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SESSION Weekly

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INSIDE: BOXING BACK IN THE RING, CONNECTING THE METRO, WHEN MEDICAL DEVICES FAIL, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF3918-HF4067

SESSION Weekly

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On the cover: The spiral staircase in the State Office Building is a busy place March 28 with members of several groups spending the day meeting with House members to express their concerns on various issues.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Recognizing the impact of the rising cost of health care for employers, the state and patients like Joanna Craighead, the House created a special division to look for alternatives to the current health care system.

Containing health care costs

Even though there's disagreement, crafting legislation seen as a labor of love

By **BAO ONG**

At first glance, the goal seems simple: increase the quality and access of health care while cutting costs for consumers. The reality surrounding the issue: political division among Republicans and DFLers on the best solution, bills pitting the private and public sectors against each other, and citizens demanding legislators not forget their needs.

The House recognized the contentious and challenging issue of health care cost last year and created the [Health Care Cost Containment Division](#) of the House Health Policy and Finance Committee.

Since last year, the division has been focusing on finding better alternatives to the current health care system. [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka), chair of the division, is one of those leading the way. A practicing

chiropractor, Abeler said, "We're here. How do we make it better — not worse?"

Both parties and Gov. Tim Pawlenty are anticipating a \$176 million surplus in the Health Care Access Fund, which is expected to grow in the next three years.

Abeler appears to be full of ideas on how to spend that money on the ongoing health care debate. He has proposed a handful of bills aimed at reforms in the private sector giving consumers more choices, whereas DFLers have called for more state action.

However, Abeler's division has a big challenge on its hands: the Health Care Cost and Containment Division is not authorized to spend money. Abeler said crafting legislation is a creative process; it is a labor of love.

"You'll never get support from everybody," said Abeler. "It's about how do we compromise. Things can only change with input from

both sides."

Abeler said he has seen health care problems increase in Minnesota firsthand because of his background in the health care field. Between 2001 and 2004, the group coverage market has gone down 8 percent and there has been a 30 percent increase in the number uninsured people, he noted.

The most comprehensive of Abeler's bills is [HF1862](#).

It contains a variety of provisions dealing with the efficiency and cost of health care. Some of those reforms include: evidence-based practice standards and guidelines; electronic billing assistance; requiring medical clinics to develop free patient brochures on prescription programs offered by pharmaceutical manufacturers; and a state Web site providing health care cost and quality information for consumers. Other

First Reading continued on page 4

parts of the bill bring changes to charity care by health care providers, the Public Employees Insurance Program (PEIP), private sector health coverage provisions and service cooperatives.

Although there have been questions about cost with some parts of the bill, members from both parties have supported measures promoting more transparency and consumer access.

PEIP and evidence-based practice guidelines are some of the most dividing issues in Abeler's bill.

Nancy Hokkanen testified at the House Health Policy and Finance Committee on March 21 against evidence-based practice. "For families like mine, evidence-based medicine restricts access to proper medical treatment and promotes unhealthy alternatives," she said.

[Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie) said many schools in her district cannot afford to offer health insurance. She is concerned about the PEIP and service cooperative guidelines and their consequences on affordable health care.

In constructing the bill, Abeler said he has made it a point to accept suggestions from all sides — legislators from both parties, citizens, state departments and lobbyists.

The details

Consider HF1862 the "parent bill" coming out of the division. House Files [2831](#), [2832](#) and [2438](#) all carry parts that comprise HF1862. But because of the short session, HF1862 was divided into separate bills so that each could go to their prospective committees instead of having one bill move around from committee to committee. Abeler said he will amend HF1862 according to changes made in the three smaller bills.

The following is an overview of HF1862, which awaits action by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee.

The first section addresses evidence-based practice standards and guidelines. Health-related boards and provider organizations would be permitted to establish practice standards for treating patients within their scopes of practice; however, a health insurance provider would not be required to cover treatments, testing or imaging based on standards developed by the boards or provider organizations. This section would also require the human services commissioner to encourage and assist providers to adopt and use electronic billing for state programs from existing resources. The commissioner would also be permitted to post health information on the agency Web site.

- Last session the division approved an amendment for charity care by health care providers. The current bill would eliminate a discount payment provision enacted in 2005.

- The [Department of Employee Relations](#) runs the Public Employees Insurance Program (PEIP),

which is used by local government employees and employers who choose to enroll in it. The requirement to offer life insurance was eliminated and the Minnesota Employees Insurance Program was originally in the bill and left out when the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee voted it down.

- Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) would be permitted to impose higher deductibles. Current laws allow yearly deductibles of up to \$2,250 per person and \$4,500 per family. That rate changes to \$5,000 and \$10,000, respectively. The annual out-of-pocket maximums of \$5,000 per person and \$10,000 for each family would also be implemented. There would also be a lifetime maximum benefit of \$3 million. HMOs are not allowed to cap lifetime benefits in the present system.

- Service cooperatives would be permitted to create and operate a health reinsurance and stop-loss pool. Smaller districts will sometimes join each other to form a service cooperative when other health care options are too expensive.

- The last article in the bill is geared toward malpractice cases. It would prohibit the use of an apology made by a health care provider as evidence in any civil action or related arbitration proceeding.

A companion bill ([SF1640](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Sheila Kiscaden](#) (DFL-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

SOMBER RALLY



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Cara Ruwersma and Nadine Sanders of St. Cloud attend the 2006 Violence Against Women Action Day Rally March 29 in the Capitol Rotunda. The event was sponsored by the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. Ruwersma and Sanders both live at Anne Marie's Alliance in St. Cloud, a private non-profit corporation dedicated to providing safe shelter, support and referral services for battered women and their children.

★ **AGRICULTURE**

Food law provisions

A bill that makes several technical changes to the Department of Agriculture's regulations regarding commercial feeds was passed 132-0 by the House March 27.

[HF3670](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rod Hamilton](#) (R-Mountain Lake), changes specific terms in the current commercial feed law, including defining "brand name," replacing "registrant" with "license holder" and adds "specialty pet foods" to the department's rulemaking purview.

The bill also requires that if a commercial feed is determined to be adulterated or misbranded, the person whose name appears on the label must provide a manufacturer's investigation report to the commissioner within 30 days.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton) is the sponsor.

★ **BONDING**

Testimony accepted here

A week after the nearly \$990 million Senate capital investment bill ([SF3475](#)) was unveiled, the House Capital Investment Committee took testimony on the plan March 28.

"I thought we ought to have a little public testimony and find out the good, bad and ugly before we put our bill together and see if we can come up with something that will give us an improved package for the state of Minnesota," said Committee Chair [Rep. Dan Dorman](#) (R-Albert Lea). He expects a House bill to be unveiled next week, and on the House floor by Easter.

Dorman explained it was important to have a target number before finalizing the bill, and that he and [House Speaker Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) met with [Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), the Senate Capital Investment Committee chair.

"At that time Sen. Langseth explained to me that we needed a lot of process — and in the Senate they had a lot of process — to put the bill together and see how it all works with committee hearings and whatnot. I thought that sounded good. But I said that I really think we ought to have a target. As we went forward, my understanding is the speaker tried to meet with them last week, but so far calls have went unreturned," Dorman said.

The Senate vote came less than two weeks after its capital investment committee had its first meeting.

"I think they started that meeting at about 6:10 and at about 6:14 they banged it through the committee," Dorman said. "For some reason we couldn't have a budget target because we had to have that process."

House testifiers came from Albert Lea to International Falls and addressed issues from agriculture to education to parks to zoos.

One of the more high-profile, and expensive, issues is a new Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center.

Duluth Mayor Herb Bergson noted that the \$33.7 million request would cover one-half of the costs. Thirty percent would come from an increase in the city's food and beverage sales tax that was approved by voters Feb. 28. The center and University of Minnesota would each contribute 10 percent.

The funding is in the governor's recommendations, but the Senate recommended zero. "I was floored," said Bergson, who indicated that Sviggum pledged to him it would be in the House bill.

[Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) voiced support for \$300,000 to renovate and purchase additional testing equipment for the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory in preparation for the potential introduction of avian influenza.

"This is our due diligence to do all we can to be ready for this," he said.

★ **CHILDREN**

Safe place for newborns

According to at least one legislator, efforts to follow surrounding states via a bill expanding the timeframe for hospitals to accept newborns would protect more children.

Currently, unharmed newborns can be left with a hospital employee within three days of birth without question. [HF3597](#), sponsored by [Rep. Judy Soderstrom](#) (R-Mora), would increase the timeframe to seven days.

The bill prohibits a hospital from disclosing the mother's identity, and allows the parent or an "interested person" to call 911 or an emergency medical services provider to take the newborn. It would also prohibit local social service agencies and the Department of Human Services from conducting a search for relatives of the newborn received by a hospital.

The House Jobs and Economic Opportunity

Policy and Finance Committee approved the bill March 28 and referred it to the House Civil Law and Elections Committee. There is no Senate companion.

Spending resolution

Three days after failing to adopt a budget resolution to set the limit on changes in expenditures for the remainder of this biennium, the House approved the measure 69-65 March 30. It was defeated 68-63 March 27.

Before the House Ways and Means Committee gave its approval March 29, [Rep. Jim Knoblach](#) (R-St. Cloud) said, "This resolution is identical to the resolution we had last time except for one thing. We have a cash flow account proposed of \$351 million, instead of \$350 million, and a budget reserve of \$652 million, instead of \$653 million. I want to make sure there's no question about whether or not there's a problem for this being identical to the last resolution. Also, the state budget has grown somewhat since the last time we established a cash flow account, and so having a little more in it to cushion cash flow might also make sense."

The resolution proposes to spend \$88 million in various items that would likely be part of a target resolution the committee is expected to adopt in the near future. "This should be sufficient with the other monies available from other sources to meet the emergency-type needs that we have in the second year of the biennium when we are not normally passing a new budget," Knoblach said.

The \$317 million in the tax relief account is proposed to be transferred to the General Fund so it would be available for tax relief. "That is the amount of money left over as surplus at the end of the last biennium, June 30, 2005," Knoblach said. By law, that money goes into the tax relief account. The money could also be used to offset the loss of if the court rules against the state in the health impact fee case.

Opponents, including [Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), continue to want to know what road the House is heading down and what the budget targets may ultimately look like. Carlson said some members of his caucus have expressed an interest in property tax relief, and approaches to how that might take place.

"We have as pretty good idea where the governor wants to take the state," said [Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls). "We'd like a better sense of what carpet ride we're on over here in the House. ... We're just trying to see if you can lay some cards on the table."

By [House rule](#), "In the even-numbered year, after the budget resolution is adopted by the Committee, the Committee must adopt a resolution setting limits for each budget category represented by the major finance and revenue bills."

"Once we've established this and we know what we're working with then we go forward to set up targets," Knoblach said. "It's the process we're going to use again this year."

Family members wanting to take the child from the hospital would undergo genetic testing to determine if they are actually related, said Soderstrom. Furthermore, she said such a law would help prevent mothers from leaving their newborns to die in dumpsters.

Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester) questioned the ability of mothers of newborns to call 911 and emergency medical services personnel to take away their child. But Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) said oftentimes these mothers are desperate when they call for help.

"We're trying to protect a child that someone doesn't want," said Soderstrom. "We want to give them (mothers) extra time to find safe care."

Safety first

Parents often say child passenger safety is a top concern. A bill proposing child passenger restraint system training requirements attempts to add more assurance.

[HF3368](#), sponsored by [Rep. Brad Finstad](#) (R-New Ulm), changes child passenger systems by adding training requirements for child care providers.

The bill would require the programs licensed by the [Department of Human Services](#) serving children less than 9 years old to complete child passenger restraint training, which targets school age children.

It also adds an exemption program for individuals using only buses or school buses to transport children. The House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee approved the bill and referred it to the House floor.

But [Rep. Tim Wilkin](#) (R-Eagan) had concerns about discriminating against certain providers. He questioned the bill using the term "child care center" instead of a more general "child care providers." His amendment to include individual child care providers was approved.

[Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood) also had questions about how the bill would deal with buses carrying children of various ages. Chad Dunkley, Minnesota Child Care Association president, said buses already have seat belts that meet safety standards.

A companion bill ([SF3087](#)), sponsored by [Sen. John Hottinger](#) (DFL-St. Peter), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

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★ CRIME

Driving under a controlled substance

The definition of a DUI may be broadened in two ways.

Sponsored by [Rep. Doug Meslow](#) (R-White Bear Lake), [HF3647](#) was held over March 23 by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Meslow said that the law is straightforward regarding driving under the influence of alcohol, but it is ambiguous as it relates to the crime of driving under the influence of a controlled substance.

The law only applies if someone is under the influence of something on a specific list of controlled substances, and that list has proven to be incomplete, Meslow said.

"The group of controlled substances that can affect the ability of someone to drive a motor vehicle is expanding faster than we can keep up in statutes. And existing statute does not refer to metabolites of those controlled substances, so it may be they are still under the influence of that controlled substance but that metabolite is not contained within our statute," Meslow said.

The bill would broaden the prohibition against driving while impaired by controlled substances to include metabolites, and create a new gross misdemeanor offense for driving under the influence of a drug provided that person has had an impaired driving incident in the previous decade.

"The (attorney general) tells us that they have to rescind revocations when they show up in court and they have proof that a person used cocaine, but all they have for proof from the blood test is the metabolite, or the normal bodily chemicals produced when a body processes the cocaine," said Steve Simon, director of the Minnesota Criminal Justice System DWI Task Force, which recommended the bill. He said that each drug has a fairly unique signature because each drug has a different chemical structure.

A companion bill ([SF3517](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Leo Foley](#) (DFL-Coon Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Offering emotional support

Susie Maher's son, Joshua, was murdered in St. Paul eight years ago.

"When I got that death notification my life turned upside-down and inside-out," she told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 28. "I had no idea how to help myself face what I was facing, much less



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Susie Maher, whose son was murdered eight years ago, testifies before the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 28 in support of a bill that would provide \$150,000 for Victim Intervention Program, Inc.

my surviving son."

Housed in the homicide units of the Minneapolis and St. Paul police departments, Victim Intervention Program, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that offers counseling and support to help where it can.

"Without VIPI, I can only imagine the anger, bitterness, revenge and heartache we might still be suffering today," Maher said. "The program showed me the way to help myself and my family, my extended family and my son's friends, all kinds of ripples in the pool that were hugely important to healing and coming to some way of accepting where our life went."

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown), [HF3869](#) would appropriate \$150,000 to the program in the current biennium for expansion across the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

The program has two paid positions, with the rest of its efforts coming from volunteers, many of whom also abruptly lost a loved one. More than 95 percent of incoming funds go towards client care and programs.

"This organization serves in a spectacular way and the demand is huge," said Tim Lynch, homicide commander of the St. Paul Police

Department. The program also serves as a liaison between the authorities and families keeping them up-to-date on an investigation, rather than having the family continually calling investigators.

“Who’s going to be there for you,” Maher asked. “I hope they’re the same people that were there for me, that offered me hope and gave me the vision and the tools to take myself from that painful place to living in honor of my loved one.”

A companion bill ([SF3498](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Jane Ranum](#) (DFL-Mpls), was laid over by the Public Safety Budget Division of the Senate Finance Committee for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

★ EDUCATION

Language Chinese

Minnesota students may have a greater opportunity to learn the language and culture of China.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie), [HF3910](#) would make Mandarin, the primary language of the Chinese, more available to state classrooms, Mary Ann Nelson, assistant commissioner of Academic Excellence for the Department of Education told the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 24. Approved by the committee, the bill, which has no Senate companion, now goes to the House Education Finance Committee.

There are now about 16 teachers across the state teaching Mandarin. The bill would appropriate \$250,000 in fiscal year 2007 to begin a statewide effort to develop and expand Chinese language instruction.

“This is a wonderful bill. China is a rising power,” [Rep. Lynn Wardlow](#) (R-Eagan) said. He told the committee about the opportunities that are open to his son, an attorney fluent in Mandarin.

[Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) favors the bill, but is concerned about the partisan process that brought the bill to the committee. She said that last year the world language teachers spearheaded a bipartisan effort to raise the awareness to the growing importance of world language curriculum, but a resulting bill was not acted upon.

The world language teachers are “bitterly disappointed,” she said, that the state is making the decision to provide the opportunity only for the Chinese language.

She said that some see the importance of local control in deciding which languages should be offered in a district. “Whether it is a good idea for the state to provide leadership

(offering) the Chinese language, or whether it would be better to have the leadership in all world languages, and let local communities decide, I think that is one issue the committee could wrestle with.”

Longer school year

Minnesota students almost had their summer vacations cut short, but a bill supporting a longer school year stalled in the House Education Finance Committee March 23.

[HF3528](#) would add seven days to the current 170-day school year; teachers would be given three or four more days for training and there would be a shorter break in the

summer with somewhat longer breaks during the school year. [Rep. Randy Demmer](#) (R-Hayfield), the bill’s sponsor, said this would help move Minnesota to a world-class system for students. After a lengthy discussion, the measure was tabled.

Ted Blaesing, superintendent of White Bear Lake Area Schools and president of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, said adding school days to the calendar would help level the playing field for Minnesota students with their world counterparts who are in school longer each year.

[Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) noted there would be a tremendous cost to increasing the school calendar. She wanted to know if that would be the responsibility of the local districts or if the state would bear the burden.

Demmer said there is no expenditure proposed at this time. “If we start looking at the money, we get the cart before the horse. We need to be talking about what the vision should be for education ... and then we’ll find the way and make that investment.”

[Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) wanted to know what would be done with the extra time allotted. “I see more days, I don’t see what we are going to do with the days.” He said students get many days off during the school year, and if more days are the issue, then maybe that is where days could be added.

[Rep. John Dorn](#) (DFL-Mankato) would welcome a discussion on how to use the currently allotted days more effectively. “I don’t know how many school days are lost to vacations and workshops.”

A companion bill ([SF3203](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Geoff Michel](#) (R-Edina), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

School choice

A bill that would give some public school students the option to attend private schools was defeated 15-13 by the House Education Policy and Reform Committee March 23.

“Since 1925, the law of the U.S. has been that people have the freedom to choose their schools — wait a minute, people of means have the freedom to choose their schools,” said [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan), sponsor of [HF3504](#).

In an effort to put an end to what he sees as a two-class education system, he said the General Education Access Grant bill, commonly known as the voucher proposal, would offer the “poorest of the poor” the same opportunity as more affluent people to choose the schools which they would like to attend.

The bill calls for access grants covering



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Ted Blaesing, superintendent of White Bear Lake Area Schools and president of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, discusses a proposal to extend the school year during a hearing of the House Education Finance Committee March 23.

tuition and fees to be made available to eligible students in the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts.

Dr. William Green, interim superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools, said that Minneapolis students already have several educational choice options, including magnet schools and open enrollment.

“Public school choice means parents and students choose schools. Private schools choose rich students they enroll,” he said, adding that this bill would provide a tax subsidy to the private schools to do what they already do, select which students they serve.

Louis King, a Woodbury resident, said the current system is not working for inner-city children. He told the committee that, as an ROTC recruiter and instructor, he notices a different Minnesota. “This issue is about a people willing to use any means necessary to ensure that their children have access to quality education. ... You could go into a kindergarten class filled with African-American children and tell half of them to proceed to the first grade. The other half, we’d say, not so fast — go straight to jail or the welfare lines.”

[Rep. John Dorn](#) (DFL-Mankato) is concerned about the financial implications with the possibility of up to 50,000 students being eligible to participate in a voucher program. “I do believe the bill is not ready for prime time.”

[Sen. David Hann](#) (R-Eden Prairie) sponsors a companion bill ([SF2962](#)), which awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Alternative teacher training

A bill that would have created an alternative teacher training program was rejected 70-62 March 27 by the full House.

Sponsored by [Rep. Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton), [HF2680](#) would provide an alternative path to teacher licensure for qualified professionals wanting to leave their careers and become K-12 teachers in areas experiencing teacher shortages: math, science, world languages, English as a second language and special education.

During the one-year program, an applicant would need to complete a pre-introduction program; 200 hours of specified instruction leading to a license and up to 15 graduate credits towards a master’s degree; on-the-job mentoring arranged by an employing district; and a one-week workshop that includes analysis and reflection on the first year of teaching.

If the evaluation team gives its approval and the teacher passes a subject assessment test for each area to be taught, the candidate would receive a standard entrance license from the

Board of Teaching.

Opponents said the bill would, in part, undercut the current teacher training system at colleges and universities and potentially risk Minnesota’s status as having quality teachers. They also said other alternative pathways now exist, such as summer sessions, on-site training and online training.

“This will lower quality and hurt student learning because it may put less qualified teachers into the classroom,” said [Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope). “I’m concerned that it takes the actual recommending to the Board of Teaching out of the higher ed institutions and places it in the hands of local school districts. ... This creates a two-track system. I want to be sure that the four-year institutions are the ones making that final determination and the final recommendation to the Board of Teaching for who gets licensed.”

“The board already issues hundreds and hundreds of waivers in this state a year to allow folks who have less science and math experience to teach because we have a shortage of teachers,” said Rep. Karen Klinzing (R-Woodbury).

A companion bill ([SF2764](#)), sponsored by [Sen. David Hann](#) (R-Eden Prairie), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

ELECTIONS



Polling place buffer zones

A bill that would clarify the buffer zone around polling places was approved by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 27 and now moves to the House floor.

[HF1596](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano), is primarily directed at protesters and solicitors. Under current statute, they are not allowed within 100 feet from the entrance of the polling place. The bill would extend that distance to within 100 feet of the “property line of any private or public parcel of property on which a building containing a polling place is located.”

A companion bill ([SF1317](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Pat Pariseau](#) (R-Farmington), failed March 22 in the Senate Elections Committee.

“This isn’t far enough, as far as I’m concerned,” [Rep. Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood) said. After witnessing intimidation in the last election, he said, “It made a very stark impression on me that we needed to do something stronger than what I see here.”

[Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finalyson) said that it would be difficult for people to determine the location of a property line. Emmer said he

found that problematic as well, and would be willing to work on the language.

Helping disabled voters

Townships would no longer have to provide special voting equipment for disabled voters, under a bill heard by a House committee March 28.

[HF2608](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport), would alter a state law that extends certain provisions of the federal [Help America Vote Act](#) to local elections. Specifically, a requirement that local governments provide blind and visually impaired voters with special voting machines that allow them to vote without human assistance would no longer apply to township elections.

Heidgerken told members of the House State Government Finance Committee that some township governments have had to spend as much as 10 percent of their tax revenue on the machines, which are needed by only a handful of residents.

Kent Sulem, attorney for the Minnesota Association of Townships, said the estimated costs associated with the machines were often in the thousands of dollars. He added that in some cases, no one is even asking for the machines.

Judy Sanders, testifying on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota, said blind voters want to have the same privacy afforded to non-disabled voters.

“We have always appreciated the help we’ve received at the voting booth, but that was in the day when there was no other alternative.”

Sanders suggested postponing any legislation until after this year’s fall elections to see how bad the problem actually is.

Committee Chair [Rep. Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) encouraged both sides to work out an agreement on their own, but added that he sympathizes with the townships’ position.

“We’ve got to follow the common sense test, folks. And it’s tough to justify this for every single precinct and every single situation,” Seifert said.

The committee tabled the bill because it first must be acted on by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee.

A companion bill ([SF2591](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), awaits action by the Senate Elections Committee.

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

Uniform dates for elections

Last year, elections in Minnesota were held on 102 different days. Sponsored by [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan), [HF587](#) would specify that elections could only be held on five specific days throughout the year.

Buesgens told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 27 that the number of local elections held on various days is confusing to voters. "We are all for maximizing voter turnout, and the way to do that is by setting specific dates in the year."

Approved by the committee and sent to the House floor, the bill would require that elections be held on the fourth Tuesday in January, the second Tuesday in March, the third Tuesday in May, the first Tuesday after the second Monday in September and the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. It also calls for uniformity in the time of day that polls can be open.

