

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION ★ ★ ★

SESSION Weekly

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 6 • April 7, 2006

ME BLOOM



INSIDE: LOONS AND EAGLES, HOUSE RUMPUS ROOM, BONDING PLANS, MORE

This Week's Bill Introductions HF4068-HF4115

Session Weekly

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of the Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services office. During the 2005-2006 Legislative Session, each issue reports daily House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions, and provides other information. No fee.

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Session Weekly (ISSN 1049-8176) is published weekly during the legislative session by Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services office, 175 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minn.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Session Weekly*, Public Information Services office, Minnesota House of Representatives, 175 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298.

Printed on recycled paper which is 50% recycled,
30% post-consumer content.



CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS

Agriculture • 5
Banking • 6
Business • 6
Children • 6
Consumers • 7
Crime • 7
Development • 7
Education • 8

Employment • 9
Environment • 9
Family • 9
Government • 10
Greater Minnesota • 11
Health • 11
Higher Education • 12

Law • 13
Local Government • 13
Safety • 14
Taxes • 14
Technology • 15
Transportation • 15
Veterans • 17

BILL INTRODUCTIONS (HF4069-HF4115) • 23

FEATURES

FIRST READING: House lays out its bonding bill • 3

FEATURE: Business at the House no laughing matter • 18-19

AT ISSUE: The everything bill • 20

AT ISSUE: Pesticide report is good news, bad news • 21

MINNESOTA INDEX: Loons and eagles • 24

LATE ACTION: Gopher stadium, eminent domain • 17, 22

On the cover: Jamilia Allison, 4, who attends Shining Star Learning Center in Minneapolis, peeks through the sign she brought to a March 30 Rotunda rally to increase funding for early childhood education.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

Bonding plan unveiled

House proposal is more than governor, less than Senate

By **MIKE COOK**

Nearly \$1 billion in bonding requests is expected to be before the full House April 12.

Approved April 4 by the House Capital Investment Committee, [HF2959](#) calls for \$949.27 million in general obligation bonds. When user-financed bonds are included, the bill totals \$999.87 million.

"The size of the bill goes to the quality of the bill," said [Rep. Dan Dorman](#) (R-Albert Lea), the bill's sponsor and committee chair. "What is in it justifies the larger number than the governor."

The [governor's proposal](#) totals \$897.2 million, of which \$811.1 million would be in general obligation bonds.

Still, the Senate plan ([SF3475](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), trumps both proposals. It calls for \$1.05 billion

in total spending, with \$989.92 million in general obligation bonds.

A spreadsheet comparing the three bills is available at <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/fiscal/files/bond06.pdf>.

A \$944.9 million measure was passed last year after members failed to agree on a proposal in 2004. Of that law, \$885.9 million was in general obligation bonds.

According to the [Department of Finance](#), "The state sells general obligation bonds into the marketplace. The proceeds from the sale of the bonds are used to pay the cost of the capital projects that are approved by the Legislature."

The House proposal has received bipartisan support, and that is expected to continue when the entire body votes.

Believing she was speaking for members of her caucus, [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul) said, "We do believe there are a number

of very good things in the bill and that there is a good balance of priorities." She predicts a "strong vote in the House."

[House Speaker Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) said he expects the bill to get 110 votes on the House floor.

"I consider this a very, very balanced and a very, very prudent bill," he said. "It doesn't max out the state's credit card as the Senate does, it focuses in on infrastructure. ... We are higher than the Senate in local roads; we're higher than the Senate in bridges."

The following are parts of the House proposal, which Dorman said is broken down with 35 percent for Greater Minnesota, 35 percent for projects with statewide significance and 30 percent to the Twin Cities metropolitan area:

Transit and transportation

The House bill calls for \$60 million in local bridge replacement and \$22.5 million for local road improvement grants. The Senate numbers are \$47.5 million and \$10.9 million, respectively.

First Reading continued on page 4



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Terry Kuhlman, front center, executive director of the Public Facilities Authority of the Department of Employment and Economic Development, along with other public officials, lobbyists and special interests groups get their first look at the House capital investment bill April 4.

However, the Senate and governor proposals allocate \$60 million for the Northstar commuter rail slated to run from downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake, \$10 million more than the House proposal.

“Last year we had \$37.5 million in the final bill for the Northstar Corridor, all of which is still in the bank,” Dorman said. He also said that he called a federal person asking what would happen if just \$50 million was allocated. “The reply was that at the end of the day, whenever that is, and when we know what the numbers are, you’re going to have to have all your dough in place. They’re not sure if that number is \$50 (million), \$58 (million) or \$60 (million).”

A project supporter, Dorman also expressed concern that negotiations are still ongoing with Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railway Company for using the tracks. “If those negotiations aren’t concluded, my fear is that we will have tied up close to \$100 million in bonding with a project that is not going forward because we don’t have all the paperwork done.”

[Rep Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) warned that railroads can oftentimes slow down negotiations in hopes of getting as much money as they can from the state or federal government.

While appreciating the \$50 million, [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover), a leading Northstar backer, warned that delaying this project would only lead to greater costs. She said the negotiations are expected to be completed soon, and that \$60 million is needed for a full-funding grant agreement.

“I think we can really make a go this year to completing the state’s commitment,” she said.

The House and governor fully fund the Interstate 35 Bus Rapid Transit project with \$8.3 million; the Senate offers zero. The project includes two park-and-ride facilities in Bloomington, one in Lakeville and a transit station at 46th Street in south Minneapolis.

“The Senate thinks it’s a terrible project and is not concerned about the traffic on 35 through the suburbs and south Minneapolis, but we think it’s a good opportunity,” Dorman said. “For those of you that think it’s a good opportunity, contact your senator and say, ‘What the heck?’”

“Minneapolis is supportive of the 35W BRT project, so thank you for seeing the wisdom of that project and putting it in your bill,” said [Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls).

Each proposal calls for \$5 million for a Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Corridor in the south Twin Cities metropolitan area suburbs.

BONDING RECOMMENDATIONS COMPARISON

Category	Governor	House	Senate
Higher Education	\$270.14 million	\$309.02 million	\$376 million
Wildlife area acquisition and improvement	\$15 million	\$18 million	\$10 million
Local bridge replacement	\$30 million	\$60 million	\$47.5 million
Local road improvement grants	\$10 million	\$22.5 million	\$10.9 million
Faribault prison expansion	\$27.99 million	\$3 million	\$0
Wastewater Infrastructure Fund	\$15 million	\$23 million	\$20 million
Bioscience development	\$10 million	\$16.7 million	\$2 million
Minnesota Zoo	\$21 million	\$9 million	\$8 million
Grants to political subdivisions	\$13 million	\$90.03 million	\$118.4 million
Shubert Theater	\$0	\$11 million	\$11 million
Southwest regional events center	\$0	\$12 million	\$0
State Capitol restoration	\$0	\$1.8 million	\$3.18 million
Bill total	\$897.2 million	\$999.87 million	\$1.05 billion
General obligation bonds	\$811.1 million	\$949.27 million	\$989.92 million

Source: House Fiscal Analysis Department

Higher Education

The House bill calls for \$309.02 million in higher education spending, about \$68 million less than the Senate.

The House bill includes \$187.69 million for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system. In addition to \$40 million for asset preservation, the House bill provides funding for 20 other projects, including \$32.9 million for a science building addition at Minnesota State University, Mankato and \$19.9 million for a new science and library building at Century College.

The plan calls for the University of Minnesota to receive \$121.33 million, including \$40 million for a medical biosciences building, \$30 million in asset preservation, \$26.6 million for a Carlson School of Management expansion and \$15.33 million for a Duluth business and economics building.

The Senate is \$10 million higher in asset preservation, but funds just \$13.3 million for the Carlson school expansion.

“We give them a whole school, not half a school,” Dorman said.

Environment and agriculture

“We’re a little greener than the Senate,” Dorman said. “We’ve got \$14.5 million in the bill for projects that are part of the Clean Water Legacy.” He also said the House allocates more to the Department of Natural Resources, Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Wastewater Infrastructure Fund. “People aren’t going to put on their re-election brochures that they voted for this great bonding bill because it had extra money for wastewater infrastructure, but that’s the

stuff that’s important to moving this state forward.”

Also included in the \$122.15 million for environment and agriculture is \$19.23 million for flood hazard mitigation grants, \$18 million for wildlife area acquisition and improvement, \$10.7 million for trails and \$8 million for forest conservation easements.

Corrections

Each of the three proposals allocates \$19.58 million for a 150-bed segregation unit at the Stillwater prison and nearly \$5.38 million for expansion of the women’s prison in Shakopee, but neither the House nor Senate offer money for a security fence at the facility, which many area residents do not want.

The House is the lone plan providing \$6.23 million for a vocational education building with a combined classroom and shop complex at the Red Wing juvenile facility. That item has been low on the [Department of Corrections](#) list for at least a decade, said Deputy Commissioner Dennis Benson.

“That’s one of those projects that everybody seems to like,” Dorman said. “By investing in that building and actually finishing it, we may not need as much bed space in the future.”

Animals and sports facilities

“We love zoos,” Dorman said. “You got the Apple Valley zoo, you got the Como Zoo, you got the Duluth zoo and our friends at the Little Falls Zoo. You ever been to the Little Falls Zoo, poor bear in the cage there? We’re getting him out of the cage. A tough life for that bear.”

Bonding continued on page 22

★ AGRICULTURE

Fluid conversion allowance program

Inside the gray cylinders of electrical transformers is a non-conductive fluid that cools and insulates its internal workings.

Almost all of the fluid used, estimated to be 75 million gallons annually in the United States, is petroleum based.

[HF3273](#), sponsored by [Rep. Greg Davids](#) (R-Preston), may help change that.

Davids told the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee March 30 that the bill creates an allowance program within the [Department of Agriculture](#) to fund qualifying electric utilities that desire financial aid to transition to a higher-performance, soy-based, environmentally friendly fluid called Envirotemp® FR3™, manufactured by Minnesota-based Cargill.

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

Those testifying for the bill spoke of Minnesota's leadership in initiating the use of bio-products, such as soy-based ink — now used almost universally in newsprint — and biodiesel fuel.

The soy-based fluid initially costs more than the petroleum-based fluid, said Tom Johnson, sales engineer for Cooper Power Systems, which manufactures electrical equipment that uses the soy-based fluid.

Johnson said the soy-based fluid does not ignite unless heated to 360 degrees — a much higher temperature than the petroleum-based fluid — which greatly reduces the likelihood transformers will burst into flames. He said it is also more compatible with the paper insulation components of transformers and actually increases the equipment's longevity, thus reducing maintenance costs.

Johnson said the fluid has distinct environmental advantages, in that it totally biodegrades in 99 days; it is renewable; and it has been determined by the Environmental Protection Agency to be non-hazardous to trout, which are extremely sensitive to environmental pollutants.

[Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) told the committee "a lot of work has been put into this by the soybean check-off," which is a marketing program of the United Soybean Board.

"A lot of the other states in the United States that are involved in the soybean check-off and production and membership in the soybean growers association are closely watching what we do here in Minnesota," he said.

A companion bill ([SF3314](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Protecting wild rice integrity

One critic called the bill a "solution looking for a problem." But that hasn't deterred [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) from proceeding with what he is passionate about — protecting wild rice.

