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INSIDE: BUDGET GAP NARROWS, ANGELS ON HIGH, DNA DEBATE, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF1353-HF1548

Session Weekly

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To subscribe, contact:
Minnesota House of Representatives
Public Information Services
175 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298
(651) 296-2146 or
1-800-657-3550
TTY (651) 296-9896
<http://www.house.mn/hinfo/subscribesw.asp>

Director
Barry LaGrave

Editor/Assistant Director
Lee Ann Schutz

Assistant Editor
Mike Cook

Art & Production Coordinator
Paul Battaglia

Writers
Ruth Dunn, Patty Janovec,
Brett Martin, Matt Wetzel,
Nicole Wood

Chief Photographer
Tom Olmscheid

Photographers
Andrew VonBank, Sarah Stacke

Staff Assistants
Christy Novak, Laura Noe

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On the cover: Approximately 6,000 people gathered at the State Capitol Feb. 28 for a public education rally. Many attendees arrived via school bus.

—Photo by: Andrew VonBank

Better by one-third

Budget gap narrows, job growth is on the horizon

By NICOLE WOOD

Minnesotans could see 44,000 new jobs in the state by the end of the year, maybe 103,000 between now and the end of 2007, according to the most recent state budget forecast. Finance officials are predicting strong employment growth, even though Minnesota has not lately been keeping up with the national average.

The forecast that was released Feb. 28 places the projected state budget shortfall for fiscal years 2006-07 at \$466 million, a \$234 million improvement over November's estimate when the budget gap was projected at \$700 million.

"There's actually a little bit of good news in this forecast for a change," said Finance Commissioner Peggy Ingison.

According to the Finance Department, modest increases in revenue from the major tax categories, particularly corporate income tax receipts, account for the change.

"The state's economy isn't floundering, but the growth hasn't been as robust as we have come to expect," said State Economist Tom Stinson.

If Minnesota's economy had been growing at the same rate as the U.S. economy, the

state would have added 20,000 jobs since May instead of 5,000, Stinson said.

The release prompted questions about how the news would effect Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget recommendations, the outcome of capital expenditure negotiations between a House-Senate conference committee and the myriad gambling proposals floating around the Capitol.

"It's not necessarily that you could look at adding \$200 million to the governor's budget proposal," Ingison cautioned.

She also advised against increasing the size of borrowing in the bonding bill. "If we want to keep an eye on the long-term balance in '08 and '09, it might not be a good idea to add debt service."

Forecast fallout

Reaction from House leaders was divided. House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) said the forecast is a positive sign of good financial stewardship.

"While revenues are up, we cannot rest on the management that has been done," he said in a press release. "We are not out of the woods yet."

Full speed ahead

The February forecast could be considered the key that opens the door to legislative progress on a budget for fiscal years 2006-07. Lawmakers have less than 12 weeks remaining before May 23, the constitutional deadline for session.

Under House rules, the House Ways and Means Committee must send a budget resolution to the House floor within 20 days of the forecast release. The committee then has 14 days after the House adopts the resolution to come back with budget targets for the major finance or revenue bills.

House Republicans would be open to negotiations over increasing the size of the bonding bill, Sviggum said, but the forecast has no relevance on American Indian gaming negotiations. "The gaming issue revolves around fairness," he said. "The fairness doesn't go away."

House Minority Leader Matt Entenza (DFL-St. Paul) said, "the overall trend is still really, really bad for our taxpayers and there is no solution in sight."

"If your checkbook was in the red and getting worse, would you think that was good news?" The DFL intends to release a budget proposal of its own later this month, Entenza said, and "everything is on the table."

The inflation factor

If inflationary spending factors were included in the forecast — a 2002 state law excludes them — the \$466 million deficit would grow to nearly \$1.2 billion.

The elusive inflation factor drove much of the discussion when finance officials presented the forecast to the House Ways and Means Committee March 1.

A PowerPoint slide detailing how the state's long-term outlook had improved from November showed an asterisk next to the spending projections for the 2008-09 biennium. The asterisk noted that the spending figures were not generally adjusted for inflation.

"When we have an asterisk next to a pretend number how bad are we exacerbating the problem?" asked Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia).

"Clearly you need to, in your own minds, take into account the fact that there is going to be inflation between now and 2008 and 2009," Stinson said. Although productivity growth



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

State Economist Tom Stinson discusses the state revenue forecast during a Feb. 28 news conference. The forecast shows that the improving state economy has cut almost one-third off the budget deficit that was projected in November.

First Reading continued on page 4

First Reading continued from page 3

will offset some of it, he said, “the statement I would have for you is don’t fool yourself that this is the true extent of the budget pressures that you have — the budget pressures are larger than this.”

Committee Chair Rep. Jim Knoblach (R-St. Cloud) noted that the governor’s initial budget recommendation appears to account for inflation.

The governor’s budget proposal is within \$100 million of being structurally balanced, including the effect of inflation in fiscal years 2008-09, Ingison said.

The department is re-pricing the cost of that proposal under the new assumptions contained in the forecast, she said. The governor is expected to release a supplemental budget in the next week or so.

More on the jobs outlook

Forecasting future state spending and revenues is a complicated exercise in assumptions and probabilities. The rosy outlook on jobs in the forecast is based on a number of assumptions that are detailed in the report:

- Employer caution and just-in-time hiring will not continue to slow jobs growth,
- The current slowdown in mortgage refinancing and the softening in the housing market will not cause a significant decline in financial services employment, and
- Local government and higher education budgets will ease enough to permit modest increases in public employment beginning in the third quarter of 2005.

The forecast imparts caution about putting all the employment eggs in one basket. “Minnesota’s outlook shows employment growth highly concentrated in just a few sectors,” according to the report. Health care, professional and business services, manufacturing and construction, which currently comprise approximately 41 percent of total employment, account for 72 percent of the projected job increase through 2007. “Depending on simultaneous uninterrupted expansion in each of a handful of industries is somewhat risky.”

You Should Know

The Department of Finance prepares formal state budget forecasts for the state’s General Fund in February and November of each year. The expenditure forecast reflects current law. The revenue forecast is based on national economic data provided by an outside contractor, Global Insight, Inc.

The most recent February forecast updates the state’s economic outlook for 2005, sets new figures for fiscal years 2006-07 and looks ahead to planning estimates for fiscal years 2008-09.



Reproduction angel

Prominent figure is not original guardian of Capitol entryway

The first angel to guard the front entrance of the Capitol lost a battle to the elements. In its place, on the keystone at the top of the middle archway, is a successor with a dramatic, continent-hopping story

of its own.

By the 1970s, extreme temperature fluctuations and acid rain were wreaking havoc with the Capitol’s exterior aesthetics. The masonry was in need of a good cleaning. The keystone angel was in need of some key body parts.

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board commissioned architect Brooks Cavin to oversee a major exterior restoration project between 1975-1979.

The real challenge to the angel lay in reproducing what was no longer there.

“We knew that there had been this up-raised arm and now it was gone. The wings were seriously deteriorated and the head was only about half of the original size,” recalled Cavin in an oral history interview provided by the Minnesota Historical Society State Capitol Historic Site.

Cavin ordered a meticulous restoration process, “in view of the prominence of this figure at the principal entrance to the Capitol and the degree of damage it has

View the rarely seen 28th Virginia Infantry Battle Flag, captured by the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry at Gettysburg, at the Capitol on March 7.

For more information, contact the Minnesota Historical Society State Capitol Site, (651) 296-2881 or www.mnhs.org/places/sites/msc

suffered,” he wrote in a letter to the historical society. Italian Carrara marble was selected over the original Georgia marble.

The artists were required to make a latex mold of the existing angel figure, create a plaster cast from the mold, model the missing parts in clay to bring the figure back to its full dimension, make a mold and cast of the restored figure and send the cast to Italy, “where carving in this Carrara marble had been going on for centuries,” Cavin said. “And their proposal was less than the proposal from Georgia or Vermont and the Carrara marble is more durable than the Georgia marble.”

The first keystone angel rests comfortably with the Minnesota Historical Society.



Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

Artists in a St. Paul studio create a clay model from the original keystone angel that stood guard over the Capitol entrance from 1905 to the late 1970s, above. Today, a reproduction angel, sculpted in Italy, greets Capitol visitors as they pass under the middle archway, right.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

★ BUSINESS

Liquor license granted**Signed
by
the
governor
★ ★ ★**

After waiting nearly five months, Jeffrey Huff can now open his wine shop in St. Paul.

Huff had quit his job to start his business, only to learn that he could not obtain a liquor license because the law did not allow off-sale liquor licenses within one-half mile of the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus.

That changed when Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed a law Feb. 24 authorizing St. Paul to issue the license in proximity to the campus, which will enable Huff to open his business. The law became effective Feb. 25.

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) and Sen. Ellen R. Anderson (DFL-St. Paul) sponsored the legislation.

HF155/SF206*/CH3

★ CONSUMERS

Regulating wireless phone directories

A bill that seeks to safeguard consumer privacy would have directories of wireless telephone numbers regulated by state law.

Although one industry official said no such directories now exist, HF1230, sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), would prohibit providers of wireless telecommunication services from including a customer's wireless phone number in a directory, and from selling a directory containing that number, without the customer's consent.

The bill would require the service provider to notify a customer within 30 days after becoming a customer, and once a year after that, concerning the person's number being used in a directory. The customer would not be required to have the number published and would not be charged a fee for declining the listing.

"I do view the opt-in requirement as an important component of the bill," Holberg told the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee March 1. The committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee. There is no Senate companion bill.

Victor Dobras, director of government affairs for Sprint, opposed the bill, calling it unnecessary.

"No one is currently offering a wireless directory," he said.

If Sprint did decide to publish a directory,

Dobras said his company would not include wireless customers without their consent and would not charge them if they did not want to participate.

"We certainly have every intention of protecting consumer information," he said.

Should legislation for the directories be needed, it should be done at the federal level so phone companies wouldn't be faced with different state laws, Dobras said.

The bill also would permit someone calling a wireless directory assistance center to be connected to a customer if the recipient is first given notice who is calling and can accept or reject the call. The recipient's wireless information may not be disclosed to the caller.

★ CRIME

Crackdown on meth

Methamphetamine, commonly called meth, is a frightening drug that has become a problem all over Minnesota, according to Rep. Jeff Johnson (R-Plymouth) who said his bill, HF572, is a "drastic solution to a drastic problem."

The bill clamps down on the sale of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine, essential ingredients to the manufacture of meth, commonly found in over-the-counter cold medications sold in drug and grocery stores. Under the bill, the medications must be located behind the counter and only pharmacists or technicians could sell them. Buyers would have to show identification, sign a log and be limited to two packages per transaction.

The bill would also boost meth into the narcotic drug category, which would increase penalties for sale, possession and use of the drug.

Other provisions in the bill include: criminal restitution when emergency response is needed due to dangerous chemicals, required notification of county health officials of clandestine lab sites, creation of two new crimes related to illegal use of anhydrous ammonia and criminalization of meth-related activities that could impact children and vulnerable adults.

The House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee discussed amendments to the bill March 2.