Opponents said that voters are aware when there is an election on an issue relating specifically to their local jurisdiction.

Ann Higgins, intergovernmental relations representative with the League of Minnesota Cities, said that many cities have provisions in place where issues can be brought before the local voter. She explained there are regulations specifying how long after a local unit of government calls for an election that it must be held. "The bill would delay that process by making it subject to the requirements of this law to have those elections on other dates."

A companion bill ([SF827](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Pat Pariseau](#) (R-Farmington), was tabled March 22 by the Senate Elections Committee.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Air quality test

The city of Avon may not get \$6,000 to conduct an air quality study, despite the efforts of [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph).

"We don't have any dollars," said [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount), chair of the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

The committee held [HF2886](#) over March 29 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill ([SF2526](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Michelle Fischbach](#) (R-Paynesville), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

But Avon will get something: ambient monitoring in the elementary school and the assurance and peace of mind that may bring to the parents of the school children.

Mike Sandusky, director of the Environmental Analysis and Outcomes

Division of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, said that, as part of an emissions impact study being conducted by the agency and paid for by a wood finishing business in Avon, the school's air will be monitored and analyzed.

Sandusky said he would direct that the monitoring take place despite the usual agency modeling procedures, which would accurately determine the air quality impact of the business's emissions on the school and on all public facilities in Avon.

Following the meeting, Sandusky explained that modeling is a process of analyzing a business's emissions to ascertain if hazardous levels of toxic compounds are present.

The process is more cost and time efficient than the alternative of citywide ambient monitoring and is "very accurate," Sandusky said, although the accuracy decreases in direct proportion to the distance from the emissions site. He added that the half-mile from the Avon business to the school would not affect the modeling accuracy.

Regarding his decision to honor the request from Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) to monitor the air in the Avon school and provide a report to the city, Sandusky said there is a "general public misperception" about asthma.

Documentation exists, he said, that of the many variables that may be contributing to the growing incidence of asthma nationwide, lifestyle — particularly exposure to cigarette smoke — is the largest contributor.

Mercury reduction

The day may come when people who catch fish in Minnesota's lakes and streams won't fear that eating their catch will subject them to mercury poisoning. Yet, fillet aficionados of all ages would be advised to review the Health Department's [Web site](#) regarding safe levels of fish consumption.

[HF3712](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) and approved March 23 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, is also known as the Mercury Emissions Reduction Act of 2006. Its goal is to reduce, by 90 percent, the amount of mercury released over the Land of 10,000 Lakes by the end of 2015. The bill now awaits action by the House Regulated Industries Committee.

Classified as a heavy metal, mercury is a neurotoxin, which means it adversely affects the nervous system. The more mercury, the greater the risk, and the greatest risk is to fetuses and young children because their nervous systems are still developing. It is the major pollutant in two-thirds of Minnesota's impaired waters.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Joseph Carruth, director of environmental affairs for Mercury Waste Solutions, Inc., demonstrates the use of a waste fluorescent bulb container during his March 23 testimony before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. He spoke in support of a bill that would require disclosure regarding disposal of lamps containing mercury.

While 90 percent of the state's mercury pollution comes from out-of-state sources, the bill, as amended, would require the six largest coal-fired generating plants in the state to reduce emissions according to procedures approved by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

David Thornton, agency commissioner, said that requiring reductions from the generating plants, which are owned by Xcel Energy or Minnesota Power, would reduce the greatest amount of mercury for the cost.

A companion bill ([SF3398](#)), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

Timber permit extensions

Many Minnesotans enjoy mild winters, especially mild winters with lots of snow.

But for those who contract to harvest the timber from state forests, mild and snow-filled winters may mean fewer work days, since deep snow can prohibit access to harvesting equipment. In addition, the ground must be adequately frozen to minimize equipment

damage to the forest environment. Thus, it may take an extra winter or more beyond the terms of the original contract for the timber to be harvested.

[HF3039](#), sponsored by [Rep. Greg Blaine](#) (R-Little Falls) and passed 132-0 on the House floor March 27, would permit the [Department of Natural Resources](#) to extend contracts when inclement weather disallows the timber to be harvested during the contracted time.

Passed 59-0 by the Senate March 30, the bill now goes to the governor.

FAMILY

Prevention measures

A group looking to help end domestic violence might get two more years to finish its work.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Smith](#) (R-Mound), [HF3197](#) would extend the duration of a 34-member [domestic fatality review team pilot project](#) in the 4th Judicial District until Dec. 31, 2008.

The project is a collaboration of public, private and nonprofit organizations operating in Hennepin County. It is set to expire at the end of this year, with a report due to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2007. The bill would also extend the report due date by two years.

The bill was held over March 23 by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

“The purpose of the domestic fatality review team is to examine deaths resulting from domestic violence in order to identify the circumstances that led to those homicides,” said Project Director Tim Reardon. “Our goal is to improve identification, intervention and prevention efforts in similar cases.”

“Since our team began in 2000, we have implemented well over 24 substantive programmatic changes that have resulted in better support for victims of domestic violence, and increased the penalties for those who perpetrate that kind of violence,” he said.

According to a [Hennepin County resolution](#) that provided for \$30,000 in 2005 to help cover operational expenses, more than \$120,000 of in-kind services were donated to the team in 2004, including 2,736 hours contributed by professionals and more than \$6,500 of in-kind support in office supplies, meeting space and mailing expenses were offered. The team also solicits funding from other sources.

A companion bill ([SF2818](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Wes Skoglund](#) (DFL-Mpls), was passed 62-0 by the Senate March 29.

GOVERNMENT

Back in the ring

A House committee approved a bill to re-establish a state boxing commission.

[HF3484](#), sponsored by [Rep. Andy Westerberg](#) (R-Blaine), would create a five-member Minnesota Boxing Commission similar to the one the state abolished five years ago.

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee approved the bill March 24. It now goes to the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee.

Anoka County Commissioner Scott LeDoux, a former professional boxer, said having a governmental body charged with regulating boxing contests would not only increase safety but also help re-establish the sport in Minnesota.

“There’s no boxing allowed in the state of Minnesota, and what that means to fighters is that they don’t get a chance to fight at home, they don’t get a chance to fight in front of their fans, and they don’t get a chance to fight in front of their family — and I think that’s just wrong,” LeDoux said.

Professional boxer and Minnesota native Anthony Bonsante, a former contestant on NBC’s reality show “The Contender,” spoke to the economic benefits of having professional boxing in the state.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Former professional heavyweight boxer, Scott LeDoux, right, and international boxing referee, Mark Nelson, share a laugh with members of the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee March 24 while LeDoux testifies for the re-establishment of a state boxing commission.

“When you have top promoters that come into the state — top-ranked, main events, Don King — they come into your state and pay huge amounts of money in order to promote their fights in your state,” Bonsante said.

For the most part, committee members from both parties voiced enthusiastic support for the bill.

[Rep. Lloyd Cybart](#) (R-Apple Valley) praised the increase in safety and standards that would result from a boxing commission.

[Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) praised the edifying effects of boxing and wrestling programs on youth, adding that passing the bill would help repair the state’s youth amateur boxing program. “They may start with a fighter, but they end up with a disciplined athlete,” he said.

[Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) successfully amended the bill by changing the term “tough man” to “tough person” in regard to a type of contest that features boxers of any skill level or physical condition fighting one-minute rounds.

A companion bill ([SF3123](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Report faults state council

A [financial audit](#) of the [Council on Black Minnesotans](#) revealed improper expense reimbursements, mishandling of grant funds and a lack of attendance at council meetings, an official told a House committee March 28.

David Polisen, audit manager for the [Office of the Legislative Auditor](#), discussed the findings of a recent report on the council with the House State Government Finance Committee, which took no action.

Among its key findings, the report concluded that the council committed several infractions during fiscal years 2002 to 2005, including:

- unsupported payroll expenditures;
- per diem overpayments totaling \$1,430;
- improperly spent grant funds totaling \$51,000;
- receipts not deposited or unaccounted for in the state’s accounting system; and
- low attendance at meetings.

Polisen said a [2002 audit](#) resulted in similar findings. He added that six of the 12 problems detailed in the 2002 report had not yet been resolved at the time of the new one.

Council member Lucky R. Rosenbloom urged the committee to carefully scrutinize the council’s practices. He added that his own research led him to believe the same types of mismanagement had been going on since 1987.

“There is no excuse, from 1987 to the latest audit, that we keep seeing the same types of mistakes over and over and over again from a state organization,” Rosenbloom said.

Executive Director Lester Collins disputed many of the report’s findings.

He admitted the council suffered from “absenteeism,” but dismissed many of the other accusations as misunderstandings relating to paperwork or circumstances that were beyond the council’s control.

Roger Banks, policy and research analyst for the council, said many of the financial troubles within the organization arise from its small size.

“Smaller agencies do have issues relative to scope and span of control and control mechanisms,” Banks said.

Some committee members weren’t buying it.

Committee Chair [Rep. Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) said he was “bewildered” at the council’s “chronic problems of absenteeism.”

[Rep. Greg Blaine](#) (R-Little Falls) said that if some of the problems outlined in the report had occurred in a private sector business, those responsible would likely be fired.

“I would encourage you to probably step your efforts up, as the leader of your organization, to come to grips with this in probably a short period of time,” Blaine told Collins.

Cutting special session pay

On March 28, members of a House committee debated the merits of forcing legislators to take a pay cut when the Legislature fails to pass a budget and goes into special session.

[HF3187](#), sponsored by [Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers), would apply only in situations such as the one last year, in which the Legislature failed to approve a state budget before the constitutional deadline and a special session was needed. According to the bill, legislators may not receive per diem living expenses during a special session if the session is called because the Legislature failed to pass necessary budget bills during an odd-numbered year or because the Legislature failed to pass an omnibus capital investment bill during an even-numbered year.

Members of the House State Government Finance Committee had reservations about the bill and its potential unintended consequences.

[Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) said the bill had the effect of empowering the governor, who can veto legislation and keep a special session going, while disempowering legislators.

“You better be a little careful of what you ask for, because you might get it. That governor’s office may change, and you may not want that governor to have that additional power over the legislative branch,” he said.

[Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover) worries that pressuring legislators to pass a budget before deadline might force them to compromise their values.

“This pressure to get done on time, with this penalty looming over legislators, may provide an incentive to agree to particular budget bills that fiscally conservative people would not consider to be in the best interests of the state,” he said.

[Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) had a different take on the issue. He said he objected to the popular portrayal of last session as a “failure.”

“I think that’s a very narrow concept of what the job is — to say that it’s better to do something, even if you think it’s the wrong thing, than to say, ‘I refuse to do something that does not represent the best interests of my constituents and does not square with my own personal philosophy or conscience,’” Hilty said.

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

A companion bill ([SF2700](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Mady Reiter](#) (R-Shoreview), awaits action in the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

HEALTH



Prohibiting mercury vaccinations

Immunizations have drastically cut the rate of diseases like measles, mumps and rubella in the United States. But new controversy has sprung up around vaccines because some contain mercury in a form known as thimerosal — which some say causes autism.

[HF1505](#), sponsored by [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague), would prohibit the use of vaccines containing mercury or mercury compounds. Only a vaccine with the least amount of mercury may be administered if a mercury-free vaccine or vaccine containing a trace amount of mercury is not available.

The House Health Policy and Finance Committee did not approve the bill March 24. A companion bill ([SF639](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Becky Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), was tabled March 29 by the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

“My legislation is a reasonable approach to getting mercury out of vaccines as much as possible,” said Brod. “Let’s err on the side

of caution while the scientists continue their important debate.”

But that debate is far from over. While proponents of the bill contend thimerosal poses a health risk to children as evidenced by an increase in autism, opponents say there is no study clearly showing that thimerosal causes autism.

[Rep. Barb Goodwin](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) said the state should move in the direction of the bill. “Why are we protecting that product when there’s risk?”

