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SESSION Weekly

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INSIDE: BONDING BILL, METH'S GROWING EPIDEMIC, CASINO LOCALES, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF1152-HF1352

SESSION Weekly

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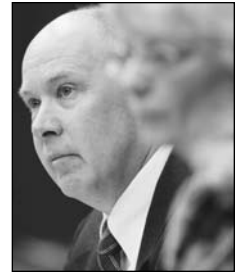
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On the cover: A staff member from the Minnesota Historical Society's Conservation Department hangs a portrait of Capitol architect Cass Gilbert outside the Supreme Court Chamber on the second floor of the Capitol prior to unveiling ceremonies Feb. 22 to honor Gilbert.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

Not going away

Many reasons for homelessness, solutions not easy

By **MATT WETZEL**

If you're homeless in Minnesota and lucky enough to have found emergency shelter for the night, you are awakened around 8 a.m. after sleeping on a bunk bed or a mat less than an inch thick. Your resting place was inches away from the next person.

After gathering your belongings, you leave the shelter to maybe buy breakfast, if you can afford it, or go to one of the centers in the area that provides a free breakfast for people.

According to a 2003 homeless survey conducted by the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, a nonprofit health and human services organization in St. Paul, there were 7,015 homeless people in homeless shelters, battered women's shelters and transitional housing in Minnesota on Oct. 23, 2003. Another 796 were on the street.

Of those, 1,228 were considered long-term homeless, meaning they had been homeless for at least a year, or homeless four times in the past three years, and 85 percent have some type of serious disability.

The foundation recently made a presentation to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity

Policy and Finance Committee.

Committee Chair Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) invited the foundation because he wanted to make members aware of the problem. "We have to do something about it. We can't duck it."

Research about homelessness in Greater Minnesota is limited, but Ellen Shelton, a research scientist with the foundation, said generally, people having trouble with finding shelter move from rural to urban areas. On the night of the survey, 21 percent of homeless people were in rural areas, 6 percent were in suburban areas and 73 percent were in urban areas.

More than 80 percent of the children of homeless adults interviewed in the survey were able to attend school regularly. If you're an unemployed mother, you might be able to stay at the shelter during the day. If you work, it's usually in food service, housekeeping, construction or at a factory. Of the 30 percent of employed homeless people, more than half make less than \$8 an hour. Just 13 percent of all homeless people work at least 35 hours a week.

Beyond that, it's hard to describe a typical day for a homeless person, said Michael Dahl, execu-

You Should Know

Data from the 2003 homeless survey was presented to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 16. The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation has done surveys on homelessness every three years since 1991.

For the Oct. 23, 2003, survey, more than 700 trained volunteers conducted 30-minute interviews with more than 3,000 homeless people throughout Minnesota at homeless shelters, battered women's shelters and transitional housing programs. The subjects were paid \$5 for the interview. The response rate was 90 percent.

tive director of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, a Minneapolis advocacy group.

Their lives are unstable, he said, often through no fault of their own.

Approximately 20 percent are turned away from emergency shelters at night because of no space, Shelton said. Of those, approximately 20 percent find a bed at another shelter, and one-third have to sleep outside.

There might not be an early end to the instability, even if a homeless person has a job. Assuming the optimistic scenario of working 35 hours per week, making \$8 an hour, they might clear \$220 per week. The market rate in the Twin Cities metropolitan area for an efficiency apartment is \$554 a month.

"What you have left is not very much," said Greg Owen, a consulting scientist with the foundation.

Many homeless people are deep in debt, and some were evicted from their apartment. Even now, when landlords are experiencing high vacancy rates, they are very cautious with people that might be bad credit risks.

Owen said things have gotten worse since the federal government got out of the business of building affordable housing in the early 1980s. Now, the federal government provides money for private developers and local governments. However, private developers aren't as likely to take risks on tenants.

The lack of shelter is often just the final result of a series of problems, including mental illness and a criminal background, that make it hard for homeless people to make progress.

According to the 2003 survey, 47 percent of homeless adults had a serious mental illness, up from 25 percent in 1991; 43 percent were physically or sexually abused as a child; 42 percent were once in prison and 34 percent were



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Most homeless people do not fit the view depicted here of a single man on the streets. There is a growing number of homeless women with children. Recently released statistics show that one of the causes of homelessness is the high cost of housing.

First Reading continued on page 4



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Greg Owen, left, and Ellen Shelton, scientists for the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, listen to a question from a member of the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee during a Feb. 16 hearing on homelessness.

First Reading continued from page 3


either alcoholic or chemically dependent.

Many of these problems have gotten worse since 1991, the first year the foundation did a homeless survey. Owen said a common denominator is the lack of access to affordable health care.

Owen said that the increasing inability to treat the mentally ill shows the failure of the Community Mental Health Act legislation passed in the 1960s and 1970s. The initiative assumed the people would have places to live that they could afford.

Since most homeless people don't have health insurance, when they get sick or hurt they generally try to live with it until they can't take anymore. Then they receive treatment at an emergency room, a cost almost always borne by the public. "It's just another cost-shifting frustration," Owen said.

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) agrees. "They will be ending up in our hospitals, in our neighborhoods, in our prisons, which is much more expensive. We have the resources. We're going to pay for it one way or another."

On the jobs front, the McKnight Foundation has supported 17 programs around the state to work with employers and public agencies to help low-income workers get the skills they need to get better jobs, according to Owen and Shelton. 

The Gilberts return

Portraits unveiled, Capitol architect and wife honored



In honor of the Capitol Centennial, portraits of Capitol architect Cass Gilbert and his wife, Julia Finch Gilbert, will be on display outside the Supreme Court Chamber through the end of the year.

The 1926 and 1927 oil on canvas paintings were unveiled in a special ceremony Feb. 22.

The portraits are on loan from the Smithsonian Institution Museum of American Art. A gift to the Smithsonian by the Gilbert family in 1962, they remained in storage until the Minnesota Historical Society and the Cass Gilbert Society arranged for this exhibition.

Both Gilberts are portrayed in their 60s, at a high point of social and professional success.

Julia is depicted in the same gown she wore when she and Cass were presented to the British royal family in 1925. Her ensemble includes a beaded silver dress, a silver damask veil and a stole edged in ermine decorated with a rich aubergine-colored floral pattern.

The plaque next to Julia's portrait reads: "Straightforward, 'unaffected,' and 'strong willed' were among the words used by Cass

Gilbert's friends to describe the young Julia Finch when the two met in New York."

Their courtship lasted from 1880 until they wed in 1887.

Cass' attire is a classic dark suit and tie with a white shirt. At the time of the portrait, he was involved in construction of the West Virginia State Capitol, the U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C., and a number of projects in New York City.

Guests of honor at the unveiling ceremony were two great-grandchildren of Cass and Julia Gilbert, Helen Post Curry and Charles Post.

Curry was visibly moved by the gesture that she described as bringing the portraits out of the basement and up into the light.

"Thank you all for bringing Cass and Julia Gilbert back to their beloved St. Paul," she said.

Curry shared early memories of tea with her great-grandmother Julia, whom she referred to as "Nana."

In addition to learning to properly drink tea from Nana Gilbert, Curry said she learned two important phrases from her father's family: "Do it right or don't bother" so that afterward you could say, "No effort was spared."

(N. Wood)



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

House Speaker Steve Sviggum, right, takes a closer look at the portrait of Capitol architect Cass Gilbert as Gilbert's great-granddaughter, Helen Post Curry, left, speaks during ceremonies to honor Gilbert as part of the building's 100th birthday.

BUSINESS



For information on HF674 that would restrict some information currently considered public about companies that the state is considering for investment, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

CRIME



Another boot camp

An 80-acre camp in Pine County is being sold by the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation and Rep. Judy Soderstrom (R-Mora) thinks the state should buy it and open another boot camp for non-dangerous offenders.

Her bill, HF1048, would authorize \$200,000 from bonds to buy the St. Croix Camp, located near Sandstone, and create another Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP), similar to an existing program near Willow River. The land has an assessed value of \$1.6 million, Soderstrom told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 22.

"It's a beautiful facility, well-kept, overlooking a river," said Soderstrom. The camp includes a cafeteria, dorms and classrooms, along with administration and recreation buildings.

Thirty years ago, the state sold the land to the foundation with the stipulation that if the land was ever to be sold, the state could have first dibs on it. The foundation announced recently the camp for troubled youth will close in April.

The camp closing is a big deal in her district, said Soderstrom. "It's a real concern, front page news." An estimated 90 jobs are at stake.

"CIP has been successful," said Soderstrom. "It's my hope that the Department of Corrections uses this for another separate site for CIP."

The program features education, chemical dependency treatment and rigorous physical exercise for offenders who qualify for placement. An estimated 160 men are on the waiting list for the program.

The proposal, which has no Senate companion, is included in the House bonding proposal (HF3), but is not in the Senate bonding bill (SF1).

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

YOUTH IN ACTION



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Young people wearing yellow shirts that read, "Coming together is the beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success," ring the railing on the second floor of the Rotunda for the Youth in Action Rally. Mothers Against Drunk Driving sponsored the Feb. 22 rally in support of policies that reduce underage drinking.

Sex offender commitment

The state Office of the Attorney General would play a greater role in determining the future of convicted sex offenders upon completion of their prison terms, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Larry Howes (R-Walker).

HF341, approved Feb. 21 by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee and referred to the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee, calls for the attorney general's office to handle civil commitment proceedings of serious sex offenders who have completed their prison terms, and to also take a greater role in considering their release.

"I don't want any more loopholes. If the state is responsible for convicting sex offenders, I want the state involved in making (the release) decision," Howes said.

Kris Eiden, chief deputy in the attorney general's office, said they currently handle about 40 percent of the civil commitments in the state. Four attorneys, four legal assistants plus support staff handle these cases. "This bill would require us to handle 100 percent of the commitments, so it would mean doubling our staff."

The proposal asks that, at least a year before a sex offender is scheduled for release, the commissioner of corrections present the attorney general all information necessary to make a decision on whether the offender should be civilly committed. If the office determines that a commitment is not called for, the county in which the case was prosecuted could still decide to make a commitment.

A companion bill (SF342), sponsored by Sen. Carrie L. Ruud (R-Breezy Point), awaits action by the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Stiffer steroid penalties

Former Major League Baseball player Jose Canseco couldn't make it to the committee meeting, so Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) spoke in favor of HF1020, which would toughen penalties for selling steroids, especially to minors.

Atkins, sponsor of the measure, really did invite Canseco to appear before the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 22. "His scheduler was trying to make it work but an opportunity arose for him to be on NBC's Today show this morning," Atkins said. "He asked if the hearing could be delayed but we said no."

Canseco recently wrote a best-selling book called "Juiced," which details his steroid use during a 16-year career in baseball.