That passion is translated into a bill, [HF3915](#), which he sponsors to protect the genetic integrity of the native strains of wild rice that have spiritual and cultural significance to the state's Ojibwe people.

After receiving testimony for parts of three days, the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee approved the bill as amended April 5 and referred it to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee. A companion bill ([SF3575](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Becky Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee.

Originally, the bill required the [Department of Agriculture](#) to impose a two-year moratorium on the release, planting, importation or sale of genetically engineered wild rice in the state in the event an application to plant a test plot was made anywhere in the United States. The moratorium was intended to give the state agencies time to assess — in consultation with the Ojibwe people — the

possible impact of the modified species on the native species and to plan their response.

Supporters spoke of the Ojibwe's desire to preserve the native strains unadulterated, so wild rice can continue to occupy its traditional place in the Ojibwe culture and spirituality, and its more recently developed place in the tribes' economies.

Opponents said the bill was unnecessary because the department already has a structure in place to assess the possible impact of genetically engineered plants, including wild rice. Others said passage of the bill would send a global message that genetic modification biotechnology is not welcome in Minnesota.

On April 4 and April 5, the committee approved "delete-all" amendments brought forward by Moe. The bill now requires only that the Agriculture and [Natural Resources](#) departments examine the need for a study regarding the two native strains of wild rice, *zizania aquatica* and *zizania palustris*. The study would examine any decline in their populations, arguments for and against maintaining the genetic integrity of the strains and how it could best be maintained. The agencies would also compose recommendations regarding possible responses to their findings and report to both the Legislature and the Ojibwe tribes.

"I'm not an opponent of genetically modified organisms," Moe said, adding he is not asking for a moratorium on research related to genetic modifications of wild



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Winona LaDuke, director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project, testifies before the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee March 28 on a two-year moratorium on genetically engineered wild rice.

rice. Nor is he necessarily opposed to the introduction of modified wild rice in the state, but said its introduction should be delayed until its impact can be assessed and possible responses developed.

BANKING

Signed
by
the
governor
★ ★ ★

New banking facility

Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed a new law April 5 that will permit a new bank to open in Shamrock Township.

[Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) and [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) sponsor the new law. It goes into effect the day after Shamrock Township complies with the provisions set out in the law. The Shamrock Town Board has already indicated its support.

The law authorizes the State Bank of McGregor, located in McGregor, to operate a separate facility in Shamrock Township, with approval of the commerce commissioner.

A bank that wants to open a new branch in a township needs permission from the Legislature. This is the second exemption in two years.

During a March 14 House Commerce and Financial Institutions Committee hearing, [Rep. Greg Davids](#) (R-Preston) asked if other banks approved of the new facility. Jonathan Passer, a loan officer at the bank, said there is a credit union in town but that the next closest bank to McGregor is 24 miles away. HF2709/SF2523/CH174.

BUSINESS

Gas station exemption

The House unanimously approved a bill April 3 that would provide an exemption to the state's gasoline franchising law.

[HF3747](#), sponsored by [Rep. Dean Simpson](#) (R-New York Mills), now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin) is the sponsor.

Simpson said current laws prevent smaller gas stations from posting brand name signs unless they meet a minimum sales requirement. Gas stations, especially in rural Minnesota, struggle to meet those requirements and cannot advertise any kind of brand name postings. The bill allows these gas stations to put up a sign that could read "Dean's Corner Gas," Simpson said.

[Rep. Tina Liebling](#) (DFL-Rochester) questioned what kind of impact the bill would have on consumers. It would mainly help smaller gas stations stay in business, and would not affect consumers, said Simpson.

CHILDREN

Third party payments

[Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood) said child care assistance costs continue to rise and any measures to cut those costs should be taken.

Sponsored by Slawik, [HF3944](#), would allow a third party to pay all or part of a family's child care assistance fee. The money paid on a family's behalf would not be considered as part of their income or affect their eligibility for assistance.

On April 5, the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill ([SF3615](#)), sponsored by [Sen. John Hottinger](#) (DFL-St. Peter) awaits action by the full Senate.

Currently, some third parties help families pay for child care because the costs keep increasing, said Slawik. But according to current law, the [Department of Human Services](#) counts that money as family income, which sometimes makes families ineligible for certain services. She said the bill was a "tweak" to the current system and would help parents afford quality child care.

The department, which administers many of the state's child care programs, has no objections to the bill.

Video game purchases, rentals

One of the most popular video games on the market is "Postal 2."

"That's a serial killer game where you score points by killing as many people as you can in lots of different gory ways, but there's a twist to this game," said [Rep. Jeff Johnson](#) (R-Plymouth). "You actually get extra points in this game if you urinate in your victim's mouth before you kill him or her. You can even open fire on a gay pride parade, a minority community celebration or a parade of police officers."

Johnson said the game's description, and those of some other popular games, makes him sick to his stomach, knowing youth across the state are playing them regularly.

He and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul) are sponsoring [HF1298/SF785](#)* that would prohibit people under the age of 17 from renting or purchasing video games that are rated Adults Only or Mature by the entertainment software industry. The offense would be considered a petty misdemeanor, and the minor could be charged a \$25 fine. Retailers would be required to post a sign that is clearly visible regarding the restriction.

Approved April 5 by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee, the bill



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Jeff Johnson shows members of the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee examples of violent video games April 4 during discussion of a bill that would bar anyone under age 17 from renting or purchasing graphic games.

was sent to the House floor. It was approved by the Senate 51-10 last year.

"My intent with the legislation is not to make criminals out of kids, and it's not to raise money for the state \$25 at a time, because I suspect none, or little, of that will happen," Johnson said. "I'm hopeful that the new law and the signs will, at the very least, get the attention of some painfully oblivious parents in Minnesota who are paying absolutely no attention to what their kids are playing on their video game machines at home."

Johnson said many retailers already restrict access to children under age 17.

Deborah Buyer, senior associate general counsel for the Entertainment Software Association, said parents purchase these games 83 percent of the time, and that the average age of players is 30.

She also warned that the bill could be unlawful.

"Six federal courts in the past five years, including the 7th and 8th Circuit Court of Appeals, have ruled that statutes designed to regulate violent games are unconstitutional. In 2005, federal district courts in Illinois, Michigan and California granted injunctions preventing this type of regulation from becoming law."

Johnson said he has “tried to craft a bill that is extremely narrowly tailored, and could withstand a constitutional objection.”

★ CONSUMERS

Omnibus liquor bill

In the future, you may be able to have a glass of wine while learning to cook a new culinary delight, or a beer after a round of golf at the New Prague Municipal Golf Course.

From bed-and-breakfasts to an off-sale facility next to the grocery store proposed for downtown Minneapolis, the omnibus liquor bill addresses alcohol-related issues on a local level. The House Regulated Industries Committee approved [HF3940](#), sponsored by [Rep. Joe Hoppe](#) (R-Chaska), April 4. It awaits action on the House floor.

Minnesota wineries would benefit from the bill by being allowed to produce fortified wines, which by definition, is any product that has alcohol or spirits added.

Since 1980, Minnesota farmers have been allowed to produce wine for sale. John Falconer, owner of a vineyard and vice president of the Minnesota Grape Growers Association, said state wineries are at a disadvantage to producers in other states because they are not allowed to make fortified wine products, such as port wines. “We just want to level the playing field here,” he said.

Culinary schools and retail stores selling kitchen products would benefit as well, under the bill.

As the popularity of stores dedicated to cooking has grown, so has the need to show people how to pair wines to enhance the “culinary experience,” retailer Brian Albrecht said. The bill would allow for a limited on-sale liquor license and allow the licensee to offer up to a 1 ounce sample of wine in their stores.

The bill also includes a provision allowing for on-sale liquor licenses to concessionaires, caterers or restaurant operators at the Minnesota Book and Literary Arts Building; allowance for wine licenses to be issued to bed-and-breakfasts with a licensed commercial kitchen to serve guests attending events at the facility; and the ability for municipalities to have different off-sale hours for 3.2 and intoxicating liquor establishments.

A companion bill ([SF3081](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action on the Senate floor.

★ CRIME

Pilot project funding

People seeking to turn their lives around after serving time in prison could receive some assistance.

[HF3812](#), sponsored by [Rep. Judy Soderstrom](#) (R-Mora), would appropriate \$700,000 in fiscal year 2007 for a grant to the Correctional Transition Services, Inc. The grant would fund a pilot project focusing on offender reentry programs. It specifies that the appropriation must be evenly split between transitional housing programs and employment opportunity programs.

Heard April 4 by the House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee, it will be considered for inclusion in the committee omnibus bill. There is no Senate companion.

Executive Director Paul Kustermann said the program turns out motivated and trained employees, and contributes to reducing the growth of prison beds by focusing on eliminating the number of repeat offenders.

According to a 2004 Department of Corrections study, 33 percent of released offenders are convicted of new felonies within three years. The program offers intervention and re-entry services by providing comprehensive “best practices” programming, and works with the community to help these people, Kustermann said.

[Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls) is concerned about offenders with chemical dependency issues because she said they are more likely to break the law again. Although Clark supports the bill, she said it needs to work on addressing treatment of the high number of chemically dependent offenders.

[Rep. Connie Ruth](#) (R-Owatonna) asked if the state has a program in place to keep chemical dependent offenders from being released until they have completed a treatment program. Soderstrom said there was none, and this program could be a model statewide.

Neglecting vulnerable adults

Minnesotans can currently receive a tougher penalty for mistreating an animal than for mistreating a vulnerable adult.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers), [HF3235](#) would create new penalties for criminal neglect of an adult committed by a family member who has responsibility for that person’s care.

The bill was held over March 30 by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

“If the neglect results in the death of a vulnerable adult, the caregiver may receive imprisonment of not more than 10 years or payment of not more than \$20,000, or both,” Peppin said. If the neglect results in substantial bodily harm or the risk of death, the caregiver could receive up to five years in prison, a \$10,000 fine or both.

Currently, it is a gross misdemeanor for neglect of a vulnerable adult, with a penalty topping out at one year in prison or a \$3,000 fine. The maximum penalty for mistreating an animal, resulting in death or great bodily harm, is four years behind bars and a \$10,000 fine.

Peppin told the committee about a Brooklyn Park man who was in charge of caring for his elderly mother, but neglected her when she fell. “He brought her food and water, but he did not move her. She sat in the same spot on the floor for more than a week, and she sat in her own excrement. When authorities were finally notified, this caused her to go to the hospital and spend several weeks, I believe.” For his actions, the man was given probation.

The committee’s omnibus bill last year contained a similar provision that would have applied to all caregivers and operators, but Peppin withdrew the language because of concerns by hospital and nursing home representatives. “My preference would be to have them included, as well,” she said.

John Lips, director of legal affairs for Care Providers of Minnesota, said last year’s bill had no element of intentionality.

“Our concern was that there could be instances where a caregiver would make an honest mistake — a judgment in an instance of delivering care — and could be subjected to much higher penalties,” he said.

A companion bill ([SF3598](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Warren Limmer](#) (R-Maple Grove), awaits action by the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

★ DEVELOPMENT

Research facility funding

The University of Minnesota hopes to uphold the state’s reputation as a leader in the field of biomedical sciences.