Rep. Judy Soderstrom (R-Mora) would like to see more meth users go into long-term treatment and fewer go to prison. She doesn't want to see meth users, many who are young, being sent into prisons with hardened criminals.

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) wants

to see the penalty increases eliminated from the bill. "Do you want to incarcerate individuals who cook small amounts (of meth)?"

Johnson spoke against the proposed amendments, saying the bill is a comprehensive effort and every piece is crucial. "If you take anything out, it becomes a less effective bill."

The committee did not act on the amendments at this time, but recommended the bill to pass and sent it to the House Health Policy and Finance Committee. The bill could be referred to other committees before returning to the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee later in March.

A companion bill (SF423), sponsored by Sen. Julie A. Rosen (R-Fairmont), awaits action in the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.

★ EDUCATION

Shorter walks

Five-year-old Kristiana Turnquist looked forward to riding the big, yellow school bus on her first day of kindergarten last fall.

But that didn't happen because Kristiana lives 1.9 miles from her school — one-tenth of a mile too close to qualify for free busing.

Under current state law, school districts are required to provide free transportation only to students who live at least two miles from school.

Kristina's mother, Melissa Turnquist, told the House Education Finance Committee Feb. 24 that the family was faced with three unacceptable options: allow their child to walk to school along busy highways and through congested intersections; drive their child to school — something that's hard to do with two other preschool children in tow; or pay \$175, a yearly fee their school district charges to provide busing to students who don't qualify for free busing. "That's more than we could afford as a one-income family," said Turnquist.

They are not alone in the transportation dilemma.

"While door-knocking last fall, this was the number two concern I heard after Northstar commuter rail," said Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park), sponsor of HF643, which would require free busing for elementary-age children who live one mile or more from their schools.

The bill would allow school districts to levy — raise additional money through a tax on district property owners — for the cost of transporting elementary students who live



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Three-year-old Rachel Turnquist yawns as Chuck Holden, director of operations for Anoka-Hennepin Independent School District 11, testifies Feb. 24 before the House Education Finance Committee on a bill that would change the distance requirement for transportation of elementary school students. Rachel's mother, Melissa, also testified about the bill.

between one and two miles from school, in addition to those who live two miles or more from school.

The bill would not change walking distance for secondary students. School bus transportation would continue to be provided for those who live two miles or more from their schools.

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

A companion bill (SF1306), sponsored by Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

ELECTIONS

Taking campaign materials

A bill making it a misdemeanor to take an opposing candidate's election material was heard in the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 2 and held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus elections bill.

HF892, sponsored by Rep. Chris DeLaForest (R-Andover), addresses the

increase in what he termed election-time "pranks" — taking campaign material and vandalism to signs.

"I don't view this as any sort of a prank," he said, and is asking that these types of activities be treated as a crime.

Under current law, the taking of campaign material is treated like any other theft; the offense level depends on the value of the materials taken. DeLaForest noted that campaign material, in of itself has little monetary value, but the value is more representative of our democratic process.

The bill makes it a misdemeanor for anyone other than a candidate to remove campaign material without permission. If a candidate or elected official commits the same act, it would be considered a gross misdemeanor.

DeLaForest said his bill would make a policy statement. "I want there to be a bipartisan public statement on behalf of the state of Minnesota that we don't view this type of an activity as a prank."

A bill (HF1274) with similar language, sponsored by Rep. Sandra Peterson (DFL-New Hope), has also been referred to this committee.

Neither bill has a Senate companion.



For information on HF607, which would immediately restore an offender's right to vote upon release from a correctional facility, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

EMPLOYMENT

Put youths to work

Shawn Hackett was 14 years old in 1988 and had too much time on his hands in the summer.

However, he was able to work in a summer employment program for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. He graduated from Minneapolis South High School in 1992, and now, at age 31, he works for the park board.

It wouldn't have been possible without the park's summer youth employment program, he told the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee March 1.

HF1046, sponsored by Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls), would provide \$250,000 to the park board for the Learn to Earn Summer Youth Program. Participating teens would work in the city's park system, get paid, and receive remedial training in reading and writing if they need it. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in a committee omnibus bill.

"This program gives kids opportunities," Hackett said. "If I wouldn't have done this, I would have had the opportunity to be a drug dealer."

Rochelle Berry Graves, a member of the board, agreed. "We want to ensure that they have positive and happy experiences and a belief in themselves. I want to make sure we have something available to them. The busier kids are, the more they don't want to run the streets at night."

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) called the request "a fabulous investment."

There is no Senate companion.

ENERGY

Wind-energy tariff proposed

A tariff to facilitate the development of community-based wind projects would be established by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, under two bills heard by the House Regulated Industries Committee March 2.

HF1332, sponsored by Rep. Aaron Peterson (DFL-Madison), and HF1344, sponsored by Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake), would require the tariff rate to be front-loaded to increase cash flow during a project's initial years in order to accelerate the recovery of capital costs. Front-loaded means the rate would be higher in the initial years of the power purchase agreement and lower in the later years.

Both bills were held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill. Neither has a Senate companion.

Peterson's bill would require that a project eligible for the tariff be given preference over other projects if the utility system can accept the project using standard reliability criteria. Westrom's bill does not address the priority issue. However, his bill would require a resolution of support from the county board where the project is located to be eligible for tariffs. Peterson's bill does not have that requirement.

Both bills would require the net present value of the tariff rate over the 20-year term of the contract to be no lower than the utility's avoided cost, as determined by its most recent avoided cost filing or by the commission if no filing is available.

New electric lines

Minnesota utilities' projections indicate that 4,000 megawatts to 6,000 megawatts of new electric generating capacity may be built in Minnesota over the next 10 to 15 years.

A bill sponsored by Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) would provide incentives to encourage construction of transmission facilities to bring that energy to the market.

HF1347 would provide utilities opportunities for annual recovery of transmission-related costs outside of a general rate case. This would allow utilities to transfer transmission assets to entities under federal jurisdiction under certain conditions. The bill would also permit the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to consider regional energy needs and benefits in the certificate of need process for transmission lines.

"This bill primarily focuses on reliability," Gunther told the House Regulated Industries Committee on March 2. "We want to make sure the lights are always on in Minnesota."

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

A provision in the bill would require the Legislative Electric Energy Task Force to convene a group of stakeholders representing utilities, consumer advocates and affected state agencies to investigate whether current state processes to certify and route transmission lines can be modified to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Laura and John Reinhardt of Minneapolis provided written testimony opposing the bill.

"(The bill) does not serve the public interest and would, in fact, harm Minnesota citizens and landowners," the Reinhardts wrote.

A companion bill (SF1332), sponsored by Rep. Ellen R. Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Burning permits go high tech

Volunteer fire wardens, together with Department of Natural Resources forestry offices, issue more than 60,000 burning permits each year at a cost to the state of \$170,000, according to department figures. The system has remained relatively unchanged since the early 1900s when the state first adopted open burning laws.

HF901, sponsored by Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder), would augment the way burning permits are issued by adding an option to issue permits via the Internet under the same electronic system used to issue hunting and fishing permits.

The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the measure March 1. It now moves to the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

Though there is no charge for paper burning permits, the bill would allow the department to charge fees for the electronic alternative: \$5 for an annual noncommercial burning permit and up to \$50 for multiple permits to commercial enterprises.

The goal of electronic burning permits is to allow the department to more easily track permits or revoke them when wildfire risks are high. Consumers would benefit from the online access and convenience.

Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls) questioned the effect of electronic distribution on township fire wardens.

"Will a township fire warden know that a permit has been given electronically to someone who lives 3 miles away?" asked Blaine.

"My parents may not have — or other township fire wardens may not have — the computer technology to be able to access that information electronically," he said. Blaine said his parents have been volunteer township fire wardens for 30 years and one of their concerns over the proposal is ensuring foolproof communication between the fire wardens and the department.

A companion bill (SF1019), sponsored by Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids),

awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Hog slats and power loading

The House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee received a lesson in the proper way to launch and load a boat March 2.

As part of a routine program overview and budget request, Department of Natural Resources Trails and Waterways Division Director Laurie Martinson informed the committee of a new challenge the department is facing on Minnesota lakes: power loading.

Power loading is powering a boat out of the water onto a trailer rather than using a winch. The current created by the engine's propeller causes wash out and ridges at the end of the ramp that in turn cause damage to boat trailers.

In its budget request for fiscal years 2006-07 the department seeks a funding level increase for maintenance and rehabilitation at water access sites.

One solution to power loading is placing "hog slats" — precast concrete slats — on the launch site, Martinson said.

The department has further identified some critical trends in trails and waterways use, Martinson said:

- All-terrain vehicle registrations have grown dramatically in the last 20 years, from 12,235 in 1984 to 222,594 in 2004.
- Boat registration numbers have increased in the same time period, though not as dramatically. In 1984, there were 629,291 watercraft registrations; today the number has climbed to 854,110.
- The size and horsepower of boats have increased substantially in recent years. The average boat length in the Brainerd Lakes Area is now 18 feet with a 114 horsepower motor on the back.

The department's budget request will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill.

★ GAMBLING

Play while you wait

Hitting the jackpot at the Minnesota-St. Paul International Airport could mean more than just finding a low-cost airfare.

HF1009, sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), would allow the Minnesota State Lottery to operate and regulate a casino in the airport terminal.

The state would receive the net proceeds, which are estimated at \$27 million per year after expenses.

SUPPORT REPORT

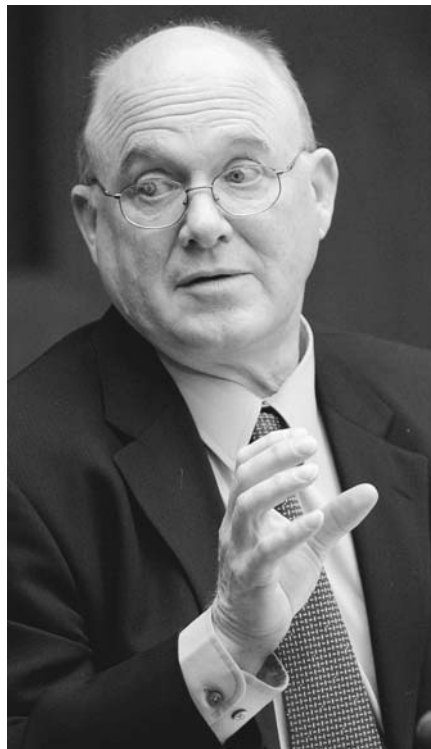


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Wayland Campbell, director of the child support enforcement division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, gives a presentation on child support collections to the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 1.

"It's totally free money," Kahn told the Gaming Division of the House Regulated Industries Committee March 1.

Under the bill, the lottery would receive an appropriation from the General Fund for capital, acquisition and initial operating costs, but would need to repay the money, plus interest, within three months of the casino opening.

Kahn said the casino would attract people with larger incomes since they are the typical airline passengers. The casino would also draw out-of-town travelers.

"A lot of people passing through the airport are not Minnesota residents," she said. Casino admittance would be limited to ticketed passengers 18 years of age or older.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, travelers spend more time in airports because they need to arrive earlier for security checks and screening, Kahn said. The casino would allow them to gamble as they waited to board their flights.