Kris Ehresmann, Department of Health director of the [immunizations, tuberculosis and international health unit](#), said most vaccines for children are already moving toward eliminating as much mercury as possible. It is flu vaccines — which is even more important during the watch on bird flu — that contain mercury. She added that the July 2007 implementation date was too soon for the state to be ready.

Mary Ho, a public health nurse in Rice County, said the bill “would act as an effective barrier to vaccines.” Physicians and doctors should determine a patient’s treatment, Ho said.

HIGHER EDUCATION



Permission granted

A bill granting permission to construct a new building at Minnesota State University, Mankato was approved 132-0 by the House March 27.

[HF2892](#) allows the university to “raise \$24 million to build a 95,000-square foot building and give that to the state. They will also raise \$8 million to provide facility operations and maintenance endowment,” said [Rep. John Dorn](#) (DFL-Mankato), the bill’s sponsor. Additional monies would be used for faculty costs and scholarships, he said.

The bill specifies non-state monies are to be used to design, construct, furnish and equip an academic building on the campus.

Basically the role of the Legislature is to consent to the agreement to allow \$57 million in private dollars to be used by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system to build the addition for the College of Business, said Dorn.

The college is running out of room for classrooms and space with the growth of programs, University President Richard Davenport told a House committee.

The bill now goes to the Senate where [Sen. John Hottinger](#) (DFL-St. Peter) is the sponsor.

Openness in U of M hiring

Under state law, the process of selecting a president for the University of Minnesota from a slate of finalists is not classified as private, and a bill ([HF3136](#)) sponsored by [Rep. Ron Abrams](#) (R-Minnetonka) would be change that.

Abrams said that while he is “an open meeting sort of guy,” he is convinced that an exception needs to be made in the case of hiring a university president.

Frank Berman, a member of the [Board of Regents](#), told the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 27 that the open meeting law and the data practices act require that the finalist process of choosing a university president be public, including interviews and deliberations.

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

“The open meeting law literally destroys the ability to find the best person for this critical position,” Berman said, adding that in 2003, before President Robert Bruininks was hired, a search firm said that the open process would preclude many qualified people from applying. “Worse than the application process that thoroughly prevents the most qualified applicants from applying, is that the deliberations of the board must be done in public. No one of any stature would subject themselves to such a public spectacle,” Berman said.

[Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover) said that openness allows for the news media and others to be involved in the process, and surfacing information that may not otherwise be made available. “Isn’t there something to be gained by having this process open?” he asked.

Mark Anfinson, attorney for the Minnesota Newspaper Association, said the initial slate of candidates is not public, only the finalists are public. “At that point the balance has historically tipped for some public scrutiny.”

He added that the internal scrutiny cannot always be trusted to flush out the details of a candidate. He referenced the search to fill the superintendent position with the St. Paul School District where pertinent information about a finalist was “completely missed by the search firm,” but found by a newspaper.

“If this bill is adopted, what is to stop every other governmental unit in the state from coming forward and asking for the same thing?” he said.

A companion bill ([SF2678](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Gopher football stadium

Benefits of selling one area available for public recreation could be reaped by another form of public recreation.

Approved as amended March 29 by the House Capital Investment Committee and referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, [HF263](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ron Abrams](#) (R-Minnetonka), would, in the words of its sponsor, “bring football back to the campus of the University of Minnesota.”

The bill calls for the state to pay \$9.4 million annually for 25 years for 2,840 acres of University of Minnesota land near Rosemount, land which Abrams called “some of the most pristine park and natural resources land in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.” Upon conclusion of the payments, the university would sell the land to the [Department of Natural Resources](#) for \$1. The proposal adds \$2 million to the initial state offer of \$7.4 million per year.

“If the university were to continue to manage this parcel, we certainly would preserve the natural habitat, particularly in the environmentally sensitive areas, but probably not an area this large,” said University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks. “This agreement absolutely guarantees an undeveloped natural area for the public in perpetuity.”

The money would be used by the university to help pay down its long-term debt on money borrowed to build a 50,000-seat football

stadium on its Minneapolis campus. The Gophers moved into the Metrodome in 1982 after spending decades playing at Memorial Stadium on campus.

Before any state money goes toward the stadium, the university must prove it has received \$124 million in non-state sources for its share of the project, including student fees. The new agreement calls for the prospective student share, beginning with entering students in 2007, to decrease from \$50 to \$25 per semester.

“I want a stadium, but I don’t want more placed on the backs of students,” said Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul). He unsuccessfully offered an amendment to eliminate any student fee increase for the stadium.

In addition to Bruininks, others speaking in support of the bill were football coach Glen Mason and Athletics Director Joel Maturi. Also present were at least two members of the Board of Regents.

This led [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) to wonder if this is the university’s top priority this year. They and [Rep. Jim Knoblach](#) (R-St. Cloud) were the only no votes.

Abrams said that in his meetings with university personnel, other things rank higher, especially its bonding request and its biomedical initiative.

A companion bill ([SF237](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Geoff Michel](#) (R-Edina), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Seated behind the University of Minnesota’s 1941 national championship football, current football coach Glen Mason, left, reacts when asked by House Capital Investment Committee Chair Dan Dorman when one of his teams will win another championship. Mason fired back, jokingly, “When will you build me a stadium?” Mason and Athletics Director Joel Maturi, right, were among university supporters testifying March 29 before the committee for a new on-campus football stadium.

Drinking, drug use parent notification

As a tool to help colleges deal with underage drinking and illegal drug use, parents could be notified if their student is involved in these behaviors, under [HF3848](#), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth).

Currently, the Minnesota Data Practices Act allows institutions to disclose emergency health and safety information. It is unclear, however, whether the law allows for disclosure of an alcohol- or drug-related incident if it is only a violation of school policy or even state law. Marquart's bill would clear up the ambiguity by linking the state law with the federal law that allows for this type of disclosure.

The bill was approved by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee March 27, and referred to the House Higher Education Finance Committee.

[Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover) said he understood the importance of reporting serious incidents, but wanted to know if parents could also be receiving a letter stating, "Hey, we found a six-pack in Junior's dorm room."

"What I'm hearing from school officials is this is not to catch the person who has the six-pack in their dorm. It is to try to deal with the DUIs and to try to deal with underage drinking when there is a citation ... to just let parents know," Marquart said.

He added that under federal law, if the student is under age 21 and the institution determines the student has committed a disciplinary violation with respect to such use or possession, the incident could be reported.

A companion bill ([SF3589](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

Defining residency

Military personnel and certain family members could have new exemptions to help them qualify for state financial aid programs when a residency issue could be a factor.

[HF2817](#), sponsored by [Rep. Randy Demmer](#) (R-Hayfield), would allow those on active military service in Minnesota, including spouses and dependents; those who have relocated to the state from a declared presidential disaster area; and those defined as refugees under federal law, to qualify for state aid even if they have not lived in the state in the prior 12 months.

The House Higher Education Finance Committee held the bill over March 27 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

Under current law, a student must meet one

of four conditions for residency: to have lived in the state the last 12 months; be a dependent of a Minnesota resident; be a student who graduated from a Minnesota high school; or to have resided in the state for at least a year with a General Education Development certificate.

It is estimated the bill would affect about 50 people initially and about 25 per year thereafter, each at a cost of an average of \$2,000 per year.

Demmer said a military service constituent of his who had recently moved to the state received \$2,500 in financial aid, but was asked to pay it back when it was learned that he did not meet the 12-month residency qualification.

HUMAN SERVICES

Helping the homeless

Gov. Tim Pawlenty recently provided \$10 million in state grants to help end long-term homelessness. A bill in the House requesting less than \$1 million hopes to aid the same cause.

[HF3513](#), sponsored by [Rep. Michael Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), would appropriate \$650,000 toward implementing a statewide Homeless Management Information System and a capacity building grant for the [Minnesota Housing Finance Agency](#).

The system is a computerized database that allows organizations providing services for the homeless a way to collect client information electronically and easily produce required reports. The additional dollars would make the system more comprehensive by incorporating all emergency shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing providers.

The House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

[Rep. Andy Westerberg](#) (R-Blaine) and [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood) wanted to know if the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless had statistics for the system. Numbers are currently tracked by some services utilized by the homeless but an upgraded system would enable better tracking of statistics, said Michael Dahl, executive director of the coalition. "This provides a common reporting tool. Our services will reach a different level."

Michele Merxbauer, a social worker at Three Rivers Community Action, added that an improved system would allow her to better manage case loads and reallocate resources.

A companion bill ([SF3160](#)), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

IMMIGRATION



Immigration bill revised

The bill representing Gov. Tim Pawlenty's policy initiatives on immigration enforcement went through a number of changes before being approved by a House committee March 29.

[HF3308](#), sponsored by [Rep. Steve Smith](#) (R-Mound), was approved as amended by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee. It now goes to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee.

"Tonight's bill is about the failure of our state and our local governments to do what they can to stop this crime wave by foreign-born criminals and other criminals in our midst," Smith said.

According to Smith, approximately 500 felons in the state prison system and 10,000 in the county system are foreign-born. "We don't know if they're illegal," he said, "but I believe we should." He added that their victims might have been saved if law enforcement officers had asked about their immigration status before they committed their crimes.

In order to shore up bipartisan support for the bill, Smith offered to amend it by removing or modifying several of its provisions. Specifically, he offered to:

- remove an article prohibiting "sanctuary laws" by local governments;
- delete language in the bill that would require a "status check" date on state-issued identification cards of immigrants;
- support a proposal to create an immigration task force that would report to the Legislature;
- change the name of the proposed "Minnesota Illegal Immigration Enforcement Unit" to "Special Crimes Unit";
- narrow sanctions on employers who hire illegal immigrants; and
- propose a compromise on the bill's fake ID provisions.

The committee amended the bill as Smith proposed. It has at least two more committee stops before reaching the House floor.

A companion, [SF3117](#), sponsored by [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Health coverage services eliminated

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's report released in December 2005 states that illegal immigrants

cost Minnesota between \$176 million and \$188 million annually. A House bill hopes to stymie those costs — specifically through public assistance health care programs, which cost the state \$17 million in 2005, according to the governor’s report.

[HF2877](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano), would eliminate the State Children’s Health Insurance Program coverage for undocumented mothers.

Currently undocumented mothers, under the state program, are covered for prenatal care, labor, delivery and 60 days of postpartum services. Emmer said these women will still be eligible for coverage during emergency situations.

“Minnesota has become a magnet for these women,” said Emmer, who added that undocumented mothers flock to the state because of its generous health care policies.

On March 28, the House Health Policy and Finance Committee held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. There is no Senate companion.

[Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie) said that although she is pro-life, she can’t support the bill because “we need to respect the child.” Emmer said there is no impact on the child’s life in the bill. However, Otremba said prenatal care is important to a newborn’s vitality and health.

[Rep. Barb Goodwin](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) agreed with Otremba and said it was ironic that Emmer would support the bill because of his pro-life stance.

Still, proponents of the bill said Minnesotans are picking up the high cost of these undocumented immigrants. [Rep. Duke Powell](#) (R-Burnsville) said he frequently listens to his constituents say undocumented mothers abuse the service.

[Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) said the costs would be higher for the state once a child is born and has complications because it will be considered a Minnesotan and U.S. citizen.

LAW



When Fido gets loose

If Fido is unlicensed, is wearing no identification tags, gets loose and is picked up by animal control, the dog’s description is currently posted around town in at least three locations.

“So presumably three telephone poles have to have signs saying, ‘Found: Dog matching description XYZ,’” [Rep. Doug Meslow](#) (R-White Bear Lake) said. That posting hasn’t been effective in finding owners, and it would

no longer be required under [HF3691](#), which he is sponsoring.

If the owner of a dog can be identified, they would be called. If after five days the owner does not claim the dog, it could be disposed of in a “proper and humane manner,” including adoption.

The bill was approved March 27 by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee and sent to the House floor.

A companion bill ([SF2374](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the full Senate.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Putting flags at half-staff

A bill that would authorize local governments to fly the flag at half-staff in remembrance of prominent local officials was tabled by a House committee March 28.

[HF3990](#), sponsored by [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids), would have allowed counties and municipalities to order the U.S. and Minnesota flags flown at half-staff following the death of “a current or retired municipal official, employee, or public safety officer.”