[HF3268](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ron Abrams](#) (R-Minnetonka), would help the cause. It would use \$330 million in state general obligation bonds to pay for 90 percent of the cost to construct and furnish biomedical research facilities at the university. The university would pay for the remaining 10 percent. The House Jobs and Economic

What’s in the bill:

HF3940
HF3028
HF2827
HF3322
HF3549
HF3275
HF3583

Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee approved the bill March 30, and referred it to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee.

If successful, five new research facilities, with a total of about 750,000-square-feet, would be built in 10 years at a total cost of \$366 million.

University President Robert Bruininks said the research facilities would bring economic and health benefits to the state, as well as advance biomedical research. The bill would also aid in recruiting and keeping faculty in the field.

"We need to be diligent, as a state, if we want to maintain our competitive position and improve it for the future," Bruininks said.

[Rep. Fran Bradley](#) (R-Rochester) agreed the bill was important, but had questions about maintenance costs. Once built, Bruininks said the university would be responsible for operation expenses.

While [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls) said she also believes in biomedical research, she wants to see more accountability in the bill because manufacturers will oftentimes charge high rates for products and attribute it to expensive research and development costs. Committee Chair [Rep. Bob Gunther](#) (R-Fairmont) said some leeway should be given because, although some products are expensive, they also save money.

[Rep. Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) said it was important for Minnesota to compete with other states attempting to lead the way in the biomedical sciences. He said it is an opportunity to create jobs statewide.

A companion bill ([SF3044](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

★ EDUCATION

Developing character

[Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) gave the House Education Finance Committee a little history lesson April 4 — a topic that he says is his passion.

This country's Founding Fathers would spend 80 percent to 90 percent of their schooling time on ethics, values and character development, where as today's schools spend less than 5 percent. "I think this is something we need to bring into balance," he said.

Sponsored by [Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City), [HF3425](#) would work toward that goal by establishing a pilot program to provide approved character development education curriculum.

Larry McGuire, who represents a company that develops this type of curriculum, said the key to any program of this type is that

FFA DAY



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Andy Westerberg, left, and Rep. Michael Beard, right, frame a group of Future Farmers of America as House members applaud the group that was on the House floor and in the gallery March 30. FFA participants made their annual trip to the Capitol to meet with their legislators.

it be comprehensive and not piecemeal. "Transformation is really the point of this."

Funding for the program would be appropriated to districts participating in the program equal to \$30 times the district's adjusted marginal cost pupil units.

Schools would apply for funding to facilitate their participation in the program, and the education commissioner would, to the extent feasible, ensure equitable geographical distribution of approved applications, under an amendment successfully proposed by Buesgens, and adopted by the committee.

[Rep. John Dorn](#) (DFL-Mankato) questioned the fairness of the appropriation distribution, stating that districts with larger populations could expend the total amount of money allocated for the program. Urdahl said that since the bill is to be laid over for possible inclusion in the committee omnibus bill, he would have time to work on a more equitable distribution formula.

A companion bill ([SF2826](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Tarryl Clark](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), awaits action on the Senate floor.

New sponsors for charter schools

The state could see more charter schools sponsored by private, nonprofit organizations, under a bill sponsored by [Rep. Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood).

[HF1303](#) would create a new classification of sponsors, allowing for up to five nonprofit organizations to come together to sponsor a charter school.

The bill, passed last year by the House Education Policy and Reform Committee, opened the discussion in the House Education Finance Committee April 4 over accountability, and whether the development of charter schools is harming traditional public schools.

Robert Aronson, legal counsel for the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals and its counterpart for elementary principals, said the criteria for charter schools have evolved over the years. Speaking in opposition to the bill, he said the first charter school sponsors were school districts in which the school was located. Then nonprofits, meeting certain criteria, were allowed as sponsors. There are now over 100 charter schools in the state. He cautioned the committee, "If you have private corporations running schools, as compared to publicly elected school boards, you run afoul of the Uniform System of Public Schools."

Robert J. Wedl, director of Education Evolving, a joint venture of the Center for Policy Studies and Hamline University, said this bill calls for more accountability from organizations sponsoring charter schools. He said the application process for this new classification would be extensive, allowing for greater oversight by the commissioner of education.

[Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) responded, "If the need is greater for oversight over sponsoring organizations, why don't we give the commissioner more authority," instead of expanding the criteria for who can sponsor a charter?

A companion bill, ([SF1707](#)), is sponsored by [Sen. Steve Kelley](#) (DFL-Hopkins) was laid over by the Senate Education Committee.

Moratorium on school building

School districts with fewer than 500 students could face a moratorium on any new facilities.

[Rep. Scott Newman](#) (R-Hutchinson), brought ([HF3952](#)) to the House Education Finance Committee April 4 in response to a situation in the McLeod West School District, which has a high school in Brownton and an elementary in Stewart. A referendum is set on whether a new, one-campus facility should be built, and this, according to Newman, is splitting the community apart. "I have neighbors fighting with neighbors, and family members fighting family members."

While the McLeod West student population is stable, and some would like to see a new school built, farmers in the district are concerned about the impact on their property taxes. "No matter what I do here, somebody isn't going to be happy," Newman said.

And this district is not unique. He said that many small districts are facing declining or stabilized enrollments coupled with deteriorating buildings. "Eventually the state will have to look for some reform (to address the problem)," Newman said.

His bill would give the education commissioner one year to examine the condition of school buildings in the state's 88 small school districts, as well as the state's incentives for school district consolidation and school building projects and provide a report to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2007. Any school district receiving funding from this year's capital investment bill would be exempted from the proposed moratorium.

Larry Raisbeck, McLeod West school board chair, is not happy.

"This is not a knee-jerk reaction," he said referring to the upcoming referendum. He said the district has researched the building proposal for more than two years, held many public hearings, "and now we are down to the last two months before a referendum and this comes up slamming the door; basically saying stay to your old-fashioned way of teaching."

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

A companion bill ([SF3611](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

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EMPLOYMENT



Living wage

Although Minnesota's minimum wage is higher than the federal standard, some legislators say it is still too low.

[HF3568](#), sponsored by [Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), would impose a low-wage compensation surtax on certain employers who fail to pay full-time employees a living wage.

The bill defines "living wage" as \$14 an hour, and would be adjusted annually for inflation. From 2006 to 2008, only businesses employing more than 20 full-time employees would be subject to the wage standards, but all employers would have to meet it by 2012. Employers offering their employees health insurance would be required to pay at least \$11 an hour.

Money collected from the low-wage compensation surtax would be used to increase working-family credits in Minnesota.

The House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee did not approve the bill April 4. [Rep. Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) suggested referring the bill to the House Taxes Committee without recommendation, but that was also voted down.

Carrie Thomas, JOBS NOW Coalition policy director, said many jobs throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area do not pay wages high enough to keep people off public assistance, a cost to taxpayers. Thomas added that 15 percent of area jobs pay less than \$9 per hour.

A companion bill ([SF2090](#)), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development Committee.

ENVIRONMENT



Sewage system pilot program

A bill to give more time to the individual sewer treatment pilot project, as established in 2003 in three Minnesota counties, was passed 132-1 by the House April 3.

Sponsored by [Rep. Greg Davids](#) (R-Preston), [HF2721](#) allows an additional year for Fillmore, Carlton and Chisago counties to complete an inventory of property with individual sewage treatment systems that are an imminent threat to public health or safety due to discharge of untreated sewage. It now must be completed by July 1, 2008. The bill stipulates that the inventory may take place in phases over the period of the project.

Received from the House April 5, the bill awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. [Sen. Bob Kierlin](#) (R-Winona) is the Senate sponsor.

Timber contracts can be extended



Contracts with the Department of Natural Resources to harvest timber from public lands can now be extended if needed, according to legislation signed by Gov. Tim

Pawlenty April 5.

[Rep. Greg Blaine](#) (R-Little Falls) and [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) sponsored the legislation that provides for the extension of timber contracts when adverse surface conditions limit the number of days harvesters can work. Harvesting equipment is prohibited from timberland unless the ground is frozen, and deep snow can also restrict access. The new law takes effect immediately.

[HF3039](#)*/SF2632/CH175

FAMILY



Hmong marriages

A bill that would legitimize Hmong cultural marriages, and expand the law making it a form of child neglect to allow a minor to marry, was approved April 3 by the House Civil Law and Elections Committee. The House Public Safety Policy and Finance committee sent the bill to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee April 6, without recommendation.

Sponsored by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF3674](#) would elevate the role of the mej koob, giving them the ability to solemnize Hmong marriages in the same way judges, priests, rabbis and others who perform marriages are recognized by state statute. The bill would also make all solemnizers mandatory reporters of neglect. Those knowingly facilitating or assisting in arranging marriages that violate state law would be charged with a misdemeanor.

"Our intent is to protect underage people, especially girls in the Hmong culture from being forced into marriage. It is also our intent to provide protection to people who are culturally married, but do not have their rights recognized by the state," Paymar said.

[Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the only Hmong House member, opposes the bill and said marriage traditions practiced by the Hmong have changed little in the past 5,000 years. He said the role of the mej koob is to act as a mediator between two families as the cultural marriage is arranged. Historically their role is not one of solemnizing the union. The parents and the community recognize a cultural marriage. He said this bill would do little to prevent cultural marriages between a minor female and an older male.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Members of the Hmong community fill the committee room during the April 3 meeting of the House Civil Law and Elections Committee to hear debate on a bill that would provide Hmong marriage solemnization and mej koob requirements.

"I want us to kill the bill. Set up a task force within the Hmong community with legal professionals and come out with a comprehensive proposal to deal with both issues — marriage and child abuse," Thao said. "I commit to you that I will have a bill ready by the end of the year to put that task force together."

He said the Hmong community has been in Minnesota for 30 years, and those that have been here the entire time "have changed a lot." But recent immigrants "are the least educated about our laws and the least sophisticated about our culture," and need time to assimilate.

A companion bill ([SF2403](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Wes Skoglund](#) (DFL-Mpls), has been incorporated into [SF2633](#), sponsored by [Sen. Thomas Neuville](#) (R-Northfield). It awaits action by the full Senate.

★ GOVERNMENT

No new state flag

Minnesota will not be getting a new state flag anytime soon.

[HF3974](#), sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), would create a legislative task force to examine the design of the state flag to determine if any changes or improvements should be made. The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee, however, voted it down April 4. A companion bill ([SF3459](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Linda](#)

[Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the full Senate.

Lee Herold, owner of Herold Flags in Rochester, said the current Minnesota flag lacks distinctive qualities and is confusing to most Minnesotans. "It's pretty, but it's not really effective," Harold said.

The proposal drew sharp criticism from committee members, who said changing the flag was both unnecessary and disparaging of the state's history.

"Frankly, I don't think that the flag in my office or the one that flies outside my house or the one on top of this building is ugly or obsolete. I think it's a good flag," said [Rep. Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall).

He added that trying to change the state flag would likely provoke the ire of many Minnesotans, who would be compelled to replace their current flags. "They're going to say, 'Is that all you guys have time to do is screw around with stuff that's working already?'"

[Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) said he was embarrassed to admit that he didn't know



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Lee Herold, *right*, owner of Herold Flags in Rochester, describes the Minnesota state flag to members of the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee April 4. The committee rejected a proposal that would have created a task force to look into designing a new state flag.

the history behind every aspect of the current state flag, but that the flag had a meaning and a heritage that shouldn't be thrown out.