More than 33 million travelers pass through the airport each year.

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

Know when to hold'em

It might be too early to go all in on a wager, but poker players across the state might have reason to begin collecting their chips.

On March 1, the Gaming Division of the House Regulated Industries Committee held over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill a proposal that would add Texas hold'em to the list of games permitted in tournaments or contests under Minnesota law.

HF519, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar), would allow Texas hold'em to be considered a game of social skill, and therefore legal. Current law allows social skill games, such as cribbage, skat, sheephead, bridge, euchre, pinochle, gin, 500, smear or whist. There cannot be any direct financial benefit to the promoter and the prizes can't exceed \$200.

In Texas hold'em, each player is dealt two cards and then uses five community cards that are flipped over on the table to make the best poker hand.

David Bischoff, owner of Granite Bowl in St. Cloud, said his attorneys had told him that Texas hold'em is already legal in Minnesota, so he started holding tournaments in his bowling alley. He did not charge an entry fee or play for money. On June 19, 2004, more than 20 police officers raided his establishment.

"They came in with their guns drawn," Bischoff said.

The county attorney chose not to file gambling charges. Bischoff said he's paid more than

\$30,000 in attorney fees and lost revenue since he hasn't held the tournaments after the raid.

"We should clarify the law," Hackbarth said, adding that his bill would achieve that goal.

A companion bill (SF317), sponsored by Sen. Dave Kleis (R-St. Cloud), has passed one committee and awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

GOVERNMENT



Nonprofit salaries posted

Some employees or officers of nonprofit organizations could see their wages on a state Web site, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 24.

Under HF961, sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), salaries of the top three executives of nonprofit organizations receiving state money would be posted on the Office of the Attorney General's Web site, if an officer or employee's compensation exceeds the governor's \$120,303 salary.

The bill initially required publication of salaries in all written solicitations. Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) offered the change.

The change makes a "simple disclosure to the attorney general's office for people who are curious about this," and is a more modest approach than the original bill, said Seifert.

"Taxpayers have a right to know this. ... My job is to be a watchdog for the taxpayers." If you are taking money from the government then there needs to be some accountability, he added.

Kahn offered another successful amendment that says health maintenance organizations that provide services to the state or state employees must publish, in written marketing materials directed to potential enrollees, the compensation of the three highest paid directors, officers or employees of the organization.

For the first time in his legislative career, Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) testified before a committee against a bill, saying the measure makes "Minnesota a not hospitable place for nonprofits."

"What nonprofits do and the insults that we give to nonprofits by even discussing this is offensive," said Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul).

Publishing the salaries "tells the donor nothing about whether a charity is well run or not," said Elaine Keefe, a lobbyist for the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

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

A companion bill, SF948, sponsored by Sen. Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

HEALTH



Critical changes proposed

Critical access hospitals could see some modifications under a bill that would revise the eligibility requirements of the Rural Hospital Grant Program.

Rep. Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers) is sponsoring HF664, which would also change the hospital construction moratorium and swing bed license requirements to conform to federal law.

The bill would increase the population limit for an eligible hospital's community from less than 10,000 to less than 15,000 for purposes of rural hospital grant programs. The increase would retain eligibility for current and prospective critical access hospitals.

A critical access hospital is a small, rural, acute care facility that provides outpatient, emergency care and limited inpatient services and receives enhanced Medicare reimbursement of 101 percent of reasonable costs.

The bill would exempt these facilities from the hospital construction moratorium.

Minnesota law has a 10-bed limit on hospital swing beds. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, several critical access hospitals reduced their number of beds between 1998 and 2003 to comply with the 15-bed limit provided in a 1997 federal law. In 2003, federal law raised the limit to 25 beds. Because of Minnesota's hospital construction moratorium, hospitals are prohibited from adjusting to the federal change.

"If the more restrictive state limit on swing bed use is not revised, recovering patients could be unnecessarily transferred from the hospital even though critical access hospitals could provide the needed care," according to a policy position sheet provided by the department.

The House Health Policy and Finance Committee approved the bill March 2 and referred it to the House floor.

A companion bill (SF1266), sponsored by Sen. Julie A. Rosen (R-Fairmont), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

Swing bed services

The requirements for payment of swing bed services could change under a bill heard by the House Health Policy and Finance Committee March 2.

Sponsored by Rep. Maxine Penas

(R-Badger), HF1157 would exempt hospitals from being classified under federal law as sole community providers in order to receive Medical Assistance swing bed service payments. The exemption would apply to facilities that had a provider agreement prior to Jan. 1, 2004, for these services.

A swing bed is a hospital bed that also qualifies for reimbursement under Medicare or Medical Assistance when used as a nursing home bed. Federal law requires sole community providers to be reimbursed under a Medicare prospective payment system. Critical access hospitals are exempt from that payment system and are reimbursed on a cost basis. These hospitals no longer qualify for swing bed services under current state law since they cannot be classified as sole community providers.

"This issue relates to the use of Medicaid swing beds in very rural settings," said Don Odegaard, CEO of Bigfork Valley Hospital, in written testimony to the committee. "As a facility of this designation, it is imperative for us to maintain the ability to utilize these swing beds in the occasion of patient care within the community."

Without the use of swing beds, some elderly and infirmed people would have to travel great distances for care and recuperation, Odegaard said.

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

A companion bill (SF1101), sponsored by Sen. Thomas M. Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.



HF1162 would add electronic health records systems to the list of eligible projects under two rural hospital grant programs. For more information, go to the Session Weekly EXTRA page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

★ HIGHER EDUCATION

Equal access for all

Attaining a college education is sometimes made even harder for students with a disability.

Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake), who is blind, said it sometimes would be weeks into a class before he had the textbook in a format he could use. He wants to ensure that doesn't happen to others.

His bill, HF431, would require instructional material used by higher education students

who require a reading accommodation to be produced in an alternative format in a timely fashion.

Heard Feb. 28 by the House Higher Education Finance Committee, the bill was laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

"This is largely modeled after some Kentucky legislation," said Westrom.

Under the bill, those producing the instructional material would be required to provide, at no charge, an electronic version of the material within 15 working days of a request. Minnesota State Services for the Blind, which converts printed material to a usable format, would work with the schools to ensure that materials be available within the first week of class, whenever possible.

"It's a good excuse not to do your homework, but it doesn't fly for long," said Judy Sanders, secretary of the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota.

However, Ed McCoyd, director of digital policy for the Association of American Publishers, expressed concerns in a letter to the committee. For example, he wrote, "It often costs a publisher several thousands of dollars to do one format conversion to meet one individual e-text request."

Furthermore, the bill would require the State Services for the Blind to establish a



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Judy Sanders, secretary of the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota, testifies before the House Higher Education Finance Committee Feb. 28 in support of a bill that would regulate the accessibility of instructional material for students with a disability requiring a reading accommodation.

state repository for the alternatively produced material. Such publications would be made available to post-secondary students and institutions at no cost.

"States that have established these in the past did a very forward-thinking thing," Sanders said, while noting a national repository would be even better.

Post-secondary institutions that receive state funding as a direct appropriation or through participation in state-funded financial aid programs must comply, under the bill, or risk the withholding of state appropriations or a reduction or revocation of their participation in state-funded financial aid programs.

Tuition fairness

Some students from outside state borders are paying more than \$2,000 less in tuition than a Minnesotan in the same classroom.

Rep. Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud) thinks that is wrong, and hopes to change that with HF67.

Heard March 2 by the House Higher Education Finance Committee, it was laid over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

Reciprocity allows students to attend a public college or university outside their home state without having to pay the standard nonresident tuition rate. Instead, students pay approximately the same tuition they would pay at a comparable home state institution. State taxpayers pay the remaining instructional costs after subtracting tuition paid by reciprocity students. If reciprocity students from one state impose a larger burden on the other state's taxpayers, the first state makes a reimbursement payment. For example, Wisconsin paid Minnesota \$6.1 million for the 2003-04 year.

Minnesota has full agreements with North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin, and limited agreements with Iowa and Manitoba.

While Minnesota has made payments to North Dakota, South Dakota is violating its state law by not paying Minnesota money that it should. No payment has been made between the states since 1988. The Higher Education Services Office, under the bill, is directed to examine the feasibility of reinstating the payments.

A September 2003 legislative auditor's report indicates South Dakota would have owed Minnesota \$350,000 for 2001-02, but office officials warn reinstating the interstate payment calculations could cost Minnesota money.

Additionally, the bill calls for a renegotiation of the Wisconsin agreement as soon as possible, with the goal of reducing the disparity between states.

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, a Minnesota undergraduate student attending the University of Minnesota's Morris campus pays \$2,452 more than a Wisconsin student for the current academic year. At the Duluth campus the difference is \$1,575, it is \$1,413 at Crookston and \$1,068 at the Twin Cities campus.

Under the bill, officials must also regularly submit a program evaluation to the Legislature.

A bill (SF246), sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Pretzner Solon (DFL-Duluth), would require Wisconsin students, beginning in the 2008-09 academic year, to pay a tuition rate at least equal to the state tuition rate. It will be considered for inclusion in a Senate higher education omnibus bill. A companion bill (HF1371), sponsored by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), awaits committee action.

Trustee membership

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees policy responsibilities include system planning, admissions requirements and setting tuition and fees.

State law calls for three members of the 15-member board to be students: one each from a community college, state university and technical college. Board members are appointed by the governor and approved by the Senate.

Currently, the Minnesota State University Student Association and the Minnesota State College Student Association each recruit, screen and recommend two to four qualified candidates to the governor by Jan. 2 of the year a student member's two-year term expires on June 30.

Sponsored by Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls), HF1085 would change the recommendation date to April 15.

J.J. Jouppe, associate director of university and government relations for the university student association, said the bill is a minor change requested by the organization.

"This would align us with the Trustee Candidate Advisory Council," he said, adding that the current time frame makes it difficult for some students to decide if they can make a two-year commitment to the board.

The council, part of the Legislative Coordinating Commission, recruits qualified candidates for the other 12 seats and recommends two to four candidates for each open seat to the governor by April 15. Those people serve six-year terms.

A companion bill (SF990), sponsored by Sen. Sandra L. Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

HUMAN SERVICES



Disability programs modified

Programs and services for people with disabilities could see sweeping changes, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan).

Presented to the House Health Policy and Finance Committee Feb. 24, HF980 would establish a Disability Services Coordination Commission to help people with disabilities live in more independent settings.

The bill would increase the spend-down standard from 75 percent to 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines for people who are aged, blind or disabled. It would also increase the asset limit to \$10,000 for single households and \$18,000 for households of two or more. Community-based, long-term care providers and intermediate care facilities for people with disabilities could also see a rate increase under the measure.

Other provisions call for the commissioner of human services to develop a wellness exam incentive program for Medical Assistance enrollees with disabilities. It also gives enrollees the ability to choose between a county or private agency case management service coordinator vendor; the \$500 annual benefit limit for Medical Assistance and General Assistance Medical Care dental services would be eliminated; the personal needs allowance would be increased and a MinnesotaCare dental coverage would be reduced.

