what we have now — we’re important.”

In honor of the Capitol Centennial, the collectors will share their treasures with the public throughout the year. Look for the display cases on the first floor of the Capitol in the north wing, May 1-24 and June 26-July 10.

According to the collectors, “over 550 varied postcards and hundreds of other souvenirs in paper, metal ceramics, textile and plastic were made, sold and saved — all with the Capitol image.”

Smith’s collection began with a gift from her antique collecting husband: a 100-year-old hand mirror that bears an impression of the Capitol.

Part of her inspiration to build on the collection came from spending six years as a Senate staff member, she said. “Having an opportunity to work in the building, I appreciated its beauty every day.”

Smith has also served on the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board and now is connected with the Capitol Centennial



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The Minnesota State Capitol Collectors are scheduled to share their treasures at two shows later this year.

Commission and Friends of the Minnesota State Capitol.

Some lighthearted, some lovely, the upcoming exhibits promise to be delightful. Along with the more respectable porcelain plates and vases, the May exhibit will feature “A Different Era — of Bad Habits” focusing on smoking, drinking and vanity. “It’s hard to believe how many ashtrays have the Capitol on them,” Smith joked. Beer steins, tweezers and pill boxes will also be on display.

Smith speaks about the Capitol collection with a combination of admiration and amusement. “It’s all about having fun with the 100th birthday celebration.”

(N. WOOD)

Celebrate the Centennial by attending the unveiling of portraits of Capitol Architect Cass Gilbert and his wife, Julia Finch Gilbert, at noon Tuesday, Feb. 22. The event will take place just outside the Supreme Court Chamber on the second floor of the Capitol.

For more information about upcoming Capitol Centennial Celebration events: Minnesota Historical Society State Capitol Site, (651) 296-2881 or www.mnhs.org/places/sites/msc Minnesota State Capitol Centennial Celebration, (651) 203-7246 or www.ourhouse100.com

★ AGRICULTURE

One step closer to E20

Motor vehicle gasoline sold in Minnesota is required to contain 10 percent agriculturally derived ethanol by volume. The mandate, in place since 1997, is commonly referred to as "E10."

The House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee approved a bill (HF223/SF4*) Feb. 8 that could double the mandate. As amended, it now moves to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Sponsored by Committee Chair Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston), the bill would raise the required ethanol/gasoline blend to 20/80 by the year 2012 unless two things happen by Dec. 31, 2010: the state is already using a 20 percent ethanol blend in the gasoline supply, or federal approval has not been granted for the E20 blend.

The Senate passed the unamended measure, sponsored by Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples), Feb. 7 by a 54-12 vote.

The Minnesota Petroleum Marketers Association had expressed concerns about liability issues that could arise from a new blend. Its position is now neutral, said Executive Director Bob Krogman, after the following amendment was added: "No motor fuel ...

shall be deemed to be a defective product, nor any manufacturer of motor fueled engines be liable for warranties or repairs thereto, if the motor fuel has not been prohibited from use by the federal government."

Other provisions in the bill would create a state petroleum replacement goal for at least 20 percent of the liquid fuel sold in the state to be derived from renewable sources by Dec. 31, 2015.

The Agriculture Department, in consultation with the Commerce Department and Pollution Control Agency, is directed to "identify and implement activities necessary for the widespread use of renewable liquid fuels in the state." Those activities could include developing retailer incentives to install renewable fuel dispensing equipment and working to maintain an affordable retail price for liquid fuels.

Extending farmer assistance program

The year 1986 was a turbulent one for Minnesota farmers. Commodity prices were low, interest rates were high and a record number of farmers were facing foreclosures.

Those were the circumstances under which the Legislature created the Farmer-Lender Mediation Program. Lawmakers set a sunset date of July 1, 1988, and the program has been

extended 12 times since then.

The program is set to expire July 1, 2005.

HF426, sponsored by Rep. Maxine Penas (R-Badger), would again extend the program, this time through June 30, 2009.

The House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee approved the measure Feb. 9. It now moves to the House floor.

The program is operated through the University of Minnesota Extension Service with significant support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It offers farmers and creditors the chance to resolve debt issues through mediation rather than litigation. Under certain circumstances it is mandatory for a creditor to offer the mediation option. Farmers are not obligated to accept.

Mary Nell Preisler, mediation program director, said the number of cases in 2004 was 1,270 at an average cost per case of \$274.

"This seems like an extremely cost-efficient way to support family farms in Minnesota," said Rep. Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji).

John Apitz, an attorney representing Farm Credit Services, opposed the bill on the grounds that interfering in lender-borrower relations could violate the Minnesota Constitution.

Art. 1 Sec. 11 of the Constitution reads: "No bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or any law impairing the obligation of contracts shall be passed, and no conviction shall work corruption of blood or forfeiture of estate."

The program was created during an agricultural economic crisis, Apitz said, in part to prevent civil unrest and protect the state's economic interest. "But today is not that era," he said. "The conditions in the state have changed dramatically."

A companion bill (SF550), sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), awaits action on the Senate floor.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Ward Formo, right, project manager with the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, tells the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee Feb. 8 that there will be plenty of corn for the livestock growers even with the increase of ethanol in gasoline. Brad Nelson, left, president of the Minnesota Ethanol Producers Association, also appeared before the committee.



For information on a proposal for funding a feasibility study on constructing a rail container facility in Willmar, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>

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

Recovering attorney's fees

Funeral homes would have a greater chance of recouping attorney's fees in conciliation court if HF128, sponsored by Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton), becomes law.

Wes Siemers, a funeral director from Milaca, told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee Feb. 7 that many rural funeral directors do business on a handshake, but sometimes those handshake contracts leave them empty-handed. They end up hiring an attorney and going to court in an attempt to recover their costs.

"You know the deceased and their family, and operate on trust that you will get paid," Siemers testified.

He said that even if there is a written contract, and those owing the money are brought to conciliation court, funeral homes seem to have little success in having judges award attorney's fees.

"A lot of times the judge will hear sympathetic excuses ... we haven't had a lot of luck collecting these fees," Siemers said.

Under Erickson's bill, if a funeral provider is allowed to recover fees through court action, the provider may be able to recoup reasonable attorney's fees as well. That provision is not currently spelled out in state statute.

Erickson proposed similar legislation last year, which was passed by the House, but not considered by the Senate.

She asked that language in her bill be amended to correspond with that being considered in SF287, sponsored by Sen. Betsy Wergin (R-Princeton). That bill awaits action on the Senate floor. Erickson's bill now awaits action on the House floor.

Liquor license restriction

Jeffrey Huff quit his job five months ago to start a wine shop near the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. He discovered, however, that he couldn't obtain the liquor license.

Current law does not allow off-sale liquor licenses within one-half mile of the campus, which meant Huff couldn't get a license and open his doors for business.

But the House Regulated Industries Committee approved a bill Feb. 9 that would change that. It now awaits action on the House floor.

Sponsored by Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) and Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), HF155/SF206* would authorize St. Paul to issue the license in proximity to the college. The St. Paul City Council has already approved the license.

"We're asking for a random act of kindness," Hausman said.

The Senate passed the bill 59-0 Jan. 27.

"We'd like to get this passed so this man can get on with his business," said Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake), the committee chair.

"I'll be able to open my business and get on with my life and make money," Huff said. "This will bring a good thing to St. Anthony Park."

CONSUMERS

Another round

An omnibus liquor bill made its way through committee and was referred to the House floor by the House Regulated Industries Committee Feb. 9.

A nearly identical bill cleared both the House and Senate last year, only to be rejected by the governor.

Rep. Joe Hoppe (R-Chaska), the sponsor of HF286, said the provision the governor objected to last year, concerning the sale of alcohol in the city of Walker, has been removed from the bill.

"This bill is completely non-controversial," Hoppe said. "We want to make life easier with less regulation for people."

He said the bill would provide conformity in license fees and production levels for brewpubs and small brewers, authorize temporary licenses to small brewers, and modify other municipal licenses.

In addition to allowing the issuance of liquor licenses in St. Paul for special events at the State Capitol and Duluth for Wade Municipal Stadium, the bill would also permit Elko Speedway to sell liquor seven days a week, permit Manning's Café in Minneapolis to be issued an intoxicating liquor license and transfer from St. Paul to Ramsey County the authority to issue licenses to state fair vendors to sell Minnesota-produced wine.

A Senate companion (SF171), sponsored by Sen. Sandra Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the full Senate.

EDUCATION

Problem buses

A school bus overturned in Florida in 2003 and brought to light a defect in buses made by Carpenter Manufacturing Company. Upon impact, defective welds failed resulting in the collapse of the bus roof to seat level — a potentially dangerous situation.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration investigated the accident and ordered safety recalls.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, 40 school districts in Minnesota currently have about 115 defective Carpenter buses in their fleets.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety ordered that all defective school buses be taken out of service until recommended repairs were completed. A certified welder was required to repair the welds. But even after repairs, the recommendation was that the buses should be used only on a limited basis and should not be driven over 45 mph.

Usually when a vehicle defect is discovered, the manufacturer is liable. But in this case Carpenter went out of business in 1995.

Two bills heard by the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 9 would provide money to school districts to partially pay the costs of replacing each defective bus, many of which are old and have dropped in value. "The bills are similar but with a twist," according to Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior), the committee chair.

Both bills would provide about \$30,000 to replace each defective bus and would also reimburse districts that have already replaced buses. The bills differ only in the strategies for getting money to the school districts.

Under HF579, sponsored by Rep. Maxine Penas (R-Badger), the state would provide \$3.6 million for a loan program to districts. In turn, the districts could levy locally, over four years, to pay back the money. Penas said her proposal would accelerate getting money to the school districts because they are eager to replace the buses. "You can't go 45 mph forever," she said.