Atkins intended for Canseco to present the pro-steroid argument while he would argue against it. "I was surprised when his staff said he supports my bill because it keeps kids off steroids," Atkins said later.

Steroids are a "giant chemical experiment gone awry" and they are a considerable health risk for boys and girls, said Atkins, a Little League coach.

Atkins drafted his sons John, 11, and Tom, 10, — both young athletes — to testify. John Atkins said he's heard other young athletes say, "Steroids are cool. They make your muscles bigger so you can hit more home runs."

Atkins' bill would add anabolic steroids to the list of controlled substances on statutory schedule III, incorporating recent federal changes into Minnesota law. This change automatically increases penalties for selling steroids to a 15-year felony with a fine of up to \$100,000. The same penalties apply to a person who is convicted of possessing steroids with the intent to sell.

A person who sells steroids to minors or employs a minor to sell the drugs would, under the bill, have committed a third-degree controlled substance offense and be subject to a 20-year felony and a fine up to \$250,000.

Under the bill, the penalty for simply possessing or using steroids would remain the same. It would still be legal to properly use steroids in raising animals like cattle.

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

★ EDUCATION

Community ed levy

The community education levy would be restored to \$5.95 per capita beginning in fiscal year 2006 under a bill (HF710) sponsored by Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior). The 2003 Legislature lowered the levy to \$5.23 per capita.

"This doesn't amount to a great deal of money, although there is a fiscal cost of 72 cents per person — not a very big amount," Sykora told members of the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 22.

Steve Kerr, community education director for the Anoka-Hennepin School District, said 70 percent to 80 percent of the funds from the community education levy go toward programs for youth, mostly after school.

As a result of the decreased levy in 2003, programs were cut, fees were raised and participation dropped, according to Doug Spray, community education director for the Montevideo School District. "I strongly encourage you to consider raising the community ed levy

back to \$5.95," he said.

The committee held the bill for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. There is no Senate companion bill.

A similar restoration of the community education levy is included in HF148, sponsored by Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville). The committee only had time to discuss the community education portion of her bill Feb. 22.

A companion bill (SF245), sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Money for choice winners

Almost half of the 1,735 students in the St. Anthony-New Brighton School District don't live in the school district. They attend the suburban school district through open enrollment, as allowed by state law.

Districts that attract students through open enrollment receive basic state aid for the students that come to their school district, but they don't receive any referendum money for those students.

CHEEKY ADVOCATE



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Two-year-old Claire Temali, *right*, who attends the St. Paul-Como Park Crossroads ECFE, sticks out her tongue as she and her mother, Laura Temali, enjoy the Teddy Bear Band as part of the Feb. 24 Voices for Children Advocacy Day rally in the Rotunda. Participants later met with legislators to express the importance of early care and childhood programs.

"We receive less revenue for our open enrollment students than for our resident students," Michael Volna, chair of the St. Anthony-New Brighton School Board, told the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 17.

This can amount to a substantial loss of revenue for districts with high percentages of open enrollment, according to Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville), sponsor of HF195.

"St. Anthony/New Brighton is a wonderful small district that has been very successful with school choice," said Greiling. "But the money that comes with levy referendum does not follow students from their resident district."

The bill would partially compensate school districts for their open enrollment students. According to a formula, a school district with more than 50 percent of its students through open enrollment would receive \$500 for each open-enrolled student. The amount would decrease proportionately as the percentage of open-enrolled students declines. For example, a district with 10 percent open-enrolled students would receive \$100 for each of those students. Lots of school districts around the state would benefit, she said.

Under Greiling's bill, the aid amount would be provided by increasing the state general levy by \$2 million a year.

Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) suggested a different source of funding — take from districts that lose students and pay to those that gain. "You're asking for an adjustment on students entering a district," he said. "From the state perspective, there should also be an adjustment to districts losing students. There's the answer to your funding right there."

If all the money truly followed students, he said, then districts losing students to open enrollment should look at how they serve students and make necessary adjustments so they don't lose students. "There's something to be said for competition; American was built on that," said Buesgens.

The committee held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A Senate companion bill, SF384, sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Money for counselors

School districts would have a new way to pay for counselors, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield).

School districts have eliminated or reduced counselor positions because of budget reductions in recent years, Demmer told the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 22.

HF550 would expand eligible expenses so school districts could use the Safe Schools

levy, already in place, to pay salaries and benefits of school counselors. The levy, which does not need voter approval, already pays for such things as police liaison officers, drug abuse prevention programs like DARE, gang resistance education, school security and other crime prevention and school safety measures.

Demmer's bill would also restore the levy, which was cut to \$27 in 2003, back to \$30 per pupil. The increased allowance would be effective for taxes payable in 2006 with school districts receiving the revenue in 2007.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would further expand the list of eligible expenses to include nurses, social workers, psychologists and drug-abuse counselors. By providing money only for counselors, Greiling said, they would be ignoring the fact that all school support staff help address problems that students might have.

"I strongly support the goal of student safety and giving the tools to local school boards to decide what they need in their communities without us mandating that they have to use this fund for one [position] and not another," she said.

Demmer said he'd prefer to keep the funding just for counselors because there's not enough money to even do much of that.

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

A companion bill, SF522, sponsored by Sen. Michelle L. Fischbach (R-Paynesville), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Suspend suspensions

When students break certain school rules, they may be placed on out-of-school suspension.

Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Red Wing) thinks that's the wrong response and has proposed a bill (HF512) that he describes as a workable solution to the problem. This would be totally voluntary for school districts, not a mandate, he told the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 17.

"In too many cases, suspending a student from school does nothing to fix or address the problems that led to the suspension," said Dempsey, a former teacher and school administrator. "Students see the suspension as just an unsupervised day off from school." Dempsey said his bill goes along with the philosophy at his former school where "everybody is somebody and you don't throw somebodies out on the street."

The bill creates a process for school districts to use alternatives to out-of-school suspension and provides funding equal to \$54 per hour

(not per pupil) for each hour of a district's alternative suspension program.

The bill would allow a school administrator to impose one of three alternative suspensions: a parent or guardian would be encouraged to spend the school day with the child; the student could be required to attend school on Saturday in a program supervised by the principal; or the juvenile court could become involved.

"I feel like I'm back on the school board again," commented Rep. Randy Demmer (R-Hayfield). "I think we're dabbling in what school boards should be doing."

The committee held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A companion bill (SF536), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Technology and transportation

School districts would be able to levy up to \$30 per pupil unit for technology and another \$30 per pupil unit for transportation under HF141, sponsored by Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood).

"With cuts and things that have happened with tight budgets in the past several years, this would be a significant way to affect funding and actually help pupils in the classroom by funding transportation and technology through a levy," Slawik told the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 22.

Greg Hein, director of business for the North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale School District, said transportation used to be a separate fund for school districts but, several years ago, was rolled into the General Fund where it now competes with all the other items including teaching positions, support staff and supplies.

Under the bill, his school district would receive an additional \$390,000 for transportation, which he said, "is close to what we need on an annual basis to fund our bus replacement cycle."

"Technology funding has always been a struggle," said Robert Biddick, technology director for the district. The goal is to have up-to-date workstations for student and staff use so they can gain skills critical for today's world. But with current funding, technology can only be updated every 9.5 years or so, he said. "This money would help us to accomplish the things we need to do in technology."

The levies would not require voter approval and would provide additional revenue for school districts beginning in 2007.

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

A companion bill (SF52), sponsored by Sen. Charles W. "Chuck" Wiger (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

ELECTIONS



Five days for elections

Elections would be limited to five specific days each year under HF587, sponsored by Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan).

"In the state of Minnesota, particularly when it comes to referendum elections and ballot questions, there is a tremendous amount of flexibility at the local level to move both dates and times of elections," Buesgens told the House Education Policy and Reform Committee Feb. 22.

It can be confusing to voters when they move from city to city and the voting rules change, said Buesgens. "This bill provides uniformity, statewide, to whenever we call people to the ballot box."

Buesgens hopes uniformity will minimize voter disenfranchisement and increase voter turnout. "I hope we can get people into the mindset and good habit of always voting by setting some uniformity to the whole process; thus, hopefully, encouraging turnout which only helps representative democracy."

People tend to think of elections as taking place only in November, but that's not the reality, said Tony Kielkucki, deputy secretary of state. There could be 80 to 90 different election days in any given year, he said. This past December, for example, 22 elections took place, although some were on the same day.

Under the bill, all elections would be allowed only on these five dates:

- The first Tuesday after the second Monday in September, the primary election date;
- The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, the general election date;
- The fourth Tuesday in January;
- The second Tuesday in March, a common day for township elections, and
- The third Tuesday in May.

The bill would also make times and polling places more consistent.

"Our general concern is this bill does restrict the school districts' right to set elections based on the needs of local communities," said Thomas Deans, lobbyist with the Minnesota School Boards Association.

The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Local Government Committee. A Senate companion, SF827, sponsored by Sen. Dave Kleis (R-St. Cloud), awaits action in the Senate Elections Committee.

Candy, cookies and coffee

If elected officials or candidates handed you candy during a parade last summer, they were breaking the law. But a bill (HF507), sponsored by Rep. Andrew "Andy" Westerberg (R-Blaine), would make that action legal.

"This arises from my own personal experience in parades," Westerberg told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee Feb. 23. He said that he would like to hand out candy at parades, but it is currently against state statute. "I do know that there are people who do that anyway. I don't think it is good to put ourselves above the law."

Westerberg's proposal would also address an issue faced by legislators hosting town hall meetings and other gatherings where coffee and cookies are provided.

According to current law, it is OK to provide one or the other. The language would make the practice of serving both at the same time acceptable.

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

Sen. Michael J. Jungbauer (R-East Bethel) is the sponsor of a companion bill, SF960. It awaits action in the Senate Elections Committee.



For information on HF936 that would make it easier for journalists to access polling places go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

EMPLOYMENT



Wage modification doesn't prevail

Union employers wanting to see employee overtime pay modified were dealt a blow when the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee failed to adopt HF536.

Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth), sponsor of the bill, said the proposed exception to overtime requirements would allow employees who work on out-of-town state projects to spend more time with their families. There is no Senate companion bill.

"This really is an employee- and family-friendly bill," Marquart said during the Feb. 22 meeting.

Under the Minnesota prevailing wage law, employers must pay employees 1.5 times the prevailing hourly wage rate for hours worked in excess of eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. Federal law requires overtime pay after 40 hours a week, but has no daily limit.

The bill would allow employers to reschedule up to four hours of work that's scheduled for one day of the week for another day within the

same week at the same pay rate rather than the overtime rate. Rescheduling the hours would only be permissible when unfavorable weather conditions prevent the work from being done.

An exception would apply to employees working on highway projects outside the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Marquart said the bill would give contractors scheduling flexibility without having to pay the overtime rate. For example, if employees didn't work four hours on Wednesday because of a rain delay, they could make up the four hours on Thursday at the straight pay rate.