Ron Conaway, who was living in a nursing home four years ago and told he'd never leave, said the bill supports programs that allow disabled people to live more independently.

"When I was in the nursing home, I felt like I had been discarded by society," Conaway said. "Everyone should have the right to feel dignity."

He no longer resides in a nursing home.

The bill was amended to require the human services commissioner to conduct a study of access to dental services for people with disabilities.

The bill was referred to the House Governmental Operations and Veteran Affairs Committee.

A companion bill (SF984), sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action in the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

IMMIGRATION



Becoming self-sufficient

St. Paul's East Side is an ethnic melting pot, and the residents there try to help each other out, said Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul).

He's sponsoring a bill that would provide \$1.5 million to the Hmong, American Indian and Hispanic development organizations in the area so they can work with each other and Metropolitan State University to help their clients build their skills and find jobs.

Presented March 2 to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee, HF513 was held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus spending bill.

Chicanos Latinos Unidos En Servicio



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Joel Ulland, left, public policy director for the Minnesota chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and Bob Gregory, right, testify Feb. 24 before the House Health Policy and Finance Committee in support of a bill that would make several changes to programs and services for people with disabilities.

(CLUES), the American Indian Family Center and the Hmong American Partnership would each receive \$500,000 under the bill. The money would be used to build collaborative programs among the three organizations and the university.

The hope is that participants would receive degrees, meet with mentors and pursue internships, said Maureen Acosta, director of communications and fund development with CLUES.

LaVon Lee, executive director of the American Indian Family Center, agreed. "Many of the individuals have no significant job experience," she said. "Our community members are eager to work and want to work. We believe we can be successful in helping our people find jobs."

William Yang, executive director of the Hmong American Partnership, said he hopes the program can break the cycle of public assistance. "We believe the project will have an impact that extends well beyond the area. When more and more people are gainfully employed, more people will succeed."

Mahoney said the East Side has the largest Hmong and Hispanic populations in the area, and it's crucial that they learn skills now. "Unless our citizens can acquire those skills, it's not us that are the losers, it's the employers of tomorrow," he said.

A companion bill (SF460), sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

INSURANCE



The Minnesota FAIR Plan could get another option for handling insurance claims, under HF667. For more information, go to the Session Weekly Extra page at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/swx.asp>.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Changing salary limits

Salary compensation limits for government employees could be removed under a bill approved by the House Local Government Committee March 2.

Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina) sponsors HF995 that would repeal the salary cap for employees of charter cities, counties and towns. He said placing caps on employees' salaries makes it hard to keep quality workers, who "don't come and go with the winds of fortune."

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

"Local government can be trusted and set salaries for their people," said Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), sponsor of a similar bill, HF994. He voluntarily laid his bill over with the expectation Erhardt's bill would advance.

HF995 was approved and moves next to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee.

"Cities are not all equal," testified Anoka Mayor Bjorn Skogquist. By removing the salary cap, smaller cities are unable to compete for quality workers because they can't offer as much compensation, he said.

The "type of talent we need is exactly the kind we're losing," said Keith Carlson, executive director of the Metropolitan Inter-County Association. The limit creates real problems in being able to compete nationally for experienced city managers.

Cities already offer hefty severance and benefits packages to certain government employees, said John Kysylczyn, former mayor of Roseville. People should take government positions to serve the public, rather than a desire to receive a large paycheck, he added.

Companion bills (SF953 and SF857), sponsored respectively by Sen. Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins) and Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), await action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

METRO AFFAIRS



Fiscal disparities study

The city of Bloomington is one of the largest contributors in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to the fiscal disparities pool, and while Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) knows that's likely to continue, she'd like to know how and why.

She has introduced HF851, which requires the Department of Revenue to conduct a study of the fiscal disparities program, and report back to the Legislature by Feb. 1, 2006, to see if the program is working as intended.

The bill was heard March 2 in the Property and Local Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee and held over for possible inclusion in a division report to the full committee.

Fiscal disparities are payments made to cities based on their market value and population. Each city annually contributes 40 percent of its commercial and industrial growth to the fiscal disparities pool. Each city then receives a share of the pool through a formula based on its share of the area's population and its tax base.

Generally, cities like Bloomington, with more growth and a higher tax base contribute more to the pool than they get. Cities like South St. Paul, which is completely developed, get more than they give. The program was implemented in 1975 with a goal of having all areas of the Twin Cities share in development.

"There is no other state in the country that does this," Lenczewski said. "Minnesota is a strong believer in equalization. It doesn't recognize the pressures that come with growth," she said.

Communities receiving that fiscal disparities check don't receive their share of the complications, she said, yet residents of those communities will go to a nearby community to shop or see a movie.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, would examine whether the distribution formula is reasonable, whether it helps support orderly growth in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, whether the money prevents local governments from pursuing their own development and what improvements could be made.

MILITARY



Pitch the tent

The Minnesota National Guard Youth Camp at Camp Ripley needs state funding to help maintain the campgrounds and continue the program, Ed Howard, state coordinator for the camp, told the House State Government Finance Committee March 2.

Sponsored by Rep. Bruce Anderson (R-Buffalo Township), HF930 would appropriate \$50,000 in both fiscal years 2006 and 2007. The funding is contingent on being matched by other sources.

Howard said the camp currently is funded primarily through donations.

"Our overriding charter is that kids have fun," Howard told the committee. The camp serves children ages 10 to 15 and supports activities such as soccer, biking, rifle safety, flag history and etiquette. The program also attempts to help children cope with the stress of separation caused by military duty of a parent, sibling or guardian.

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

A companion bill (SF861), sponsored by Senate President James P. Metzen (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

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

★ RECREATION

Hall of Fame consideration

Major League Baseball great Roger Maris belongs in the National Baseball Hall of Fame, so says the Minnesota House of Representatives.

Rep. Anthony "Tony" Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) went to bat for his fellow Iron Ranger, sponsoring a resolution, HR5, asking for that consideration.

However, the Hall of Fame Veterans Committee passed Maris over March 2, as well as former Minnesota Twins Jim Kaat and Tony Oliva.

Born in Hibbing, but living a good share of his life in the Fargo-Moorhead area, Maris, as a member of the New York Yankees, became the homerun king with 61 in 1961. "This was before the days of steroids," Sertich told the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee Feb. 24. His record stood until 1998.

According to the Official Roger Maris Web site, highlights of his career include twice being named the American League's Most Valuable Player and playing in seven World Series — twice with the St. Louis Cardinals and five times with the Yankees. He retired in 1968 and died Dec. 14, 1985, of lymphoma cancer at the age of 51.

The House adopted the resolution on Feb. 28, referring to the Hall of Fame as "a well-deserved tribute to his outstanding major league career and his inspiration to youth through his exemplary conduct, both on and off the baseball diamond."

The North Dakota House of Representatives passed a similar resolution in early January.

★ TRANSPORTATION

Funding ideas

The Association of Minnesota Counties has proposed a funding package that includes an immediate 5 cent increase in the gas tax and subsequent increases based on the rate of inflation.

HF1353, sponsored by Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee), contains the recommendation. Heard March 1 by the House Transportation Finance Committee, it was held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

The bill would raise the gas tax from 20 cents to 25 cents a gallon, and make proportionate hikes on diesel fuel taxes. Beginning April 1, 2007, future increases would be based on inflation.

The bill would also allow counties to impose a wheelage tax of up to \$20 per vehicle. That money would be placed in a county fund for road

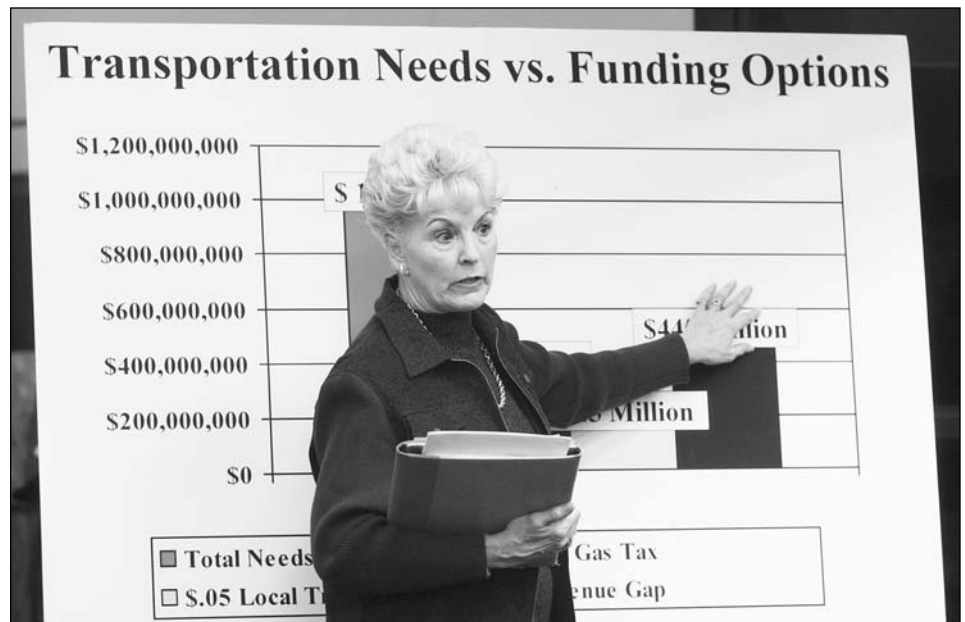


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Carol Lovro, a transportation policy analyst with the Association of Minnesota Counties, explains the graph she brought to the House Transportation Finance Committee March 1, as part of her testimony in support of a bill that would increase the gas tax and would allow cities and counties to authorize fees and taxes to meet their transportation needs.

and bridge construction and maintenance.

Maximum taxes on passenger autos would also be increased after the first year of operation from \$189 to \$214 in the second year, and from \$99 to \$124 in subsequent years.

Counties could also levy a sales tax for transportation purposes, to a maximum 0.5 percent, up to \$20. Cities and counties would have the authority to impose "transportation impact fees" on building permits, with the money designated to improve the intersections and address safety hazards that might be created by the building.

Ordinances approving the fee would have to include a trip generation rate.

Expansions of existing buildings and replacements of razed structures would be exempt, as would accessory buildings and new buildings that don't generate more trips.

For trunk highways, the bill authorizes \$200 million in bonding, split between the Twin Cities metropolitan area and Greater Minnesota, and \$50 million each for local bridges and regional routes.

Carol Lovro, a transportation policy analyst with the association, said counties are presenting the proposal as a way to improve roads, not raise taxes.

A companion bill (SF1301) sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Bring on the ethanol

The House Transportation Committee referred to the House Transportation Finance

committee March 1 a bill (HF223) that would require all gasoline sold in Minnesota to contain a 20 percent mix of ethanol by 2015.

The bill has already been through several House committees, said Rep. Gregory M. Davids (R-Preston), the bill's sponsor.

"The bill has taken the tour of the Legislature," he said. "I'll talk about ethanol every day of the week."

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

"This is one of the great Minnesota success stories," Davids said. "Ethanol has proven to be very beneficial to the environment. It creates jobs and a lot of economic activity. So don't do it for yourself, don't do it for the state of Minnesota, do it for America."