Under HF251, sponsored by Rep. Bernard Lieder (DFL-Crookston), school districts would be able to use the health and safety levy, often used for items like asbestos removal, to replace buses. Lieder said the advantage of his proposal is that it uses an existing process.

Both bills will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus finance bill. A similar bill was approved last year and included in the tax bill that was never approved.

A companion to Penas' bill (SF624), sponsored by Senate President James Metzen (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee, as does a companion to Lieder's bill (SF338), sponsored by Sen. LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Plummer).

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

Early childhood funding

With four children under the age of 5, Carolina and Greg Olson of North St. Paul turned to their school district's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program for information and support in their new role as parents.

"ECFE was like a second family to us, a support system," said Greg Olson.

Guatemala native Carolina was a stay-at-home mom who was new to this country and didn't speak much English. Through her involvement, Carolina said, "I am a more confident parent, I am more positive with my kids and I have a better understanding of their behavior."

Many families like the Olsons are involved in ECFE programs around the state. In 2003, the Legislature changed the state funding formula for ECFE from \$120 to \$96 times a school district's population of children under age 5.

Sue Stoner, family education coordinator for the Mounds View School District, said that funding reductions resulted in cuts in staff and programming. ECFE is important, she said, because babies don't come with instruction manuals.

The House Education Finance Committee considered two bills Feb. 9 that would restore the funding. Each will be considered for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus finance bill.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Leah Auckenthaler of Minneapolis holds her 8-month-old son, Jonathan, who participates in the Southwest Minneapolis ECFE program, during a hearing of the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 9. The committee heard two bills to restore funding for Early Childhood and Family Education programs.

HF58, sponsored by Rep. Char Samuelson (R-New Brighton), and HF152, sponsored by Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood), would both restore funding beginning in fiscal year 2006 by changing the formula back to \$120.

"With these two bills before us we have a chance to restore funding and undo a terrible wrong," said Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville). "I hope we will continue the bipartisan-ship that we have with these two authors."

Greiling said some people listed among sponsors of the bills actually voted in favor of the cuts last year. "People spoke out, people changed minds and came forward with restoring legislation."

ECFE is commonly offered through the community education programs of school districts. Parents involved in the program also pay fees for classes and activities based on their family income.

A district without students

Prinsburg School District 815 is one of only two public school districts in the state that does not have students.

Prinsburg, located southwest of Willmar, and Franconia (near Taylors Falls) are the state's only remaining common school districts. There used to be many common school districts that offered a limited educational program, usually just an elementary school. Most of the common school districts converted to being independent school districts when they added junior highs, middle schools or high schools.

Most school age Prinsburg children attend a private religious school, Central Minnesota Christian School, operated by the Dutch Reform Church. About 30 students within the boundaries of the Prinsburg School District attend nearby MACCRAY Public Schools through open enrollment.

The Prinsburg School District receives no state aid because aid is based on student enrollment. Residents approved a levy referendum in November but it needs legislative action to become reality.

The school district wants to raise money for two reasons, Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar), the sponsor of HF248, told the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 8.

Prinsburg owes about \$280,000 to the MACCRAY School District for tuition for Prinsburg students who attended MACCRAY through an informal arrangement that was in place before the districts entered a more formal open enrollment process.

Also, the Prinsburg School District will use the money to provide special education services to students at the private school. Residents prefer those services be offered

in Prinsburg rather than busing students to MACCRAY.

Legislators asked why District 815 wants to continue to exist rather than merge with another district.

Juhnke said there has been ongoing discussions about consolidation but nothing has come of it. In addition, he added, "In rural areas, schools are a source of pride. The 500 or 600 residents of Prinsburg want to preserve the school district. That may sound sappy, but that's the way it is."

Committee members approved HF248 and referred it to the House Taxes Committee. A companion bill (SF485), sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson (DFL-Willmar), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

A similar bill was recommended last year and was included in the final tax bill of both bodies, which never received final approval.

ELECTIONS



For information on a tabled proposal to help prosecutors follow up on reports of theft of campaign funds, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

ENERGY



Biomass-fueled systems

The farming and logging industries are looking to use their by-products, cornhusks, wood residue and waste woods to create a new energy source.

A bill (HF456), sponsored by Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover), would provide \$1 million to pay for a feasibility study that could lead to the creation of four to five biomass-fueled heating and cooling systems, which could be used to heat municipal, state college or university buildings.

The bill was heard Feb. 3 in the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's bonding resolution.

The dependence on foreign oil puts Minnesotans in a vulnerable position, said former House Speaker Dee Long, now tax and incentive program director for Minnesotans for an Energy Efficient Economy. "Our reliance on energy sources, imported from other states or countries, has put communities in a vulnerable position in terms of national energy market price fluctuations and makes us dependent on non-renewable fossil fuels," she said.

Long said the St. Paul District Energy's wood waste-fueled plant heats and cools much of downtown St. Paul, including the State Capitol. She called it, "the poster child for a successful joint application of biomass and community energy systems."

The bill states that the fuel source for the projects must be sustainable biomass. Both existing and new energy systems would be eligible to apply. Projects converting to cogeneration and projects seeking matching funds would be given top priority.

A companion bill (SF311), sponsored by Sen. Richard Cohen (DFL-St. Paul), has been referred to the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Investing in ag and the environment

The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee finalized a bonding proposal Feb. 3 that would direct nearly \$170 million in capital investment toward the state's agricultural and environmental efforts.

Activities that would be funded include flood control, critical habitat acquisition and closed landfill improvements. Capital investment dollars would support affordable loan programs for farmers and grants to help cities, counties, solid waste management districts and sanitary districts implement integrated solid waste management systems.

The request matches the bottom line of the governor's recommendations with a few shifts in priorities. It now moves to the House Capital Investment Committee.

The Department of Natural Resources would receive the largest portion, \$71.95 million. Budget items would include \$21 million for flood hazard mitigation grant projects, \$12 million for wildlife area acquisition and \$8.4 million for state and local trail acquisition. The department's capital investment outlays also would include water access and fishing pier projects, stream protection and a grant to the Lake Superior Zoo in Duluth.

The Minnesota Zoological Gardens would receive \$28.51 million. Of that, \$20.64 million would be used for new exhibits, \$6 million for asset preservation and about \$1.87 million beginning in fiscal year 2006 as the state assumes debt service on the zoo's marine education center.

Other appropriations would include:

- Board of Water and Soil Resources, \$27.36 million;
- Department of Agriculture, \$18.82 million;
- Pollution Control Agency, \$14 million;

- Metropolitan Council (Regional Parks and Como Zoo), \$5 million; and
- Office of Environmental Assistance, \$4 million.

Two notable differences between the committee recommendation and SF1, sponsored by Sen. Keith Langseth (DFL-Glyndon), that was passed by the Senate Jan. 24, are the Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota Zoo appropriations. The Senate would fund them at \$117.8 million and \$12 million, respectively.

★ GAME & FISH

Shhhh! ... Wildlife control at work

Federal, state, tribal and local peace officers would have the option of using silencers to muffle firearms discharged for wildlife control purposes, under a bill (HF42) approved by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee Feb. 3.

Silencers are already legal for peace officers to use in tactical emergency response operations against criminal activity.

Sponsored by Rep. Larry Howes (R-Walker), the bill now moves to the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee.

As a precursor to discussion of the silencer bill, the Department of Natural Resources presented an overview of trouble on Minnesota's lakes caused by double-breasted cormorants, a swimming bird that dives into water after fish. The state's aquaculture industry is concerned about the cormorant population negatively impacting fish resources. Natural resources officials have identified a problem on Leech Lake with cormorants encroaching on the nesting areas of the threatened common terns.

The silencer bill is not directed solely toward cormorant control. It would give natural resources management agencies a more effective control method for many wildlife populations, proponents said.

A companion bill (SF149), sponsored by Sen. Carrie Ruud (R-Breezy Point), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Taking the trailer

Boaters who have too much to drink behind the wheel could see their trailers towed away along with their boats, under a bill (HF215) approved by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee Feb. 3.

It now moves to the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Tony Cornish

(R-Good Thunder), the bill would add trailers to the approved list of vehicles subject to seizure and forfeiture by the Department of Natural Resources because of a Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) arrest.

Boats come in so many different sizes that it's a challenge to always have the appropriate trailer on hand, enforcement officials said.

Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake) objected to adding one more item of value to the forfeiture list that the offender could potentially sell.

"No one hates forfeiture more than I do, I'll tell you that right now, but I think this is a common sense issue," said Committee Chair Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar).

Other provisions in the bill would authorize the department to run criminal background checks on volunteer instructors who work with children and change a requirement that firearms safety courses be conducted in every school district.

A companion bill (SF569), sponsored by Sen. Satveer Chaudhary (DFL-Fridley), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

★ GOVERNMENT

Legislative redistricting

It was the House Civil Law and Elections Committee's turn on Feb. 9 to review a proposal to realign legislative districts and reduce House and Senate membership — something that at least one rural legislator said may not best serve his constituents.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), HF515 calls for legislative districts to be realigned by 2013 and for the size of the Legislature to decrease. It would also prevent congressional districts from crossing Senate districts.

The bill would reduce the number of senators from 67 to between 60 and 64, and House members from 134 to between 120 to 128. The number of senators must be evenly divisible by the number of Minnesota representatives in Congress.

Supporters said it can be confusing for constituents, especially when several congressional districts can be in one House district. Because of fewer legislators, Rep. Peter Nelson (R-Lindstrom) is concerned that realignment may "move people further away from their government."

He spoke of when his father was a legislator and how his Senate district went from Anoka to 30 miles south of Duluth. Nelson pointed to how difficult it is to be "pulled by the needs and wants" of such varied constituencies. "It is

kind of nice to pick up your phone and know your legislator and when you talk about an issue, they know what you are talking about.”