That flexibility would allow employees to spend their weekends with their families rather than working to make up for time lost as a result of bad weather, Marquart said.

Mark Sellin, president of Sellin Brothers Inc. in Hawley, said the bill would allow contractors to schedule five days of work in four days without having to pay as much overtime.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) spoke in opposition to the bill. He said people in the labor movement fought too hard for overtime pay to give it up.

Crime victim protection

After her 12-year-old daughter, Cally Jo, was murdered in their Waseca home in 1999, Connie Larson was able to take time off without pay from her job as a social worker to assist with the investigation and to grieve.

But later when a suspect was charged with the crime and the court process began, Larson's employer was reluctant to give her time off and Larson felt her job was threatened.

Through her connections with the state Attorney General's office and the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Larson was able to get the time off she needed. "If I didn't have connections as a crime victim, this would not have had a favorable outcome for me," Larson told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 17.

"In current law, the only time that employees are protected from employer retaliation is if they are subpoenaed to testify in court," said Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul), who is sponsoring HF443.

The bill would extend the same protection to victims and to next of kin of victims of heinous crimes, such as murder, and also for victims of domestic abuse so they could attend court proceedings.

The penalty would be a misdemeanor charge and also open the door for civil remedies to recover back pay. The committee held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

"Sometimes trials for heinous crimes can become quite lengthy," said Rep. Scott

Newman (R-Hutchinson). “For an employee to take time off even without pay could become a real burden on an employer to have an employee gone for an extended period of time. Is there any protection at all for employers under those circumstances?”

“We tried to balance, as best we could, with language requiring employees to give reasonable advance notice and provide verification for being absent,” responded Paymar. “I don’t disagree this could be problematic in certain circumstances. I would add this is really a small consideration to victims of crime, as well as family members who have had children or other family members killed.”

Paymar had wanted to take an even broader approach.

For example, he said Illinois has an economic security and safety act to protect victims and families. It allows for unpaid leave of up to one year. “In Minnesota now, there is no way victims or their families can protect themselves from employer retaliation,” he said.

There is no companion bill in the Senate.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Clean water legacy

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

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

A bill (HF826), sponsored by Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), aims to thwart the moniker Land of 10,000 Impaired Lakes.

The purpose is to “protect, restore, and preserve the quality of Minnesota’s surface waters by providing authority, direction, and resources to achieve and maintain water quality standards for surface waters” as required by the federal Clean Water Act.

The so-called Clean Water Legacy Act would establish both a policy framework and a funding mechanism to deal with the growing problem of impaired waters.

The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee began reviewing the proposal Feb. 22. No action was taken, but future meetings are planned on the topic.

Federal law requires states to identify surface waters that don’t meet certain water quality standards, compile a document known as a “TMDL report” that determines the pollution sources and the amount of cleanup needed to

restore the waters and then make “reasonable progress” toward restoration.

The 2003 Legislature ordered the Pollution Control Agency to meet with water quality stakeholders — conservation organizations; local, state, federal, and tribal officials; farmers; business owners; builders; environmental organizations and others — and report back with a policy framework and financing ideas.

Out of this broad, diverse coalition came recommendations that are incorporated in the bill.

The “elegant policy framework” set forth in the bill would streamline the efforts of all levels of government involved in water quality management, said Clean Water Action Midwest Regional Director Marie Zellar, “There’s a real problem of, ‘Who do you go to for what?’ ... It’s confounding for citizens. It divides our resources, divides our attentions.”

What’s unique about the approach under the bill is that it comes down to the community level, she said. “What these community leaders need is they need the resources.”

A companion bill (SF762), sponsored by Sen. Dennis R. Frederickson (R-New Ulm), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Spirit of conservation

The spirit of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a Depression-era public works program initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, is still alive in Minnesota. It’s

operating these days as a private, non-profit organization with limited state support.

The Minnesota Conservation Corps is a public service organization that provides young men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 with practical outdoor work experience protecting and enhancing the state’s natural resources.

In his fourth week as the executive director of the program, former Sen. Len Price presented his case for continued state support at current levels to the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee Feb. 17. The request will be considered for possible inclusion in the committee’s omnibus environment finance bill.

Committee Chair Rep. Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount) is sponsoring a bill (HF1089) that would direct \$3.5 million to the corps in fiscal years 2006-07.

A companion bill (SF771), sponsored by Sen. Dallas C. Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty has recommended \$980,000 in state support from the Natural Resources Fund — a 42 percent decrease from the current biennium. The governor would eliminate any General Fund support.

“I learned a long time ago that if you don’t ask you don’t even get considered,” Price said. “I’m here to ask you to try to do better than the governor’s recommendation of just the dedicated fund dollars.”

Program officials shared a PowerPoint presentation featuring a number of lively corps

OWLY DISPOSITION



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

As part of the Minnesota Zoo’s Feb. 22 budget presentation, Kevin Wier, supervisor of the Zoomobile program at the Minnesota Zoo, shows off Annie, a great horned owl, to the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

members working and camping at different sites around the state.

"Housing? It's not the Ritz. They're in bunks, they're in bug nets, they love it," said Rolf Hagberg, corps development director.

★ GOVERNMENT

Electronic meetings

If state boards and councils can do business using interactive television, why not the House?

While this is not the intent of HF944, sponsored by Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Delano), Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood) raised the question during discussion of the measure that would allow certain government entities to meet electronically. Heard Feb. 23 by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee, the bill was approved and referred to the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee.

Emmer explained that some state boards and councils currently meet electronically under certain conditions that are acceptable according to the state's Open Meeting law.

The bill would extend the option to several others under the jurisdiction of the Department of Employment and Economic Development: the Agricultural and Economic Development Board, the Small Business Development Center Advisory Board, Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Board, the Governor's Workforce Development Council, the Urban Initiative Board and the Explore Minnesota Tourism Council. The boards could only meet by telephone or other electronic means if interactive television is not available and if other specified requirements are met.

"This idea is to make these boards more accessible to people in outstate Minnesota," said Emmer. One of the issues that people face when serving on the boards is the travel distance, plus overnight accommodations, he said.

"Occasionally a legislator can't make session. Would you be in favor of lawmakers voting by interactive TV?" asked Slawik. "If there was some kind of emergency, we might want to think about something like that. It's interesting to think about being anywhere and being able to vote."

Mark Anfinson, attorney for the Minnesota Newspaper Association, was concerned about amendment language referring to "other electronic means."

"We do think there is the opportunity to authorize an e-mail meeting," he said, but added that some of the requirements set out in the language would make that difficult.

A companion bill, SF853, sponsored by Sen. David H. Senjem (R-Rochester), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.



For information on a bill (HF1036) dealing with some "housekeeping issues" regarding administrative hearings, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ HEALTH

Health options

Current and former legislators have a unique health care insurance benefit; they can opt in or out of the state health plan at any time.

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee on Feb. 22 heard HF913, sponsored by Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee), which would restrict the benefit available to legislators, along with providing retired state employees more options for health care.

The bill was voluntarily laid over by Beard for changes with the expectation it will be brought up at a later date. There is no Senate companion.

"At any point going forward in the future ... I could chip a tooth, pick up the phone and call (the Department of Employee Relations) and pay my monthly premium for my dental bill, go get my teeth fixed and then the next month not pay the premium," explained Beard.

With that option for legislators, "premiums skyrocket ... and those costs are spread across a smaller group," testified Elizabeth Houlding, director of the insurance division with the Department of Employee Relations. Currently the monthly premium cost is \$368 per individual for retired legislators.

Under the bill, legislators would have a time limit in which to purchase the insurance. Once past the effective date, the purchasing option would no longer be available.

"This is one of the few things that is left when we leave this place because the pension isn't worth a hill of beans ... it's almost insulting to every legislator. It tells us that we have no value and we shouldn't be paid," said Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul). He said he would be voting against any form of the legislation.

Under the bill, the Department of Employee Relations would also be required to offer an alternative to the current more costly health plan to state retirees. Many are finding the yearly increase in premiums is a cost they can't afford, and requested that the state offer a choice of plans.

"What we currently have is an expensive plan and it is becoming too expensive for many to continue in it," said Houlding.

Smokers could offset state costs

Cigarette prices could increase to offset some state costs under two bills presented to the House Health Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 22.

HF1168, sponsored by Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan), and HF1169, sponsored by Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester), would use cigarette excise tax money to offset Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association deficits and revenue losses that will result from conforming to federal health savings accounts. In each case \$210.31 million would be appropriated to the commerce commissioner to pay for the estimated association deficit in the next biennium.

Each bill would make structural changes in the association and eliminate its assessment on health insurance, and conform the Minnesota income tax to federal tax treatment of health savings accounts.

Wilkin's bill would increase the cigarette tax by 54 cents to \$1.02 a pack. Bradley's bill would raise the tax to \$1.47 a pack and use some of that money to eliminate the premium tax on health insurance.

"I don't think there will be another initiative this session, no matter what we do, that will bring more immediate money to the table to reduce health care costs," Bradley said.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Phil Stalboeger, left, legislative affairs director for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, and Dr. Marc Manley, executive director of the Center for Tobacco Reduction and Health Improvement at Blue Cross Blue Shield, testify before the House Health Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 22 in support of a bill that would increase the cigarette tax.

He said current health care taxes have an “incredible unfairness” to small businesses because they pay taxes that large self-insured employers are exempt from because they are self-insured and regulated by federal law.

The savings in insurance premiums would be passed along to consumers, benefiting small businesses and their employees, Bradley said.

“This is going to help some people hang onto their health insurance,” said Mike Hickey, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business.

Julie Brunner, executive director for the Minnesota Council of Health Plans, echoed the message of other testifiers by saying that raising the cost of cigarettes would dissuade people from starting to smoke and help current smokers quit.

“We think that will be worth the effort,” Brunner said.

Rep. Barbara Goodwin (DFL-Columbia Heights) opposed both bills, saying they would not necessarily lower premiums or help the uninsured. She also said insurance companies may not pass the savings along to customers, but instead use the money to increase their profits.

Both bills passed and were referred to the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee. Neither has a Senate companion bill.

HUMAN SERVICES



Nursing home moratoriums sought

Nursing home projects in two counties could receive moratorium exceptions that would allow for the building or relocation of facilities.

The House Health Policy and Finance Committee heard bills Feb. 23 that would grant the exceptions to nursing homes in Wadena and Otter Tail counties. The committee held over both bills for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A construction moratorium was imposed by the state several years ago to help control health care costs.

HF1082, sponsored by Rep. Dean Simpson (R-New York Mills), would allow for the licensing and certification of 23 beds in a locked dementia unit at a 100-bed facility in Wadena County. The beds would be relocated from a nursing home to an attached hospital. A similar bill was proposed last session.