Severson said he was contacted by a city council member in his district who wanted to know why they couldn’t put the flags at half-staff for a recently deceased city fire chief. Currently, only the president and governor are authorized to order flags to be flown at half-staff.

“Proper etiquette would say that they would have to contact the governor and get his permission in order to fly that flag at half-mast,” Severson said. “This bill takes a little bit of that etiquette, reads into it and says that the local municipality can do it, and it is not a violation of law.”

Although members of the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee generally supported the spirit of the bill, a host of logistical problems arose during the discussion.

[Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) worried that flying the flag at half-staff too often would take away the meaning of the gesture. “Once you’ve put this long list of everybody they can do it for, how do you say ‘no’ to anybody?”

[Rep. Michael Beard](#) (R-Shakopee) said he explored these issues once before, when the first Minnesota soldier killed in Iraq turned out to be from his district.

According to Beard, an individual in the governor’s office is responsible for determining when it is appropriate to lower flags to half-staff. He recommended that Severson and the committee members consult that person before moving forward on any legislation.

After hearing some of the points, Severson said he wanted more time to work on the bill and possibly re-introduce it next year.

A companion bill ([SF3656](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Michelle Fischbach](#) (R-Paynesville), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

Park fees for Minneapolis

Minneapolis would be authorized to impose a park dedication fee of up to \$3,000 on all new housing units within city limits, under a bill sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls).

[HF3095](#) would give the Minneapolis City Council and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board joint powers to impose the fee. The House Local Government Committee approved the bill March 29. It now goes to the House floor.

Hornstein said the fee was necessary to help expand and improve Minneapolis’ parks system at a time when it suffers from funding problems.

“The biggest challenge faced by Minneapolis parks today is reduced funding coupled with the increased use of an aging system,” said Park Board Commissioner Carol Kummer.

Kummer said a number of areas in downtown, Uptown and along the light rail line were in need of new parks that would be partially funded by the fee. She added that other cities are already able to impose a similar fee on housing development subdivisions.

[Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) objected to a provision in the bill that would allow any dedication fee ordinance to exclude senior and affordable housing from having to pay the fee.

“Why are you going to pick winners and losers with your new housing?” Holberg said.

Hornstein answered that he felt some areas in Minneapolis suffered a lack of affordable housing.

“We didn’t want to make a real problem — a real crisis, actually, in certain neighborhoods — even worse by requiring that these affordable units be treated the same as some very upscale housing,” he said.

A companion bill ([SF2660](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the full Senate.

Dressing up strip clubs

Anyone wanting to open an adults-only live entertainment business would have to notify city officials before doing so, under a bill approved March 27 by the House Local Government Committee.

[HF3779](#), sponsored by [Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City), would require those who wish to open a business providing “live performances of sexually oriented entertainment” to give 60 days notice to local officials of the business’ intended start date. The bill now goes to the House floor.

“We’re looking at trying to curtail the establishment of live adult entertainment enterprises, particularly in rural Minnesota,” Urdahl said.

According to Urdahl, owners of such businesses often mislead local governments about the type of business they intend to establish, thereby preventing cities from making “statutory changes” that would prevent such businesses from entering their communities.

As an example, he cited a case in Eden Valley in which city council members say they were led to believe that what is now a “gentleman’s club” was going to be a textile plant.

Although committee members expressed support for the bill, some also expressed concern that the law would be challenged in court on the basis of First Amendment rights.

“You can’t deny, under the federal Constitution, the ability for these facilities to come into a community,” said [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington).

A former Bloomington City Council member, Lenczewski says her city fought the opening of a topless car wash. While the city found it could discourage such businesses through some creative zoning, it could not unilaterally ban all sex-related businesses from opening within city limits.

“I don’t know if you’ll get where you want to go, but I think we should try,” Lenczewski said.

A companion bill ([SF3394](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Dille](#) (R-Dassel), was recommended to pass by the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee March 27.

★ RECREATION

Boathouse replacement

Scenic lake but unsightly boathouse?

There’s good news for public lake enthusiasts bothered by the sight of deteriorating boathouses: owners may be able to restore them to better-than-new condition or completely replace them under guidelines set forth by [HF2994](#), passed 129-3 by the House March 23.

[Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), the bill’s sponsor, said that since the 1979 public

lake moratorium on boathouse construction, owners of boathouses built prior to that year have been allowed to maintain only 50 percent of the structure in any given year.

While the bill does not allow owners to increase the area of their boathouse, they could extend the height by 1 foot to accommodate taller boats. They could also replace the foundational structure as long as they use only materials nontoxic to aquatic life below the high water mark. The bill also allows existing boathouses to be consolidated or moved off the water onto the owner’s property.

Boathouse owners would apply to the [Department of Natural Resources](#) for a permit to renovate, which would also require the approval of the local governmental unit and proof that the boathouse existed prior to 1997.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Thomas Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook) is the sponsor.

Olympics in Minnesota?

Minnesota might be taking the first step toward hosting the Olympics, if a bill sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) becomes law.

[HF3643](#) would create a 17-member task force — including four legislators and 13 members to be appointed by the governor — to investigate whether it is in the state’s best interest to make a bid for the 2020 Summer Olympics.

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee approved the bill March 28 and referred it to the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee.

“This is actually a precursor step to making a bid,” Hortman said. “What most cities do is they put together a committee and they make a bid. This is a task force to say, ‘Hey, is it worth it? Should we spend the time and energy putting together a bid?’”

According to Hortman, Atlanta received \$4 billion of economic activity when it hosted the 1996 games, and Sydney, Australia received \$7 billion in 2000. She said hosting the Olympics would send a message that Minnesota can compete “with any region, anywhere, on any playing field, whether it be economic or athletic,” as well as send a positive message to kids about the importance of physical fitness.

She added that Gov. Tim Pawlenty supports the bill.

[Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), who supports the bill, said that Minnesota would’ve hosted the 1996 games if Atlanta

hadn’t cheated in the bid process.

“We were second, and they were first, and there was the investigation of the scandals of what Olympic committees had done to get the site. Atlanta was one of the places that was cited,” she said.

A companion bill ([SF3562](#)), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

★ SAFETY

Bomb squad reimbursement

Minnesota has four departments that provide bomb squad service to the entire state. However, their current-year funding has been expended.

[HF3572](#), sponsored by [House Minority Leader Matt Entenza](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would provide \$52,000 in fiscal year 2007 to fund bomb squads that provide out-of-area service. Heard March 28 by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee, the bill was held over for possible inclusion in the committee’s omnibus bill.

“We’ve had about a 250 percent increase in the number of calls just over the last two years,” Entenza said.

The Bloomington, Minneapolis and

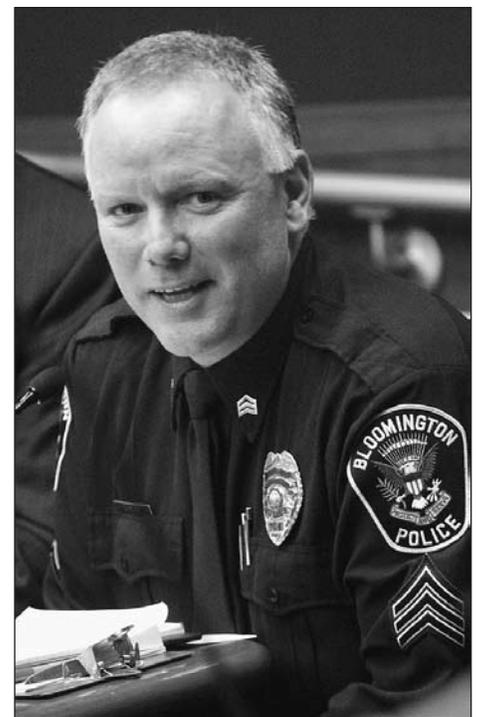


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Bloomington Police Sgt. Marty Earley, the city’s former bomb squad commander, testifies March 28 before the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee in support of a bill that would reimburse local bomb squads for out-of-area service.

St. Paul police departments would each receive \$15,000, and a joint effort between the Brainerd Police Department and Crow Wing County Sheriff's Office would receive \$7,500, based upon the history of responses.

"Each team will go anywhere in the state. All four teams are trained identically," said Sgt. Marty Earley of the Bloomington Police Department, who spent 13 years as commander of the bomb squad.

Starting about 10 years ago, \$50,000 was set aside annually to help reimburse departments that respond to incidents outside city boundaries.

Bloomington Police Chief John Laux says the issue is one of fairness to local taxpayers. "We'll do it, but we should be able to get reimbursed when we go elsewhere."

Before cities received any state reimbursement, Earley said sometimes a city would call for assistance, but when they were told that it would cost \$150 per hour, "they said they'll get back to us."

"A couple hours later we'd make the call back to them and ask what happened. The answers we got were disturbing," he said. The way the cities took care of a potential bomb included dumping it in a river, putting it in a dump, shooting it with a high-powered rifle or having the chief open it up. "Lucky nobody got hurt doing that," Earley said.

A companion bill ([SF3341](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul), was laid over by the Public Safety Budget Division of the Senate Finance Committee March 29 for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

Firefighter headsets allowed

The House passed a bill 133-0 March 23 that would create an exception in current law for firefighters operating emergency vehicles to wear headsets.

"I didn't know that people driving emergency vehicles who are wearing headsets so they can communicate by radio with each other are breaking the law," said [Rep. Fran Bradley](#) (R-Rochester), sponsor of [HF2697](#).

The use of headsets also helps prevent hearing loss and allows others in the emergency vehicle to warn the driver of oncoming traffic, Edina Fire Chief Marty Scheerer told a House committee.

Current law states, "No person, while operating a motor vehicle, shall wear headphones or earphones which are used in both ears simultaneously for purposes of receiving or listening to broadcasts or reproductions from radios, tape decks, or other sound-producing or transmitting devices."

The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. David Senjem](#) (R-Rochester) is the sponsor.

★ TECHNOLOGY

Biotechnology zone creations

A bill that would give the Employment and Economic Development commissioner authority to create one or more biotechnology and health sciences industry zones was approved March 27 by the House Technology, Bioscience and Medical Products Division of the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee and referred to the full committee.

[HF3561](#) is sponsored by [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids). He said the bill is necessary to help attract applied research companies to areas such as St. Cloud, where universities are available to support projects that would take bioscience patents to the production phase.

The deadline for applying for inclusion into the state's current bioscience zone was Oct. 15, 2003. The current zone includes three 500-acre sites (Minneapolis, St. Paul and Rochester) and provides opportunities for possible tax incentives to qualifying businesses within the zone.

Discussion of the bill included questions regarding the effectiveness of the original bioscience zone, the wisdom of adding a zone at some distance to the existing zones, and whether the state's JOBZ program might successfully attract bioscience businesses. According to a Department of Employment and Economic Development [report](#), JOBZ attracted 217 businesses to Greater Minnesota during 2004-2005.

[Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls) suggested the committee consider developing a comprehensive marketing plan for the bioscience zones and JOBZ.

Gene Goddard, bioscience industry specialist for the department, said that while there is currently no funding for the tax incentives, a number of communities have expressed an interest in being included in a designated zone so they can use that status in promoting themselves as possible bioscience industry sites.

A companion bill ([SF3260](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Tarryl Clark](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), awaits action by the full Senate.

★ TRANSPORTATION

Vehicle tax credit

Businesses and individuals could qualify for an income tax credit if they switch to using at least one alternative fuel vehicle, under two bills approved by the House Transportation Finance Committee March 28.

"If we're serious about using these alternative

fuels I think we need to put some incentives in there to get the people to go out there and buy the vehicles that are going to do that," said [Rep. Peter Nelson](#) (R-Lindstrom), who sponsors [HF3562](#) and [HF3563](#). Both bills now go to the House Taxes Committee. [Sen. Sean Nienow](#) (R-Cambridge) sponsors a pair of companion bills, [SF3030](#) and [SF3031](#). They both await action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

[HF3562](#) creates credits for those who conduct a trade or business and includes up to 50 percent credit for the costs of converting a vehicle to an alternative fuel source. The credit can not exceed \$500 for a vehicle weighing less than 10,000 pounds and \$1,000 for a vehicle weighing at least 10,000 pounds. If the credit amount exceeds liability tax limitations, the excess credit can carryover to the next taxable year, under the bill.