"If you know the history [of the flag], it has a message," Olson said.

[Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) said he has coached athletic teams that have competed in interstate competitions under the Minnesota flag, and that other states were appreciative of the flag.

Reducing greenhouse gasses

New state-funded buildings would be forbidden from producing a net increase in greenhouse gases, under a bill approved by a House committee March 30.

[HF3139](#), sponsored by [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would direct the [Administration](#) and [Commerce](#) departments to develop guidelines and procedures for a requirement that no net increases in greenhouse gases be allowed as a result of state building projects.

The departments would report back to the Legislature in 2007 on the cost and feasibility of implementing such guidelines, which would become mandatory for all new buildings receiving funding from state bond proceeds after Jan. 1, 2008.

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee approved the bill, which now goes to the House Regulated Industries Committee. A companion bill ([SF2677](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

"This initiative builds on existing laws, which are known as 'sustainable building guidelines,' that bond-funded buildings exceed the state energy code by 30 percent," Johnson said.

Johnson billed the initiative as "climate-neutral bonding" and said it was an important step in fighting global warming on the state level.

[Rep. Michael Beard](#) (R-Shakopee) questioned the merits of fighting global warming when it has not been proven to exist.

"Is the global climate changing, getting a little warmer? Yeah, I think it is. I think we all agree with that. How much we have to do with that is something I wish we'd slow down and take a little closer look at," Beard said.

He added that he was not strongly against the bill, because it did no harm, but he doubted whether it would do anything to ward off the gradually changing climate.

Sally Grans, assistant director of planning for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, said MnSCU supports the

bill but has concerns about the potential fiscal impact new guidelines could have on some of the organization's more "geographically challenged locations" throughout the state.

Cleaning up statutes

A bill ([HF3488](#)) making technical corrections to state statutes was passed by the House 129-4 April 3.

The annual "revisor's bill," as it is known, corrects erroneous and ambiguous language, including obsolete references in state statutes, according to the bill's sponsor, [Rep. Pete Nelson](#) (R-Lindstrom).

In an earlier committee hearing, he said that the [Office of the Revisor of Statutes](#) is asked to do a lot of work in a short amount of time during session, and this bill "is a cleanup, fix-up, straighten up."

Received April 5 from the House, the bill awaits action by the Senate. [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley) is the Senate sponsor.

GREATER MINNESOTA

Business development investment

Business growth is important to the Greater Minnesota economy.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), [HF3638](#) would establish the Greater Minnesota Business Development Investments Program. The plan calls for the commissioner of employment and economic development to make long-term loans of up to \$2 million for each qualifying business. The bill would appropriate \$12 million from the General Fund for such loans.

The House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee held the bill over April 5 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill ([SF3229](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Thomas Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Sertich said businesses receiving a loan would have to provide collateral or security for the entire amount of funds invested by the state. They must also demonstrate that there will be at least a 1 percent projected return on investments each year.

Funds given out at a regional level are better suited to meet the needs of entrepreneurs and businesses, Sertich noted.

Tom Renier, Northland Foundation president, added that the bill meets today's marketplace demands.

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) questioned how the repayment process would be monitored. Sertich said it is typically

done through banks and that the default rate is about average when compared to other loans.

HEALTH



Mental health workers study

The House approved a bill April 3 that would require a study to be completed regarding the qualifications necessary for mental health practitioners to receive Medical Assistance reimbursement.

Approved 125-9, [HF2806](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka), awaits action by the Senate Health and Family Security committee, where [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley) is the sponsor.

The [Department of Human Services](#) would be in charge of conducting the study, which would be completed by Jan. 15, 2007. A report based on the study would then be given to the House and Senate health committees.

Abeler said the bill was controversial at first but now receives support from both parties. The bill originally authorized Medical Assistance payments for mental health services provided by licensed professional counselors.

Radiation facilities

A sunset provision on construction of radiation therapy facilities could be extended to 2013.

Current law states that all radiation therapy facilities must be constructed only by an entity owned, operated or controlled by a hospital. However, there is a sunset provision on this current law of August 2008.

[HF2810](#), sponsored by [Rep. Duke Powell](#) (R-Burnsville), would eliminate the sunset provision and leave the rest of the law intact. Powell's bill would have meant that all newly constructed radiation facilities be affiliated with hospitals. But after considerable discussion, the House Health Policy and Finance Committee approved March 30 an amendment to extend the sunset until 2013. The bill now goes to the House.

Powell said opposition centers on issues concerning quality care, but focusing on current regulations of radiation facilities is more the issue. However, he said the 2013 sunset is something he can work with for the time being.

Lawrence Massa, chief executive officer of Rice Memorial Hospital in Willmar, said that current "law has encouraged collaborative relationships and projects between hospitals and physicians that are high quality, cost effective, and have introduced the latest



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

With Rep. Duke Powell, the bill sponsor, looking on, as Lawrence Massa, right, chief executive officer of Rice Memorial Hospital in Willmar, testifies before the House Health Policy and Finance Committee in support of a bill that would extend a sunset provision on construction of radiation therapy facilities.

technology to Minnesotans seeking treatment for cancer.” Other supporters said the status quo cuts out duplication of services, equipment and personnel.

Opponents of Powell’s original bill to remove any sort of sunset provision said it would not help improve patient access and care.

Michele Stangl, a breast cancer survivor, said having a variety of provider choices was important for her diagnosis and treatment. She was able to find physicians who knew her personally and provided individualized care.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) said it was ironic that DFLers support getting rid of regulations passed in the 1990s meant to increase competition. But [Rep. Barb Goodwin](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) said the issue was not about competition, but about access and choices for consumers.

A companion bill ([SF2532](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the full Senate.

HIGHER EDUCATION



Accountability for teacher training

A bill that would require the [Board of Teaching](#), along with colleges and universities in the state, to summarize specified information to improve teacher preparation programs was tabled by the House Higher Education Finance Committee April 3.

[HF3334](#), sponsored by [Rep. Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton), would require a summary report to be posted on a joint Web site between the board and the [Office of Higher Education](#). It would include:

- the student entrance requirements for each board-approved program, including the grade point average for students enrolled in each program in the preceding school year;
- the average SAT and ACT scores of students entering each program in the preceding school year;
- a list of faculty qualifications, including at least the undergraduate and graduate degrees of the faculty members and their years of experience as K-12 classroom teachers or K-12 school administrators;
- the current number and percent of graduates, by program, in the school year who were hired to teach full time in the preceding year; and
- students’ pass rates on skills and subject matter exams required for graduation in each program, and licensure area in the preceding school year.

“This bill would develop a report card for our teacher preparation programs,” said Erickson, who added that a recent teacher publication gave Minnesota a D+ for teacher training programs.

“The items in this particular bill will require significant resources from institutions that prepare teachers,” said Carmen

Coballes-Vega, executive board member of the Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Because implementation of the report might not improve teacher preparation, [Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona) warned, “Your intention is good but what might happen won’t be good.”

Erickson said she would talk with concerned parties to improve the bill’s language before it moves to the next committee.

A companion bill ([SF3582](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Sean Nienow](#) (R-Cambridge), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

Textbook cost study

The [Office of Higher Education](#) would be required to assemble a task force to study the rising costs of textbooks for postsecondary students, under a bill laid over by the House Higher Education Finance Committee April 3 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

[HF4032](#), sponsored by [Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City), would require the examination of textbook pricing trends and strategies, the practice of textbook rental, policies related to the repurchase of textbooks from students, textbook selection policies and purchasing practices of colleges and universities.

A report would be due to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2007.

“As tuition has dramatically increased, we need to look at other costs faced by students,” Urdahl said.

“My generation is a generation of debt,” said Hal Kimball, state chair of the Minnesota State University Student Association. Along with tuition increases, the rising costs of textbooks are equally as corrosive to student pocketbooks, he said.

“We welcome the study ... and we want to address the new technologies that are coming online,” said Bruce Hildebrand, executive director for the Association of American Publishers.

A companion bill ([SF3608](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Claire Robling](#) (R-Jordan), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

English proficiency for professors

A task force to investigate and report on the assessment of faculty and teaching assistants, and their ability to speak English clearly and with good pronunciation, was laid over April 5 for possible inclusion in the House Higher Education Finance Committee omnibus bill.

[HF2798](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport), would establish a Higher

Education English Proficiency Task Force consisting of 11 members that would include three post-secondary students, an administrator and faculty member from the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system, and four legislators.

"There's a lot of good foreign professors; there's a lot of good professors that come from foreign countries," but there should be a speaking test like the University of Minnesota requires, said Heidgerken.

"Every international student we admit is required to go to the University of Minnesota 'speak' program before teaching a class or before running a discussion class," said Martin Sampson, a university political science professor. Foreign professors are a valuable source for education on cultures and global awareness, he said.

"We don't think we need a law to solve every single issue that exists out there, nor do we need a task force," said Russ Stanton, representative for the Inter-Faculty Organization. We have a board of trustees, we have faculty, presidents and administrators that assure communication problems are caught and dealt with, he said.

A companion bill ([SF3715](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Cal Larson](#) (R-Fergus Falls), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Apples and money

A bill seeking \$8.1 million for the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry and the College of Veterinary Medicine was laid over April 5 for possible inclusion in the House Higher Education Finance Committee omnibus bill.

[HF3975](#), sponsored by [Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City), would appropriate \$3.2 million to the veterinary college for equipment, a magnetic resonance imaging system, a linear accelerator and radiology equipment. The additional \$4.9 million would fund dentistry studies with simulation and virtual reality equipment, 101 patient simulation workstations and 20 advanced simulation units.

An amendment added by Urdahl would require the university to establish a task force to study the market impact on Minnesota producers of agricultural products from the university licensing germplasm and to make recommendations to the Legislature and the Board of Regents on ways to mitigate any negative impacts on Minnesota businesses that arise from university agreements.

Controversy arose with the licensing of a new variety of apple the university has produced when one Minnesota grower was

given packing and distributing rights.

Jim Brikholz, vice president of the Minnesota Apple Growers Association, said independent growers cite this as a disadvantage because they usually do much of the packing and distributing themselves, putting them at a marketing disadvantage.

A committee at the university looks at each variety release to determine how it should be handled, said Bev Durgan, director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station at the university. "We believe that this will help and ensure that this particular apple variety will be available for apple growers for a long time to come."

A companion bill ([SF3527](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Dille](#) (R-Dassel), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

LAW



Updating investment securities

There are two versions — 1985 and 2002 — of the Uniform Securities Act. Minnesota currently uses the 1985 version of this federal law. However, [HF2514](#), sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) would update that law to the federal 2002 version.

The act deals with the sale of investment securities, such as stocks and bonds. Some securities transactions are exempt from regulation at one level and regulated only at others; the bill attempts to create uniformity for such cases at the federal and state level.

On April 3, the House passed the bill 132-2. Received April 4 from the House, it awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee. [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley) is the Senate sponsor.