“We have a need to provide more service,” Simpson said. “This is an important part of our health care system.”

Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls) is sponsoring HF1058 that would extend a moratorium exception for an additional 24 months

AZTEC DANCE



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Charlie Quiros, St. Paul, and other members of Danza Mexica Cuahemec perform a percussive Aztec dance to open Youth Intervention Programs Day at the Capitol Feb. 17.

for a nursing facility in Otter Tail County. The health commissioner initially approved the exception on Dec. 20, 2002.

The bill would affect the Broen Memorial Home in Fergus Falls and the Perham Memorial Hospital and Home in Perham. The extension would not significantly increase the costs of the projects, but would change the timing of the expenses.

Senate companion bills (SF1043 and SF1118), sponsored by Sen. Dallas C. Sams (DFL-Staples) and Sen. Cal Larson (R-Fergus Falls), respectively, await action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Metro rates mean more money

Some nursing home facilities outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area could see the playing field leveled when it comes to reimbursement rates.

Two bills heard by the House Health Policy and Finance Committee on Feb. 23 would allow certain facilities in Chisago and Rice counties to receive the higher reimbursement rates given to nursing homes in the metro area.

Rep. Ray Cox (R-Northfield) is sponsoring HF745 that would consider nursing home facilities in Rice County, located within two miles of Scott or Dakota counties, to be considered metro. The bill would affect two facilities located in Northfield.

Having the metro rate rather than the non-metro rate would increase state reimbursements

by approximately \$5 per resident per day, said Pat Vincent, CEO of Three Links Care Center in Northfield. The money would help the facilities offer competitive wages and maintain its labor force, she said.

“We are unable to compete in our area,” Vincent said.

Rep. Peter Nelson (R-Lindstrom) is sponsoring HF337 that would provide the metro rate to all facilities in Chisago County. Nelson said Chisago is one of the fastest growing counties in the country and it’s no longer a rural area.

Under both bills, the metro designation would apply only if it results in a higher level of reimbursement. The bills would not give authority to create rate increases.

Both bills were held over for possible inclusion in the committee’s omnibus bill.

The Senate companion for Cox’s bill (SF954), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Neville (R-Northfield), has been referred to the Senate Health and Family Security Committee. The companion for Nelson’s bill (SF506), sponsored by Sen. Sean R. Nienow (R-Cambridge), has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

INSURANCE



Flexible plans for small employers

Small employers could have more health plan options under a bill that would exclude or modify benefits otherwise mandated by state law.

Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) is sponsoring HF588 that would permit flexible benefit plans for small employer group health coverage. The small employer designation is for companies with two to 50 employees.

Wilkin told the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee Feb. 23 that Minnesota leads the nation in the number of health insurance mandates, with more than 60.

He said the mandates increase the cost of basic health coverage by 30 percent to 50 percent. The bill would not exclude federal mandates.

The bill would allow small employers the flexibility to tailor their plans, Wilkin said, adding that it will also help the uninsured afford health care insurance.

"This will go a long way toward helping companies choose the coverage they have," he said. "This is one tool in the toolbox for employers."

Several other states have, or are considering, these health plans for small employers, he said.

The bill was approved and referred to the House Health Policy and Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

★ LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Fee increases

Fees may be rising for real estate recordings and registrations by counties under a bill approved by the House Local Government Committee Feb. 21.

Sponsored by Rep. Connie Ruth (R-Owatonna), HF358 would change the current fee of \$1 per page, with a minimum of \$15, to a flat fee of \$40 for indexing and recording deeds. Also, the maximum fee for abstract titles would increase from \$5 to \$10, abstract certificates from \$50 to \$100, and the minimum fee for filing an amended floor plan for a multi-unit building from \$30 to \$50.

The changes "create consistency" for customers, said Kay Wrucke, Martin County recorder. The last fee increase was in 1991 and they have not kept up with the services counties provide, she added.

The bill now goes to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee.

A Senate companion (SF267), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Also sponsored by Ruth and Murphy, HF357/SF262* was approved by the committee and now goes to the House floor.

The bill makes technical changes to language as it relates to county recorders.

The Senate version of the bill was passed Feb. 14.



For information on a bill (HF295) that would increase the number of seats on the Minneapolis School Board, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ MILITARY

Veterans' license plates

Soldiers having served in Iraq may have the choice of a new license plate with the decal of the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and choice of: Iraq War Vet, Afghan War Vet, or GWOT (Global War On Terror) Veteran.

HF171, sponsored by Rep. Bruce Anderson (R-Buffalo Township), establishes the new plate. It was approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 23 and referred to the House Transportation Committee.



PHOTO BY TOM OLSCHIED

Minnesota National Guard Spc. Adam Temperly testifies Feb. 23 before the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee for a bill that would authorize Global War on Terrorism veteran's license plates, Rep. Bruce Anderson holds an example of the plate.

The plate is one way for soldiers to be "recognized for their duty," said Anderson.

Motorized vehicles and motorcycles would be able to have the plates. Currently, only Vietnam Veteran license plates are available for motorcycles.

"There is a sense of pride when you have something like that," just like when a soldier puts on their uniform, testified Capt. Daniel Hingst of the Army Reserve.

Those who qualify for the plate include National Guard and Reserve members who earned the qualifying military medal for airport security duty under presidential orders, and those who have earned veteran status, including soldiers that have served on active duty consecutively for 181 days.

A companion bill, SF605, sponsored by Sen. Michael J. Jungbauer (R-East Bethel), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

★ RECREATION

Complement not compete

It's been more than 30 years since the Legislature recognized that the pressure of urbanization was threatening recreational open spaces in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Under the 1974 Metropolitan Parks Act, the Metropolitan Council was charged with organizing cities, counties and special park districts to acquire and manage parks and trails that, along with state parks and trails, would meet the outdoor recreational needs in the metro area.

Under Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget recommendation for fiscal years 2006-07, the Metropolitan Regional Parks System, through the Metropolitan Council, would receive \$14.9 million in state support. The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee reviewed the proposal Feb. 22.

The level of funding in the governor's recommendation would cover 9.8 percent of the parks' operating costs, said Arne Stefferud, Metropolitan Council parks planning analyst. The other 90.2 percent would be picked up at the local level through property taxes and park user fees.

"We are not trying to compete with the state parks system but we are trying to complement it in the metropolitan area," Stefferud said.

Today, the metro parks system consists of 52,000 acres, including 46 regional parks and park reserves and 22 regional trails, and serves an estimated 30.5 million annual visitors, Stefferud said. The breakdown of visitors by origin is 58.9 percent local (meaning people who live within a park agency's taxation jurisdiction), 34.5 percent non-local, 3.4 percent

from outside the state and 3.2 percent from outside of the metro area.

The parks are owned, operated and maintained by Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties; the Three Rivers Park District; the cities of Bloomington and St. Paul; and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

The request will be considered for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus environment finance bill.

Happy campers

Camping on the fairgrounds is part of the Minnesota State Fair experience for some people, right up there with Pronto Pups and mini-donuts.

A brouhaha erupted in 2004 after the fair announced an end to public onsite camping because the Department of Health had determined, among other reasons, there was not enough space between campsites. The fair and the department reached a compromise and a reduced number of sites were available, but only for the 2004 fair.

A bill (HF1104), sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), would permit public camping on the fairgrounds with the same number and size of campsites that were allowed in 2004.

The House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee approved the measure Feb. 23.

It now moves to the House Health Policy and Finance Committee.

The fair supports the bill, said Minnesota State Fair Assistant Manager Steve Pooch. He has been there about 35 years, he said, and there have been no incidents in campgrounds or overnight parking areas.

"The department is not opposed to camping at the state fair, nor do we want to get rid of camping at the state fair, but at the same time there are rules in place that we have to enforce and we need to be as consistent as possible," said former Rep. Doug Stang, who now is a Department of Health assistant commissioner.

Under the bill, as amended, the fair must operate a camping area on the fairgrounds. Camping would be allowed under the following conditions:

- RVs and tents must be separated from each other and from other structures by at least 7 feet;
- a minimum area of 300 square feet per site must be provided; and
- each site must face a driveway with unobstructed access to a public roadway.

"My argument was as long as you can get fire and emergency vehicles in and the people are happy, 7 feet or 6 feet is fine," Seifert said. "If we went to these really stringent regulations

that are in rules right now we would have just started crowding out more and more sites. We already gave up over 100 sites last year and I just don't want to give any more up."

A companion bill (SF1031), sponsored by Sen. Paul E. Koering (R-Fort Ripley), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.

SAFETY

Extinguishing costs

If the car of a motorist passing through one of Minnesota's townships or small cities catches fire, the local fire department dutifully responds. But the department may have a hard time recouping its costs for providing the service.

A bill (HF210), sponsored by Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls), would change that requiring the state to reimburse local fire departments up to \$300 per call under certain circumstances.

The Twin Cities suburb of Vadnais Heights is hit hard with this problem. Its fire department is responsible for 7.5 miles of interstates 694 and 35E. Fire Chief Ed Leier told the House Transportation Finance Committee on Feb. 17 the city spends \$37,000 a year on extinguishing car fires.

Under the bill, towns that have not been reimbursed, either by the individual or the motorist's insurance company, can put a charge on the person's property tax bill.

If the fire department has no option for reimbursement, the bill would require the state to reimburse local fire departments, with the money coming from a revolving account in the General Fund. Payments from people who had car fires extinguished would be placed in the account.

Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina) took issue with the proposed payments, pointing out that at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, people from all over the state are treated. Some are unable to pay, so the county does not get reimbursed.

The measure was tabled and Committee Chair Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) said staff members would work with Blaine to clarify the language in the bill.

A companion bill, SF344, sponsored by Sen. LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Plummer), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.



For information on a bill (HF465) that would make it a misdemeanor to interfere with paramedics who are working at the scene of an emergency, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA at: <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

TAXES

A fairer tax system

An overhaul of the state tax system that would impose higher individual income taxes on high earners and lower taxes on businesses might make the tax system fairer and could raise more money.

A presentation on doing that was made to the House Taxes Committee Feb. 23 by Growth and Justice, a St. Paul organization that tries to foster the achievement of economic growth and justice.

Joel Kramer, the organization's executive director, said there is pressure to invest more money in public projects, and state and local governments habitually agonize over how to raise money.

He presented three possible new models for taxation: restructuring and rebalancing, which would not bring in any more money, and reinvesting, which would bring in \$1 billion more.

Under restructuring, 25 percent of taxpayers would pay more and 75 percent would pay less, providing \$375 million to the state. The corporate income and sales taxes would be eliminated on most purchases, and a 2.5 percent business flat tax would be placed on business activity. That would result in a \$375 million loss.

The consumer sales tax would be expanded to include services, household goods and clothing. Kramer said it's unlikely the organization would ever recommend a tax on food because it's a regressive tax.