The bill, while not unanimous in its approval, now moves to the House floor.

A companion bill (SF291), sponsored by Sen. Pat Pariseau (R-Farmington), is awaiting action on the Senate floor.



For information on how municipalities, constituents and businesses are affected financially as they try to comply with state agency rules, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ HEALTH

Savings account advancement

Identical bills calling for consumer-driven health plans have been referred to their second committee in two weeks.

The bills would give health savings accounts (HSAs) the same tax advantages under state tax law that they have under federal tax law where contributions, earnings and withdrawals are tax-free.

“HSAs encourage individuals to buy health plans that better suit their needs so that insurance kicks in only when it is truly needed,” Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) said in a written document provided to the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee Feb. 8. “Individuals will make cost-conscious decisions if they are spending their own money rather than that of a third party.”

Wilkin is sponsoring HF9 and Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud) is sponsoring HF135. Both bills were referred to the House Taxes Committee.

A health savings account, when paired with a high deductible health plan, forms a consumer-driven health plan.

Since the accounts belong to individuals, they can be carried from job to job until retirement. They can be used during retirement to pay for retiree health care, Medicare expenses and prescription drugs.

Advocates say these plans offer more choices and more savings.

“What employers are really looking for in the marketplace are options,” said Carolyn Jones, director of health care and transportation policy for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

If Minnesota does not adopt federal conformity, it would increase the cost of doing business in Minnesota relative to states that have, Wilkin said. Only nine states, including Minnesota, that tax income have not

CRIME VICTIMS SUPPORT



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Jill Fazio of Someplace Safe in Fergus Falls awaits the start of the Minnesota General Crime Victims Coalition's rally in the Capitol Rotunda Feb 9. Someplace Safe provides support for the walk-in advocacy services available to area women who are victims of domestic abuse. The program also offers services to victims of general crime and sexual assault.

conformed to the federal standards.

The bills would make the income tax treatment of health savings accounts retroactive to Jan. 1, 2004.

The Senate companion bill for Wilkin's bill (SF99), sponsored by Sen. Brian LeClair (R-Woodbury), was approved by one committee and awaits action in the Senate Tax Committee. The companion bill to Knoblach's bill (SF194), sponsored by Sen. Mady Reiter (R-Shoreview), has been referred to the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.



For information on a bill seeking technical adjustments to the Hospice Bill of Rights making it easier to understand, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ HIGHER EDUCATION

Charting a course

Minnesota needs a new strategic vision for higher education.

So says a November 2004 Citizen's League Report on higher education in Minnesota, the findings which were shared Feb. 9 with the House Higher Education Finance Committee.

“Maintaining our quality of life and our economic success will require setting new and higher expectations for higher education achievement and recognizing that this education will need to be provided in new and innovative settings,” according to the report.

The 33-member task force took six months to research and compile its findings. The report can be accessed at: <http://www.citizensleague.net>.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Students from Minnesota colleges and universities wear their message for a tuition freeze during a rally on the State Capitol steps Feb. 9. Students, from left, Tim Donahue from Winona State University, Elizabeth Nyberg from Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Caitlin Payton from St. Paul College, Dawn Meyers from Northwest Technical College-Bemidji and Michelle Nyman and Tom Bergstrom of Minnesota State University, Mankato.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Dr. David Agerter, chair of the Mayo Clinic Department of Family Medicine, presents an overview of the Mayo Medical School and two family residency programs during the Feb. 7 meeting of the House Higher Education Finance Committee.

Among its recommendations are:

- expectations should be raised so a minimum level of academic achievement for Minnesotans is at least two years of post-high school education;
- Minnesota should expand its investment in improving the coordination and expansion of college readiness and access programs;
- the Higher Education Services Office Board should be replaced with a Higher Education Performance Council, whose mission would be to monitor and maximize the results Minnesotans are receiving for their annual investment in higher education; and
- annual report cards should be created to detail the strengths and weaknesses of higher education providers.

"There really is no report card on what the outcomes are on places receiving state money," said Vance Opperman, who co-chaired the task force with Rondi Erickson.

The report also found some troubling trends even before students begin college:

- fewer high school students are taking higher level math and science classes,
- more than 30 percent of state high school graduates need remedial college classes, and
- the percentage of Minnesotans ages 18-24 enrolled in higher education but not yet graduated dropped from 43 percent to 36 percent between 1992 and 2002.

"We can't sustain our quality of life under the current situation and we can't compete as well globally," Erickson said. "We must have a highly educated workforce in Minnesota for

the state to move forward."

The report does not address closing any campuses. It was task force members' beliefs that answering that topic is dependent on a new strategic vision for higher education.

Physician training

Mayo Foundation representatives came to the House Higher Education Finance Committee Feb. 7 seeking support for the governor's budget proposal calling for nearly \$2.8 million to fund three programs that focus on keeping doctors in the state and, in particular, rural areas.

The foundation is receiving state dollars for the same amount during the current biennium. "Current funding allows for the continuation of high quality education at Mayo which benefits all Minnesotans," said Dr. David Agerter, chair of the Mayo Clinic Department of Family Medicine.

The foundation receives state dollars for Minnesota students participating in three programs: the Mayo Medical School and family residency programs in Rochester and St. Cloud.

At both family residency programs, physicians are trained to meet the needs of rural Minnesota, which Agerter defined as areas of 10,000 persons or fewer.

The 24 students in the Rochester program practice at a clinic in Kasson, 14 miles away. "We are the only physicians in that particular county," Agerter said. "Last year we had 68,000 outpatient visits, many of them for under-insured or uninsured patients. We also

take care of five nursing homes and provide support for five rural ambulance services."

Since the Rochester program began 23 years ago, every spot has been filled, as is the case at the St. Cloud program that began in 1996.

He said that 54 percent of Rochester graduates practice in the state, 23 percent in rural areas.

Sixty-eight percent of those graduating from the St. Cloud program remain in the state, with 60 percent practicing in rural areas. "Very few of our graduates that have gone into a smaller community have chosen to leave," Agerter said.

The Mayo Medical School is the most competitive school for admissions in the country, Agerter said, with 3,000 annual applicants for 40 admissions.

"What's interesting, is that a large clinic like Mayo is on the cutting edge of new technology, yet 55 percent of those students opt to go into primary care: family medicine, general internal medicine and general pediatrics," Agerter said. Seventy percent of the school's graduates enter practice in Minnesota.

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.

HUMAN SERVICES

Parental fees modification

Financial relief could be on the way for parents of children with disabilities.

A bill (HF619) being sponsored by Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester) would modify the sliding scale for parental fees for the cost of services for children with disabilities. The modification would impact parents in certain income ranges.

"I hope we as a committee will do all we can to help these people," Bradley told the House Health Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 9. He chairs the committee.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Jessica Wilson of Sartell holds her 15-month-old son, Lars, as she testifies Feb. 9 before the House Health Policy and Finance Committee in support of a bill that would modify parental contributions for the cost of services for children with disabilities.

Steve Larson, executive director for The Arc of Minnesota, called the fee increases approved by the 2003 Legislature "dramatic" and said they are adversely affecting families.

"Parents of children with disabilities who are on medical assistance received substantial increases in their fees; some increases ranged from 200 percent to 700 percent," Larson said. "The fee increases have jeopardized the ability of many families to stay on the medical assistance program or provide for the needs of other family members."

Jessica Wilson said the increases caused her family to cancel its supplemental insurance. The parental premium fees in 2003 were \$157 a month. This year, they would have been more than \$500 a month, she said.

Their 15-month-old son, Lars, was born with Spina Bifida, and he's already had six surgeries, Wilson said. Last year, they spent \$7,500 in out-of-pocket medical expenses and logged 13,000 miles driving to hospitals. Audience members wept as she testified with Lars sitting on her lap.

"If the program fees continue to increase or the program is not available, I don't know how we'll be able to afford the rising medical costs," Wilson said. "We need the parental fee programs to be accessible and affordable for all who need and depend on them."

The committee held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. Its Senate companion (SF726), sponsored by Sen. Brian LeClair (R-Woodbury), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

INSURANCE

One more health alternative

More health care providers in Minnesota would create competition and drive down the cost of health coverage under a bill that would permit service cooperatives to provide group health coverage to private employers.

HF563, sponsored by Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud), would allow the cooperatives to create and manage one or more group health coverage pools for private employers. The pools could be fully insured or self-insured.

"In this era of skyrocketing health care costs, this bill provides one additional alternative," Knoblach told the House Health Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 9. "We have very few health care providers in this state."

The bill, which would be effective immediately, would require pools to permit the sale of its products by licensed insurance agents. Service cooperatives would be prohibited from covering both public and private employers in the same pool.

Paul Brinkman, executive director for the Northeast Service Cooperative, said the cooperatives are competitive and membership is voluntary.

"People only join when they see a value in membership," Brinkman said.

The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee. It has no Senate companion.

HUMAN SERVICES BUDGET OVERVIEW



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Department of Human Services Budget Director Jane Hardwick and Commissioner Kevin Goodno present the governor's 2006-07 agency budget proposal during the Feb. 8 meeting of the House Health Policy and Finance Committee.

LAW



Initiative and referendum

A bill giving voters the opportunity to decide on a process that would let them enact laws and repeal old ones without legislative approval was approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 9.

Minnesotans would appreciate the “opportunity for people to weigh in,” said House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie) of the process known as initiative and referendum.

He sponsors HF820 that advocates changing the state constitution to allow for the process. The proposed constitutional amendment would be before state voters in the 2006 general election.

Under the bill, proposals from voters to initiate or repeal a law would require 5 percent of registered voters who cast ballots in the previous gubernatorial election. Constitutional changes would require 8 percent of the registered voters in the previous gubernatorial election in each of the three-quarters of the congressional districts, and the state as a whole.