[HF3563](#) would create tax credits from federal taxable income. Vehicles that weigh less than 10,000 pounds would qualify for a \$2,000 credit, and those weighing at least that would qualify for a \$5,000 credit.

[Rep. Ron Abrams](#) (R-Minnetonka) said he would be more convinced of the proposals if there were more specific standards, "so that you're not rewarding sport utility vehicles that basically have a dual fuel type."

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, an alternative fuel vehicle is defined as, "one that can run on non-gasoline fuels (such as natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, and methanol) or a mixture containing at least 85 percent non-gasoline fuel."

Electric vehicle usage

Drivers might start seeing electric vehicles on roads with a maximum speed of 35 mph, under a bill approved by the House Transportation Committee March 28.

[HF1838](#), sponsored by [Rep. Greg Blaine](#) (R-Little Falls), would define "neighborhood electric vehicle" and set restrictions and requirements for its operation.

Under the bill, such a vehicle is defined as "electrically powered motor vehicle that has four wheels, and has a speed attainable in one mile of at least 20 miles per hour, but not more than 25 miles per hour on a paved surface."

The cars are restricted from going on roads with speed limits of more than 35 mph, "except to make a direct crossing" of a street or highway with a higher speed limit, under the bill.

"They're just little cars that go on slow streets," said [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), who sponsors a similar bill ([HF2734](#)) that he voluntarily laid over.

The vehicles would be subject to all the same requirements as other cars such as turn signals, license plates, windshields and seat belts, said Juhnke.

The transportation commissioner, a county board a town board, or a governing body of a city could further restrict the electric vehicles.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill ([SF1811](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), was recommended to pass by the Senate Transportation Committee, March 28.

A police officer remembered

A bill that would designate portions of Interstates 35, 35E and 35W as the Shawn Silvera Memorial Highway was approved by the House Transportation Committee March 28.

[HF3805](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ray Vandever](#) (R-Forest Lake), would require the transportation commissioner, in consultation with the Shawn Silvera Foundation, to adopt a suitable marking design and placement of signs to memorialize the Lino Lakes police officer killed in the line of duty.

“The sign has a greater appeal, a message for a greater good. It has a message to treasure the life we’ve been given,” said Jennifer Silvera, the officer’s widow.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation supports designating the highway in memorial to the officer, but the department is concerned about erecting signs along the freeway, said Sue Groth, MnDOT assistant state traffic engineer.

Federal and state standards specifically say memorial signs should not be placed on freeways, but rather at rest areas, scenic overlooks or recreational areas where parking is available. The department is suggesting placing a memorial at the Forest Lake rest area instead, she said.

Vandever said he would work on the placement issue of the memorial as the bill goes to the House Transportation Finance Committee, its next stop.

A Senate companion ([SF3526](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Michele Bachmann](#) (R-Stillwater), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

Trash can advertising

Cities with populations of 50,000 or more may be able to place advertisements on trash and recycling receptacles, under a bill heard by the House Transportation Committee March 29.

[HF3265](#), sponsored by [Rep. Keith Ellison](#)

(DFL-Mpls), would allow for such advertising if authorized by permit, license or franchise.

“There’s trash on the street, there’s already advertising on the street, there’s garbage cans on the street, why not let somebody else pay to keep those garbage cans maintained and clean and help keep the street clean and recycle,” said Ellison.

The bill was sent to the House Local Government Committee without recommendation with the expectation that Ellison would work on some committee members’ concerns.

“It’s one thing on a 30 mph road, but we have requirements about signs, spacing and signage. There are safety issues when you begin to clutter up your roadways with so much information,” said [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville).

Currently, bus shelters and benches are often maintained by private companies who pay for advertising, said Pierre Willette, governmental relations representative for the city of Minneapolis. The city has about 900 containers that they maintain at a cost of \$300,000 a year, he said. The bill would allow the city to save money by allowing advertising.

About 12 cities fall into the category allowed under the bill, said Sue Groth, assistant state traffic engineer from the Department of Transportation. The department would not be in favor of the proposal if containers are on higher speed roads and would cause a safety problem.

“The frequency of these add to the distraction of drivers,” said [Rep. Peter Nelson](#) (R-Lindstrom). He questioned how close the containers could be to bus shelters considering they could attract insects such as bees, thereby causing people to have quick reactions that could possibly put them into oncoming traffic.

A companion bill ([SF3007](#)), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the full Senate.

VETERANS



Time off for troops’ families

Families of military service members would get time off from their jobs to attend send-off and homecoming ceremonies for overseas troop deployments, under a bill sponsored by [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview).

[HF2567](#) would require employers to grant an unpaid leave-of-absence for “the actual time necessary” for an employee to attend a send-off or homecoming ceremony for a member of their family who has been mobilized for an active military deployment.

The bill would cover parents, grandparents, children, siblings, grandchildren, spouses,

legal guardians and fiancés or fiancées. The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee approved it March 28. It now goes to the House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee.

Laurie Olmon, a representative for the National Military Family Association and the spouse of a twice-deployed U.S. National Guard member, said the leaves-of-absence were a “quality-of-life” issue for military service members and their families.

“A deployment is something you can never totally prepare for,” Olmon said, adding that it has been both emotionally and logistically difficult for her to do without her husband for extended periods of time.

Teresa Rongitsch, who has three sons serving in the military, and whose son-in-law, Michael, was killed in Iraq in June 2005, said that after losing a family member, any time she can spend with her sons before they’re deployed is “ever so important to us.”

“In this kind of situation, you get really upset that your employer has a hard time understanding,” she said.

Welti said most employers do a “wonderful job” of allowing employees time with their family members in such situations, but some don’t see time off as critical to the families.

A companion bill ([SF2688](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), has been incorporated in [SF2654](#), also sponsored by Vickerman. It awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

Information, House

175 State Office Building 296-2146

Toll free 1-800-657-3550

TTY, House 296-9896

Toll free 1-800-657-3550

Chief Clerk of the House

211 Capitol 296-2314

Index, House

211 Capitol 296-6646

Sergeant-at-Arms, House

190 State Office Building 296-4860

Committee Hotline, House 296-9283

Information, Senate

231 Capitol 296-0504

Toll free 1-888-234-1112

TTY, Senate 296-0250

Toll free 1-888-234-1112

Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol 296-2344

Voice mail/order bills 296-2343

Index, Senate

110 Capitol 296-5560

Sergeant-at-Arms, Senate

Senate Chamber 296-7514/296-1119

Committee Hotline, Senate 296-8088

A new educational frontier

U of M Rochester campus may get base funding

By **PATTY JANOVEC**

An extension of the University of Minnesota is on the horizon in Rochester.

There's been much talk, and now a bill that would put money into the plan was discussed March 29 by the House Higher Education Finance Committee.

"I care what happens to our state, what happens to the southeast part of Minnesota ... it really is important also to have the signature programs" that are represented in this expansion of the university, said [Rep. Fran Bradley](#) (R-Rochester), the sponsor of [HF3607](#).

"We really believe this will be an attraction for education," he added.

Held over for possible inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill, the bill appropriates \$5 million in fiscal year 2007 to the Board of Regents to establish a branch campus, "to foster the economic goals of the region and state."

Bradley said an additional \$6.3 million would be spent in fiscal year 2009 for funding faculty and staff; program planning and development in the areas of biomedical technologies; engineering and computer technologies; health care administration and allied health programs, as well as operational costs. The appropriations are also in the governor's bonding proposal.

The bill states, "It is the intent of the legislature that this be achieved in part by developing new and strengthening existing partnerships with higher education institutions in Rochester and the region in which the state already has significant investment."

In a January speech, Gov. Tim Pawlenty said his expectations of a branch campus would be "A world-class institution that leverages the University of Minnesota's research capability in partnership with industry leaders in Rochester, including IBM, the Mayo Clinic and others."

With Minnesota's depth of health sciences,

he said the state would be "foolish" if upper division classes and graduate classes in areas of nanotechnology, biosciences and the health sciences were not offered.

A report by the Rochester Higher Education Development Committee states, "Rochester is unable to compete with other states in fully developing a technology-driven economic base, despite having powerhouse institutions like Mayo and IBM, because it does not have the research university driver."

The Rochester Higher Education Development Committee was established by the Legislature in 2005 to recommend a form of higher education that would best meet the unique opportunities in southeast Minnesota, said Marilyn Stewart, the committee chair. Stewart said the bill before the committee "is not about Rochester, it's about Minnesota. It's about investment in Minnesota's economic development in the global economy."

[Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona) said the proposal lacks some answers.

"Considering that this is such an important document, why is it that we had to use tax money for this report? Why couldn't Rochester come up with that sum of money and issue the report?"

Pelowski is also concerned that the proposal would benefit Rochester companies, yet they have little, if anything, invested. "There's no requirement in here that any entity that's going to benefit from all of this is going to contribute any of its resources toward it."

Bradley reiterated the plan is a statewide investment. Many people from those institutions were involved in the committee meetings in Rochester in developing the campus concept, he said.

The programs that would be offered at the campus would not be duplicative of programs already offered at other university campuses, Stewart said. The programs would be highly unique, cutting-edge. "There is no intent to look like the University of Minnesota-Duluth."

Programs that would be offered include:

Bioscience in other states

Examples of bioscience investments in other states, according to the Rochester Higher Education Development Committee:

- California is investing \$100 million in a bioengineering and biotechnology institute, and \$500 million in pension funds toward the California Biotechnology Program.
- Pennsylvania has committed to invest \$2 billion over a 20-year period in the biosciences, including \$100 million for the Life Sciences Greenhouses initiative.
- Michigan, through its Life Sciences Corridor initiative, plans to invest \$1 billion in the biosciences over a 20-year period. However, this investment level may be scaled back due to programmatic modifications and budgetary concerns.
- Georgia has invested more than \$300 million over a 10-year period to build core research facilities and to attract eminent scholars, the majority of whom are in the biosciences. It has also created a \$1 billion Georgia Cancer Coalition.
- Texas appropriated \$800 million for seven new or expanded health science research centers.
- North Carolina has allocated half of the state's tobacco settlement to an endowment that has dispersed many of the funds to applied research projects in the biosciences, including a \$60 million grant for biomanufacturing and pharmaceutical workforce

biomedical informatics, that explores and seeks to understand biological data from complex experiments; computational biology, that involves the implementation of algorithms to understand biological processes; and biomolecular engineering that can involve medical device design, fabrication and testing.

A companion bill ([SF3239](#)), sponsored by [Sen. David Senjem](#) (R-Rochester), was held over by the Senate Education Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.



Light rail and corridors

Bills connect the metro through planned transit

By **PATTY JANOVEC**

Millions of dollars go into planning the state's mass transit system that includes buses, express buses, and light rail. From preliminary designs to final designs to actual construction, the state funds major portions with help from the federal government.

As the 40-mile Northstar Commuter Rail from Big Lake to Minneapolis moves into its final design stage, completion of the project hinges on the state bonding for \$60 million in order to receive a 50 percent match from the federal government. Final design stages include track improvements, stations and maintenance facilities. The project is included in the governor's and the Senate's bonding proposals.

The funding, "is necessary, absolutely necessary, per federal rules and guidelines for New Starts projects to be passed and approved by the state this year," Bob McFarlin, assistant to the transportation commissioner, told the House Transportation Finance Committee March 21.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover), [HF3342](#) would appropriate the \$60 million to construct, furnish and equip the extension of the commuter line as well as fund a small portion of light rail line that would connect the Northstar commuter rail to the Hiawatha light rail line. It awaits action by the committee. The House has yet to complete its bonding recommendations.

A companion bill ([SF2846](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the [Senate Finance Committee](#).