Under rebalancing, a new top bracket would be at a 9 percent rate. Itemized deductions would be limited to \$100,000, and income from municipal bonds would be taxed. This would be expected to bring in \$375 million.

The corporate income tax rate would be lowered, as would the sales tax rate on business declines, a loss of about \$375 million. Also, the sales tax would be expanded to include most services, except health care, but the rate lowered from 6.5 percent to 5.3 percent.

Under reinvesting, a more aggressive form of the adjusted gross income would be used, so that 25 percent of people would pay more and 75 percent would pay less. Local governments would be allowed a tax option, or surtax. If three-fourths of local governments used the surtax, it is expected that \$772 million would be raised, Kramer said. Businesses would have a lower tax rate, but consumers would have to pay a tax on most services. The rate would be 5.75 percent. Those shifts would offset.

Moving?

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PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The House capital investment bill includes \$3.8 million for two projects at St. Cloud State University, including \$2.9 million to finish converting Centennial Hall from a library to classrooms and office space.

Perseverance pays off

House bonding bill includes money for Northstar commuter rail

By Mike Cook

Nine months after last session ended without the passage of a capital investment bill, the House passed another measure Feb. 22.

The bill calls for slightly more than \$811.8 million in spending, in areas from agriculture to zoos. After nearly three hours of debate, the measure passed 121-12. The Senate-approved bill (SF1) calls for almost \$1.04 billion in spending. The governor's proposal is \$811.05 million. A conference committee is expected to work out the differences.

"We've brought balance to this bill: metro, rural, suburban, urban, DFL, Republican," said Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea), sponsor of HF3. "I think it's a very prudent bill and comes in parallel with the governor. It's very affordable at this time."

But House Minority Leader Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul) said it is not large enough. He said Senate Democrats and Republicans, and House Democrats believe the bill should be in the \$975 million range, which would then

fully fund the Northstar commuter rail line and contain money for planning the Central Corridor transitway between the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The governor and Senate recommend \$37.5 million for the Northstar project; the House \$10 million. The Senate bill calls for \$5.25 million for the corridor, the House \$1 million and the governor proposes zero.

"As stewards of the state credit card, we need to be very prudent," said House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie). "It's not possible to include every member's project without overspending the limit on the credit card."

Rep. Phil Krinkie (R-Shoreview) expressed concern about the state jeopardizing its AAA bond rating and that the bill calls for \$180 million more in net general obligation spending than last year's bill. "The fastest growing portion of the state budget is debt service. If you vote for this bill you increase the amount of debt service \$55 million. You move it from 22 percent of the state's increase in spending to 31 percent. It will pale in terms of

the percentage increase of the state budget to health care, education, corrections, etc..."

"Rep. Dorman I think you're going to go out of here with a big group hug," Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) said, even though he was disappointed with some of what didn't make it into the bill. "It can come back a lot better than it's leaving here."

Entenza said more than \$55 million in projects for northwest Minnesota that were in last year's bill are not in the 2005 version.

Transportation

"I think this is one of the highlights of our bill," said Dorman, noting that \$50 million is appropriated for local bridge replacement, \$12.5 million for local road improvement grants and \$10 million for the Northstar commuter rail.

Also included is \$10 million for a Cedar Avenue bus rapid transit plan, \$1 million for design of the central corridor and \$500,000 each for the Red Rock Corridor in the southeastern part of the Twin Cities

metropolitan area and the Rush Line Corridor from Hinckley to St. Paul.

Entenza said the central corridor money would not be enough to get needed federal matching money to help with the planning.

“Between those appropriations and the Department of Transportation, I think the bill is very heavy in infrastructure — in transportation projects that I think will help get our state moving forward.” Dorman said.

Much of the floor debate centered on the Northstar commuter rail line that would run from downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake.

“Thank you for funding the Northstar corridor,” said Rep. Barbara Goodwin (DFL-Columbia Heights). “This is the first bonding bill I’ll be able to vote for.”

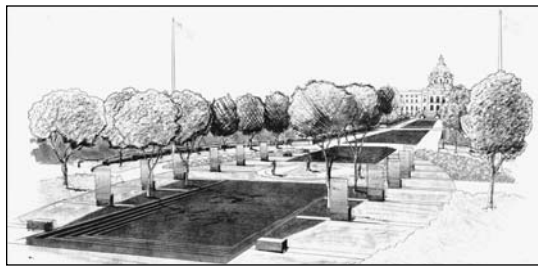
Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake) went 0-for-3 on his transportation-related amendments.

One would have required that federal funds earmarked for the Northstar commuter rail, that he estimates exceed \$250 million, be instead put toward express bus systems and that a study be conducted to see if commuter rail or express buses is more effective in relieving corridor congestion.

Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) said the purpose of the commuter rail is not just congestion relief. She said federal estimates indicate that 900,000 hours will be saved annually because of the project. “That’s time we can spend with our children at home and at work and not in our cars,” she said.

A second amendment would have required, in part, a referendum be passed by the majority of all voters in all cities voting on the question. The referendum would ask if the city should be permitted to spend local funds on the project.

Also rejected was a plan to require as part of the preliminary engineering for the central corridor project an evaluation of the feasibility of personal rapid transit in the corridor.



\$670,000 is included in the House bonding bill to complete the World War II veteran's memorial in the Capitol Complex.

Illustration courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

An amendment by Rep. Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake) would have eliminated funding for Northstar and, instead, put \$6 million toward local roads projects and \$4 million toward local bridges.

Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) successfully divided the amendment so that the House would have to vote on funding the Northstar project alone. “This amendment is an attempt to gut Northstar out of the bill,” she said. The body overwhelmingly voted to keep \$10 million toward the rail line, after which Vandever withdrew his amendment and one other.

Education

The bill allocates \$154.76 million to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and \$89.37 million to the University of Minnesota; \$4.2 million for the state academies for the deaf and blind; \$2 million for library capital improvement grants; \$1.08 million for the Perpich Center for the Arts and \$1.05 million for the Crosswinds Arts and Science Middle School in Woodbury.

Entenza expressed concern that the funding for higher education is far lower than the cumulative requested amounts, which total \$450.7 million. “When we don’t take care of

the important needs of higher education, our future investment, our future capital, our future economic growth is put at peril. When this bill comes back we need to make sure that the critical needs for the University of Minnesota are met. We want to make sure our state college and university system has the investment that they need.”


An amendment offered, then withdrawn, by Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake) would have taken \$3.3 million designated for the acquisition of state park and recreation areas and scientific and natural areas, and instead acquire school trust lands within the two areas.

“They specifically have a purpose to raise money for school kids and to help pay for public education,” he said. “I’m told there are over 50,000 acres of school trust land that is inside state parks and (scientific and natural) areas today that someday need to be purchased, condemned and, in accordance with the constitution, pay the school trust for those lands.”

By law, the state holds the land and accumulated revenues from the land in trust for the benefit of public schools in Minnesota.

“Some of the land is very carefully lumbered so that we are always preserving our asset, but taking the trees that are mature and should be taken,” said Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior). “There are also some mineral lands where we have some mining going on.” She said it usually brings \$10 million to \$15 million to schools annually. “We aren’t making enough money off our land and we certainly could use it now.”

Others

- \$113 million to the Department of Employment and Economic Development, including \$20 million for a biotech research facility in Rochester and \$15 million in redevelopment grants;
- \$106 million in corrections, including an expansion of the Faribault facility and money toward a segregation unit at the Stillwater prison;
- \$72.9 million for natural resources, including \$21 million in flood hazard mitigation grants and \$4.85 million for Greater Minnesota regional parks;
- \$15 million to the Minnesota Zoo for asset preservation and the new zoo master plan and new exhibit;
- \$12.6 million for a forensic nursing facility for sex offenders;
- \$10 million for permanent supportive housing loans; and
- \$670,000 to complete the World War II veteran’s memorial in the Capitol Complex. 

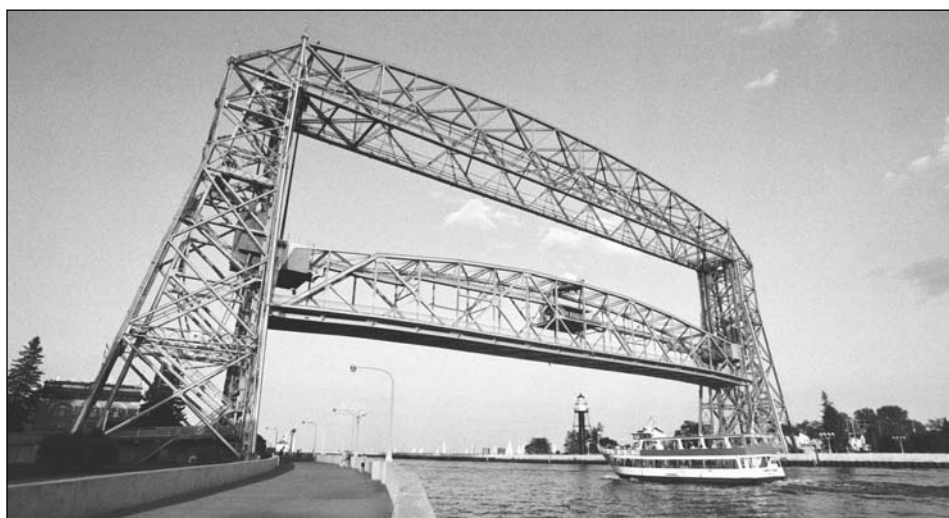


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Not included in the House capital investment bill, nor the governor’s recommendation, is \$1 million for restoration of the aerial lift bridge in Duluth. The money is in the Senate proposal.

Minnesota's growing danger

Meth use has now spread throughout the state

By **BRETT MARTIN**

It's dangerous, addictive and widely available. It has short- and long-term health effects. It's one of the most devastating drugs to hit Minnesota, posing a particular threat to young women and children. The drug is methamphetamine, commonly called meth, and it's now present in all 87 counties in the state.

"This (drug) has an unusual, rapid addiction," Rebecca Kenow, manager for the Minnesota Department of Health, told the House Health Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 17. The committee took no action, and no specific bills on curbing meth use have been heard by the committee. However, seven methamphetamine-related bills await action by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee.

Kenow said meth appeals to young women who use the drug to lose weight. Whereas most illegal drugs have a 2-1 ratio of men users versus women, there are almost an equal number of women using meth as men.

Because most of the ingredients used to make meth are readily available in local hardware stores, such as solvents, liquid drain openers and paint thinner, the drug is easy to make and inexpensive to buy. Recipes for "cooking" meth are easily accessible on the Internet.

The typical Minnesota "cook" is a meth user who makes meth every 24 to 74 hours, makes one ounce per batch and provides meth for one to five people, mostly family and friends, according to the department.

Children are present in 30 percent to 50 percent of the labs where meth is made, putting them at risk of abuse, neglect, poor nutrition and exposure to violence, sexual abuse and pornography, Kenow said.