Paulsen said the process has been shown to increase voter turnout when a state has the option for initiative and referendum, and brings more accountability to government.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) said the legislation only requires the Office of the Secretary of State to publish an online voter's guide that would include: ballot text, ballot question and the sponsor's mailing address for proposals. Unless broadband Internet service becomes available statewide, the requirement is “geographical unfairness,” she said.

The bill next moves to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee.

A Senate companion, SF90, sponsored by Sen. Dave Kleis (R-St. Cloud) awaits action in the Senate Elections Committee.

To have and to hold

If you file bankruptcy, you may be able to keep your wedding ring off the hands of your creditors, under a bill (HF473) sponsored by Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake).

Olson is asking to protect, in bankruptcy proceedings, wedding rings in the possession of the debtor, with a cumulative value of no more than \$1,225.

He told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee Feb. 9 the bill's intent is to “create a modest exemption” so that rings aren't taken as part of a settlement.

The bill would extend the current

protection offered to debtors, which now includes clothes and household furniture, which in totality cannot exceed \$4,500 in value.

Under current law a ring of any value can be taken in bankruptcy court, said Olson. He told of an attorney who described the emotional situation that people face when they are forced to hand over their rings.

Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake) presented a scenario in which a person might become divorced, remarried, keeps both rings and later files bankruptcy. He wanted to know if both rings are exempt, because they are wedding rings.

Olson said that it could be argued that if the cumulative value of the rings is no more than \$1,225 both rings could be retained. “What the court would decide I don't know,” he said.

Olson said the bill would cover lower income people, and has been told by attorneys that this figure would apply to most bankruptcies.

The bill was approved by the committee and sent to the House floor.

A companion bill (SF288), sponsored by Sen. Betsy Wergin (R-Princeton), awaits action by the full Senate.



As part of the state's 1998 settlement with tobacco companies, \$200 million went to a private nonprofit to distribute. Several lawmakers believe the funds should have been appropriated by the Legislature instead. For information on a bill that addresses the issue, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



No time extension

A bill that would have extended the ability for cities and townships with populations of less than 10,000 to review certain applications over a 90-day period, instead of the current 60 days, failed in the House Local Government Committee Feb. 9.

Sponsored by Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth), HF568 would have given small cities and towns additional time they currently lack because of small staff and infrequent meetings, he said.

In 1995, the Legislature enacted the so-called “60-day rule” that requires governmental entities to approve or deny a written request for certain regulatory actions within 60 days or the request is approved, according to a nonpartisan

House Research publication.

According to the bill, a request means “a written application related to zoning, septic systems, or the expansion of the metropolitan urban service area, for a permit, license, or other governmental approval of an action.”

Townships can currently apply for a 60-day extension with a written notice of why the extension is needed. Fewer extensions would occur with a 90-day period by “giving them more accommodations under their meeting schedules,” said Kent Sulem, an attorney with the Minnesota Association of Townships.

Current law provides accountability for both governmental entities and those submitting applications, said Rep. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Joseph). Many of the issues can be addressed in the 60-day time frame, he added.

A Senate companion, SF323, sponsored by Sen. Thomas Neuville (R-Northfield), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

METRO AFFAIRS



Elected members

Metropolitan Council members may soon find themselves campaigning for their seats on the regional planning entity.

“It has significant taxing authority, and so, therefore, a government entity with this much responsibility and this large, I believe needs and deserves to be elected in order to have the legitimacy to carry out its very important mission,” said Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls).

A former council member, Hornstein is sponsoring HF558 that would require the 16-member board to be elected to four-year terms, with a chair elected from among members to a one-year term, beginning with the primary in 2006. Members are currently appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Under the bill, there must be a new election of all members at the first election following redistricting every 10 years. Members from odd-numbered districts would serve an initial term of two years.

The bill also requires a feasibility study on transferring functions or services from counties to the council. The report would be due to the Legislature by Dec. 31, 2006.

Created by the Legislature in 1967, the council is responsible for regional planning in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It oversees the regional bus system, wastewater collection and treatment facilities, and Metro Mobility, a transit operation that serves senior citizens

and people with disabilities. With a budget of more than \$600 million, it's the third largest level of government in the state, behind the state itself and Hennepin County.

Rep. Neil W. Peterson (R-Bloomington), also a former Met Council member, voted against the measure. "Election doesn't necessarily mean quality," he said. When you look at the history of members, "these people have great pedigrees in public policy and public organization, and they know these communities. The electorate, many times, does not select the same quality of people that the appointment process does."

The bill was approved on a 12-5 roll-call vote by the House Local Government Committee and referred to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee.

A Senate companion, SF420, sponsored by Sen. Charles Wiger (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

★ RECREATION

★ Money for hockey

When leaking propane from a Zamboni led to an explosion during a broomball game at Duluth's Peterson Arena Dec. 19, the ensuing fire gutted the building. There were 30 people in the city-owned building at the time, and one person was hurt.

With only one other indoor youth hockey arena in Duluth, the incident forced Duluth Hockey Association officials to scramble for ice time, and begin fund-raising efforts for a new arena.

Hockey boosters believe they can raise half of the \$3.4 million needed for a new arena from local contributors and the insurance settlement.

HF636, sponsored by Rep. Mike Jaros (DFL-Duluth), would provide the additional \$1.7 million. The bill was heard Feb. 3 in the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's bonding resolution.

"I call it an emergency bill," Jaros said.

According to Clarke Coole, executive director of the Duluth Amateur Hockey Association, almost 30,000 people used the facility in 2004, and it regularly hosted statewide broomball and hockey events. A 1998 study indicated arena activity contributed approximately \$11 million to the local economy. That number has increased since then, Coole said.

"In our view, this bill will not only provide opportunities for the children of Minnesota, but will also contribute greatly to the economic development of West Duluth and the

city of Duluth as a whole," Coole said.

A companion measure (SF600), sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettnier Solon (DFL-Duluth), has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

★ TOURISM

★ Longer summers requested

If some resort owners get their way, students will have their summer vacations extended.

Testifying before the Tourism Division of the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee Feb. 9, resort owners said that prohibiting schools from starting before Labor Day would provide a much-needed longer vacation season. Several dozen supporters, all wearing orange life preservers, filled the room for the testimony. The division took no action.

Mary Jane Keller, who owns Brookside Resort in Park Rapids with her husband, Dave, said schools and school sporting events are starting earlier in the year, which impacts the resort industry.

"The window of time to vacation is getting smaller and smaller," she said. "Starting school after Labor Day would lengthen the season."

Keller also noted that resorts employ high school students, so a later school start date would allow students to earn more money.

Jennifer Bateman, owner of Two Inlets Resort in Park Rapids with her husband, Bob, said the number of resorts in Minnesota has shrunk from about 4,000 in the 1990s to 980 today. A longer season would allow resorts to make more money and stay in business.

"We're not asking you to save us,"

Bateman said. "We're asking you to help preserve Minnesota resorts."

Resorts contribute nearly \$11 million in taxes to Minnesota in addition to supporting local economies, said John Edman, director of Explore Minnesota.

"The Minnesota resort experience is what differentiates us from the rest of the country," Edman said. "Resorts offer people an experience they couldn't otherwise enjoy."

Jerry Hammer, general manager of the Minnesota State Fair, also supports delaying the start of schools until after Labor Day so they won't compete with the fair. He said the later opening wouldn't hinder children's education.

"Education is what the fair is all about," Hammer said. "A trip to the fair is like 100 field trips rolled into one as far as educational value."

A bill (HF205), sponsored by Rep. Larry Howes (R-Walker), would prohibit the school year from starting before Labor Day. It awaits action in the House Education Policy and Reform Committee. Its Senate companion (SF307), sponsored by Sen. Carrie Ruud (R-Breezy Point), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

★ TAXES

★ Long-term care credits

A bill to increase the maximum allowable credit for long-term care insurance premiums was approved by the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee Feb. 8.

The tax credit would help people plan for long-term care by offsetting expenses, said



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Observers in the hearing room don life vests to illustrate their cause during a presentation by the Congress of Minnesota Resorts on tourism in small-sized markets at the Feb. 9 meeting of the Tourism Division of the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee.

Rep. Kurt Zellers (R-Maple Grove), sponsor of HF309.

"This bill encourages people to do the right thing for their families," Zellers said. "This helps prevent the unexpected."

Zellers said his family has had a farm in North Dakota for more than a century. When a relative needed long-term care, the insurance covered the costs. If not for the insurance, Zellers said they would have been forced to sell land or put a lien on the farm to cover the long-term care expenses.

Current law in Minnesota allows a credit against the state income tax for paying long-term care insurance premiums. That credit is equal to 25 percent of the premiums' costs if they are not used as an itemized deduction. The bill would increase the maximum allowable credit from \$100 to \$500 for an individual return and from \$200 to \$1,000 for a married couple filing jointly.

The committee referred the bill to the House Taxes Committee. The Senate companion (SF125), sponsored by Sen. Brian LeClair (R-Woodbury), awaits action in the Senate Tax Committee.

★ TRANSPORTATION

Signs for rural areas

There are 56,000 miles of rural roads in the state's unincorporated areas, and tens of thousands of road signs to help keep motorists safe.

Many of those signs were installed in the mid-1980s and need to be replaced, but there is no program for the maintenance, improvement and replacement of those signs, said David Fricke, executive director of the Minnesota Association of Townships.

The organization, which spends more than half of its time on transportation issues, is asking the Minnesota Department of Transportation to implement a pilot program that would provide for the ongoing maintenance of road signs in the state's unincorporated areas.

HF276, sponsored by Rep. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton), seeks \$6 million to help the department develop a program that would count all the town road signs, make sure they adhere to applicable federal, state and local standards, replace those that don't and establish an ongoing maintenance program. The allocation could be used as a match to federal dollars.