According to a letter from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, three conditions must be met by the Minnesota Department of Transportation before the partnership for Northstar can enter into the final design phases:

- compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements must be demonstrated;
- executed agreements with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company must be provided covering all commuter line right-of-way access issues; and

- an adequate overall New Starts rating must be demonstrated and cost-effective requirements must be met.

New Starts projects require that 50 percent of the non-federal share of project funding be committed before a project can move to a final design phase.

Brian Sweeney, legislative council for Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company, is concerned about meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act federal requirements.

The way the rails now sit would increase commuter and freight traffic congestion, he said. The stations would need to be redesigned because the platform requirements would interfere with high/wide freight-loads, and cars with lower clearance would not clear the platforms.

"While the letter says that they have to meet those requirements, I'm told it is still under active review," Sweeney told the committee.

Also under consideration is [HF3251](#), sponsored by [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul). It would appropriate \$12.5 million to acquire land and structures to revitalize the historic St. Paul Union Depot. Plans call for the facility to be used as a transit hub for the proposed Central Corridor project linking downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul. In future years, it could also be used as a hub for connections coming in from the north and south metro. A federal transportation bill has appropriated \$50 million for the depot project, which it says has national and regional significance.

A companion bill ([SF2812](#)), sponsored by

[Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the [Senate Finance Committee](#).

According to the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, the depot was completed in 1923, and "served passenger and freight railroad activities for the metro area and the state of Minnesota." The structure once functioned as a passenger terminal and concourse.

The Central Corridor Partnership received \$5.25 million in bonding last year for preliminary engineering costs. railroad authority and the partnership are now requesting that \$50 million from the state to secure a federal match by 2007. The governor's recommendations include \$2.5 million. Under the project timeline, the corridor would be completed by 2011, if all funding is secured.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

The historic St. Paul Union Depot could see new life as a transit hub from a \$12.5 million state appropriation.

The Robert Street Corridor Transitway is also under consideration by the committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), [HF2513](#) would appropriate \$2 million for environmental studies, pre-design and design for a possible 14-mile bus and light rail transit line from the Union Depot to Rosemount.

This expenditure would help determine if it is feasible to include the project in the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transit System Plan.

A companion bill ([SF2296](#)), sponsored by [Senate President James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action by the [Senate Finance Committee](#).

When medical devices fail

Medical implants sometimes face recalls, but who should pay?

BY BAO ONG

Legislators agree that implanted medical devices contribute to quality of life for countless numbers of people. They also agree that manufacturers are only human and make mistakes. But when these devices fail — as has been the case for some products from Minnesota-based companies Medtronic and Guidant — who ends up paying for the costs remains a point of contention.

[Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder), sponsor of [HF3422](#), believes manufacturers carry that burden. His bill would “require manufacturers of certain recalled implantable devices to be financially responsible for medical costs associated with removing and replacing the recalled device.”

“You don’t have to convince me these devices are important,” said Cornish. “We’re thinking about when something goes wrong and who pays for it.” Cornish said it should not be the consumer.

The House Health Policy and Finance Committee was divided March 24 on which party should absorb that burden and decided to lay over the bill for more work. A companion bill ([SF3266](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Julie Rosen](#) (R-Fairmont), awaits action by the Senate Health and Family Security Committee.

If the bill passes, manufacturers would pay a patient’s entire medical bill, including the cost of the replacement device; procedures related to removing, replacing and disposing the replacement; any other medical costs associated with the removal and replacement of the device; and up to \$100,000 in health complication costs connected to the recalled device.

Susan M. Peterson only wishes she had that option.

In 1999, Peterson said she had a near death experience in the Rocky Mountains. She was 14,000-feet in the air when her heart became enlarged. She suffered a heart attack and had a surgery resulting in an implanted Medtronic cardioverter and pacemaker.

On Valentine’s Day 2000, Peterson’s husband read in the *Mankato Free Press* that her implanted device was defective. The couple said Medtronic was unresponsive to their questions. Peterson’s physician eventually replaced the device.

But from December 2004 until June 2005, Peterson was being monitored for a possible defect because of a wire in a ventricle of her heart. It was replaced in June 2005 but the defective wire, although turned off, was left inside. She said it is not known how many wires can be left in a human heart and that one out 100 patients die when a wire is removed from the heart.

“We’re thinking about when something goes wrong and who pays for it.”

— Rep. Tony Cornish

by the manufacturer of the numerous recalls and Ford paid for the complete costs involved,” said Peterson. She said companies like Medtronic “create wonderful products to improve and protect the quality of life for many people” but that those manufacturers should have the same responsibility.

Dr. Robert Hauser, a senior consulting cardiologist at the Minneapolis Heart Institute, said current law allows manufacturers a “free ride.” The costs from recalled devices are

placed on patients and the health care system, Hauser said. He added that manufacturers were not being asked to pay for “unreasonable costs” and “those infrequent random failures, which inevitably occur with any medical product.”

For Don Gerhardt, president and chief executive officer of Medical Alley/MNBIO, the bill could create a chilling effect on the industry in Minnesota. Gerhardt said the Food and Drug Administration is already working on regulations at the federal level.

It would also affect smaller companies that could not take the financial losses a bigger company can afford, Gerhardt noted. He said

“When you depend on the device for your life, you depend on the quality.”

— Dr. Robert Hauser, a senior consulting cardiologist at the Minneapolis Heart Institute

that of the more than 35,000 Minnesotans employed by medical technology companies in Minnesota, the majority are small companies attempting to remain competitive

in an increasingly global marketplace.

Susan Alpert, Medtronic senior vice president and chief quality and regulatory officer, said the bill drastically changes the rewards and risks for smaller manufacturers. Alpert also said there is a clear consensus that the benefits far outweigh the risks.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) sides with Alpert. He asked the testifiers where patients would be without such technology. Hauser said, “When you depend on the device for your life, you depend on the quality.” Emmer was also concerned that lawyers might broadly interpret the law for litigation.

Still, it was not a clear-cut position for all committee members. For [Rep. Fran Bradley](#) (R-Rochester), the lack of support from the medical community caused doubts about the bill, he said.

However, [Rep. Barb Goodwin](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) said the problem may be best solved by spending money on effective products and addressing defective devices.



Monday March 27

HF3918-Abeler (R) **Civil Law & Elections**

Medical liability actions regulated and certain health care provider conduct inadmissibility provided.

HF3919-Nornes (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Petroleum tank release cleanup costs provided.

HF3920-Wilkin (R) **Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Mutual insurance holding companies regulated and related laws modified.

HF3921-Erickson (R) **Civil Law & Elections**

Marriage recognized only as legal union between one man and one woman, identical or similar legal status creation and recognition limited and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF3922-Eastlund (R) **Civil Law & Elections**

Marriage between one man and one woman only recognized as a valid domestic legal union and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF3923-Dorman (R) **Agriculture & Rural Development**

Ethanol producer payment open appropriation restored and money appropriated.

HF3924-Nornes (R) **Higher Education Finance**

Higher Education Office programs and appropriations modified and money appropriated.

HF3925-Olson (R) **Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Municipal boundary adjustment provisions modified, task force established and money appropriated.

HF3926-Beard (R) **Regulated Industries**

State conservation objectives provided, investments by utilities regulated, conservation consideration required in regulatory proceedings and rate decoupling study initiated.

HF3927-Smith (R) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Juvenile controlled substance offender driver's license suspension or revocation provided and drug paraphernalia possession crime modified.

HF3928-Smith (R) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Substance abuse treatment recommendations by legislative auditor implemented.

HF3929-Smith (R) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Mental health program report by Department of Corrections to Legislature required.

HF3930-Smith (R) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Juvenile detention and correctional facility umbrella rule compliance exemption provided and umbrella rule amendment required.

HF3931-Smith (R) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Municipal and county court obsolete references and provisions removed.

HF3932-Magnus (R) **Regulated Industries**

Soy-based transformer fluid usage tax refunds for electric utilities provided.

HF3933-Westrom (R) **Health Policy & Finance**

Hospital construction and modification moratorium and public interest review requirements for hospitals eliminated.

HF3934-Ruud (DFL) **Transportation**

Driver education, license examination requirements and driver's manual information modified.

HF3935-Blaine (R) **Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Industrialized-modular building contractors and salespeople licensure required.

HF3936-Simpson (R) **Health Policy & Finance**

Campground backflow prevention established.

HF3937-Demmer (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Animal location through artificial lights and lighting device restrictions modified.

HF3938-Howes (R) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Fireworks sale and use authorized and licenses provided.

HF3939-Johnson, J. (R) **Civil Law & Elections**

State fund usage for abortion services restricted and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF3940-Hoppe (R) **Regulated Industries**

Farm winery production of certain fortified wines authorized.

HF3941-Nelson, M. (DFL) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

911 emergency telecommunications service fee increased, statewide public safety radio communication system completion provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF3942-Urdahl (R) **Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 463, Eden Valley-Watkins, fund transfer authorized.

HF3943-Peterson, S. (DFL) **Education Policy & Reform**

Child-relevant American Sign Language usage for second-language skills pilot program established and money appropriated.

HF3944-Slawik (DFL) **Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Child care assistance parent fees modified.

HF3945-Thissen (DFL) **Regulated Industries**

Renewable energy production incentive receipt eligibility extended.

HF3946-Westrom (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Stevens County; tax-forfeited land private sale authorized.

HF3947-Cornish (R) **Agriculture & Rural Development**

Rural Policy and Development Center biennial legislative report required.

HF3948-Emmer (R) **Civil Law & Elections**

Municipality exemption for county plan submission provided, tribal identification requirements implemented and voter oath established.

HF3949-Thissen (DFL) **Health Policy & Finance**

Medicare Part D individual limited Medical Assistance coverage provided.

HF3950-Lesch (DFL) **Civil Law & Elections**

Structured settlement transfers regulated.

HF3951-DeLaForest (R) **Transportation**

Transportation contracts regulated and indemnification provisions prohibited.

HF3952-Newman (R) **Education Finance**

School district building projects for districts serving fewer than 500 pupils one-year moratorium imposed.

HF3953-Demmer (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Feedlot environmental review exemption modified.

HF3954-Hilstrom (DFL) **Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Security responsibilities for the Capitol Security Division of Public Safety Department clarified.

HF3955-Solberg (DFL) **Local Government**

Lakeview Cemetery Association created and tax levy authorized.

HF3956-Kelliher (DFL) **Rules & Legislative Administration**

Congress memorialized by resolution to repeal the No Child Left Behind requirements in the schools.

HF3957-Erhardt (R) **Taxes**

Single sales apportionment adoption relating to corporate franchise taxation accelerated.

HF3958-Erhardt (R) **Taxes**

Alternative minimum income tax exemption amounts and phase-out thresholds for inflation adjusted.

HF3959-Erhardt (R) **Taxes**

Sales and excise tax June accelerated payments reduced.

HF3960-Simpson (R) **Taxes**

Application of 4d property tax classification extended.

HF3961-Fritz (DFL) **Taxes**

Nursing home resident tax credit provided, foreign operating corporation income tax treatment modified and money appropriated.

HF3962-Mullery (DFL) **Taxes**

Property tax refund payment when claimant dies provided.

HF3963-Ruud (DFL) **Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Data warehouse personal information disclosure regulated, notice content requirements provided and financial institution and health care entity exemption removed.

HF3964-Abeler (R) **Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Community action grant money appropriated.

HF3965-Dill (DFL) **Taxes**

Ely sales and use tax authorized.

HF3966-Sieben (DFL) **Health Policy & Finance**

Health risk limit development for perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctane sulfonate required.

HF3967-Thissen (DFL) **Transportation**

Metropolitan Council regular route transit requirements expanded.

HF3968-Solberg (DFL)**Local Government**

Itasca County; revolving loan fund establishment to upgrade failing septic systems authorized.

HF3969-Loeffler (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Mortgage originator individual employee licensing plan development by Department of Commerce required and money appropriated.

HF3970-Thissen (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Mental health training annual provision by foster care providers required.

HF3971-Thissen (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Open data format usage by state agencies required.

HF3972-Hilty (DFL)**Taxes**

Pine County Judicial Center construction materials and equipment tax exemption provided.