"It's a toxic soup used to cook the meth," she said. "Kids are being exposed to this whenever the meth is cooked."

The Health Department estimates that 25 percent of meth users are under the age of 16.

Sara Peterson was one of those users.

"I was a hopeless case," she said. Peterson, now 24, lived through seven years of severe meth addiction. In 2002, she overdosed on a mixture of cocaine and meth and had a heart attack.

"I hate meth," she said in passionate testimony before the committee. "I hate what it does to people and families."

Peterson had been to six treatment centers and three psychiatric wards before finding help at Minnesota Teen Challenge, the program she credits for ending her addiction. She has been "clean" for three years and now attends Northwestern College in St. Paul.

"I'm no longer an addict. I'm set free from that," Peterson said, adding that she looks forward to her future.

Kenow said she is seeing second and third generation meth users.

The effects of using the drug include hair loss; tooth and bone loss; cardiovascular

and cerebrovascular damage; damage to the liver, kidneys and respiratory system; neurological damage and psychiatric problems. Chronic usage can cause permanent changes in the brain.

A central nervous system stimulant, chemically similar to amphetamines, meth can be smoked, snorted, injected or ingested. Like other stimulants, meth may increase libido, which is why men use the drug for sexual enhancement, Kenow said.

The use of meth has also been associated with violent behavior and an increase in crime. As Tom Rime, supervisor for Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted Community Corrections, pointed out, it's much more expensive to incarcerate users in state prisons than to treat and manage them in the community through

Publicly funded clients who were admitted to a chemical dependency treatment program in 2004.

Primary substance:	Client count	Percent
Alcohol	5,552	46%
Marijuana	2,607	21%
Methamphetamine	1,887	16%
Crack	1,190	10%
Cocaine	332	3%
Other	375	3%
Heroin	231	2%

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services

The percentage of substance abuse, by gender, for public clients receiving treatment in 2003-04


Primary substance	Male	Female	Total
Alcohol	48.8	41.3	46.4
Marijuana	21.6	16.1	19.8
Methamphetamine	12.1	18.6	14.2
Crack	10.0	12.9	10.9
Other	2.3	5.1	3.2
Cocaine	2.7	3.3	2.9
Heroin	2.6	2.7	2.7
Number of Admissions	29,369	14,055	43,424

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services

local jails and correctional supervision.

Rime said it costs about \$22,000 to house an inmate for one year. A first offense sentence for manufacturing meth, with no criminal history, can be 86 months in prison at a cost of about \$110,000, not including medical or dental costs. Non-treated offenders re-offend at four times the rate of treated offenders nationally.

By comparison, the Crossroads/Odyssey Program, a collaborative effort between corrections, social services, local jails and community treatment providers, costs \$6,500 per participant for treatment, Rime said.

"This Legislature cannot afford not to fund methamphetamine-specific treatment programs because it can't afford to build enough prisons to manage the epidemic," he said. 

Power to the people

Bills would let voters decide if casino comes to their cities

By **BRETT MARTIN**

Before a casino can set up operations in a city, it may have to win over the city's residents.

Two bills heard by the Gaming Division of the House Regulated Industries Committee on Feb. 23 would prohibit the location of a state-operated or state-licensed gambling facility in a city unless the city's voters approve the facility in a referendum.

Reps. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) and Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake) are sponsoring HF463 and HF1208, respectively. Both bills would require voter approval in a general or special election called for that purpose, with the city picking up the expense for the election.

Vandever's bill would exempt racetracks from being considered a gambling facility unless it also conducts casino games. Lenczewski's bill doesn't have the exemption.

Lenczewski said it's important to let the voters decide if a casino can open in their communities because the host towns would be impacted by factors not addressed by the state, such as local costs, congestion and smoking bans.

"A host community would have a long list of issues the state would not consider," she said.

Vandever said the bills are in sync with the governor's pledge that he would not force a casino in any given area.

"In Minnesota, we like to have the people make decisions, and that's what this legislation does," he said.

Although Lenczewski concedes that casinos may be able to sway voters' opinions through marketing blitzes, she said the bills would slow down the process of building a new casino and give legislators time to work out a good deal with the gambling facility.

She points out that the tribal gaming compacts have not been beneficial to the state.

"Let's not rush too quickly to make another bad compact," Lenczewski said.

Currently, there are no legislators stepping forward with bills to bring a casino to their cities or towns, which Lenczewski finds ironic. She said legislators have fought for prisons, nuclear waste and sex offender housing in their districts, but not one representative is courting gambling facilities.

Both bills were held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill. A companion for Vandever's bill (SF1106), sponsored by Sen. Michele Bachmann (R-Stillwater), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee. Lenczewski's bill does not have a Senate companion.

The governor's budget proposal called for a \$200 million one-time casino license fee. Under the governor's plan a new casino arrangement,

Let the duckies race

For years, groups across the state have raised money by racing rubber ducks on Minnesota lakes. However, by doing so, they were violating the law.

But they may not remain that way for long. Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar) is sponsoring HF803, that would redefine a raffle under charitable gaming laws to include games in which chances are represented by shares or other certificates of participation.

That modification would make the famed duck races legal. Under current law, raffles require tickets.

On Feb. 23, the Gaming Division of the House Regulated Industries Committee heard, and occasionally jeered, a bill that would legalize the rubber duck races. It was held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

A companion bill (SF759), sponsored by Sen. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.

(B. Martin)

which could include a partnership with interested tribes, is expected to generate more than \$100 million in state revenues beginning in 2008.

Although net revenues at Minnesota tribal casinos are unknown since casinos don't have to disclose them, they have been estimated to be between \$1 billion and \$2 billion a year, according to the Minnesota State Lottery. Illegal gambling in Minnesota is estimated to be in excess of \$2 billion annually.

A 2004 survey conducted by the Minnesota State Lottery and St. Cloud State University found that 83 percent of adult Minnesotans had gambled during the previous year, and an additional 11 percent had gambled at some point in their lives.

According to the survey, the average Minnesotan has bet on six different gambling activities in his or her lifetime and three within the past year. The state lottery was the most popular form of gambling with 60 percent of the state's adults having purchased a lottery ticket in the year prior to the survey.

Legal gambling in Minnesota includes charitable gambling, pari-mutuel horse racing, the state lottery, card rooms and tribal casinos. Utah and Hawaii are the only states that do not have some form of legal gambling.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

A pair of bills would require voter approval before a state-operated or state-licensed gaming facility could open in a city.

A call to public service

Emmer takes time to know the people and the process

By **BRETT MARTIN**

When Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Delano) moved just west of the Twin Cities metropolitan area after graduating from law school in 1988, he had



Rep. Tom Emmer

no idea the move would lead him into politics. In fact, he purchased the Old Shady Beach Resort Hotel, the last privately owned resort in Hennepin County, to enjoy rural life.

“I wanted to go somewhere where I could hunt in the front yard and fish in the backyard,” he said.

The country didn’t stay country for long. Developers came to Independence to start building, and a new road was slated for construction in front of Emmer’s home. This called for removing 300-year-old trees. Emmer contacted the mayor and saved the trees

the night before they were to be cut down.

“That’s the way the process is supposed to work,” he said. “Then the public service part took hold of me.”

The call to public service prompted him to run for city council. He served eight years on the Independence City Council and then moved up the road to Delano, where he served another two years before being elected to the House.

His city council experience gave him firsthand knowledge of the needs and expectations of the people he now represents. Because the area is experiencing rapid growth, Emmer said constituents are looking for a better transportation system.

“The city is exploding, so the issues we’re facing at home and the issues we’re facing here are the same,” he said. “The transportation infrastructure needs serious consideration. There are a lot of people moving into the area, and they need to be able to get around. They

DISTRICT 19B

2002 Population: 36,729
Largest city: St. Michael
Counties: Hennepin and Wright
Top concerns: Education, transportation

“The transportation infrastructure needs serious consideration. There are a lot of people moving into the area, and they need to be able to get around. They need access.”

— Rep. Tom Emmer

need access.”

Emmer serves on the House Civil Law and Elections, Ethics, Health Policy and Finance and Regulated Industries committees.

“What I’d prefer to do, as a new legislator, is to get my feet on the ground and learn as much as I can about the people and the process,” he said.

A trial attorney, Emmer compares serving as a new House member to serving on a jury. “You want to get all the information, get the facts, then make an informed decision,” he said.

A solid foundation

Hosch uses business, local government background

By **MATT WETZEL**

Rep. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Joseph) ran for the House because he believes some members of the Legislature had grown shortsighted.



Rep. Larry Hosch

“I was frustrated with some of the things that were happening,” he said. “There were many cuts that saved money in the short-term but didn’t look to the long-term implications.”

Hosch, who co-owns a home construction and remodeling business, is one of the youngest House members at age 27, but is not short on experience, having served as mayor of St. Joseph for four years. Despite working hard at his business and being involved in the community, some residents didn’t take him seriously because of his youth.

“I wanted to make St. Joseph my home,” he said. “I was tired of complaining.”

He sees education funding, paying for health care and jobs as the key issues facing his district.

“We have schools in the state that have declining enrollment. Operating referendums just aren’t working. We need the state to step in,” he said. Voters in the Rocori School District rejected three different levies, and now a fourth-grade class there has 33 children. He believes schools should be better supported by the state so students have equal access and equal opportunity.

Like children learning to play together, Hosch said legislators must do the same. If he could have offered the first bill of the session, it would reflect that value. “A mandate that we all have to work together,” he said. “There’s so many things that I want to do.”

Hosch has to balance two messages in his

DISTRICT 14B

2002 Population: 36,834
Largest city: St. Joseph
County: Stearns
Top concerns: School funding and health care

“We have schools in the state that have declining enrollment. Operating referendums just aren’t working. We need the state to step in.”

— Rep. Larry Hosch

district, with the St. Cloud area “exploding,” but the western half being predominantly rural.

Rural Minnesota and its needs are crucial, but sometimes rural folks have a hard time getting together and presenting a united front, he said. “I think really the most important area we have to deal with is jobs.”

Hosch serves on the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs, Local Government, and Rules and Legislative Administration committees.

Monday, February 21

HF1152—Ruth (R)

Transportation Finance

Transportation, Metropolitan Council and public safety activities funding provided; vehicle registration and transfer tax and fee provisions modified and money appropriated.

HF1153—Hausman (DFL)

Transportation Finance

Crosswalk safety education account established and money appropriated.

HF1154—Emmer (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Uniform Environmental Covenants Act adopted.

HF1155—Davids (R)

Taxes

Chatfield tax increment financing district authorized to capture the state general tax.

HF1156—Powell (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

State Patrol vehicle automatic external defibrillators funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1157—Penas (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Medical Assistance swing bed services requirements modified.