The bill was heard in the House Transportation Finance Committee Feb. 8 and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

"It's been an ongoing issue for a number of years," Fricke said.

No one was responsible for township road signs, Fricke said, until a federal program was implemented in the mid-1980s to replace deficient township road signs.

According to Fricke, there is no program for the regular maintenance and replacement of township road signs. And townships don't have the money.

He said that if the program is approved, the towns could update and keep a better record of their signs, and make needed replacements quicker. This will make Minnesota's rural roads safer, he said; adding that in 2002, there were 50 traffic fatalities on rural two-lane roads and 217 accidents where the victim sustained severe injuries.

A companion bill, SF377, sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

Utility fee bill to wait

A bill that would allow cities to impose utility fees on property owners was tabled Feb. 9 at a joint meeting of the House Transportation and Transportation Finance committees.

HF313, sponsored by Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls), would permit cities to impose street utility fees on properties based on the number of trips their land generates.

In order for the cities to impose the utility fee, an ordinance would have to be approved by two-thirds of the city council. The city must have a master plan for street reconstruction and maintenance. Property owners would be allowed to appeal their fee to district court.

Currently, when streets in cities need to be repaired, property owners in the area are assessed. Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) said that isn't always fair, because the costs are borne by the property owners in the immediate area, when drivers from the entire city and elsewhere often use the streets.

"This is an attempt to get it off the property tax system and make it a user fee," she said.

Judy Johnson, Plymouth mayor and president of the League of Minnesota Cities agreed. "We know that there's an effort that will continue to take away local control. There are no more revenues. The roads don't know they aren't deteriorating faster than the rate of inflation. It's a much more equitable way to spread the cost," she said.

"We see this as an end run around property tax reform," said Jack Horner, speaking for the Minnesota Multi-Housing Organization, a trade association for the multi-family rental housing industry. "It makes apartment owners and commercial property owners pay more, but apartment owners and commercial property owners are already paying more."

Buzz Anderson, president of the Minnesota Retailers Association said, "It just adds another obstacle to any development a retailer does in a community," adding that retailers would likely pass the utility fees on to their customers.

A companion bill (SF366), sponsored by Sen. Sharon Marko (DFL-Cottage Grove), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

★ LATE ACTION

Deficiency dollars in Senate court

A House-Senate conference committee reached agreement on a \$31.07 million deficiency spending measure (HF57*/SF350) that would assist those state agencies and programs that are facing budget shortfalls by June 30 or sooner.

The House voted 130-2 on Feb. 10 to pass the plan. It now moves to the Senate.

House sponsor Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud) said there were three main differences between the two bodies:

- Senate conferees, led by Sen. Richard Cohen (DFL-St. Paul), acceded to the House plan that would offset the cost of the bill by a \$24.7 million transfer from the budget reserve in the state General Fund;
- Department of Corrections funding levels differed between the two bodies by \$500,000. The conference committee agreement would direct \$4.07 million to help the department deal with a growing prison population and rising prisoner health care costs; and
- The Department of Administration would receive nearly \$4.71 million for relocating the Agriculture and Health departments to a joint facility. The House had proposed \$3.7 million for the move.

Other appropriations would include \$13.39 million for regional treatment centers for civilly committed sex offenders and \$7.68 million for public defenders.

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

Gambling on new ventures

Commission recommends special natural resource project funding to Legislature

By PATTY JANOVEC

A wind turbine's three, 40-meter blades spin 360-feet in the air near Carleton College in Northfield, an experimental energy project funded by state lottery money.

For every dollar the public spends on a lottery ticket, about 6 cents goes to the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. The fund solely supports the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR), which then ventures into some gambling of its own with experimental natural resource projects.

"We try to be innovative, and sometimes when you try to be innovative you're not always gonna succeed, but documenting an unsuccessful approach is valuable in and of itself," explained John Velin, director of the LCMR, at the Jan. 19 meeting of the House Governmental Operations and Veterans

Affairs Committee. It's the basic research with no industrial incentive that is often times the hardest to get funded, he added.

Over \$400,000 was put into research, such as wind turbines at Carleton College and the University of Minnesota-Morris, in 2003. Another project involved a machine that compresses dairy manure to make dry fertilizer ...

"It is probably one of the most innovative parts of state government in that you really look at things that are kind of on the leading edge."

— Rep. Kathy Tingelstad,
LCMR member

although that experiment didn't work, said Velin.

"If we aren't getting into at least a little bit of trouble, we probably aren't doing our job," Velin said. Asked if the ventures are met with much controversy, he responded, "Often we get questions that indicate surprise," rather than disapproval.

"What I really like about this commission is it is probably one of the most innovative parts

LCMR continued on page 16



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The LCMR has provided funding for wind turbines similar to these at Carleton College in Northfield.

LCMR project requests

HF390, sponsored by Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover), places the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources' recommendations in bill form.

The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee laid over the \$39.29 million bill Feb. 8 for possible inclusion in its omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill.

Director John Velin emphasized citizen involvement in commission projects. Together with the Citizen Advisory Committee, a Web-based citizen survey garnered some 300 responses and allowed citizens to "come to a public forum in a virtual sense," he said.

A couple of "hallmark projects" in the bill, Velin said, include a consortium of nonprofits, state and federal agencies and American Indian tribes working together on habitat corridor restoration in both Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The bill would earmark \$7.59 million for those efforts.

"The hope would be that they would combine in their view of prioritization in seeking which lands to purchase, which lands to restore, the ones that make the best sense, the ones that create the biggest symbiosis," he said.

Other projects would include:

- state park and recreational land acquisition (\$2 million),
- Minnesota county biological survey (\$1 million),
- clean energy resource teams and community wind energy rebate programs (\$700,000),
- recycling treated municipal wastewater for industrial water use (\$300,000),
- completing third party certification of Department of Natural Resources forest lands (\$250,000),
- biological control of European buckthorn and garlic mustard (\$200,000), and
- Minnesota children's pesticide exposure reduction initiative (\$200,000).

A companion bill (SF469), sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

(N. WOOD)

High-tech destination

Legislative support could help companies compete globally

By Brett Martin

Minnesota is a hotbed for high-technology companies, and these companies would like to see policies that strengthen the state's technology-based economy and help ensure global competitiveness.

In 10 years, 90 percent of the world's scientists will come from Asia, Michael Wright, president of Entegris, told the Technology, Bioscience and Medical Products Division of the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee Feb. 3. Asia is graduating significantly more scientists while many American scientists are retiring, he said.

Wright is concerned this country will lose its competitive edge.

"For most of us in business, it's a threat we've been competing with for a long time. It's a very real threat," Wright said. "It's not to say we can't compete, because we can, but the playing field is becoming more and more uneven."

There are almost 200,000 high-tech jobs in Minnesota, paying an average wage of \$58,300

(more than 50 percent higher than the average private sector wage), with an annual payroll of \$8.4 billion, said Kate Rubin, president of the Minnesota High Tech Association.

"I want the committee to understand the landscape of tech companies in Minnesota and the impact they have on the economy," she said.

Rubin emphasized the importance of educational funding for the sciences. Her association recommended allocating \$4.5 million for Internet access in rural Minnesota schools to make the use of technology widely available.

Donald E. Gerhardt, president and CEO of Medical Alley, touted the enormity of Minnesota's medical technology industry. He said there were 2,500 medical device patents filed between 1997 and 2001 in Minnesota.

"It's important to keep that alive because that's what fuels the economy," he said, noting that the state medical technology sector's employment rate grew 31.9 percent over the last 10 years, compared to 10.2 percent nationally.

There are approximately 520 medical manufacturers in Minnesota registered with

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, employing as many as 50,000 people and generating \$40 billion to \$50 billion in sales per year, Gerhardt said.

"It's an important source of revenue back to the state," he said.

To help these companies stay competitive and encourage innovation, Gerhardt and Rubin would like to see a change in the state's research and development tax credit.

Currently, Minnesota companies receive a 5 percent tax credit for expenditures over the "base amount" up to \$2 million, then 2.5 percent after that. Each company's base amount is devised using a specific formula.

Rubin's association has called for a flat 5 percent tax credit. Gerhardt said he supports a flat 5 percent now, but would like to see the number gradually increase to 8 or 9 percent. He points out that Indiana and Massachusetts have 10 percent rates, and California has 15 percent.

"We're asking for competitiveness," Gerhardt said. "We feel that would be fair for all the players."

While no bills have yet been introduced, Rep. Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers) said she would introduce legislation this session to expand the credit.

"I am in support of the R & D tax credit," she said. "The high tech industry is important for Minnesota." ■

LCMR continued from page 15

of state government in that you really look at things that are kind of on the leading edge and the opportunity to try some new things," said Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover).

Comprised of 10 members each from the House and Senate, including Tingelstad, and a citizen advisory committee of 11 members appointed by the governor, the commission provides recommendations to the Legislature.

The commission was created by the Legislature in 1963 to look at natural resources and "realized that enhancing and maintaining and improving our natural resources would probably not be done by just the regular budget operations," said Velin.

In 1988 voters approved a constitutional amendment allowing for the Minnesota State Lottery, and two years later approved



Director John Velin presents the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources' biennial report during the Feb. 8 meeting of the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

an amendment requiring that 40 percent of proceeds go to the fund. That dedication now goes through December 2024.

Each biennium the commission reviews potential projects, and prepares a plan for funding priority areas.

"Anybody can apply for funding. The

only qualification is that there be a clear and dominant public benefit to the project," Velin explained.

Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Red Wing) questioned how wind turbines at Carleton College could have a broad public benefit.

"You reduce the amount of power generated by the traditional fossil fuel sources," Velin said. Any megawatt that you produce other than by fossil fuels reduces the load in the area thereby reducing pollution in the surrounding communities.