The bill gives the state regulatory and enforcement authority that avoids duplication of regulatory effort and blends with federal regulation and enforcement. The new act facilitates improvements as electronic filing, investor education, criminal penalties set by states, expanded power enforcement and registration of securities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



County positions now appointed

Signed
by
the
governor

Carver and Renville counties can now follow the actions of 24 other counties in the state, and change some previously elected county positions to appointed.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed a bill March 31 giving the two counties authority to make the auditor, treasurer and recorder

positions appointed rather than elected. It also provides for a current officeholder to complete the elected term before the office is made appointive. For enactment, it is subject to a four-fifths vote of the county board and is subject to reverse referendum.

There was significant debate March 23 when the bill, sponsored by [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria), was approved 68-65 by the House.

Calling the bill, "a wonderful idea," [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) said he will sponsor a bill allowing all counties to make the change.

Another member, however, viewed this as a step toward eroding local control.

"Here we go again, folks. Taking away the local citizens' right to vote," [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) said. Under current law, a county has the option of going directly to its residents for a referendum on whether the positions should be appointed. "None of them have done that, and have opted to take the easy path and have the Legislature stick it to the citizens of their county instead."

[Sen. Julianne Ortman](#) (R-Chanhassen) is the Senate sponsor. It passed 59-4 in that body March 28.

[HF3263/SF1878](#)*/CH173

Authority membership increase

A plan to add members to Swift County's rural development finance authority was passed 122-8 by the House March 30.

Sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Madison), [HF2645](#) stipulates that the authority's membership be increased from seven to nine. It also stipulates that members reside within the county and that appointments reflect the population of the entire county, with one member representing each of the five county commissioner districts. The other four members must represent various county-based economic development organizations or be at-large. No more than three members may reside in any one county commissioner district.

The bill also defines the members' terms, and prohibits membership to employees, shareholders, owners or directors of entities with which the authority enters into an agreement.

Received from the House April 3, the bill was referred to the Senate Rules and Administration Committee. [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls) is the Senate sponsor.

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

★ SAFETY

Detecting carbon monoxide

[Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings) lost his brother-in-law to carbon monoxide poisoning in 1999. A bill he is sponsoring would help others avoid the same fate.

“We always wanted to make sure we had carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors everywhere at home, and unfortunately didn’t make sure we had a carbon monoxide detector at our cabin,” he said.

Heard April 4 by the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee, [HF1337](#) was held over for possible inclusion in the committee omnibus bill.

The bill would require that every single-family home, and each unit of a multi-family building have an operational carbon monoxide alarm on each level and within 10 feet of each sleeping room.

According to the Minnesota Safety Council, “Carbon monoxide is a tasteless, colorless, odorless gas that interferes with the delivery of oxygen throughout the body. Sources of carbon monoxide include unvented kerosene and gas space heaters, leaking chimneys and furnaces, back-drafting from furnaces, gas water heaters, woodstoves and fireplaces, gas stoves and automobile exhaust from cars in attached garages.”

McNamara said the operation and enforcement is similar to that with smoke detectors, where failure to comply results in a misdemeanor.

“The effective date is Jan. 1, 2007, for new construction, and Aug. 1, 2008, for all existing single-family and multi-family units,” McNamara said.

[Rep. Michael Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) expressed concern about the potential cost for public housing agencies at a time their budgets are getting tighter.

“We’re putting an unfunded mandate on these people. I agree with having it for new construction, but we need to move the time out further on existing construction because that cost is going to get borne by somebody,” he said. McNamara agreed to work with Nelson on an effective date.

Nelson also questioned the impact on buildings with hot-water central heating where there is no combustion in the apartment.

Under the bill, an owner of a multi-family dwelling that contains minimal or no sources of carbon monoxide may be exempted from the requirements if the owner certifies to the commerce commissioner that the dwelling poses no health or safety risks to the occupants.

A companion bill ([SF1003](#)), sponsored by

[Sen. Pat Pariseau](#) (R-Farmington), awaits action by the full Senate.

Helping with organ donation

Emergency workers response time to the scene of an incident can sometimes determine if a life can be saved. In the future, those actions might save the life of someone miles away.

[HF2673](#), sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), would change the procedure for emergency responders and peace officers when the victim is an organ donor.

Under the bill, if a public safety officer at an incident finds a document indicating the person wants to donate his or her organs, that officer would notify the dispatcher, who would then contact LifeSource, Minnesota’s designated management organization for organ transplants.

Under [current statute](#), public safety officers are required to search a gravely injured or deceased person for documents indicating the person’s willingness to be an organ donor. That information must be provided to hospital staff if the person is sent to a hospital. However, there is nothing in statute for a person sent straight to the morgue.

“Many people in automobile accidents never go to hospitals; they go directly to the morgue,” Kahn told the House Public Safety Policy and Finance Committee March 30. “With improvements in donor availability and the kinds of things they use for donation, there was a large waste, in a sense, of people who wanted to be a donor.”

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

Upon a request from [Rep. Doug Meslow](#) (R-White Bear Lake), Kahn agreed to further define the term “dispatcher” as the bill moves along.

According to a Nov. 24, 2005, story in *The Register-Guard* in Eugene, Ore., a similar program in Washington between November 2003 and Sept. 1, 2005, resulted in 18 tissue and 45 cornea transplants.

A companion bill ([SF3604](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action by the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

★ TAXES

Aggregate preservation

Construction of most streets and buildings requires the use of aggregate — more commonly called gravel. But when streets and buildings constructed over gravel deposits render the deposits inaccessible, finding a

cheap-as-dirt source of the material for other construction projects becomes difficult or impossible.

On March 30, the House Property and Local Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee considered [HF2220](#), sponsored by [Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings). The bill would encourage the preservation of aggregate deposits by establishing an aggregate resource preservation property tax program. It was laid over for possible inclusion in a report to the full committee.

A companion bill ([SF1800](#)), sponsored by [Sen. John Hottinger](#) (DFL-St. Peter), was included in the Senate omnibus tax bill ([SF1683](#)), but did not make the final law.

McNamara said that both good and bad stewardship of aggregate deposits has occurred in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

“The city of Woodbury is built on top of the aggregate, and it’s underneath all the homes there. In the city of Apple Valley, we mined the aggregate first and now it’s been developed,” McNamara said, explaining that the bill might help keep future development costs from rising unnecessarily.

Fred Corrigan, executive director of the Aggregate & Ready Mix Association of Minnesota, said the Southdale retail area was built over an aggregate deposit that could have supplied the construction needs of the Twin Cities for 100 years. An example of good stewardship is Maple Grove, he said, where the aggregate was mined before the retail area was built.

Areas with aggregate deposits are popular places to develop because of cheap access to the aggregate, Corrigan said.

The preservation program is one that counties could opt out of within two years of the effective date, and it would allow landowners with 10 or more contiguous acres zoned residential homestead, farm homestead, timber or agricultural to enroll 10-acre parcels. The parcels enrolled would be assessed as agricultural until the aggregate is mined.

In return, the owner would agree that the parcels would be mined for aggregate before being developed, and the tax classification of each parcel would change to commercial after the mining commences.

Looking for relief

A lengthy discussion of Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s 2007 tax proposals April 4 by the House Taxes Committee wrapped up with the question, “Where’s the tax relief?”

[HF3603](#) — sponsored by [Rep. Phil Krinkie](#) (R-Lino Lakes) and presented to the committee by Revenue Commissioner Don Salomone — sets levy limits for counties and cities with

populations of 2,500 or more, but details no direct property tax relief.

The legislation was termed “a disappointment” by [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington). “Property tax relief — I think — is the biggest issue out there, and there’s really no property tax relief in this bill. I know it’s been asserted that levy limits are property tax relief, but I just have to disagree.”

“My understanding of what is in the Senate bill is that there is no direct property tax relief in the Senate proposal,” Krinkie said, adding that if property tax is what people want, legislation to that effect must be put forward by the House.

[Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) and Lenczewski said some property tax relief legislation has been introduced, some has been heard in committees and some still awaits a hearing.

Salomone said he wasn’t sure how not passing a tax bill this year would impact the department. He said that, in his opinion, legislation that will conform Minnesota’s income tax policies to federal policies needs to be passed this year.

This include changes regarding certain utilities, charitable contributions and losses related to Hurricane Katrina, but Salomone said adopting the federal standard deduction for married taxpayers would impact more people than any of the other conformity items.

A companion bill ([SF3326](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Bill Belanger, Jr.](#) (R-Bloomington), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

School funding

They say it’s never been done before in Minnesota, but if the Legislature allows it and Fergus Falls-area voters approve it, a local option sales tax and motor vehicle excise tax may help fund a new high school.

[HF3994](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bud Nornes](#) (R-Fergus Falls), would allow Fergus Falls to collect a 0.1 percent local option sales tax and an excise tax of up to \$20 per vehicle purchased within Independent School District 544 to build a new school for grades 9-12 and renovate its middle school. The amount that may be raised is limited to \$30 million, plus bond costs.

The bill was considered March 30 by the Property and Local Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee and will be considered for inclusion in a report to the full committee.

A companion bill ([SF3695](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Cal Larson](#) (R-Fergus Falls), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

Nornes said the Fergus Falls community has

said it would “like to have as many choices for funding this as possible instead of just having property taxes fund the entire project.”

Darrel Tungseth, a Fergus Falls-area farmer and member of the Fergus Falls Public Schools Facilities Task Force, said a local option sales tax was fairer to the farmers than an additional property tax levy “where you’re taxing a small number of people very heavily.”

Nornes said the Fergus Falls business community supports the local option sales tax alternative.

Funding K-12 school improvements with local option sales taxes has not been done in Minnesota before, according to Superintendent Mark Bezek.

“It has been used very successfully in North Dakota, in Jamestown, and that was a model that we were being compared to during this whole campaign,” he said.

Nornes said every House committee he sits on talks about local control.

“I think here’s another opportunity for us to enable the local folks to make the decision on whether they want to impose this tax,” he said.

★ TECHNOLOGY

★ Plug it in

A bill that started as a way to keep the St. Paul Ford plant operating is now a proposal for a general task force to study the future of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles in the state.

[HF3719](#), sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), would establish a 13-member plug-in hybrid electric vehicle task force with two primary goals. The first is to identify barriers to the adoption of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles by state agencies, small and large private fleets, and Minnesota drivers. Another task is to develop strategies to be implemented over one-, three- and five-year time frames to overcome those barriers. The task force would issue a report to the Legislature by April 1, 2007.

The House Jobs and Economic Opportunity Policy and Finance Committee laid over the bill April 5 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

By making a public commitment to have the St. Paul plant work on the hybrid vehicles, Hornstein said he hoped the original bill would woo Ford executives from any future shutdowns of the plant, but he opted to focus on the current version as a compromise. He also added that more hybrid vehicles would result in less dependence on foreign oil and vehicles not contributing to global warming.

[Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls) said she

fully supports the bill but wanted to know how the vehicles would be affordable to the masses. David Morris, Institute for Local Self-Reliance vice president, said there are some reimbursements for people who own hybrid cars besides saving money on gas.

Hornstein added that these hybrid electric cars can run for 30 miles on electricity and then use ethanol, another renewable energy source, when gas is needed.

[Rep. Andy Westerberg](#) (R-Blaine) suggested adding language to the bill that would ensure that plug-in vehicles meet certain performance standards.

A companion bill ([SF3513](#)), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the full Senate.

★ TRANSPORTATION

★ Wear a helmet or pay up

People under age 18 may be required to wear bicycle helmets or face a fine of \$25, under a bill approved by the House Transportation Committee April 4 and sent to the House floor.