HF1158—Buesgens (R)

Local Government

Municipal liquor stores banned and cities required to divest themselves of existing stores by Jan. 1, 2006.

HF1159—Emmer (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Uniform Mediation Act adopted providing for mediation of disputes.

HF1160—Otremba (DFL)

Agriculture & Rural Development

Pesticides application information access expanded.

HF1161—Huntley (DFL)

Health Policy & Finance

Credentialed health occupations penalty fees established.

HF1162—Finstad (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Hospital and clinic grant programs modified and community health center program eliminated.

HF1163—Ruud (DFL)

Regulated Industries

Eden Prairie on-sale liquor license authorized for a caterer for use in connection with city-owned premises.

HF1164—Gazelka (R)

Transportation

Passing of a parked emergency vehicle provisions modified to include requirement to slow down and when possible to provide one full lane of separation.

HF1165—Seifert (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Terminated state employee data access preserved, ombudsman for state employee whistle-blower investigations established, retaliation against public employees who report waste or mismanagement prohibited and case hearing access provided.

HF1166—Erickson (R)

Education Finance

Library and library programs funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1167—Abeler (R)

Education Finance

Adult basic education formula modified, grants awarded and money appropriated.

HF1168—Wilkin (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association structure modified, cigarette tax increased, health savings account federal conformity provided, health association assessment repealed and money appropriated.

HF1169—Bradley (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association structure modified, cigarette tax increased, health savings account federal conformity provided, health assessment repealed, insurance premiums exemption provided and money appropriated.

HF1170—Peterson, A. (DFL)

Transportation

Oversize load permit authorized for transportation of storage sheds.

HF1171—Hornstein (DFL)

Taxes

Fuel-efficient hybrid motor vehicles exempted from the motor vehicle sales tax.

HF1172—Olson (R)

Local Government

Local government state mandate opt-out provided.

HF1173—Olson (R)

Taxes

Public personal rapid transit systems exempted from certain taxes.

HF1174—Olson (R)

Local Government

Personal rapid transit local bonding authorized.

HF1175—Zellers (R)

Taxes

Global war on terrorism income tax return donation check-off provided.

HF1176—Brod (R)

Education Policy & Reform

Special education teacher license variance modified.

HF1177—Brod (R)

Education Policy & Reform

North Central Service Cooperative defined as a contractor for purposes of calculating special education revenue.

HF1178—Thissen (DFL)

Health Policy & Finance

Prescription drug purchasing financial information and arrangements disclosure required.

HF1179—Westerberg (R)

Regulated Industries

Racing commission card club duties clarified and director of card clubs established.

HF1180—Davnie (DFL)

Education Policy & Reform

Teacher tenure modified in cities of the first class and teacher layoff plan negotiation authorized.

HF1181—Cox (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Soil and water conservation districts added to the definition of special taxing district.

HF1182—Severson (R)

Taxes

Local government aid city aid base increased for specified cities.

HF1183—Meslow (R)

Education Finance

Basic formula allowance increased and special education growth factors restored.

HF1184—Vandever (R)

Transportation Finance

Interstate 35E interchange construction funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1185—Cox (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Federal Clean Water Act 401 certification waiver and review specifications provided.

HF1186—Clark (DFL)

Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Food and nutrition assistance funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1187—Finstad (R)

Taxes

Minnesota State High School League events exempted from the sales tax.

HF1188—Moe (DFL)

Transportation

Recreational vehicle combination carrying equestrian equipment and supplies permit exemption specified.

HF1189—Erhardt (R)

Transportation

Recycling and garbage truck weight restriction exemptions provided.

HF1190—Abeler (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Occupational therapists scope of practice clarified and continuing education activities approval granted.

HF1191—Eastlund (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Best interests of the child clarified relating to family law, joint legal and physical custody rebuttable presumption established and child support guidelines provided.

HF1192—Davnie (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Early learning guidelines and quality rating system provided and money appropriated.

HF1193—Nelson, P. (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Suggestion solicitation and postage defined as constituent services relating to campaign finance.

HF1194—Fritz (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Rice County; tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF1195—Lanning (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Child-care provider rates modified.

HF1196—Lanning (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Child-care assistance provider reimbursement rate grant program established and money appropriated.

HF1197—Westerberg (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Blandin Foundation “get broadband” program grant provided and money appropriated.

HF1198—Slawik (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Emergency assistance and transitional housing funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1199—Carlson (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Motor vehicle lemon law extended to include motor boats.

HF1200—Cybart (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Name changes; courts authorized to conduct a search if a person applies for a name change.

HF1201—Cybart (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Courts required to determine if a person has a criminal history when the person applies for a name change.

HF1202—Dempsey (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Fourth-degree assault law expanded to include protection of secure treatment facility personnel.

HF1203—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Ramsey nursing home bed moratorium exception provided by allowing the relicensure and recertification of beds placed on layaway.

HF1204—Holberg (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Department of Transportation data classified.

HF1205—Urdahl (R)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Rural economic development base funding level established including ethanol producer payments.

HF1206—Rukavina (DFL)**Taxes**

Municipal utilities construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1207—Vandevveer (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Washington County; tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF1208—Vandevveer (R)**Regulated Industries**

State-operated or state-licensed gambling facility prohibited in a town or city unless the voters of the town or city have approved the facility in a referendum.

HF1209—Blaine (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Vinland Center; veterans services grant provided and money appropriated.

HF1210—Ruud (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Student information and reporting system established, contracting specified and money appropriated.

HF1211—Urdahl (R)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Agricultural land sale or lease limited if the land was acquired by eminent domain within the previous five years.

HF1212—Davids (R)**Transportation**

Passing parked emergency vehicle traffic regulation modified to require leaving a vacant lane between the driver and emergency vehicle.

Tuesday, February 22**HF1213—Gunther (R)****Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Fairmont; tax increment financing district property tax abatement authorized.

HF1214—Knoblach (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Blind and disabled persons accessible electronic information service established and money appropriated.

HF1215—Clark (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Bridges rental housing assistance program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1216—Abeler (R)**Education Finance**

Charter schools provided state facilities aid for lease, purchase, renovation, or construction of school buildings, or for rent, lease or purchase of land.

HF1217—Loeffler (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Local parks grant programs modified to include veterans memorial gardens and parks.

HF1218—Powell (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Vehicle-monitoring device installation allowed in authorized emergency vehicles.

HF1219—Wilkin (R)**Transportation**

Interstate 35E speed limit provided in part of St. Paul.

HF1220—Brod (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Local and state welfare agencies authorized to use unemployment insurance data to assist in collection of overpayment debts in assistance programs.

HF1221—Erickson (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Pupil Fair Dismissal Act provision applied to students whose parents refuse to consent to an initial evaluation.

HF1222—Powell (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Metropolitan Radio Board and the Metropolitan 911 Board merger authorized.

HF1223—Howes (R)**Taxes**

Property tax clarification provided for certain noncommercial aircraft storage hangers abutting public airports located outside the seven-county metropolitan area.

HF1224—Wagenius (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Chloro-s-Triazine herbicide use restricted.

HF1225—Sieben (DFL)**Education Finance**

International baccalaureate pilot program provided for elementary and middle school years and money appropriated.

HF1226—Lanning (R)**Regulated Industries**

Attainment of age specified at 8 a.m. on the day of person's 21st birthday with respect to the use of alcohol.

HF1227—Carlson (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Health professional education loan forgiveness account participation criteria expanded and money appropriated.

HF1228—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Legal services recording and registration fee surcharges increased and money appropriated.

HF1229—Buesgens (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Elections provided to determine whether to detach land from an existing school district for a new independent school district.

HF1230—Holberg (R)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Wireless telephone directories regulated to protect consumer privacy.

HF1231—Holberg (R)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Credit report consumer access federal conformity provided.

HF1232—Beard (R)
Transportation
Metropolitan Airports Commission prohibited from authorizing facility demolition or work on Northwest Airlines 20/20 vision until airline demonstrates compliance with financing agreement and reporting requirements.

HF1233—Urdahl (R)
Transportation
Driver's license applicant proof of identity requirements expanded.

HF1234—Thissen (DFL)
Taxes
Tax preparers regulated.

HF1235—Thissen (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Minnesota Family Investment Program and basic sliding fee child care programs consolidated and money appropriated.

HF1236—Solberg (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Itasca County; tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF1237—Solberg (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Itasca County; tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF1238—Seifert (R)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 418, Russell, fund transfer authorized.

HF1239—Severson (R)
Education Policy and Reform
Tenth grade students allowed to participate in the post-secondary enrollment options program.

HF1240—Severson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
May designated as "Hire a Veteran Month" in Minnesota.

HF1241—Kahn (DFL)
Local Government
Boundaries; study and report required on the feasibility of consolidating counties along natural physical or alternative political boundaries and money appropriated.

HF1242—Westrom (R)
Education Finance
Telecommunications/Internet access equity aid provided and money appropriated.

HF1243—Brod (R)
Transportation
Hybrid vehicles authorized on high-occupancy vehicle lanes.

HF1244—Paulsen (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
DNA sample required of all persons arrested for or convicted of committing a felony and money appropriated.

HF1245—Davids (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Dike repair required on certain state lands.

HF1246—Ellison (DFL)
Agriculture & Rural Development
Chloro-s-Triazine herbicide sale or use prohibited after a specified date.

HF1247—Larson (DFL)
Taxes
Richfield redevelopment tax increment financing district authorized.

HF1248—Ellison (DFL)
Agriculture & Rural Development
Atrazine use restricted.

HF1249—Hansen (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Sick leave use to care for parents study required.

HF1250—Smith (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Political subdivision elected officials exempted from a certain limit on covered salary for public pension purposes.

HF1251—Smith (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Custodian of children background check provided and adoption requirements modified for children who are in the custody of a social services agency.

HF1252—Smith (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Government appeals defined as not requiring payment of defendant's attorney fees and costs under certain circumstances.

HF1253—Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Government appeals defined as not requiring payment of defendant's attorney fees and costs under certain circumstances.

Thursday, February 24

HF1254—Abrams (R)
Taxes
Charitable contribution income tax subtraction increased.

HF1255—Smith (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Judge service credit purchase for authorized leave permitted.

HF1256—Liebling (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Child-care facility accreditation provider rate differential established.

HF1257—Marquart (DFL)
Taxes
Truth in taxation process public hearings and proposed property tax notification dates advanced.

HF1258—Marquart (DFL)
Local Government
Mosquito abatement fee imposition by local governments authorized.

HF1259—Moe (DFL)
Higher Education Finance
Minnesota Online program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1260—Atkins (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Injured employee civil remedy provided if employer violates safety laws.

HF1261—Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Regulation of certain medical examinations provided.

HF1262—Dittrich (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Predatory offender registration requirement expanded, other provisions of predatory offender registration law modified and community notification for out-of-state offenders provided.