For the 2006-07 biennium, 221 projects costing more than \$240 million were initially submitted for possible funding. The LCMR is recommending 74 of those to the Legislature for funding, totaling \$39.29 million. ■

For a full listing of the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources 2005 recommended projects visit: <http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/lcmr/>

Leading by example

Hamilton knows the process works with commitment

By BRETT MARTIN

For the Hamiltons, politics may be becoming a family affair.

"When I won my election, my son, Tyler, who was president of his elementary school student council, said, 'Dad, that's great! Maybe that will help my career,'" Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake) said.



Rep. Rod Hamilton

The entire family, including his fifth-grade daughter, Haley, and wife, Lynee, hit the campaign trail, knocked on doors and handed out literature.

"Without their support, I could not, and would not, be here," Hamilton said.

Working on a hog farm south of Rochester, and seeing the issues that farmers face, drew him into politics.

"I sat down with two local farmers at a Happy Chef restaurant and we wrote a list on

a napkin of what we would like to change. We took that list to the Minnesota Pork Producers Association," Hamilton said. "The list then went to legislators and those changes ended up becoming law."

After seeing the process in motion, he wanted to be part of it.

"It's a process that does work if you're committed," he said. "It's extremely rewarding to know you can make a difference if you're committed to the process until the end and willing to work hard."

With an impressive resumé in agricultural issues — past president of the Minnesota Pork Producers Association, member of the Minnesota Farm Bureau, winner of the Young Farmers & Ranchers competition in 2001, former member of the governor's Livestock Task Force — he's a natural for the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. He also sits on the House Ways and Means Committee and House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee,

DISTRICT 22B

2002 Population: 36,610
Largest city: Worthington
Counties: Cottonwood, Jackson and Nobles
Top Concern: Increased funding for education

"It's extremely rewarding to know you can make a difference if you're committed to the process until the end and willing to work hard."

— Rep. Rod Hamilton

including the Technology, Bioscience and Medical Products Division.

Hamilton, a former member of the Mountain Lake School Board, introduced HF5 to increase the basic education formula allowance.

"When I was going around visiting with constituents, the two main issues of concern were skyrocketing health care costs and education," he said. "I want to promote quality education and make sure our children get the good education they deserve."

Education expert

Outsider comes inside to bring about change

By RUTH DUNN

Rep. Sandra Peterson (DFL-New Hope) is no newcomer to the limelight. During her tenure as president of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, the state's second largest teachers' union, her face and name appeared in newspapers and on TV across the state. Four years ago, she was instrumental in the federation's merger with the Minnesota Education Association, to create Education Minnesota. She served as co-president of the new union for three years and then as vice president.



Rep. Sandra Peterson

Peterson is familiar with the legislative process from the outside. She's testified and lobbied on behalf of bills, and was appointed by several governors to numerous legislative task

forces and committees. But seeing the process from the inside is a different story. "I'm learning like everyone else," she said. Peterson serves on the House Education Policy and Reform and Transportation committees.

Peterson, a former teacher in the Robbinsdale School District, is not surprised that there are more educators than any other occupation represented in the House. "Every day in their classrooms, teachers see how the Legislature affects their lives." Teachers also possess skills for campaigning, like being able to communicate with voters, she said.

Legislative gridlock was the big factor in her election from a swing district, said Peterson. "Voters are upset with both political parties. People told me if they went to work and didn't get the job done, they would not be paid. People want us to get things done and to make decisions that will benefit the state in the long run. We have to focus on results, or we will

DISTRICT 45A

2002 Population: 36,983
Largest city: New Hope
County: Hennepin
Top Concerns: Education, transportation, economy

"Voters are upset with both political parties. People told me if they went to work and didn't get the job done, they would not be paid."

— Rep. Sandra Peterson

not see a second term."

A widow since 1990, Peterson has two grown sons and a 2-year-old granddaughter who might grow up to be a teacher someday, if Peterson has any influence.

She enjoys city life and is an avid movie buff. She has also been known to hunt game birds in Manitoba, Canada, and to return to the homestead near Benson that has been owned by her family since the 1800s. She loves to read non-fiction books, especially biographies, because she learns so much from them.

Road trip

House committee tours to gain a better understanding

By NICOLE WOOD

The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee went to Mars Jan. 25. In reality, there was no interplanetary travel. It was a trip to the Science Museum of Minnesota 3D digital theater in St. Paul. While Museum President Eric J. Jolly presented his case for state support, committee members were wowed by the "Mars 3-D" imagery captured by the Spirit and Opportunity rovers.

Sometimes that wow factor enhances

legislative support.

Tours afford lawmakers the opportunity to see, firsthand, unique projects and genuine working conditions. Better than a State Office Building hearing room and a PowerPoint presentation, a tour allows department officials to provide tangible evidence of efficiency and innovation. With

"It's really tough to sit here and make budget recommendations when everyone is coming through your door with good ideas and a passion for what they do."

— Rep. Doug Magnus

a captive audience, it's easier to dispel myths or misconceptions about agency activities.

"It's really tough to sit here and make budget recommendations when everyone is coming through your door with good ideas and a passion for what they do," said Rep. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton). A tour can reveal duplicate efforts or synergism among programs, he said.

Committee members learned a number of things at the Science Museum, some scientific and some financial.

The film they viewed is the first project to create a three-dimensional movie from the images and data sent back from the Red Planet. The museum, Jolly said, played a key role in getting the Mars information from NASA databases to the big screen.

Museum benefactors often earmark donations for projects rather than operating expenses,

Jolly explained. Some days the biggest challenge is finding the resources to keep the lights on, he said, and other days it's just making sure the big dinosaur in the lobby doesn't fall on anyone.

Magnus said he left the building with a better understanding of the work done at the St. Croix Watershed Research Station by the museum's environmental research component. After an overview of prairie plant

propagation efforts, he said, "an ag person like me is saying 'Gee, they're doing studies here on wildlife habitat that I think are really cutting edge.'"

The museum isn't the only account to

fall under the scope of the committee as it develops a budget recommendation for fiscal years 2006-07. Other off-site visits in January included trips to the Minnesota Zoo, Agriculture Department, Board of Animal Health, Department of Natural Resources, Office of Environmental Assistance and Pollution Control Agency.

All of this activity "took abstract spreadsheets and information sheets that are very dry and black and white and translated them into a much more meaningful way to picture the things you are being asked to fund," said Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul). He said the tours left him with "a deeper appreciation of some of the fine work that is being done by some of these agencies and state-funded organizations."

Where to find information

House Public Information Services

175 State Office Building
(651) 296-2146 or 1-800-657-3550

House Public Information Services is a nonpartisan office that provides committee meeting schedules; legislator information; and publications, including the *Session Weekly* newsmagazine, educational brochures, and member directories. All information is available at no charge.

Most of what this office publishes can be viewed on the Legislature's World Wide Web page. To connect, point your web browser at: <http://www.leg.mn>



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Members of the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee look at a collection of deformed frogs during a Jan. 25 tour of the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Monday, February 7

HF785—Krinkie (R)

Taxes

Property tax rate increases prohibited for taxes payable in 2006 and certain subsequent years, increases in fees prohibited, reimbursement provided to local governments for tax and fee increases and money appropriated.

HF786—McNamara (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Sale of tax-forfeited lands bordering public waters proceeds disposition modified, riparian land enhancement account created and money appropriated.

HF787—McNamara (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Road easement across state lands application fee required, land management account established and money appropriated.

HF788—McNamara (R)

Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Tree seedlings surcharge established and money appropriated.

HF789—Cox (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Administrative penalty orders and civil penalties provided for violations of state waters laws, implementation plan required and rulemaking exemption provided.

HF790—Wardlow (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Veterans home admission eligibility expanded to include certain Minnesota residents who provided military assistance to the United States armed forces in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War era.

HF791—Zellers (R)

Regulated Industries

Video game of chance definition modified.

HF792—Sertich (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Securities, mortgage originators and servicers, athlete agents and contractor's recovery fund regulated.

HF793—Thao (DFL)

Jobs & Economic

Opportunity Policy & Finance

Newly arrived refugees and asylees exempted from participating in the diversionary work program and allowed to enter directly into the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

HF794—Howes (R)

Taxes

Homestead resorts property valuation and deferment provided.

HF795—Urdahl (R)

Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Agricultural pesticides in groundwater and surface water monitoring provided and money appropriated.

HF796—Heidgerken (R)

Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance

Alternative livestock production programs funding provided and money appropriated.

HF797—Bradley (R)

Taxes

Rochester sales and use tax revenue uses specified.

HF798—Westerberg (R)

Transportation Finance

Trunk Highway 65 improvements funding provided to facilitate bus rapid transit, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF799—Anderson, I. (DFL)

Jobs & Economic

Opportunity Policy & Finance

Koochiching County; Grand Mound interpretive center renovation funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF800—Nelson, M. (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Peddlers and door-to-door solicitors regulated.

HF801—Dempsey (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

A House resolution memorializing Congress to propose an amendment to the United States Constitution, for ratification by the states, specifying the Congress and the states shall have the power to prohibit desecration of the flag.

HF802—Davnies (DFL)

Education Policy & Reform

Minneapolis excluded from the Teachers Tenure Act.

HF803—Juhnke (DFL)

Regulated Industries

Raffle definition modified.

HF804—Cornish (R)

Taxes

Biomass fuel stoves sales tax exemption provided.

HF805—Dorn (DFL)

Regulated Industries

Mankato on-sale liquor license authorized for the Midwest Wireless Civic Center.

HF806—Cornish (R)

Education Policy and Reform

School district and employee notification of students with a violent history immunity from liability provided.

HF807—Davids (R)

Taxes

Chatfield wastewater treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF808—Smith (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Private contracting for previously public services standards and procedures established and public accountability provided.