The bill originally had a 2012 deadline, but a successful amendment by committee chair Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina) extended that by three years.

Speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, Sandy Neren said the requirement would be expensive. "This would be prohibitively expensive for the manufacturers and prohibitively expensive for your constituents."

Hosein Shapouri, an economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said ethanol was worth the trouble.

According to research he has done, advances in farming technology have improved the economic feasibility of ethanol production. He has concluded that the manufacture, pro-

cessing and use of ethanol in modern facilities could eventually replace petroleum imports. "The future of the ethanol industry is very bright," he said.

"This legislation is good for our state, our farms and our country," said Rod Jorgenson, who farms near Kasson, adding that it will create jobs and help businesses in rural Minnesota.

A Senate companion (SF4), sponsored by Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

'Mad Mom' bill

The son of Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) obtained his learner's permit, allowing him to drive with a licensed driver in the car, shortly after he turned 15. The permit expired in one year, so it was his intent to get his driver's license shortly after he turned 16.

That didn't work out, Holberg said, so they went to get another permit when his expired. They were told it would be all right to continue

to drive with an expired learner's permit.

"It was not OK in my mind, so we ended up buying another permit," she said. She was later told that people frequently drive with expired learner's permits.

Hence was born Holberg's self-proclaimed, "Mad Mom bill."

Heard March 2 by the House Transportation Committee, HF1351 would extend the duration of learner's permits to two years. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

There is no Senate companion.

VETERANS



Veterans' plates

The Minnesota Department of Transportation now issues license plates to a number of veterans, including: World Wars I and II, Gulf, Korean and Vietnam wars.

A number of bills are being offered to

expand the collection. The House Transportation Committee considered five March 2.

HF105, sponsored by Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea), would authorize a special veterans' motorcycle license plate for veterans who served in the Gulf War. Now, veterans' motorcycle license plates are authorized only for Vietnam veterans. There would continue to be a \$10 fee. The bill was referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee. A companion bill (SF135), sponsored by Sen. Bob Kierlin (R-Winona), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

HF171, sponsored by Rep. Bruce Anderson (R-Buffalo Township), would authorize new license plates for veterans who have served in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere in support of the global war on terrorism. The plate would sport decals and lettering to signify the veteran's service. There would be a \$10 fee for each set of plates to cover the cost. The bill was referred to the House floor. A companion bill (SF605), sponsored by Sen. Michael J.

MUSEUM PROPOSAL



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Katie Guck, bottom left, a member of VFW Post 4020 Women's Auxiliary in Perham, listens as members of the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee hears a proposal to appropriate money for a grant for a Veterans Museum in Perham. Other post members pictured include, clockwise from top left, Art Sozama, Gary Metz and Norm Hayden.

Jungbauer (R-East Bethel), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

HF472, sponsored by Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake), would allow veterans to have special veterans' plates on all vehicles they own. They are now allowed a maximum of two. The bill was referred to the House floor. A companion bill (SF921), sponsored by Sen. Betsy L. Wergin (R-Princeton), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

HF883, sponsored by Rep. Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake), would allow members of the Disabled American Veterans to have a license plate with the "Disabled American Veteran" notation under the numbers and the "DAV" notation on the side for a \$10 fee. The bill was referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee. A companion bill (SF931), sponsored by Sen. Michele Bachmann (R-Stillwater), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

HF1095, sponsored by Rep. Peter Nelson (R-Lindstrom), would allow veterans' license plates to be used on 1-ton trucks that don't meet the definition of a commercial vehicle. They can now only be displayed on passenger

cars and trucks. The bill was referred to the House Transportation Finance Committee. A companion bill (SF950), sponsored by Sen. Sean R. Nienow (R-Cambridge), awaits action in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Potential property tax breaks

Disabled American veterans would get a break on their property taxes under a bill heard March 2 in the Property and Local Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee.

Held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill, HF169, sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), would make veterans with a permanent service-connected disability exempt from property taxes beginning with taxes payable in 2006. The United States Veterans Administration must provide the certification.

"The bill does not charge veterans who got their disability in the line of duty any (property) tax whatsoever," Rukavina said. "This would be a good tax policy for someone who is totally disabled."

To get the exemption, the veteran must apply with the county assessor, and then provide the documentation. When the exemption is granted, it remains in effect until the property changes hands. Veterans would then qualify for an exemption at their new home. The exemption would extend to the spouse if the veteran dies first, until the spouse either remarries or disposes of the property.

Permanently and totally disabled American veterans currently qualify for a lower property tax rate, not a total exemption, if they live in special housing unit to accommodate the disability. Rukavina's bill drops that requirement.

According to an analysis from the Minnesota Department of Revenue, there are approximately 2,800 homeowners who would qualify for the exemption. The main impact on the state's budget would be the elimination of property tax refunds to the disabled veterans, so money would actually be saved.

A companion bill (SF417), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

What's on the Web

Talkin' 'bout My Bills (My Bills)

The legislative Web site provides personalized bill tracking for House and Senate legislation within the current biennium. MyBills, as the service is called, requires an easy one-time registration of a username and password (www.house.leg.state.mn.us/leg/billsublogin.asp).

The system keeps track of House and Senate bills by bill number, subject or author. Users enjoy the benefit of viewing bill status with items of significant current action highlighted. The status

is updated daily, and users can modify their lists at anytime. Lists are retained throughout the legislative biennium.



Constitutional Officers

Governor

TIM PAWLENTY (R)

Room 130
State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-3391
1-800-657-3717
Fax: (651) 296-2089

State Auditor

PATRICIA ANDERSON (R)

525 Park St.
Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 296-2551

Lieutenant Governor

CAROL MOLNAU (R)

Room 130
State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-3391

Attorney General

MIKE HATCH (DFL)

Room 102
State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-6196
Consumer Division: (651) 296-3353
1-800-657-3787
NCL Tower Suite 1400
445 Minnesota St.
St. Paul, MN 55101

Secretary of State

MARY KIFFMEYER (R)

Room 180
State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-2803
1-877-600-VOTE
Public Information: 1-877-551-6767
Election Division: (651) 215-1440
Open Appointments: (651) 297-5845
Business Information &
Uniform Commercial Code:
(651) 296-2803

DNA database

Crime-solving tool or invasion of privacy?

By Ruth Dunn

A cotton swab would be used to capture DNA from inside your mouth if you are arrested for any felony, under HF1244, sponsored by House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie).

"DNA is the fingerprint of the 21st century," Paulsen told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 1. DNA results can be used to help convict the guilty, exonerate the innocent and to solve both current and old cases, he said.

Under his bill, DNA would be collected from all people arrested for felony crimes in Minnesota beginning July 1, 2010.

A phase-in would begin July 1, 2005, with collection of samples from people arrested for certain violent and predatory felonies, such as murder, kidnapping and criminal sexual assault.

All DNA information that is collected would be added to a statewide DNA database and also shared with a national database.

The proposal sparks a controversy between those who think the DNA database is an important crime-solving tool and those who have concerns about civil liberties and the invasion of personal privacy.

Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls) said DNA collection started with convicted sex offenders, then moved to violent and predatory offenders upon conviction, then to all felons upon conviction and now it's proposed to take samples from all who are arrested in connection with felonies. "Why doesn't your bill go to non-felons, misdemeanors, driving after suspension? Why even stop there, why not tell all hospitals to take

everyone's DNA at birth?" he said.

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) said it was problematic that every person arrested — not just convicted — for felonies would have DNA taken. He said the net becomes so large that thousands of individuals would be affected, including many who are wrongly arrested.

There is a process for clearing (expunging) a record in some circumstances but that could be expensive and time consuming, commented Ellison.

He also said that personal information on computer networks could mistakenly be released. "When you've got humans involved, mistakes will happen."

Rich Neumeister, a concerned citizen, also raised concerns.

"I believe in personal autonomy and freedom, and if I have not done a crime my DNA sample and '21st century' fingerprint should not be in the computer and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension refrigerator/freezer," he wrote in testimony to the committee.

"DNA is the most powerful tool available to law enforcement to prove the truth," said James Backstrom, Dakota County attorney. DNA biological samples are genetic fingerprints that should

be considered no different from fingerprints that have been used in crime investigations for decades, he said.

DNA has been taken from all convicted felons in Minnesota since a law was passed by the Legislature in 2003 (and expires in July 2005).

At that time, the Legislature provided funds for the collection of DNA but not for the analysis of it, so there is a backlog of more than 19,000 samples that nothing has

History of Minnesota's Combined DNA Index System

1989: DNA sex offender database established in Minnesota; about 1,000 DNA samples a year done by taking blood from adults convicted of felonies.

1991: First Minnesota murder solved by use of database.

1993: First crime solved in another state through match of Minnesota database with national database.

1999: New DNA technology, much less time required to process samples.

2000: DNA sampling expanded to convicted predatory offenders, sample collection increases to about 4,000 a year.

2003: DNA sampling further expanded to all convicted felons, set to sunset in 2005.

Source: Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety

been done with, according to Frank Dolejsi, director of the BCA laboratory at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety. Some grant money was secured to process some samples, he said.

There are now 23,613 offender DNA profiles in the Minnesota database. In addition, there are 1,619 forensic samples collected from crime scenes or victims that have not yet been matched to suspects, said Dolejsi.

All states participate in the national DNA index system, which includes more than 2 million profiles of convicted adult felons, as of December 2004.

Four states have authorized DNA collection from people who are arrested for felonies: California, Louisiana, Texas and Virginia.

The House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee recommended the bill to pass and sent it to House Civil Law and Elections Committee to clarify civil liberties issues before it is returned. A companion bill (SF1201), sponsored by Sen. Leo T. Foley (DFL-Coon Rapids), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

"This is a natural evolution of fingerprint requirement," said Paulsen. "This legislation is saving lives in other states, and can save lives here in Minnesota. It is entirely appropriate for us to protect citizens and prevent future crimes."

"This legislation is saving lives in other states, and can save lives here in Minnesota. It is entirely appropriate for us to protect citizens and prevent future crimes."

— House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen

"Why doesn't your bill go to non-felons, misdemeanors, driving after suspension? Why even stop there, why not tell all hospitals to take everyone's DNA at birth?"

— Rep. Keith Ellison

High-speed connection

Broadening broadband use could help productivity

By MATT WETZEL

A broadband Internet connection means more than surfing the Web quickly without tying up your phone line. It also helps businesses operate more efficiently.

One example is WindLogics, Inc. Based in St. Paul, and with a Grand Rapids operation, the company provides long-term weather and wind variability reports to utilities and wind farm developers. "All of our products are delivered on the Web. You couldn't really do it without broadband," said Mark Ahlstrom, chief executive officer.

Lee Alnes, vice president of marketing with WindLogics, said the company has more than 100 computers in Grand Rapids that transmit massive amounts of data to the St. Paul office every day. Transmitting that data by dial-up connection would probably take more than a day.

"It would be too expensive to bother driving them down. Our need for information is pretty much real time," he said. "It changes your life when you can look up something instantaneously. I don't have a phone book in my home anymore."