HF1263—Newman (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Liability of certain nonprofit service providers for individuals with mental retardation and related conditions limited and children's home provider corporations established.

HF1264—Anderson, I. (DFL)
Taxes
Property taxpayers' trust fund established; revenues dedicated to paying property tax relief and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1265—Newman (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Civil Commitment Act temporary confinement cost payment clarified.

HF1266—Bradley (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Discharge plans for offenders with mental illnesses modified, medical assistance eligibility clarified, prescription drug purchasing pool authorized, housing funds allocated to employment support and money appropriated.

HF1267—Demmer (R)
Taxes
Special service district law requirement delayed.

HF1268—Walker (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Death record access modified.

HF1269—Sertich (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Housing Finance Agency family homeless prevention and assistance program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1270—Penas (R)
Transportation Finance
Bridge design and preliminary engineering in smaller cities usage of state transportation funds authorized.

HF1271—Seifert (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Prevailing wage rate definition amended.

HF1272—Ruth (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Marriage and family therapy included in definition of professional services and marriage and family therapist practice of services in combination authorized.

HF1273—Demmer (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Teacher contract negotiation during school year prohibited and Jan. 15 contract settlement penalty repealed.

HF1274—Peterson, S. (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Campaign material unauthorized removal prohibited and penalty provided.

HF1275—Sykora (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Minnesota Humanities Commission established.

HF1276—Dill (DFL)**Transportation**

Disabled veteran status placement on driver's licenses authorized.

HF1277—Thissen (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Interior designer certification changed to licensure.

HF1278—Sieben (DFL)**Taxes**

Adoption expense refundable income tax credit authorized and money appropriated.

HF1279—Heidgerken (R)**Education Finance**

Section-based school finance formula task force created.

HF1280—Larson (DFL)**Local Government**

Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport construction restricted.

HF1281—Magnus (R)**Transportation**

Controlled-access highway maximum and minimum speed limit differential restricted.

HF1282—Magnus (R)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Biodiesel usage as home heating fuel technical and economic feasibility study authorized and report required.

HF1283—Abeler (R)**Education Finance**

Pupil units modified and formula allowance increased.

HF1284—Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Local sales tax imposition under certain criteria authorized.

HF1285—Carlson (DFL)**Education Finance**

Area learning center pupil funding restored and eligible pupil age increased.

HF1286—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Regulated Industries**

Geothermal energy incentives established.

HF1287—Welti (DFL)**Local Government**

Wabasha County; jail and criminal justice center construction and sheriff office location outside county seat authorized.

HF1288—Ellison (DFL)**Transportation**

Driver's license suspension for nonpayment of support repealed.

HF1289—Ellison (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Driver's license suspension required when defendant convicted of gasoline theft.

HF1290—Westerberg (R)**Transportation Finance**

Transportation utility fee city imposition authorized.

HF1291—Erickson (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

High-resolution digital elevation and flood plain management mapping pilot project money appropriated.

HF1292—Peterson, A. (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Catch-up ethanol producer lump-sum payments authorized and money appropriated.

HF1293—Howes (R)**Transportation**

Snowmobile two-way operation on either side of local road allowed when authorized.

HF1294—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Social work statutes and rules recodified, rulemaking authorized, penalties provided and money appropriated.

HF1295—Abrams (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Foreign judgment life span and interest rate clarified and docketing and payment of judgments in United States currency on foreign-money claims provided.

HF1296—Meslow (R)**Education Finance**

Early childhood education program funding restored, full-day kindergarten access assured for at-risk students and money appropriated.

HF1297—Beard (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Campaign expenditure definition clarified and certain exceptions to ban on gifts to public officials provided.

HF1298—Johnson, J. (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Video game purchase or rental in certain instances by children under the age of 17 prohibited and penalties provided.

HF1299—Clark (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Usage of certain substances banned after a certain date.

HF1300—Greiling (DFL)**Education Finance**

Sexuality and comprehensive family life education program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1301—Walker (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Sexuality and comprehensive family life education programs provided.

HF1302—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Lead hazard and children lead poisoning reduction project funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1303—Dean (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Approval of up to five charitable organizations as charter school sponsors authorized.

HF1304—Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Reverse referendum to rescind increases in certain sales tax revenues authorized, refund of rescinded revenue increases allowed, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1305—Erickson (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Superintendent hiring option for school boards provided.

HF1306—Davids (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

E85 fuel pump installation reimbursement funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1307—Erickson (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Princeton nursing facility temporary rate increase authorized.

HF1308—Nornes (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Fergus Falls Regional Treatment Center reuse capital projects bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1309—Lanning (R)**Local Government**

Watershed district manager compensation increased, board elections provided and land entry clarified.

HF1310—Sykora (R)**Education Finance**

Minnesota Learning Resource Center funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1311—Paymar (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Mourning dove hunting prohibited.

HF1312—Bradley (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Gifted and talented student local programs authorized and permanent gifted and talented funding established.

HF1313—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Mental health professional definition provided.

HF1314—Davids (R)
Taxes
Health care provider credit established for services to state health program recipients, third-party purchaser responsibilities provided and itemized taxes authorized on certain billings.

HF1315—Opatz (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Age of eligibility to hold office lowered to 18 and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1316—Erhardt (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Essential employee definition expanded to include public safety radio communications operators.

HF1317—Erhardt (R)
Transportation
Highway sign program billing authorized and administrative cost deductible increased relating to the county state-aid highway fund.

HF1318—Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Electronic mail messages regulated and criminal penalties prescribed for false and deceptive commercial messages.

HF1319—Beard (R)
Regulated Industries
Additional cable franchise requirements modified.

HF1320—Hoppe (R)
Local Government
Hennepin County regional park district provisions modified.

HF1321—Smith (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Marriage dissolution, child custody, support, maintenance, and property law recodified and reformed and money appropriated.

HF1322—Smith (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Marriage dissolution, child custody and support, maintenance, and property division law recodified and reformed; data classified and additional procedures clarified.

HF1323—Sykora (R)
Education Policy & Reform
K-12 education and early childhood and family education funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1324—Kohls (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Civil action limitation period reduced.

HF1325—DeLaForest (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Civil action class certification interlocutory appeal provided and required damages specified.

HF1326—Abeler (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Emotional or behavioral disorder teacher loan forgiveness program established and money appropriated.

HF1327—Johnson, S. (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Groundwater consumptive use authorized.

HF1328—Howes (R)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Off-highway vehicle damage account availability extended.

HF1329—Slawik (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Child-care assistance income eligibility provisions modified, provider rate differential for accreditation established, license fees temporarily suspended and fee schedule modified.

HF1330—Greiling (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Allergenic latex limited in food and beverage service establishments.

HF1331—Greiling (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Parenting time expeditor fees jurisdiction provided and court communication about parenting time disputes authorized.

HF1332—Peterson, A. (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Community-based wind energy developments tariffs regulated.

HF1333—Dempsey (R)
Local Government
Wabasha; port authority commission authorized.

HF1334—Dill (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Iron nugget production scale demonstration facility environmental review exemptions modified.

HF1335—Koenen (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Renville County nursing facility reimbursement rates increased.

HF1336—Huntley (DFL)
Health Policy & Finance
Hospital payment provision modified for diagnostic-related group payments.

HF1337—McNamara (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Carbon monoxide alarms required in all dwellings.

HF1338—Zellers (R)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Tobacco product delivery sales regulated.

HF1339—Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Poet laureate of the state appointed.

HF1340—Tingelstad (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Indian Affairs Council ex-officio member added.

HF1341—Peterson, N. (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
State Board of Investment compensation plans regulated.

HF1342—Vandevier (R)
Transportation Finance
Interstate 35 overpass construction funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1343—Vandevier (R)
Transportation Finance
Anoka County State-Aid Highway 14 improvements funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1344—Westrom (R)
Regulated Industries
Community-based energy development tariffs required and renewable energy resources and objectives modified.

HF1345—Clark (DFL)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Job movement due to business subsidies reporting required.

HF1346—Clark (DFL)
Commerce & Financial Institutions
Employment termination and outsourcing reporting required under the state dislocated worker program and the unemployment insurance program.

HF1347—Gunther (R)
Regulated Industries
Automatic recovery of electricity transmission costs provided, high-voltage transmission line certification requirements modified and stakeholder group established to study state certification process.

HF1348—Marquart (DFL)
Education Finance
Alternative facilities bonding and levy program eligibility revised.

HF1349—Abeler (R)
Health Policy & Finance
Radiation therapy facility construction limitations expiration date removed.

HF1350—Dorman (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Service cooperative claims data classification removed.

HF1351—Holberg (R)
Transportation
Two-year driving permits provided.

HF1352—Holberg (R)
Transportation
Motor vehicle and driver applications and records provisions modified and vehicle accident report procedures modified including “long arm” statute provisions.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: STEVE SVIGGUM
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 MINORITY LEADER: MATT ENTENZA

MINNESOTA INDEX

Homeless youth

Nationwide, number of people expected to experience homelessness in a year, in millions.....	3.5
Number that are children, in millions.....	1.35
Minnesotans that were homeless or precariously housed (living in a temporary or unstable situation) on a given night in 2003, as estimate.....	20,347
Percent increase since 1991.....	250
Homeless people in Minnesota on any given night in 2003, as estimate.....	8,800
Children and youth, as percent of total.....	40
Unaccompanied youth (ages 8-17) estimated to be on their own and without permanent shelter.....	500-600
Average age.....	16
Estimated children experiencing homelessness with their parents.....	3,000
Percent of homeless youth that have been physically or sexually mistreated.....	46
Percent of homeless youth that are girls.....	64
Homeless youth, as a percent, that are African-American, American Indian, Asian or multiracial.....	65
People staying in homeless shelters or temporary housing the night of an October 2003 survey that are under age 21, as percent.....	46
Homeless youth employed at the time of an October 2003 survey.....	19
Percent in 1997.....	32
Percent in 1991.....	28
Percent of homeless youth enrolled in school at time of survey.....	84
Percent in 2000.....	73
Percent in 1994.....	52
Homeless youth that have experienced an out-of-home placement.....	71
Percent in 2000.....	41
Percent of homeless youth in 2003 that have spent more than a week in a juvenile corrections facility.....	34
Homeless youth in 2003, as percent, with a serious mental illness.....	42
Percent in 1997.....	23
When compared to youth in general population, times more likely that homeless boys are likely to have had a sexual relationship that resulted in a pregnancy.....	10
Times more likely for homeless girls to be pregnant.....	20
Homeless youth in 2003, as a percent, that have a child of their own.....	16
Percent in 2000.....	8
Percent of homeless youth that said a conflict or fight with their family is why they don't live with their parents.....	63

Sources: Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless; National Coalition for the Homeless; Homeless youth in Minnesota: 2003 Statewide survey of people without permanent shelter, February 2005, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

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