HF809—Dorn (DFL)

Education Policy & Reform

Health, safety and environmental management cost modified for school districts.

HF810—Dorn (DFL)

Education Finance

Class size ratios formula and class size reduction revenue allocation restored to former methods.

HF811—Hortman (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Military assistance trust fund created, fund uses specified and money appropriated.

HF812—Brod (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Voter registration outreach and solicitation training provided, numbering of applications required and distribution provided.

HF813—Sykora (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

School trust land construction aggregate evaluation provided and money appropriated.

HF814—Cornish (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Hubbard, Lake and Wabasha counties private sale of surplus land authorized.

HF815—Kahn (DFL)

Local Government

City councils required to vote on charter commission recommendations for charter amendments by ordinance.

HF816—Kahn (DFL)

Civil Law & Elections

Nonpartisan legislative offices provided and state elections campaign fund allocation modified.

HF817—Erickson (R)

Education Policy & Reform

School districts authorized to hold operating referendum for a proposed facility at the same time as a referendum to fund the proposed facility.

HF818—Kahn (DFL)

Civil Law & Elections

Local units of government authorized to permit permanent resident non-citizens to vote in local elections and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF819—Thissen (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

State-funded reinsurance provided for small employer health coverage and money appropriated.

HF820—Paulsen (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Initiative and referendum provided by proposed constitutional amendment.

HF821—Blaine (R)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Wildlife lands in lieu of tax payments requirements modified.

HF822—Blaine (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Independent School District No. 482, Little Falls, alley system for at-large election of school board members provided.

HF823—Blaine (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
State Timber Act and standard measurements for wood modified.

HF824—Blaine (R)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Forest suspense account receipts disposition modified.

HF825—Hilstrom (DFL)
Taxes
Brooklyn Center tax increments expenditure deadline extended.

HF826—Ozment (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Clean Water Legacy Act established providing authority, direction and funding to achieve and maintain water quality standards for surface waters in accordance with the federal Clean Water Act and money appropriated.

HF827—Greiling (DFL)
Education Policy & Reform
World language programs state coordinator provided, grants provided to model extended world languages programs and money appropriated.

HF828—Greiling (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Political parties receiving a public subsidy prohibited from making independent expenditures, specified funding available only to candidates who agree to spending limits, spending limits imposed on caucuses and refund amount increased.

HF829—Peppin (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Shaking infants and young children dangers education provided for parents, primary caregivers and child care providers.

HF830—Mahoney (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Soil and water conservation district supervisor elections and appointments provided.

HF831—Fritz (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Absentee ballot voting made easier.

HF832—Klinzing (R)
Education Policy & Reform
School site governance program provided.

HF833—Hoppe (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Off-highway vehicle operation restrictions modified, vehicle damage account availability extended, seizure and forfeiture of vehicles provided, specified

violations added to driving record and license plates required on ATVs.

HF834—Dittrich (DFL)
Education Policy & Reform
School district authority granted to offer certain rewards to persons who provide information that leads to the apprehension and arrest of a person or persons who have committed a crime against school property, students or personnel.

HF835—Cornish (R)
Taxes
Local government aid formula modified for specified cities.

HF836—Peppin (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Abortion issue standards for Minnesota Constitution and United States Constitution required to conform and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF837—Smith (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Abortion on minors or certain other women notification reporting required.

HF838—Otremba (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Unborn child pain prevention and criminal penalties provided.

HF839—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Prescription drug bulk purchasing provided.

HF840—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Prescription drug wholesale distributor requirements modified.

HF841—Vandever (R)
Transportation
Ronald Reagan Beltway designation for interstates 494 and 694 established.

HF842—Solberg (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Aitkin County; private sale of consolidated conservation land authorized.

HF843—Demmer (R)
Taxes
Waste-to-energy resource recovery facility construction material sales tax exemption provided.

HF844—Knoblach (R)
Capital Investment
St. Cloud; Paramount Theater city ownership provided and grant recipient modified.

HF845—Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Alternative minimum income tax repealed.

HF846—Hoppe (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Levy or bond referendum notice placement on ballot specified.

HF847—Hoppe (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Game and fish regulations modified, including fishing tags, scope usage, damage-causing animals,

license requirements, waterfowl restrictions, dog training, trapping provisions, raccoon hunting, and related issues and money appropriated.

HF848—Smith (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Public defender representation limited to statutorily designated persons and public defender data access provided.

HF849—Zellers (R)
Transportation Finance
Osseo; Central Avenue and Jefferson Highway project bonds authorized.

HF850—Powell (R)
Transportation
Vehicle-monitoring device installation in certain vehicles authorized.

HF851—Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Metropolitan fiscal disparities program study required.

HF852—Zellers (R)
Transportation Finance
Osseo; Central Avenue and Jefferson Highway project bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF853—Kelliher (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund executive director exemption from political subdivision compensation limit provided, fund asset investment with State Board of Investment authorized and liquidity requirements modified.

HF854—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Physical therapy time limit prohibition eliminated.

HF855—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Antihemophilic factor drug exemption provision sunset removed.

HF856—Dittrich (DFL)
Transportation Finance
Trunk Highway 610 completion bond usage authorized and money appropriated.

HF857—Simpson (R)
Transportation Finance
Ottertail County; intersection traffic control improvements money appropriated.

HF858—Wardlow (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Edward A. Burdick State Office Building designation of State Office Building authorized.

HF859—Holberg (R)
Transportation
Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority development of bus rapid transit in Cedar Avenue transitway corridor authorized.

HF860—Eken (DFL)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Green Meadow Dam bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF861—Eken (DFL)**Education Finance**

Fertile-Beltrami tax base levy adjustments modified.

HF862—Eken (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Ada flood hazard mitigation grant bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF863—Eken (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Wild Rice Watershed District flood storage easement acquisition bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF864—Abrams (R)**Education Finance**

Special school breakfast and lunch diets based on religious beliefs of students cost payment provided and money appropriated.

HF865—Olson (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Precinct boundary annexation procedures modified.

HF866—Olson (R)**Taxes**

Education tax credit for tuition expenses for certain school attendance authorized and family cap on education tax credit eliminated.

HF867—Olson (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

American Heritage Education in Minnesota Public Schools Act enacted.

HF868—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Coyote (*Canis latrans*) destruction bounty provision by county board authorized.

HF869—Hortman (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Military assistance trust fund created, rulemaking authorized, constitutional amendment proposed and money appropriated.

HF870—Thissen (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Publicly funded health program applicant employer disclosure required.

HF871—Seifert (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Day training and habilitation services provider participation in state cooperative purchasing agreements authorized; certain facilities and extended employment and services provider's inclusion in agency acquisition process provided.

Thursday, February 10**HF872—Sykora (R)****Education Finance**

Operating referendum ballot language simplified.

HF873—Emmer (R)**Taxes**

St. Michael tax increment financing district authorized.

HF874—Brod (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

State voting systems contract established and money appropriated from the Help America Vote Act account.

HF875—Abrams (R)**Taxes**

Cigarette cost mitigation fee established and health care provider tax repealed.

HF876—Greiling (DFL)**Education Finance**

Special education excessive costs state payment required.

HF877—Simpson (R)**Regulated Industries**

Uniform off-sale liquor sales hours provided statewide and 10 a.m. Sunday on-sale authorized for restaurants, clubs, bowling centers and hotels.

HF878—Erickson (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

School districts authorized to determine the school year starting date.

HF879—Samuelson (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Donated dental services program modified, covered services for Medical Assistance modified and money appropriated.

HF880—Hortman (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Sexual psychopaths and sexually dangerous persons civil commitment hearings time period extended.

HF881—Urdahl (R)**Transportation**

Peace officers required to make all reasonable efforts to contact parent or guardian of a cited minor.

HF882—Thissen (DFL)**Taxes**

Employer postsecondary education expenses tax credit provided.

HF883—Vandever (R)**Transportation**

Disabled American Veterans members specified as eligible for special veterans service group license plates.

HF884—Vandever (R)**Transportation**

Tolls on highways and new tolls on bridges prohibited through proposed constitutional amendment.

HF885—Vandever (R)**Taxes**

Death tax; Congress memorialized, by resolution, to permanently repeal the death tax.

HF886—Vandever (R)**Transportation**

Toll road construction and single-occupant vehicle tolls on high-occupancy vehicle lanes authorizations repealed and new tolls or toll road construction prohibited.

HF887—Vandever (R)**Taxes**

Income tax check-off provided to fund benefits for survivors of law enforcement officers and firefighters and to provide maintenance of peace officer and firefighter memorials.

HF888—Vandever (R)**Transportation**

Toll collection on a toll facility allowed only until all construction costs of the facility have been paid.

HF889—Vandever (R)**Transportation**

Tolls on public highways discontinued when original construction costs have been paid and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF890—Vandever (R)**Taxes**

Limited market value provisions extended to all property, limited market value made permanent and separate limitation provided to certain property that is sold or transferred.

HF891—Thissen (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Prescription drug provisions under Medical Assistance clarified and modified.

HF892—DeLaForest (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Campaign material unauthorized removal prohibited and penalty provided.

HF893—Urdahl (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Child-care higher education grant maximum amount increased.

HF894—Cox (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Public waters inventory authority, public waters work permit and water use permit provisions and enforcement authority modified.

HF895—Anderson, I. (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Health coverage required for state employees to permit unrestricted choice of health care provider.

HF896—Buesgens (R)**Education Finance**

Pre-kindergarten through grade 12 education, early childhood and families, general education, education excellence, special education, facilities and technology, early childhood family support and prevention measures provided.

HF897—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Mental health epidemiological studies directed, mental health epidemiologist provided within the Department of Health and money appropriated.

HF898—Sertich (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Unemployment insurance federal requirement conformity and technical corrections provided.