[HF3503](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina), would restrict those under 18 years old from operating or riding a bicycle on the street, highway, bikeway or any other public bicycle path or trail without wearing properly fitted and fastened protective headgear that complies with standards established for helmets approved by the American National Standards Institute. The requirement would also apply to a person riding a bicycle in a restraining seat that is attached to the bicycle or in a trailer towed by the bicycle.

The \$25 fine would apply directly to those ages 15 or older, or to parents or guardians of those less than 15 years old.

Students from Mounds Park Academy came to Erhardt with the idea.

“In 2003, nearly 285,600 children, ages 14 and under, were treated in hospital emergency rooms for bike related accidents,” said Blair Benham-Pyle. Use of helmets for those ages 4 to 15 would prevent 39,000 to 45,000 head injuries, and 18,000 to 55,000 scalp and face injuries annually, she said.

“We need to protect our youngest most vulnerable brains,” said Jeff Nachbar, public policy director for the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota.

A companion bill ([SF2940](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the full Senate.

Highway bonding

The governor's highway bonding plan was held over April 4 by the House Transportation Finance Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

[HF3657](#), sponsored by [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville), would appropriate \$50 million to the trunk highway fund for program delivery and costs of actual payments to landowners for lands acquired for highway right-of-way, payments to lessees, interest subsidies and relocation expenses; and \$2.45 billion for actual construction, reconstruction and improvement of trunk highways, including costs associated with right-of-way acquisition, leases, interest subsidies and relocation expenses.

Additionally, the bill sets up a collection account for the motor vehicle sales tax that, with the passing of a constitutional amendment by voters this November, would allocate all the revenues to transportation.

Calling it a "reasonable bonding plan," Holberg said all those involved realize the importance of getting the constitutional amendment passed. The governor's plan also gives a tangible list of projects, she said.

"This is a very simple, direct concept for accelerating highway projects across the state ... and a new source of revenue to retire the debt on this plan, both the principal and interest," said Bob McFarlin, assistant to the transportation commissioner.

"This is all predicated on the fact that thing is going to pass," said [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina). The plan could potentially be "hung out to dry," he said.

"I think this is a very difficult plan to support without us taking a look at different revenues," said [Rep. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington).

"I think this bonding program with a list of projects will help show the voters a tangible list of items that they could expect to see happen as a result of supporting (the constitutional amendment)," said Holberg.

A companion bill ([SF2930](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Dick Day](#) (R-Owatonna), failed April 4 in the Transportation Budget Division of the Senate Finance Committee.

Goods in impounded vehicles

Owners of impounded vehicles may be able to retrieve their goods from inside their vehicle without first having to pay the impound fees, under a bill approved by the House Transportation Committee April 4.

Under [HF3276](#), sponsored by [Rep. Pete Nelson](#) (R-Lindstrom), the notice given to the owner of an impounded vehicle must include the statement: "You have the right to pick up

your contents from your car, whether or not you give up the right to reclaim your car. But if you are NOT going to reclaim your car, after you get your contents, you must immediately (or as soon as possible) transfer title to the car to the impound lot operator or city. This will save money for you and the impound lot operator or the city." Under current law, all that is required is notice to the vehicle owner within five days of the impound.

The bill now goes to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

"What this bill is doing is preventing private tow operators from withholding personal belongings when they tow your vehicle away," said Nelson. "When they tow your vehicle they have some collateral, but some folks may not be able to afford the fees and need to get some money together. City towers have to give those things up and we're dealing with private towers."

After 45 days, if you do not claim your vehicle, it becomes the property of the towing company, Nelson said.

Speaking in opposition, Mark Bonstrom, president of the Minnesota Professional Towing Association, said current vehicle registration has been a major problem in tracking down owners of impounded vehicles. "Sometimes the only way we get any response when we send these certified letters is when the time comes that it's fishing or hunting season, or it's something that they want to get out of their car then miraculously they know where we're at."

Oftentimes if they just want the contents, they don't want the car back or the responsibility of the vehicle they left on the road, said Bonstrom.

A Senate companion ([SF3327](#)), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the full Senate.

Tribal identification card changes

Tribal identification cards issued by tribal governments and recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs may be used to obtain a Minnesota driver's license, under a bill approved by the House Transportation Committee April 4.

"There is a big problem with cashing checks and identification in general" for tribal members, said [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), the sponsor of [HF3886](#). The bill now goes to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee.

"I had a tribal ID and that's what I used for identification until 9/11 and then, after that, they wanted a Minnesota ID which I didn't have," said Melissa Tapio, an 80-year-old tribal member. Because she was born at home,



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Melissa Tapio, 80, testifies April 4 before the House Transportation Committee in support of a bill that would permit tribal documents to be accepted as proof of identity when applying for a driver's license or for purposes of verifying a name change. Rep. Brita Sailer, left, is the bill's sponsor.

and there is no record of a birth certificate, she said it has been difficult for her to get a state identification card.

"There are many other Indian women, not only women but men, also that have been born at home that have tribal IDs and they're not recognized," she said.

Current tribal identification cards include such information as legal name, date of birth, signature and picture of the enrolled tribal member.

Michelle Paquin Johnson, attorney for the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, said, "Often we hear tribal members who are trying to cash a check, who are trying to start an account, who are trying to apply for a driver's license or get a certificate of title," — anything that would require identification — and are having problems getting those items.

Tribal identification cards are not easy to obtain because many times members have to prove their ancestral lineage to the tribe, she said. "We have a process, it's screened through a committee ... it's probably greater than what most people do to prove their identity for the state of Minnesota."

A companion bill ([SF3549](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

VETERANS



Free parks admission

Global War on Terror veterans and active duty military personnel may be allowed to enjoy hunting, fishing and visits to state parks for free.

[HF3248](#) and [HF3249](#), both sponsored by [Rep. Lynn Wardlow](#) (R-Eagan), would allow the [Department of Natural Resources](#) to issue hunting and fishing licenses and park permits to these personnel according to stated eligibility requirements.

In action by the House Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee, [HF3248](#) was approved and sent to the House floor. [HF3249](#) was approved without recommendation and sent to the House State Government Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

[HF3248](#) would allow military personnel on active duty to enter the state's parks free when on leave and during 90 days following discharge from active duty. No fiscal note was provided. A companion bill ([SF3546](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Mike McGinn](#) (R-Eagan), awaits action by the full Senate.

In its current version, [HF3249](#) would allow veterans who are Minnesota citizens and have served in Iraq or Afghanistan the lifetime privilege of annually choosing from three categories: hunting, fishing or parks. The veterans' length of service would determine how many free items they could enjoy: six to nine months would be rewarded with one choice; nine to 18 months, two choices; and 18 months or more, three choices.

Bob Meier, legislative liaison for the DNR, said [HF3249](#) would cost \$600,000 in its first year if 10,000 veterans use the program.

"Our concern is not with the policy being established, but the loss in revenue to the accounts that are there," Meier said.

Because the future costs of the program could be exorbitant, [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) suggested the bill's sponsor consider reducing the lifetime eligibility to a specific number of years.

LATE ACTION



Gopher stadium gets House go-ahead

One stadium down, and two to go.

The House approved a plan April 6 for a new 50,000-seat football stadium on the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota.

After the 103-30 bipartisan vote, [HF263](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ron Abrams](#)

(R-Minnetonka), now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Geoff Michel](#) (R-Edina) is the sponsor.

"This bill will bring football back to the University of Minnesota," Abrams said.

The bill calls for the university to raise 50 percent of the \$248 million price tag privately, through student fees and the proposed \$35 million from TCF for naming rights. Once that money is raised, the state would contribute the other half by paying \$9.4 million annually for 25 years for 2,840 acres of environmentally sensitive university land near Rosemount. Upon conclusion of the payments, the university would sell the land to the [Department of Natural Resources](#) for \$1.

The original bill called for an annual state contribution of \$7.4 million for 25 years to fund 40 percent of the stadium costs. The land was not part of that proposal.

Two Abrams amendments were adopted. One directs the Commissioner of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Board of Regents, to develop and present to the governor and Legislature a program plan for the land by Jan. 15, 2007. The other addresses possible pollution created before the University acquired the land, that may have come from ordinances stored there. The amendment was drafted by the attorney general, making the federal government responsible for its cleanup, and the university for any pollution that may have occurred under its ownership.

Also adopted was an amendment from [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul) requiring wells on the land to be sealed in accordance with state law

[Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) saw his amendment adopted as well, which would fix the student contribution for the stadium for the length of the bonds. It ensures that students would not be assessed for any construction cost overruns.

All total, 10 amendments were proposed.

Members who remained opposed to the stadium, raised issues such as higher student fees and naming rights.

Eminent domain bill passes

The House passed the bill that would restrict governments' ability to use eminent domain after making a number of minor amendments April 6.

The bill ([HF2846/SF2750*](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Jeff Johnson](#) (R-Plymouth) and [Sen. Thomas Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), seeks to make it more difficult for government entities to acquire private property by strictly defining the situations in which eminent domain powers may be used. It passed 115-17 and

now goes back to the Senate for action on the amended version.

"This body is going to come together today on a bipartisan basis to right a wrong," said [House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie), adding that he thought the bill was reasonable, balanced and fair.

Although a bipartisan majority voiced strong support for the bill, some members expressed concern that the bill was going too far and that some very serious unintended consequences were inevitable.

"Our inner cities will decay with this bill," said [Rep. Keith Ellison](#) (DFL-Mpls), arguing that the bill's language made it so difficult for local governments to prove that a property is blighted, that cleaning up urban neighborhoods with environmental or crime problems would be virtually impossible. "We've gone from a place where it's too easy to use eminent domain to a place where it's now far, far, far too restrictive," he said.

[Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls) said that the bill "penalizes good cities" that use eminent domain responsibly for the greater good of their residents.

Members engaged in a lengthy, emotional debate regarding what to do about cities that currently have development projects underway that involved the use of eminent domain. Some members, including [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington) and [Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead), argued that cities that followed the law in acquiring property through eminent domain should be allowed to complete their projects, especially if they had already invested significant sums of money in them.

"[The cities] have been working in good faith and we are changing the rule," Lenczewski said. "What will we do during the transition?"

[Rep. Barbara Goodwin](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) and [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) each attempted to add language to the bill that would have exempted projects in their districts, but their amendments were voted down.

Johnson urged members to vote no on any such exempting amendments, noting that none of the 13 other U.S. states that have passed eminent domain reform legislation have included such transitional provisions in their laws.

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PHOTOS BY TOM OLMSCHIED

1988 - Speaker Bob Vanasek, on his 40th birthday, gets a hug and a toy monkey from a pink gorilla.

The rumpus room

Business at the House is no laughing matter — usually

German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck once remarked that laws are like sausages — those who like them should not watch them being made. Anyone who has ever watched a House of Representatives floor session from inside the House chamber probably has a good idea of what he meant.

By Nick Busse

Those who have never seen the House in action, or who have only caught a glimpse of it while flipping through channels on their TV, might be fooled into thinking the legislative process is tedious and dry. But depending on what day you're watching, nothing could be further from the truth.