Simply put, broadband does what dial-up connections do, only a lot faster, and you can connect without occupying your phone line. Alas, broadband Internet access costs more.

The Blandin Foundation in Grand Rapids recognizes the efficiency of broadband technology, so

it's trying to raise \$1 million for a Broadband Development Fund. The foundation will put up \$250,000, and is seeking \$250,000 from the state, with the remainder to come from other sources. The money must be used to increase the use of broadband technology by businesses, schools, health care, government organizations and the general public.

Sponsored by Rep. Andrew "Andy" Westerberg (R-Blaine), HF1197 was heard March 1 by the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee, and held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

"I believe broadband is a necessary tool for continued development in rural Minnesota," Westerberg said.

Broadband became available to the general public about five years ago, after the Internet had become popular. Internet access at the time was primarily achieved by dial-up, which had its limitations. Broadband offered a quicker, more varied choice.

Broadband is a high capacity, high-speed transmission channel carried on cables that have a wider bandwidth than the telephone lines. Broadband channels can carry video, voice and data simultaneously, so the transmission of movies and videotapes is a lot easier.

"Whether you're a business, or school, or government or health care organization, it allows you to operate more efficiently and productively," said Gary Fields, project consultant for the foundation.

"There are many areas where we are less competitive. We have to take every opportunity. Broadband technology allows us to do that," he said. "Many companies sell on the Internet. Broadband is a great way to identify who they (customers) are."

One use for businesses is to place catalogs on the Internet for downloading and schools can place courses on the Web for students at

remote locations.

The foundation has a Broadband Initiative Board that encourages businesses to consider broadband. Committee Chair Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) is a member. "There are very many small towns in Greater Minnesota where you couldn't be an auto dealer if you didn't have high-speed Internet," he said.

"Can you imagine a dial-up (connection) downloading a book report?" Gunther asked. If broadband allows businesses to grow, they could add employees, and that makes broadband an effective economic development tool, he said.

Even so, according to a 2004 study by the Center for Rural Policy and Development, based in St. Peter, only 21 percent of people in Greater Minnesota use broadband, even though 85 percent have access to it.

Gunther said people have to be convinced of the importance of high-speed Internet access. "Somebody has to tell people about it. It's an educational tool."

And the Blandin Foundation is trying to take the ball and run with it. "We are trying to show people why they need it," he said.

Cost could be an issue, according to the report. The average price of a home broadband connection in rural Minnesota dropped from \$40.90 in 2003 to \$37.45 in 2004. That's still \$13 higher than the average monthly dial-up connection, according to the report. Prices for businesses would be comparable, Fields said.

"The cost of broadband continues to come down as people use it. As people understand the value it delivers, they usually spend the money for it," Fields said.

Gunther said it's an investment that some companies will have to make. "You can't take the time in today's business using what dial-up offers you. You've got to be fast," he said.

A companion bill (SF1120), sponsored by Sen. Dallas C. Sams (DFL-Staples), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Expanding broadband would not only help businesses, but schools could place courses on the Web for students at remote locations.

According to a 2004 study by the Center for Rural Policy and Development, based in St. Peter, only 21 percent of people in Greater Minnesota use broadband, even though 85 percent have access to it.



Taking on the issues

Hansen's background perfect for diverse constituency

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

The day before the legislative session was to begin, Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul) sat at his desk, studying last year's bonding bill. If he could have introduced the first bill of the session, that would have been it, he said. "It is unfinished business, and at least to the people I represent, it is important."



Rep. Rick Hansen

But when it comes to concerns in his district, the bonding bill is outranked by concerns over affordable health care and maintaining a quality public education system. This shouldn't come as too much of a surprise, Hansen said. For his district, that includes Lilydale, Mendota, Mendota Heights, West St. Paul and parts of Eagan, and South St. Paul,

is diverse in economics, ethnicity and age.

The district has a large number of seniors, with whom the cost of health care is an immediate concern. But there is an equally large number of what he calls the "sandwich generation" — adult children taking care of their children and elderly parents.

Hansen knows all about these struggles. He is a new father and recently had to deal with making decisions about nursing homes and assisted care facilities for his own parents. He has introduced legislation asking for a study on how public and private institutions and workplaces are dealing with the issue.

From his farming roots in rural Freeborn County and his work with the Department of Agriculture, to his new ventures in e-commerce selling Amish-made furniture, Hansen believes he is well suited to represent his constituency. He was drawn to the idea of running for the House because of his dedication to

DISTRICT 39A

2002 population: 36,532
Largest city: Eagan
County: Dakota
Top concerns: Affordable health care, quality education

Hansen has introduced legislation asking for a study on how public and private institutions and workplaces are dealing with issues faced by the "sandwich generation."

public service and feels honored to have been elected.

On the day that Hansen was sworn in, he resigned from a job at the Department of Agriculture where he worked for 17 years on pesticide issues. Hansen could have retained his position, but felt that ethically he could not vote on legislation that affected the department. "But I won't forget my work in public service, and I bring that to the table," he said.

Natural progression

A culmination of experience led Loeffler to the House

By BRETT MARTIN

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls) has spent a good part of her career working with budgets, and in one instance, it had a very interesting outcome.



Rep. Diane Loeffler

Several years ago, when the Minnesota Board of Environmental Education was facing budget woes, it held an auction to raise money. Loeffler bid, sight unseen, on help to perform some home improvements. The board member who offered the service is now her husband.

"Demanding times can sometimes result in creative solutions," she said of the auction.

Loeffler has an eclectic background. She interned at the Department of Administration, which used to handle state budgeting. She has worked in education policy research, local government, employment, human ser-

vices and health care, focusing primarily on budgets and analyzing policy. This all served as a catalyst to run for the House seat.

"One of the things I bring to the job is experience on a wide range of issues," she said, adding that her background will be invaluable on her committees: Commerce and Financial Institutions and its Technology, Bioscience and Medical Products Division; Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs; and Rules and Legislative Administration.

Loeffler would like to see more funding in education.

"We need to increase the state investment in education — in pre-k through university education," she said. "The state has to assure that every child, no matter where he or she is born, receives a quality, publicly paid education."

If she could have introduced the first bill of the session, it would have been equal quality education for all children in the state.

"If you look at what the state is responsible for providing, education is a key responsibility,"

DISTRICT 59A

2002 Population: 36,715
Largest city: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin
Top concerns: Adequately funded education, health care needs

"The state has to assure that every child, no matter where he or she is born, receives a quality, publicly paid education."

— Rep. Diane Loeffler

ity," Loeffler said. "Education is a core Minnesota value. If you have a good education, it opens up so many doors later in life."

She is also concerned with keeping a lid on property tax increases.

"There are a lot of young homeowners and elderly people on fixed incomes who are being strangled by property tax increases," she said.

Having spent part of her career in the health care field, she realizes the importance of affordable health care.

"I want to ensure quality health care is available for everyone," she said.

Large expanse, many issues

Sailer is working on variety of subjects for her constituents

By MIKE COOK

It takes Rep. Brita Sailer (DFL-Park Rapids) more than two hours to drive from her home to the northernmost part of her district.



Rep. Brita Sailer

With such a geographic expanse, come a variety of issues.

Affordable and accessible health care is of importance to her constituency. "It is affecting people in so many ways — more than just on a personal level, but certainly on the economic level." She has spoken with people who work more than one job, yet can't afford health care. People are affected by past cuts to MinnesotaCare, she said. Additionally, small business owners want to provide some kind of health care for their employees, but it's tough.

Such is also the case for school districts

that have had little success in passing levy referendums. "We want to make sure that all Minnesotans have equal access to quality education," she said.

Before being elected, Sailer got to know some of her constituents through her work, which she terms, "A Dating Service for Waste Materials."

The materials exchange program is one of several around the state. "My job is to think 'who could use this and how could we get it there?' It's really great to help out both ends, save money, sometimes thousands of dollars," and save resources as well.

For example, she said a company in a nearby county benefited from the program. The company was making packaging for Rubbermaid containers and once the packaging was developed, many of the containers used in the testing process went to schools and nonprofits rather than a landfill.

Despite her employment activity, Sailer

DISTRICT 2B

2002 population: 36,538
Largest city: Park Rapids
Counties: Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Pennington and Polk
Top concerns: Health care and education

There are telecommunication issues in Sailer's district, such as inconsistent cell phone coverage and the lack of high-speed Internet.

does not serve on an environment committee. She is on the House Education Policy and Reform, Rules and Legislative Administration and Commerce and Financial Institutions committees, including the Tourism Division of the latter. That is fine with her.

"It comes back to representing the district," she said, noting that there are telecommunication issues in her district, such as inconsistent cell phone coverage and the lack of high-speed Internet. Additionally, many district businesses rely on tourism dollars.

Importance of tradition

New member resolves to make a difference

By MATT WETZEL

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) ran for his legislative seat because he believed the state had gotten away from its tradition of good government.



Rep. Steve Simon

"I was worried the state was getting off on the wrong track, and I felt I could help move it back in the right direction. I didn't think we were going to get the kind of changes that we needed by changing the minds of the people at the Legislature. We had to change the bodies." He defeated six-term Republican Rep. Jim Rhodes by 11.3 percent.

After earning an undergraduate degree in political science, Simon, in 1992, went to work on the campaign staff of former

President Clinton. He said the experience was invaluable. Viewers of the movie, "The War Room," a documentary about the Clinton presidential campaign, might have caught a 2-second glimpse of Simon.

After the campaign, Simon earned his law degree. He then worked on consumer, tax and education issues in the Attorney General's office under Hubert "Skip" Humphrey III, and also Mike Hatch. He joined the Minneapolis law firm of Robins, Kaplan, Miller and Ciresi LLP, where he represents businesses.

Simon believes quality public education is important to his constituents and that it might be compromised because of "flat state funding."

If he could have introduced the first bill of the session, it would have provided more financial help for schools. "I think the schools in our area have really felt the pinch of the cuts in the last two years," he said.

DISTRICT 44A

2002 Population: 36,849
Largest city: St. Louis Park
County: Hennepin
Top concerns: Education, health care and transportation

"I saw, firsthand, how families can get kicked around by the system. It didn't just make me mad, I resolved to try to do something about it."

— Rep. Steve Simon

Other key issues are health care and transportation.

"Sickness doesn't discriminate, whether you're rich or poor or black or white. I saw, firsthand, how families can get kicked around by the system. It didn't just make me mad, I resolved to try to do something about it," he said. He serves on the House Transportation, and Civil Law and Elections committees.

Monday, February 28

HF1353—Beard (R)

Transportation Finance

Motor fuel tax rates increased, county and city transportation fees and taxes authorized, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1354—Ruth (R)

Transportation

Motor vehicle transaction fee and filing fees for processing license applications increased.

HF1355—Demmer (R)

Education Finance

School districts authorized to build school buildings using design-build construction techniques.

HF1356—Kohls (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Corporate research tax credit computation increased.

HF1357—Peppin (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Corporate research tax credit increased and money appropriated for the biotechnology credit.

HF1358—Wilkin (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Minnesota No-Fault Automobile Insurance Act repealed, appropriate premium reduction provided and liability coverage required.