HF899—Buesgens (R)**Local Government**

State auditor authorized to waive certain rules and laws applying to local government units and grants board created to fund cooperative efforts in public service delivery.

HF900—Cornish (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Landowner's bill of rights for sales to the state, internal improvement land sales provisions and land exchange provisions modified and money appropriated.

HF901—Cornish (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Burn permits electronic issuance authorized, fees provided, account established and money appropriated.

HF902—Ozment (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural Resources Department gifts to the public to promote conservation value limit increased, state park permit provisions modified, fee disposition provided and money appropriated.

HF903—Sykora (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Charter schools authorized to limit admission to chemically dependent students.

HF904—Blaine (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Bowles recreational center funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF905—Rukavina (DFL)**Local Government**

County boards authorized to contract for the sale of biomass.

HF906—Nelson, P. (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Polling place size and number of voting booths minimums specified, signage required and additional election judges provided.

HF907—Nelson, P. (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Duplicate election certificates for legislators provided and records filed with the secretary of state.

HF908—Eastlund (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

CriMNet policy group reformed.

HF909—Klinzing (R)**Taxes**

Prepared food definition amended to exclude ice cream cakes relating to sales tax.

HF910—Otremba (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Traumatic brain injury waived services program caseload growth limits established and money appropriated.

HF911—Ellison (DFL)**Taxes**

Lead hazard reduction property tax valuation exclusion provided.

HF912—Beard (R)**Transportation**

Motorized foot scooters defined and use and operation regulated.

HF913—Beard (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State employee group insurance plan provisions modified.

HF914—Beard (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Teacher retirement additional benefit provided for a specified teacher.

HF915—Beard (R)**Transportation**

Aeronautics transportation provisions clarified.

HF916—Opatz (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

Minnesota State University, Rochester established on the property of Rochester Community and Technical College, planning report required, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF917—Liebling (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

University of Minnesota and Mayo Clinic collaborative research facility funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF918—Paulsen (R)**Jobs & Economic****Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Job training program grant provisions modified, funding provided and money appropriated.

HF919—Cox (R)**Taxes**

Income tax surcharge provided and money appropriated.

HF920—Cox (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Northfield Hospital pension benefits provided upon privatization.

HF921—Murphy (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

Regent Candidate Advisory Council abolished.

HF922—Hilty (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Leave of absence provision for public officials expanded to include elected tribal government officials.

HF923—Holberg (R)**Transportation**

Transportation Department property transaction provisions modified, highway routes changed and removed and clarifying changes provided.

HF924—Otremba (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

MinnesotaCare gross income definition modified.

HF925—Gazelka (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Medicare related coverage federal conformity; financial solvency regulation for standalone Medicare Part D prescription drug plans and related technical changes provided.

HF926—Davids (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Houston County nursing facility Medical Assistance reimbursement rates increased.

HF927—Sieben (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Gift certificates and gift cards regulated and remedies provided.

HF928—Soderstrom (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Parole board established and regulations provided, parole eligibility prescribed, board authorized to determine civil commitment status of Level III sex offenders and money appropriated.

HF929—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Identity theft penalties modified, minimum restitution payments specified and information provided to victims of identity theft.

HF930—Anderson, B. (R)**State Government Finance**

Camp Ripley; Minnesota National Guard Youth Camp operation and staffing funding provided and money appropriated.

HF931—Anderson, B. (R)**Transportation**

Local ordinances discriminating among motor vehicles with a certain gross vehicle weight prohibited.

HF932—Seifert (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Residency information collection required on applicants of certain human services programs.

HF933—Loeffler (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Motor Vehicle Retail Installment Sales Act recodified.

HF934—Brod (R)**Regulated Industries**

Compulsive gambling prevention and education funding provided and money appropriated.

HF935—Poppe (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Child endangerment crime expanded to include manufacturing controlled substances in the presence of a child.

HF936—Johnson, J. (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

News media access to polling places increased.

HF937—Goodwin (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Medical Assistance covered services modified.

HF938—Garofalo (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Real estate document pilot project continuation, extension, validation and Web posting provided.

HF939—Seifert (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Professional licensure law and rule modification notice required.

HF940—Seifert (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Private prison housing proposal requests required.

HF941—Koenen (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Hearing Aid Dispenser Act modified.

HF942—Westrom (R)
Regulated Industries
Natural gas utility infrastructure replacement cost recovery authorized.

HF943—Lanning (R)
Taxes
Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 conformity provided.

HF944—Emmer (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Employment-related boards meeting conduct by telephone or other electronic means authorized.

HF945—Erhardt (R)
Transportation
Highway sign program billing authorized, business signs criteria modified, quiet zones provisions modified, commuter rail corridor coordinating committee sunset removed and money appropriated.

HF946—Abrams (R)
Transportation Finance
International economic development zone and tax incentives provided, report required and money appropriated.

HF947—Klinzing (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Optional record of birth resulting in stillbirth provided.

HF948—Murphy (DFL)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Broadcast employer non-compete provisions in employment agreements prohibited.

HF949—Clark (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Hearing aid user consumer protection increased.

HF950—Westerberg (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Youth intervention program requirements modified, grants-in-aid funding provided and money appropriated.

HF951—Beard (R)
Local Government
Airports or aviation system separate plan requirement removed and Metropolitan Council and Metropolitan Airports Commission planning administration provisions repealed.

HF952—Finstad (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Abortion alternative grants and public information provided, Positive Alternatives Act created and money appropriated.

HF953—Finstad (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Abortion alternative grants and public information provided, Positive Alternatives Act created and money appropriated.

HF954—Finstad (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Abortion alternative grants and public information provided, Positive Alternatives Act created and money appropriated.

HF955—Seifert (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Tobacco product non-use and use cessation state health care program and MFIP eligibility requirements established.

HF956—Seifert (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Children's therapeutic services and support diagnostic assessment requirement modified.

HF957—Klinzing (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Montessori child-care provider assistance rate bonus provided.

HF958—Ellison (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Hennepin County; duplicate campaign finance filings eliminated and other technical changes provided.

HF959—Sailer (DFL)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 32, Blackduck, high school student retention program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF960—Hoppe (R)
Taxes
Carver County; justice center construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF961—Seifert (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Nonprofit organizations receiving grants or appropriations from the state disclosure requirements imposed.

HF962—Abeler (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Acoustical performance criteria included in school district proposal to construct a facility.

HF963—Smith (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Strangulation of family or household member crime established and penalties provided.

HF964—Abrams (R)
Taxes
MinnesotaCare tax contingent adjustment provided.

HF965—Dean (R)
Higher Education Finance
Century College remodeling funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF966—Klinzing (R)
Education Policy & Reform
School admission at younger age permitted.

HF967—Klinzing (R)
Education Finance
Classroom contribution refund authorized and money appropriated.

HF968—Kahn (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Sports wagering and sports wagering pool game established by state lottery, sports bookmaking licenses authorized, tax imposed and Minnesota active recreation fund established.

HF969—Erickson (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Interdisciplinary teachers licensed, innovative schools and programs encouraged and rulemaking provided.

HF970—Greiling (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Teachers Retirement Association; grandparenting of certain career-end school administrator salary arrangements provided.

HF971—Garofalo (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Designated offense definition expanded and seizures and forfeitures of computers and related property addressed.

HF972—Howes (R)
Taxes
Homestead resort property tax class rate reduced.

HF973—Demmer (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
State employment provisions modified.

HF974—Erhardt (R)
Transportation
Peace officer operation of any vehicle or combination of vehicles authorized.

HF975—Slawik (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
College student voter registration facilitated.

HF976—Slawik (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Crisis nursery grant program established.

HF977—Larson (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Alcohol and drug counselors for city, county and state agencies licensure modified.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Placing a bet

Percent of Minnesotans who have gambled in their lifetime.....	95
In 1993	87
Percent of Minnesota adults who have gambled in the past year.....	83
Percent who played the state lottery	60
Percent who played at a casino	41
Billions wagered on charitable gaming in fiscal year 2004.....	\$1.4
Percent of which was pull-tabs	93.1
Gross pull-tab profit, in millions, after prizes were paid in fiscal year 2004.....	\$233.5
State lottery sales (in millions) in fiscal year 2004	\$386.9
Sales per capita	\$76.46
Millions transferred to the state	\$100.7
Percent increase from 2003	26.8
Percent of those dollars directed to the state's General Fund and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, respectively.....	60,40
Millions contributed by the lottery to the Department of Human Services for problem gambling treatment and prevention from 1990 to 2004.....	\$18.4
States, including Minnesota, that fund problem gambling programs.....	16
Millions in state funding in the 2004-05 biennium for the Department of Human Services' Compulsive Gambling Treatment Program	\$2.98
Individuals who received state-funded treatment in fiscal year 2003	873
Number of treatment provider agencies registered with the Human Services Department.....	74
Average attendance for live racing in 2004 at Canterbury Park.....	4,977
Percent increase from 2003	3.6
All-sources handle (live on-track, live out-of-state and simulcast) In 2004, in millions.....	\$53.06
Overall percent increase from 2003	13.6
Live on-track percent increase.....	2.1
Casinos in state operated by tribes.....	18
Billions, as approximate, put into Minnesota's economy since 1990 from tribal gaming.....	\$8
Approximate number of jobs in Minnesota that are associated with tribal gaming.....	14,000
Percent held by non-Indians.....	78
Millions generated in payroll and benefits annually by tribal gaming.....	\$278
Payroll taxes paid by tribes, in millions	\$81
Millions paid annually by tribes to local governments for services provided.....	\$16

Sources: Gambling Oversight and Regulation, January 2005, Office of the Legislative Auditor; Annual Report 2004, Minnesota State Lottery; Canterbury Park; Minnesota Indian Gaming Association; Northstar Roundtable, Winter 2004, Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance; North American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries; Gambler's Relief.

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