Take the case of Rep. Elton Redalen (IR-Fountain), who on May 14, 1987, collapsed from exhaustion after leading a five-hour

filibuster on the House floor. As paramedics wheeled him away on a gurney, Redalen waved, drawing a round of applause from his Republican comrades. Earlier that evening, House Speaker Fred Norton (DFL-St. Paul) had ended Redalen's filibuster by declaring him to be out of order, prompting the Republicans to pound their desks with their fists, shouting "Gag! Gag! Gag!"

Or, consider the reactions of House

members in March 1974 when a trio of naked men streaked through the Capitol, sprinting past a full House chamber. Rather than scoff angrily at the streakers' lack of respect, Rep. Neil Haugerud (DFL-Preston) introduced a "streaking amendment" to a bill that would have created a special tax on ski masks and sneakers as well as required "night streakers" to equip themselves with "a lamp on the front and a red reflector on the rear."

Bizarre stories, true tales?

There are other, more bizarre stories. Some of the more popular include:

- At the height of the Great Depression, a contingent of angry farmers stormed the House chamber and pelted the unsuspecting legislators with an arsenal of rotting vegetables. A former chief clerk has denied the event took place and members of the Minnesota Historical Society declined to comment.
- In 1857, fur-trader-cum-state-representative Joe Rolette stole a bill that would have made St. Peter the state's capital and then disappeared for the remainder of the session. Rolette is said to have spent a week in a hotel room, drinking and playing cards with friends, killing time so that the bill would be dead by the time he returned. As a result, St. Paul remained the state capital.
- When a speaker of the House orders members to vote "under call," sergeants-at-arms and State Patrol troopers are sometimes called upon to go out and physically locate individual House members and bring them back to the House chamber to vote on a crucial piece of legislation. Several times in the history of the House, members have had to be driven back to the Capitol from miles out of town.



1997 - Rep. Harry Mares holds his cheesehead over his heart as he says the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of the Jan. 23, 1997, floor session. A die-hard Green Bay Packers fan, Mares brought his cheesehead to the chamber in recognition of the Packers beating the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XXXI.



1977 - House Minority Leader Henry Savelkoul set a toy monkey on top of the bill binders on his chamber desk as he spoke about the tax bill.

One has to dig deep to find them, but the history of the House is filled with such stories of outbursts, outlandish antics and colorful personalities. And while the casual observer might be tempted to attribute them to immaturity or a lack of respect on the part of some representatives, to do so would be to ignore the fairly rambunctious and unruly history of democracy itself.

Two chambers, worlds apart

"One of the first things a new observer of the House is likely to notice is its informality," writes political scientist Royce Hanson in his 1989 study of the Minnesota Legislature, *Tribune of the People*. "Its rules concerning decorum are lax, at least in comparison with the Senate. Members have long been allowed on the floor without coats and ties. They are not admonished for eating or reading at their desks during the session. They address each other by name, rather than as 'the representative from [District or County].'"

"Lax" might be a gentle term. Many a first-time visitor to the House chamber has undoubtedly been struck by the apparent chaos of floor-session proceedings. Members get up from their seats, wander about the room, converse with colleagues, leave the chamber to confer with lobbyists or constituents in the hallway, and then return just in time to punch a button on their desks that casts a "yes" or "no" vote on a bill. Speeches and debates can often barely be heard over the din of conversation in the room, prompting the speaker of the House to bang his gavel on the desk at intervals, repeatedly urging members to take their conversations to the back room.

Meanwhile, the Senate, whose members

observe a strict dress code and are forbidden from having coffee or newspapers on their desks during session (among other things), is comparatively sedate in its proceedings. This has led to a long history of friendly jesting between representatives and senators; the former often paint the latter as being too stodgy and formal, while the latter view themselves as doing an overall better job of representing the state's venerable institutions.

"Some members [of the House] even appear to take perverse pleasure in the discomfort their casual ways give members of the Senate," Hanson writes. "While a few members complain that the House often looks (and is) a bit chaotic, most appear to agree with Speaker David Jennings (1985-86), who could often be found presiding in his shirt sleeves, that too much formality just got in the way of getting the business done expeditiously."

The differences in culture between the House and Senate are perhaps most readily evident in the differences in dress. The Senate's insistence that its male members wear ties, in particular, has been a steady source of humor among House members. Even speakers of the House have been barred from the Senate chamber for not wearing a tie, and at least one House member launched a mini-revolt over the rule.

During the 2001 session, [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) attempted to confer with [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm) on the Senate floor but was stopped at the door and told he could not enter because he wasn't wearing a tie.irate, Rukavina responded by successfully amending the rules of the House to force all male senators to remove their ties before entering the House chamber.

Rumpus continued on page 22

The everything bill

State government finance bill casts a wide net

By Nick Busse

An omnibus state government finance bill covering everything from legislators' pay to election laws to new benefits for veterans was approved by a House committee April 5.

[HF2833](#), sponsored by [Rep. Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), represents the combined efforts of members of the House State Government Finance Committee, which Seifert chairs. Its provisions, culled from a number of smaller, individual bills, address a miscellany of government finance-related issues.

Altogether, the bill contains more than 180 sections, touching on dozens of topics. Some of the highlights include:

- Legislators and the governor would be forced to forfeit their salaries for each month after the May legislative adjournment deadline that the House and Senate do not pass all of the major appropriation and revenue bills. Additionally, legislators would be forbidden from receiving per diem living expense reimbursements during a special session that is called because the Legislature failed to pass major budget bills or bonding bills by the adjournment deadline.
- Political campaign materials would be barred from being displayed within 300 feet of a polling place on a primary or general election day. Additionally, anyone trying to persuade or influence voters would be forced to stay at least 1,000 feet away from the polling place.
- Campaign spending limits for political candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state or state auditor would be increased by 20 percent over current amounts.

What's in the bill:

The following are selected bills that have been incorporated, in part or in whole, into the omnibus state government finance bill:

HF2567 – Welter
HF2608 – Heidgerken
HF2688 – Westrom
HF2921 – Severson
HF2961 – Dean
HF3072 – Severson
HF3187 – Peppin
HF3254 – Hackbarth
HF3625 – Peppin
HF3833 – Hilty
HF3865 – Emmer

- The amount of money political candidates can take from political party units during election years would be increased from \$20,000 to \$50,000 for governor and lieutenant governor together, \$10,000 to \$20,000 for attorney general, \$5,000 to \$20,000 for secretary of state and state auditor, and \$5,000 to \$6,000 for legislators.
- State agencies would be forbidden from adopting unfunded mandates that would cost businesses or local governments more than \$10,000 in the first year after they take effect.
- State colleges and universities would be forbidden to assess late fees to student-veterans who are awaiting federal educational assistance payments. They

would also be directed to grant college credits to veterans for educational courses completed while serving in the military.

- Two new plaques would be placed in the Court of Honor on the Capitol Mall: one to honor military war dogs and their handlers and another to honor the state's Medal of Honor recipients.

Several significant last-minute amendments were also added to the bill.

Seifert successfully amended the bill with a provision that would bar state agencies from asking for fee increases to existing fees during the second year of the legislative

biennium. Seifert said he was concerned about "the hogs at the trough who are jacking fees up each year ... on the taxpayers of Minnesota."

[Rep. Phil Krinkie](#) (R-Lino Lakes) introduced an amendment to the bill that would forbid the National Sports Center in Blaine from charging more than just the base operating and usage costs to government or nonprofit

organizations holding meetings at the center. [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) then successfully amended Krinkie's amendment by extending the provision to apply to all publicly funded facilities in the state.

"If you're going to do it to one, the same argument should hold for everything," Kahn said.

Krinkie said it was a rather large change, but that he would accept it anyway. The committee adopted the amendment.


One of the more controversial sections of the bill is a provision that would direct the commissioner of employee relations to study and report to the Legislature the implications of converting state public pension plans from "defined benefit" to "defined contribution" plans.

[Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) objected to the provision on the basis that not all of the concerned parties had a voice in the study and that the cost of the study was unknown. He unsuccessfully moved to delete the provision.

New funding

The bill also includes a number of supplemental appropriations, including:

- \$2.3 million from the Health Care Access Fund to the Department of Employee Relations to support the Public Buyers Group (formerly the Public Employees Insurance Program).
- \$1.7 million for computer security planning, implementation and administration by the Office of Enterprise Technology in 2007;
- \$380,000 in funding to be taken away from Minnesota Public Radio and given instead to public television;
- \$325,000 to pay for the cost of the state's legal counsel in the Northwest Airlines bankruptcy proceedings; and
- \$10,000 to the Legislative Coordinating Commission for use in a legislators' forum through which Minnesota legislators "meet with counterparts from South Dakota, North Dakota, and Manitoba, Canada, to discuss issues of mutual concern."

The bill now goes to the House Ways and Means Committee. A companion ([SF2489](#)), sponsored by [Sen. Sheila Kiscaden](#) (DFL-Rochester), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee. 

Pesticide problems

Report shows good news, bad news situation

By IRENE VOTH

Pesticides are poisons. An umbrella term for herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides and other chemicals intended to bring illness and death to undesirable flora and fauna, some can and do bring illness and death to unintended victims, from honeybees to human beings.

In Minnesota, the [Department of Agriculture](#) regulates and monitors pesticide use, and a [report](#) released last month by the [Office of Legislative Auditor](#) stated that the department “does a good job.”

Yet, after hearing the auditor’s report March 22, the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee heard testimony from people who claim there are unintended victims of pesticide use in Minnesota.

The auditor’s report states that the department has a reasonable process for investigating cases alleging human or animal exposure to pesticides, but methods for collecting pesticide application records are not always thorough. It also states the department imposes numerous enforcement actions, including monetary penalties, for law violations, but it does not fully evaluate their consistency or effectiveness. Finally, it states that pesticide application information in Minnesota is not sufficiently available to all people who could be affected by the applications.

Minnesota requires that residents near application sites receive advance notice about pesticide applications, but prior to mosquito or gypsy moth treatments only or when other applications are made to reduce public health risks.

Nevertheless, [HF3159](#), a bill to require farmers or pesticide applicators to give 24-hour notice to any farm employee before applying pesticides, did not pass out of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee March 28. It has no Senate companion.

Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls), the bill sponsor, said the bill “doesn’t call the use of pesticides into question. We recognize they’re a fact of life and part of reality, but I think that



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Chela Vazquez of Centro Campesino, an organization that represents migrant workers, testifies March 22 before the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee for a bill that would require notice of certain pesticide applications.

we all can do better” in addressing the hazards of pesticides to unintended victims.

Among those testifying against the bill was Paul Liemandt, who manages the department’s response program for pesticides and fertilizers. Liemandt said the [Workers’ Protection Standard](#) is a federal law that already provides for the safe use of pesticides and that the department enforces that law.

“In fiscal year 2005, at least 13 percent of our inspectors’ time was devoted to ensuring that farm workers and handlers were protected under that Worker Protection Standard, and indeed we’ve taken dozens of enforcement actions, including penalty actions when we’ve found noncompliance,” he said.

Those testifying on behalf of the bill included Chela Vazquez, who said Latino migrant farm workers have told her that they

have been exposed to pesticides and feel they are not adequately informed about the hazards of such exposure.

Representing the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Dr. Samuel Yamin also spoke on behalf of the bill. He said the [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#) estimates that up to 20,000 U.S. farm workers are poisoned annually by pesticides, resulting in what he called “acute” effects.