HF1359—Carlson (DFL)

Higher Education Finance

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities repairs funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1360—Bradley (R)

Health Policy & Finance

Developmental disabilities quality assurance system modified and money appropriated.

HF1361—Olson (R)

Regulated Industries

Lottery proceeds percentage deposited in the natural resources and recreation fund, fund established and funds usage specified.

HF1362—Jaros (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Credit scoring prohibited for automobile and homeowner's insurance.

HF1363—Demmer (R)

Education Policy & Reform

Education staff development program and reserved revenue eliminated.

HF1364—Mariani (DFL)

Education Policy & Reform

Probationary period authorized for assistant principals who are promoted to principal in cities of the first class.

HF1365—Thissen (DFL)

Local Government

Municipal solid waste service business inverse condemnation authorized when a governmental entity occupies the market.

HF1366—Olson (R)

Transportation

Minnesota Regulated Public Transit Utilities Act adopted providing for regulation of transit services and requiring legislative reports.

HF1367—Olson (R)

Civil Law & Elections

Water utility charges responsibility regulated for landlords and tenants.

HF1368—Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Minnesota Twins community ownership process provided.

HF1369—Thissen (DFL)

Taxes

Regional investment income and franchise tax credit provided.

HF1370—McNamara (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Plumber licensure required and new plumbing installation inspection requirements established.

HF1371—Huntley (DFL)

Higher Education Finance

Wisconsin student tuition reciprocity at the University of Minnesota regulated.

HF1372—Huntley (DFL)

Health Policy & Finance

Medical Assistance reimbursement rates modified for nursing facilities.

HF1373—Clark (DFL)

Health Policy & Finance

AIDS prevention initiative grants established focusing on African-born Minnesotans and money appropriated.

HF1374—Erickson (R)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Teachers retirement association board membership modified to include a school administrator.

HF1375—Severson (R)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Construction defects in residential housing causes of action regulated and notice and opportunity to repair provided.

HF1376—Hoppe (R)

Regulated Industries

Minneapolis; Walker Art Center on-sale liquor license authorized.

HF1377—Ellison (DFL)

Civil Law & Elections

Predatory offender screening committee established, access to data provided and hearing judge and attorney panels authorized.

HF1378—Soderstrom (R)

Public Safety Policy & Finance

Conditional release board created with the authority to release certain nonviolent controlled substance offenders from prison, expungements authorized, chemical dependency treatment required and new facility proposals authorized.

HF1379—Sailer (DFL)

Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Toll-free taxpayer assistance telephone lines required.

HF1380—Solberg (DFL)

Health Policy & Finance

Aitkin County nursing facility moratorium exception project deadline extended.

HF1381—Howes (R)

Taxes

Sylvan gravel tax authorized.

HF1382—Clark (DFL)

Agriculture & Rural Development

Wild rice; genetically engineered wild rice release, planting, cultivation, harvest or sale prohibited.

HF1383—Dill (DFL)

Taxes

Direct reduced ore production tax clarified.

HF1384—Dill (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Trapper education requirements provided.

HF1385—Nornes (R)

Higher Education Finance

Higher education funding provided for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Medical Foundation; Higher Education Facilities Authority merger authorized and money appropriated.

HF1386—Sertich (DFL)

Commerce & Financial Institutions

Ergonomics occupational safety and health standard required.

HF1387—Hornstein (DFL)

Taxes

Foreign operating corporations definition modified, foreign royalties tax subtraction repealed and certain income excluded.

HF1388—Hornstein (DFL)

Taxes

Foreign operating corporation tax definition modified.

HF1389—Gunther (R)

Agriculture & Rural Development

County agricultural society exemption from local zoning ordinances clarified.

HF1390—Vandever (R)

Local Government

Local governments authorized to purchase aerial platform fire trucks using certificates of indebtedness with 10-year terms.

HF1391—Cox (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Waste electronic products recovery and recycling provided.

HF1392—Nelson, P. (R)**Taxes**

Ready-to-eat meat and seafood prepared food sales tax provision expiration date removed.

HF1393—Holberg (R)**Local Government**

Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport additional taxicabs provided, taxi services fees increased, transfer of permits authorized, unsafe rules prohibited and report provided.

HF1394—Soderstrom (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Persian Gulf War veterans plaque authorized in the Court of Honor on the Capitol grounds.

HF1395—Anderson, B. (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Minneapolis Employee Retirement Fund service credit purchase for a workers' compensation injury period authorized.

HF1396—Solberg (DFL)**Environment and Natural Resources**

Aitkin County; Big Sandy Off-highway Vehicle Recreation Area established.

HF1397—Cybart (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

State Patrol term prohibited in advertising for private detective or protective agent services.

HF1398—Cybart (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Unclaimed property held by cooperatives and the right to receive or recover unclaimed property regulated and public notice requirements modified.

HF1399—Kohls (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Minnesota No-Fault Automobile Insurance Act modified, medical expense benefits tied to worker's compensation fees schedule, income loss and funeral benefits increased, tort threshold modified and arbitration process modified.

HF1400—Nelson, P. (R)**Transportation**

Maximum axle weights allowed on highways regulated and certain motor carrier rules abolished.

HF1401—Nelson, P. (R)**Transportation**

Commercial motor vehicle definition federal conformity provided.

HF1402—Nelson, P. (R)**Transportation**

Cellular telephone operation in motor vehicle prohibited by holder of provisional driver's license or instruction permit.

HF1403—Otremba (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Milk producer payments provided to beginning producers and dairy modernization grant program established.

HF1404—Hackbarth (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Cathode-ray tube recycling provided.

HF1405—Sailer (DFL)**Agriculture and Rural Development**

Businesses that sell leases for agricultural equipment required to file a bond.

HF1406—Zellers (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Criminal sexual conduct life without release sentences provided, maximum sentences increased, sex offender review board established, sentencing guidelines modified and predatory offender registration and notification requirements modified.

HF1407—Finstad (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Brown County; intermediate care facility for persons with mental retardation relocation authorized.

HF1408—Finstad (R)**Local Government**

Brown County; recorder appointment authorized.

HF1409—Scalze (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

State fire marshal budget base increased.

HF1410—Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Businesses maintaining personal information in electronic form required to disclose to consumers breaches in security.

HF1411—Erickson (R)**Transportation**

Milk transport vehicles exempted from weight restrictions.

HF1412—Demmer (R)**Education Finance**

Agricultural land exempted from certain school district debt service levies.

HF1413—Brod (R)**Education Finance**

School boards authorized to elect to levy debt service against referendum market value.

HF1414—Brod (R)**Education Finance**

School boards authorized to elect to levy debt service against referendum market value.

HF1415—Zellers (R)**Regulated Industries**

Liquor wholesaler-retailer relationship laws modified.

HF1416—Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Lifetime conditional release imposed on sex offenders who fail to register as predatory offenders.

HF1417—Loeffler (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Homeowner insurers prohibited from acting on policies of a vacant dwelling if the vacancy is caused by the insured being called to active duty.

HF1418—Atkins (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Notification of non-custodial parents and the court required of custodial parent's residence with certain convicted persons.

HF1419—Sykora (R)**Education Finance**

Minnesota Early Learning Foundation established, funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1420—Ozment (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Environmental, natural resources, agricultural, and economic development funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1421—Bradley (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity****Policy & Finance**

Deaf and hard of hearing grants provided to the Minnesota Employment Center and money appropriated.

HF1422—Bradley (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Health care policy provisions modified, fees and licensing provisions modified, positive abortion alternatives provided, alternative health care practice regulation repealed and money appropriated.

Thursday, March 3

HF1423—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Public safety, corrections, and various public safety and crime-related boards policy provisions established, methamphetamine regulations modified, additional crime policy provided and money appropriated.

HF1424—Dittrich (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Public education equitable and adequate funding provided and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1425—Abeler (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity****Policy & Finance**

Supportive housing services provided and money appropriated.

HF1426—Mariani (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Non-school-hours enrichment grant program reestablished and money appropriated.

HF1427—Sieben (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

House resolution memorializing Congress to preserve Social Security.

HF1428—Wilkin (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Chemical dependency county expenditure allocation modified.

HF1429—Dittrich (DFL)**Education Finance**

Referendum equalization aid and referendum revenue cap increased.

HF1430—Dittrich (DFL)**Education Finance**

School district bonding for certain technology costs authorized.

HF1431—Dittrich (DFL)**Education Finance**

School district formula allowance adjustment provided.

HF1432—Dittrich (DFL)**Education Finance**

Special education program funding restored.

HF1433—Dittrich (DFL)**Education Finance**

Early childhood family education program funding restored.

HF1434—Dittrich (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Hazardous traffic condition pupil transportation zone locally controlled process defined and levy for hazardous pupil transportation services authorized.

HF1435—Hortman (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Hazardous traffic condition pupil transportation zone locally controlled process defined and levy for hazardous pupil transportation services authorized.

HF1436—Latz (DFL)**Transportation**

Uniform standards for driver's licenses and other documents provided, certain identification fraud acts prohibited, audits authorized, penalties provided and money appropriated.

HF1437—Smith (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Child support and parenting time six-month review hearing provided and procedures established.

HF1438—McNamara (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

State forest roads official map provided as alternative recording method for prescriptive easements.

HF1439—Nornes (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees competitive salaries funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1440—Nornes (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Higher Education Services Office service-learning program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1441—Nornes (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Enrollment base adjustments eliminated.

HF1442—Emmer (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Life imprisonment required for persons convicted of a second violent felony and life imprisonment without parole required for third violent felony conviction.

HF1443—Emmer (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Voter registration proof of citizenship and voter picture identification required.

HF1444—Emmer (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Candidates failing to agree to be bound by spending limits required to make a payment.

HF1445—Emmer (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Summons and complaint filing required before issuance of garnishment summons.

HF1446—Charron (R)**Regulated Industries**

Public Utilities Commission expedited proceedings and practices sunset repealed.

HF1447—Erickson (R)**Regulated Industries**

Anticompetitive telecommunications practices sunset provision removed.

HF1448—Smith (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Local correctional officer discipline procedures created.

HF1449—Latz (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Charity care by certain health care facilities required.

HF1450—Juhnke (DFL)**Transportation**

Road authority appraisals designated as private data and required to be provided to landowners; appraisal review and direct billing of appraisal costs provided and legal fee reimbursement for landowners authorized.

HF1451—Juhnke (DFL)**Transportation**

Transportation appraisals furnished to landowners for eminent domain proceedings, reimbursement of appraisal costs required and land acquisition public information provided.

HF1452—Juhnke (DFL)**Transportation**

Day activity center buses warning equipment operation authorized.

HF1453—Juhnke (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Family agricultural revitalization zones authorized and value-added processing agricultural products promoted.

HF1454—Eastlund (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Education administrative districts established.

HF1455—Zellers (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Sign specialist licenses created to be issued by the Board of Electricity.

HF1456—Mullery (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Pollution Control Agency structure modified.

HF1457—Urdahl (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Aquatic invasive species management funding provided, account established, watercraft decal required and money appropriated.

HF1458—Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Cass Gilbert and Julia Finch Gilbert portraits display maintained in the Capitol building.