HF3973-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Regulated Industries**

Energy cost display on utility bills required.

HF3974-Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

State flag design study task force created.

HF3975-Urdahl (R)**Higher Education Finance**

University of Minnesota supplemental funding provided and money appropriated.

HF3976-Sertich (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Work participation rate enhancement program established.

HF3977-Eken (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Prohibition on usage of lights and light devices to take fish modified.

HF3978-Vanderveer (R)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Building contractors regulated and homeowner warranty protection strengthened.

HF3979-Huntley (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Prescription drug discount program created, single adult benefit set expanded, eligibility income limit and inpatient hospitalization benefit increased, farmer income definition modified and small employer option established.

HF3980-Lieder (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Marshall County; tax-forfeited lands bordering public water private sale and conveyance authorized.

HF3981-Sieben (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Lead-containing jewelry sale prohibited and information provision detailing dangers of jewelry containing lead required.

HF3982-Paulsen (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Open source software usage by state agencies for creation of public documents required.

HF3983-Newman (R)**Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance**

Cedar Mills wastewater treatment system money appropriated.

HF3984-Thissen (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Workers' compensation system coverage of personal injury caused by gross negligence of an employer prohibited.

HF3985-Thissen (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Disability schedule treatment of thoracic, rib, chest and crush injuries the same as a broken spine required.

HF3986-Thissen (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Employer specification of certain certified managed care plan usage for employees authorized if employee's injury occurs on or after the date of employer plan implementation.

HF3987-Johnson, J. (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

Public safety appropriations modified; various state agencies, programs and activities money transfers provided; certain programs established, regulated and modified; and money appropriated.

HF3988-Dean (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Women's Right to Know Act provision modified.

HF3989-Severson (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Nursing facility operating payment rates modified.

HF3990-Severson (R)**Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs**

Political subdivisions flying American flag at half-staff on certain occasions permitted.

HF3991-Dempsey (R)**Transportation**

Mississippi River Parkway Commission extended to 2016.

HF3992-Thissen (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

State payment of facility costs of certain community partnership programs grant program created and money appropriated.

HF3993-Sertich (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance**

Child care training requirements modified.

HF3994-Nornes (R)**Taxes**

Independent School District No. 544, Fergus Falls, local sales and use tax and motor vehicle excise tax imposition authorized.

Tuesday March 28**HF3995-Anderson, B. (R)****Ways & Means**

Claims against the state settled and money appropriated.

HF3996-Emmer (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

License reinstatement fee and surcharge imposed for certain driving offenses, state patrol funding provided and money appropriated.

HF3997-Klinzing (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Booster car seats for children public awareness campaign required.

HF3998-Abeler (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Nursing home payment rates modified.

HF3999-Erhardt (R)**Transportation**

County state-aid highway fund distribution formula adjusted, automobile registration taxes modified, motor fuel taxes increased, metropolitan transit tax imposed, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4000-Erhardt (R)**Transportation**

County state-aid highway fund distribution formula adjusted, automobile registration tax modified, motor fuel taxes increased, metropolitan transit tax imposed, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4001-Demmer (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Independent School District No. 535, Rochester, property tax certification date extended.

HF4002-Vanderveer (R)**Taxes**

City and county levies limited.

HF4003-Anderson, B. (R)**Education Policy & Reform**

Teacher licensing alternative provided.

HF4004-Lanning (R)**Public Safety Policy & Finance**

West Central Chemical Dependency Treatment and Correctional Center pre-design funding provided and money appropriated.

HF4005-Greiling (DFL)**Taxes**

Elderly income tax subtraction increased.

HF4006-Sertich (DFL)**Health Policy & Finance**

Consumer Assurance of Radiologic Excellence Act adopted providing public access to quality medical imaging and radiation therapy procedures.

HF4007-Sertich (DFL)**Local Government**

Hibbing Area Redevelopment Agency dissolved, assets transferred to economic development authority and debts and obligations assumed.

HF4008-Cox (R)**Education Finance**

Independent School Districts Nos. 721, New Prague; 394, Montgomery-Lonsdale; and 659, Northfield; required to contract with Holy Cross School to provide transportation for Holy Cross students.

HF4009-Ellison (DFL)**Commerce & Financial Institutions**

Sale of toys, games, jewelry and apparel containing lead prohibited.

HF4010-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

School closings required during official storm warnings.

HF4011-Hilstrom (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Integration revenue formula modified.

HF4012-Lenczewski (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Educational mission and competitive extracurricular programs interrelationship advisory task force established.

HF4013-Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Working family income tax credit increased.

HF4014-Thissen (DFL)**Education Policy & Reform**

Influenza immunizations required for children in child care facilities.

HF4015-Otremba (DFL)**Civil Law & Elections**

Certificate of name change after marriage dissolution provided.

HF4016-Eken (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Emergency crop protection assistance conditions modified.

HF4017-Finstad (R)**Health Policy & Finance**

Minnesota supplemental aid shelter needy provision modified to include persons moving out of corporate foster settings.

HF4018-Anderson, I. (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Koochiching County; Grand Mound Interpretation Center evaluation grant provided and money appropriated.

HF4019-Sertich (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Carbon monoxide alarms required in all rental dwellings.

HF4020-Emmer (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Rule of 90 eligibility extended and additional service credit purchase authorized.

Wednesday, March 29

HF4021-Thissen (DFL)
Education Policy & Reform
Early learning opportunities unified administrative structure created.

HF4022-Paymar (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
No smoking lease enforcement actions by tenants authorized.

HF4023-Paymar (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Mental health assessments implemented for pre-sentence investigations.

HF4024-Paulsen (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Membership of House and Senate reduced.

HF4025-Hortman (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Hennepin County tax-forfeited land conveyance authorized.

HF4026-Dill (DFL)
Taxes
Cook-Orr HealthCare District authorized to agree to include Bois Forte Band of Minnesota Chippewa lands in the district.

HF4027-Mullery (DFL)
Education Finance
Teacher residency program established to support effective instruction for diverse student populations.

HF4028-Demmer (R)
Education Policy & Reform
Non-public school student health services.

HF4029-Carlson (DFL)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Golden Valley flood hazard mitigation grant provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4030-Clark (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Misdemeanor penalty enhancement statute expanded to include certain offenses relating to drug paraphernalia, prostitution and trespass.

HF4031-Thissen (DFL)
Education Finance
Community partnerships schools grant-in-aid assistance program established and money appropriated.

HF4032-Urdahl (R)
Higher Education Finance
Textbook cost study provided relating to higher education.

HF4033-Fritz (DFL)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Steele County; off-highway vehicle recreation site funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4034-Zellers (R)
Taxes
Movie, television, documentary and music video production sales tax exemption provided.

Thursday, March 30

HF4035-Erickson (R)
Education Finance
Teacher training program for qualified professionals established and money appropriated.

HF4036-Klinzing (R)
State Government Finance
Communications, computing and telecommunications infrastructure study funding provided; money appropriated.

HF4037-Gunther (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Clean water legacy phosphorous reduction grants and small community wastewater treatment program loans provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4038-Erhardt (R)
Taxes
Residential homestead property first tier taxation valuation limit indexed.

HF4039-Nornes (R)
Higher Education Finance
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities technical provisions modified and authority to control receipts granted.

HF4040-Sykora (R)
Education Finance
Serve Minnesota early literacy activities funding extended and previous appropriation increased.

HF4041-Davids (R)
Agriculture & Rural Development
Aquaculture water use permitting fees limited.

HF4042-Dempsey (R)
Public Safety Policy & Finance
Animal cruelty investigations criteria specified.

HF4043-Sailer (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Energy conservation investment loan program expanded to include grants.

HF4044-Sykora (R)
Education Finance
Special education study and report provided, and money appropriated.

HF4045-Ruud (DFL)
Taxes
Alternative minimum taxable income modified and exemption amounts increased.

HF4046-Ruud (DFL)
Civil Law & Elections
Lobbying restriction of one year imposed for former legislators, constitutional officers, agency heads and certain legislative employees upon leaving office.

HF4047-Ruud (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
Per diem payments prohibited to members during certain special sessions

HF4048-Murphy (DFL)
Taxes
Hermantown sales tax revenue use modified.

HF4049-Johnson, J. (R)
Civil Law & Elections
Vulnerable and incapacitated adults neglect and abuse remedies provided.

HF4050-Clark (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
City property transfers to nonprofit organizations for low-income or moderate-income housing regulated.

HF4051-Bernardy (DFL)
Transportation Finance
Trunk highway improvements funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4052-Scalze (DFL)
Transportation Finance
Municipal transportation utility fees authorized.

HF4053-Scalze (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Off-sale liquor license fees raised.

HF4054-Lenczewski (DFL)
Transportation Finance
Interstates 35W and 494 interchange funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4055-Krinkie (R)
Taxes
Metropolitan fiscal disparities law abolished.

HF4056-Sailer (DFL)
Education Finance
Parent-school partnership pilot program to assist children with autism spectrum disorders established and money appropriated.

HF4057-Simon (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs
State Board of Investment required to monitor state investments in companies doing business with Sudan and to support shareholder resolutions that require action to end the crisis in Sudan.

HF4058-Juhnke (DFL)
Higher Education Finance
Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF4059-Davids (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Rural Minnesota cultural facilities construction projects revolving loan fund established.

HF4060-Seifert (R)
Taxes
Health insurance income tax credit provided.

HF4061-Olson (R)
Transportation
Advertising devices adjacent to roadways authorized under certain circumstances.

HF4062-Gunther (R)
Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance
Economic development and human services programs funding supplemented and reduced for various programs and forecast adjustments provided.

HF4063-Hamilton (R)
Taxes
Worthington local sales tax referendum time period modified.

HF4064-Vanderveer (R)
Taxes
Local sales tax revenue sharing required.

HF4065-Loeffler (DFL)
Education Policy & Reform
Special education litigation costs reporting required.

HF4066-Krinkie (R)
Transportation Finance
Regional rail authorities abolished in the seven-county metropolitan area.

HF4067-Davids (R)
Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Finance
E85 fuel pump installation reimbursement provided and money appropriated.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Domestic abuse

Percent of all violent crime victims in Minnesota that are victims of domestic violence	25
Estimated percent of domestic violence victims that are women	90-95
Estimated percent of domestic violence victims that did not report incident to law enforcement	80
Percent of American women that report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives	31
Minnesota women that have lost their lives in 2005 as a result of domestic violence or child abuse.....	33
In 2003	24
Minnesota women murdered in 2005 where the suspected, alleged or convicted perpetrator was a current or former, husband, boyfriend or intimate partner	17
Women murdered in 2005 cases where the suspected, alleged or convicted perpetrator was a family or household member	9
Children left motherless by the murders of their mothers in 2005	18
From 1989 to March 10, 2005, Minnesota women strangled to death where the suspected, alleged or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, intimate partner or household/family member.....	41
Minnesotans receiving emergency department or inpatient care in 2003 for domestic violence injuries.....	1,096
Percent that were women between the ages of 20 and 34.....	95
Those receiving hospital treatment in 2001.....	806
Orders for Protection issued in Minnesota in 2003	13,145
In 1996	14,172
In 1989	9,767
Domestic assault criminal cases charged at felony level in Minnesota in 2004.....	113
In 2000	56
Percent of battered women that are victimized again within six months following an episode of domestic violence	32
Of homeless women in Minnesota, percent homeless in part due to domestic violence.....	33.3
Domestic violence programs in Minnesota in fiscal year 2004	81
Approximate number of primary and secondary victims receiving services from Minnesota battered women's programs in fiscal year 2003.....	65,000
Nights spent in a shelter in fiscal year 2004 by battered Minnesota women	99,000
Nights spent by battered children in 2004	116,000

Sources: 2004 Annual Report, A Matter of Life and Death: The Domestic Fatality Review Team; The 2005 Minnesota Femicide Report and Special Femicide Report: Strangulation and Women and Children Murdered in Minnesota, 1989-2005, Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women; Office of Justice Programs Statistical Analysis Center, Minnesota Department of Public Safety; A Report of the Interagency Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, Department of Public Safety, January 2005; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

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