HF1459—Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

National Guard tuition reimbursement program time period extended for members who have served in active duty, income tax surcharge imposed and money appropriated.

HF1460—Beard (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State construction contracts including design-build contracts regulation provided.

HF1461—Ruth (R)**Transportation**

Disabilities parking provisions modified and simplified.

HF1462—Krinkie (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Independent School District No. 621, Mounds View, required to establish a trust fund for the proceeds from the sale of property to use for general operating purposes.

HF1463—Koenen (DFL)**Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 2180, MACCRA, fund transfer authorized.

HF1464—Dean (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Medical malpractice liability reformed.

HF1465—Finstad (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Long-term care provider liability limited.

HF1466—Koenen (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development**

Farm tractor clock-hour meter tampering prohibited and civil penalty and private right of action prescribed.

HF1467—Hackbarth (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota conservation heritage foundation established, Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources eliminated, revenues distributed and money appropriated.

HF1468—Penas (R)**Higher Education Finance**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees membership regulated.

HF1469—Urdahl (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Minnesota State Horticultural Society funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1470—Hackbarth (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Dry cleaner environmental fees annual adjustment authorized.

HF1471—Davníe (DFL)**Education Finance**

School district net debt limit definition expanded.

HF1472—Davníe (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

House resolution memorializing Congress to oppose the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

HF1473—Mullery (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

United States and Minnesota flag display restriction prohibited.

HF1474—Demmer (R)**Education Finance**

School lunch additional funding provided.

HF1475—Smith (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Child support accounting required.

HF1476—Slawik (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Anti-bullying staff development training directed under the safe schools levy.

HF1477—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Secure forensic state nursing facility placement criteria established.

HF1478—Hilty (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Absentee voter ongoing status provided.

HF1479—Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Indecent exposure in the presence of a vulnerable adult criminal penalty provided for caregivers.

HF1480—Lieder (DFL)**Local Government**

Red Lake County drainage system outlet fee authorized for drainage originating in Pennington County.

HF1481—Seifert (R)**State Government Finance**

State government funding provided for general legislative and administrative expenses, state and local government operations modified and money appropriated.

HF1482—Davids (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Ostrander nursing facility reimbursement rate increased.

HF1483—Greiling (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State vendor preference provided to vendors with certain mental health benefits.

HF1484—Hoppe (R)**Regulated Industries**

Beer market dual distribution prohibition eliminated.

HF1485—Huntley (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Medical Assistance dental benefits cap eliminated, MinnesotaCare covered health services modified and MinnesotaCare limited care benefits for single adults without children eliminated.

HF1486—Kelliher (DFL)**Local Government**

Minneapolis city governance and management structure study panel created, membership provided and money appropriated.

HF1487—Soderstrom (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity****Policy & Finance**

Incumbent worker program established.

HF1488—Smith (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Retirement system directors and State Board of Investment director salary limit provisions modified.

HF1489—Greiling (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

No Child Left Behind continued implementation conditions imposed and money appropriated.

HF1490—Greiling (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

House resolution memorializing Congress to amend the No Child Left Behind Act according to the recommendations of the National Conference of State Legislatures' task force on No Child Left Behind.

HF1491—Greiling (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Postpartum depression information provided to mothers and their families.

HF1492—Seifert (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Guaranteed savings lease purchase contracts term extended to 15 years.

HF1493—Seifert (R)**Transportation**

Railroad fences and cattle guards obsolete provisions repealed.

HF1494—Hoppe (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Voters required to provide specified identification before voting.

HF1495—Westrom (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity****Policy & Finance**

Wind-to-hydrogen pilot project funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1496—McNamara (R)**Taxes**

Watershed management organizations included in the definition of special taxing districts.

HF1497—Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Indoor ice arena electricity and natural gas use exempted from sales tax.

HF1498—Erhardt (R)**Taxes**

Noncommercial seasonal recreational property exempted from the state property tax.

HF1499—Simpson (R)**Taxes**

Limited market value expanded to include certain small resorts, limited market value extended one year, valuation deferment provided and tax credits and refunds provided.

HF1500—Brod (R)**Civil Law & Elections**

Large campaign contributions by candidates immediate reporting required.

HF1501—Sailer (DFL)**Higher Education Finance**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities farm and small business management programs funding provided and money appropriated.

HF1502—Sailer (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Clearwater County; Upper Rice and Minerva Lakes management provided.

HF1503—Simon (DFL)**Education Finance**

Education commissioner's role in recommending school finance changes strengthened.

HF1504—Thissen (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Minneapolis Firefighters' Relief Association service credit clarified, disability benefits recomputed and pension benefit reductions prohibited.

HF1505—Brod (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Vaccines containing mercury or mercury compounds prohibited.

HF1506—Mariani (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Migrant seasonal farm workers educational and child development needs addressed.

HF1507—Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Quarantine and isolation provisions modified for persons exposed to or infected with a communicable disease.

HF1508—Howes (R)**Transportation**

Utility vehicle seasonal load restrictions clarified.

HF1509—Moe (DFL)**Taxes**

Homestead resort property tax class rate reduced.

HF1510—Brod (R)**Taxes**

Tax reform action commission established, appointments authorized, legislative report prepared and money appropriated.

HF1511—Nelson, P. (R)**Taxes**

Taylors Falls; city development zone powers authorized.

HF1512—Liebling (DFL)**Taxes**

Sales to political subdivisions exempted from the sales tax.

HF1513—Greiling (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Socio-emotional development included in early childhood health and development screening, and mental health screening availability included in notice to parents of truant children.

HF1514—Heidgerken (R)**Taxes**

Sauk River Watershed District increased levy authorized.

HF1515—Clark (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Health occupation training initiation and expansion provided and money appropriated.

HF1516—Paymar (DFL)**Taxes**

Individual income tax rates increased.

HF1517—Gunther (R)**Regulated Industries**

Wind energy facility certificate of need provisions modified and automatic recovery of certain electricity transmission costs provided.

HF1518—Howes (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Cross-country ski pass fees increased.

HF1519—Sailer (DFL)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Beaver damage control grant program reinstated and money appropriated.

HF1520—Anderson, I. (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Koochiching County; Jackfish Bay sewer project bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1521—Hamilton (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Power limited technicians application period extended.

HF1522—Hamilton (R)**Taxes**

Nobles County, Worthington and Independent School District No. 518 joint truth in taxation hearings authorized.

HF1523—Hamilton (R)**Transportation**

Recreational vehicle combinations maximum length limitation increased.

HF1524—Hamilton (R)**Transportation Finance**

Trunk Highway 60 improvement bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1525—Kahn (DFL)**Local Government**

Political subdivision pay equity reporting requirements modified.

HF1526—Simpson (R)**Taxes**

Revenue recapture provisions relating to petty misdemeanor fine collections clarified.

HF1527—Marquart (DFL)**Taxes**

Joint public truth in taxation advertisements and hearings allowed.

HF1528—Gazelka (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Claims practices regulated.

HF1529—Severson (R)**Transportation**

Air bag repair or replacement cost and related repair costs excluded from motor vehicle damage calculations for salvage title and consumer disclosure purposes.

HF1530—Simpson (R)**Regulated Industries**

Energy assistance program statutory authority clarified, obsolete energy assistance programs repealed and obsolete oil overcharge language removed.

HF1531—Paymar (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Minnesota State Capitol, Minnesota History Center and Science Museum of Minnesota prohibited from charging entrance fees for certain elementary school class visits.

HF1532—Zellers (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Department of Commerce licensee requirements modified.

HF1533—Lesch (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Overtime work payment regulated.

HF1534—Hackbarth (R)**Transportation**

Roadside wildlife habitat enhancement provided.

HF1535—Hoppe (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Hunting stands and blinds on public lands regulated.

HF1536—Gazelka (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Marriage and marriage dissolution fees adjusted to fund employment opportunities and money appropriated.

HF1537—Nelson, P. (R)**Transportation**

Terminal and facility access by certain vehicles weighing up to 40 tons required; training and certification for peace officers that engage in vehicle weight enforcement required.

HF1538—Blaine (R)**Regulated Industries**

New municipal liquor stores prohibited.

HF1539—Paymar (DFL)**Transportation**

Residential roadway definition modified and speed limit establishment on residential roadways authorized.

HF1540—Nornes (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Otter Tail County nursing facility reimbursement rate increased.

HF1541—Clark (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State Office Building renamed the Paul Wellstone State Office Building.

HF1542—Clark (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

MFIP overview of employment and training services modified.

HF1543—Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Lynx, bobcat and fox snare hunting permit requirement eliminated.

HF1544—Klinzing (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Charter school student participation in resident school district extracurricular activities authorized.

HF1545—Erhardt (R)**Transportation Finance**

Transportation; county state-aid highway formula calculation modified, county wheelage tax authorized, vehicle registration taxes modified, fuel taxes increased, highway bonds and metro sales tax authorized and money appropriated.

HF1546—Sykora (R)**Regulated Industries**

Off-sale liquor license issuance required to qualify applicants in cities operating municipal liquor stores.

HF1547—Hackbarth (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Off-highway vehicles regulated, rulemaking required, certain state trail and forest classifications provisions modified, study required, civil penalties provided and money appropriated.

HF1548—Kohls (R)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

University of Minnesota; biotechnology and medical genomics research funding provided and money appropriated.

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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MINNESOTA INDEX

Child support

In state fiscal year 2004 (ending June 30, 2004) millions in child support dollars	
collected and disbursed to people or agencies	\$589.7
Millions in fiscal year 2003	\$571.6
Millions in fiscal year 1999	\$442.7
Millions spent to provide child support services in fiscal year 2004	\$144.4
Dollars collected in fiscal year 2004 for every dollar spent	\$4.08
In 2003	\$4.03
In 1999	\$4
Percent of child support enforcement funded by the federal government	76
Percent funded by states and counties, each	12
Billions in child support collected nationwide in federal fiscal year	
2003 (ending Sept. 30, 2003)	\$21.2
Billions spent to fund child support services	\$5.2
Number of cases in the state child support program as of June 30, 2004	247,500
Average collection per open case with a court order	\$2,945
Estimated number of children with a state child support case that were	
born outside of marriage	151,000
Percent that had paternity established, as of September 2004	98
Percent of state collections in fiscal year 2004 that came from income withholding	72
Percent from federal tax intercept	4
Percent from unemployment insurance	3
Billions in total child support debt in Minnesota as of June 30, 2004	\$1.46
Percent of debt that is child support	91
Percent that is medical care	4
Percent each for child-care and judgment for pregnancy and birth	2
Child support debt that is more than one year old, as percent	82
Four months to one year	11
Average debt owed in cases with child support debt	\$7,692
Percent of child support cases with debt	78
Approximate number of parents, as of June 30, 2004, that had their driver's	
license suspended for failing to pay child support	29,000
Millions in payments collected and processed each month by the state's	
centralized collection and disbursement office	\$50
Average number of calls received each month by state automated phone lines that	
provide parents with case information	161,000

Sources: Department of Human Services, including 2004 Minnesota Child Support Performance Report by the Child Support Enforcement Division; Child Support Laws in Minnesota, House Research Department.

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