“The health effects can include rashes, headaches, nausea and vomiting, disorientation, loss of coordination and even coma and death,” he said.

Regarding a second category, called “chronic” effects, Yamin said researchers have found elevated risks for a variety of cancers as well as reproductive problems, miscarriage and birth defects among farm workers exposed long term to herbicides, including 2-4D and atrazine.

Insecticides adversely affect the nervous system, he said: “Recent studies have also begun to show a link between pesticides and Parkinson’s Disease.”

On March 28, Liemandt spoke of the role of the EPA in pesticide labeling, which incorporates instructions about safety measures for using pesticides, and of employers’ responsibilities regarding employees and pesticide use.

He also said the Agriculture Department inspects dozens of sites each year, and that 150 enforcement actions have been taken against non-compliant pesticide users in the last several years.

Sue Meyer, Candy Anderson, Becky Sheets and Carol Ashley, residents of rural central Minnesota, each spoke of the repeated exposure to pesticides by themselves, their families and their livestock through aerial and ground applications on the agricultural fields in the vicinity of their homes.

They also spoke of the human and animal health effects they attribute to that exposure, including chronic headaches, stomach pain, sore throats and burning eyes, and chronically ill horses and sheep.

Meyer said her complaints to the Department of Agriculture have resulted in inadequate testing and no disciplinary actions against those spraying, “even after the field inspector told me personally that there was enough evidence for them to be disciplined.”





Committee targets

Editor's note: As of press time Thursday night, the House was expected to take up the budget targets, which were discussed in a House committee earlier in the week.

Targets setting the limit on changes in expenditures for the remainder of the biennium were approved April 5 by the House Ways and Means Committee.

"I'm very concerned about making sure we account for the possible loss in the tobacco case," said Committee Chair [Rep. Jim Knoblach](#) (R-St. Cloud). "That is a contingent liability of \$370 million. This resolution allows us to account for that contingency."

Last year the health impact fee on tobacco products was enacted, and the law is being challenged in court.

The resolution transfers \$267.7 million of the \$316.7 million available in the tax relief account to the General Fund, with

the remaining \$49 million available for the tax committee to do with what it chooses. Knoblach said the tax committee could allocate those funds, contingent on the state winning the health-impact fee case.

The spending plan also calls for about \$20 million of the approximately \$122 million surplus in the Health Care Access Fund to be used for unrestricted spending, and nearly \$102.3 million to be set aside as contingency until the court case is settled. If the case is settled in favor of the state, the money could be expended.

[Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), warned against putting anything in writing about the money set aside for the tobacco court case, adding that Finance Commissioner Peggy Ingison previously told the committee that has never been done. Knoblach said he reviewed the proposal with Ingison, and she made no comment about the language.

Of the \$88 million in additional funding, \$75.25 million would be for the health finance bill; \$10.5 million for the environment and

natural resources; \$6.78 million for capital expenditures debt service; \$6.6 million for K-12 education; and lesser amounts for public safety, higher education, state government, agriculture and transportation.

The jobs and economic opportunity finance bill is to see a \$26.75 million decrease under the plan.

"In further research we have found that we can refinance \$27.5 million of TANF money without running into any sort of problems with the federal government," Knoblach said. "This will enable us to meet our work requirements and such, but it makes additional money available. That'll leave the committee with some additional money for needs they may have."

A number of members and committee chairs said the allocations will not meet the requested needs.

Knoblach noted that a biennial budget was passed last year, but this is to help with situations that have changed from last year's approved plan.

Bonding continued from page 4

The Como Zoo in St. Paul would receive \$10 million for facility upgrades, the Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley \$9 million, the Lake Superior Zoo \$600,000 to remodel its polar bear exhibit and the Little Falls Zoo \$400,000, with the stipulation that the capital improvement funds must support accreditation of the zoo by the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

"We really don't want to get into support of these zoos that kind of end up causing scandals or sort of roadside attraction zoos or something like that," said [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls). "This Little Falls Zoo seems to have a set of people working very hard, who

seem to supply a very good need into the community, and when I asked them about accreditation they said they couldn't get it without this appropriation."

Also potentially faring well are sports facilities.

The bill provides \$12 million for a multi-purpose facility at Southwest Minnesota State University to go along with a private \$5 million donation from Schwan's, \$3 million for a regional sports center in Bemidji and \$3 million for the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center. The governor included the Bemidji funding, but had nothing for the

other two projects. The Senate had zero for all three.

Duluth leaders call the \$33.7 million request the city's top priority and noted that its voters approved a food and beverage tax increase to help fund the project. "We're going to listen to the Senate and see if they really are interested in that project," Dorman said.

The potential House funding keeps the project alive for the expected conference committee negotiations. While not officially dead, projects that are in neither the House nor Senate bills will likely not get consideration.



Rumpus continued from page 19

Female House and Senate members have differing customs as well. Although the House had already allowed it for years, on April 16, 1993, [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul) became the first woman to wear pants on the Senate floor, leading one *Star Tribune* reporter to declare that the "Pants Barrier" had been broken in the Minnesota Senate.

Relaxed but professional

According to Hanson, the relative informality of the House has historical roots. Until the 1970s, only the speaker and majority leader had their own private offices. Rooms, telephones and secretaries were all shared communally by House members, who often met constituents on the House floor when not

in session.

Today, the House functions much differently. It has a full, professional support staff, and according to 34-year House veteran [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), the culture has become more professional as well.


"When I got here, there were members smoking all over the place, and they had flasks hidden in their desks," Kahn says.

Similarly, former Rep. John Tuma (R-Northfield), who served from 1995-2002, recalls visiting the House chamber as a child in the 1970s and seeing a "blue haze" of smoke hanging over the chamber.

"I remember looking down on the floor and just seeing what looked like utter chaos,"

Tuma said. "But yet there was something happening. There was an energy. There was a flow. And I just thought to myself, 'I've got to be here someday. This is cool.'"

An ex-member of the so-called "Dog Pound" — a group of House Republicans who used to sit in the far right corner of the chamber and hand out dog biscuits as rewards for conservative legislation — Tuma says the differences in decorum and attitude between the House and Senate are a good thing.

"I think it's healthy for democracy, because it was the wisdom of our Founding Fathers to have a very deliberative process, and have two bodies that have distinctly different views on life." 

Monday, April 3

HF4068-Abrams (R) Transportation Finance

Motor vehicle sales tax revenue allocation modified, highway user tax distribution funds provided and previous constitutional amendment ballot question modified.

HF4069-Erickson (R) State Government Finance

Assistive Technology of Minnesota funding provided and money appropriated.

HF4070-Ruth (R) Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Hairbraiding occupational registration required.

HF4071-Sykora (R) Education Finance

School district reserve accounts eliminated.

HF4072-Abeler (R) Health Policy & Finance

Limited part-time practice authority authorized for retired dentists.

HF4073-Abeler (R)

Taxes
Ramsey tax increment financing district authorized subject to special rules.

HF4074-Johnson, S. (DFL) Civil Law & Elections

Government data practices written advisory opinion required upon request of an individual.

HF4075-Simon (DFL) Education Finance

School districts required to maintain a separate account to identify expenditures for nonpublic school pupil special education instruction and services.

HF4076-Marquart (DFL) State Government Finance

County veteran service offices funding grants provided and money appropriated.

HF4077-Greiling (DFL) Education Finance

Secondary sparsity funding authorized for certain schools that primarily serve students who have been assessed as chemically dependent.

HF4078-Anderson, I. (DFL) Commerce & Financial Institutions

Boats used to carry passengers for hire inspection requirements modified.

HF4079-Sieben (DFL) Health Policy & Finance

Children's environmental health officer established within the Department of Health and money appropriated.

HF4080-Ellison (DFL) Commerce & Financial Institutions

Child health supervision for services for children under age 6 clarified to include federally recommended blood lead tests and follow-up treatment.

HF4081-Ruud (DFL) Taxes

Military pension individual income tax subtraction authorized.

HF4082-Koenen (DFL) Education Finance

Federal comprehensive school reform funds replaced and money appropriated.

HF4083-Ruud (DFL) Health Policy & Finance

Mercury tests results reporting required.

HF4084-Brod (R) Education Finance

New Prague library grant provided for a Czech heritage center, bonds issued and money appropriated.

Tuesday, April 4

HF4085-Peterson, S. (DFL) Public Safety Policy & Finance

Parental notice of predatory offenders expanded relating to school areas.

HF4086-Dorman (R) Taxes

Low-income housing projects construction materials sales tax exemption extended to limited partnerships in which the sole general partner is a nonprofit corporation.

HF4087-Simon (DFL) Taxes

Naturalization application filing fees income tax credit provided.

HF4088-Beard (R) State Government Finance

Property assessment deferments for certain members of the armed forces authorized and Support Our Troops grants authorized to eligible individuals to pay special assessments.

HF4089-Thissen (DFL) Taxes

Special property tax refund deduction provided on property tax statement and money appropriated.

HF4090-Ellison (DFL) Public Safety Policy & Finance

Minneapolis; downtown security collaborative expanded and money appropriated.

HF4091-Hamilton (R) Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Rural public water and sewer systems bonds maturity date conformity provided with bonds issued for municipal water and wastewater treatment systems.

HF4092-Westerberg (R) State Government Finance

Body armor provided for members of the National Guard being deployed to combat service and money appropriated.

HF4093-Samuels (R) Rules & Legislative Administration

Congress memorialized by resolution to recognize state authority under the U.S. Constitution to regulate noncommercial driver's licenses and identification cards and to repeal certain sections of the Real I. D. Act.

HF4094-Seifert (R) State Government Finance

State agency fees limited.

HF4095-Abrams (R) Taxes

Qualified terminable interest elections authorized relating to estate taxation.

HF4096-Olson (R) Health Policy & Finance

Human services service plan provisions modified.

HF4097-Gunther (R) Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Chemical dependency treatment fund eligibility expanded.

HF4098-Soderstrom (R) Jobs & Economic Opportunity Policy & Finance

Brook Park water treatment facility and water tower funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

Wednesday, April 5

HF4099-Tingelstad (R) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Redistricting commission created for bipartisan legislative redistricting and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF4100-Lanning (R) Taxes

Nonprofit licensed child care local property tax exemption option authorized.

HF4101-Hilstrom (DFL) Education Finance

Independent School District No. 286, Brooklyn Center, innovative district program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF4102-Carlson (DFL) Transportation Finance

Crystal Airport economic analysis and alternative land use report required.

HF4103-Hansen (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources

Heritage enhancement, parks and trails, clean water, and arts and humanities funds established; sales tax increased and funds dedicated; heritage enhancement council and clean water council created; and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF4104-Hansen (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources

Natural resources secretary office established, sales tax portion dedicated to natural resources, heritage enhancement fund and other funds established, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF4105-Nelson, P. (R) Public Safety Policy & Finance

Statewide critical school incident planning and mapping system study required and money appropriated.

HF4106-Sieben (DFL) Taxes

National Service Trust educational awards income tax subtraction authorized.

HF4107-Mariani (DFL) Health Policy & Finance

Ramsey County chemical dependency facility supplemental rate expanded.

HF4108-Vandever (R) Taxes

Transition payments for property tax base loss provided to compensate taxing jurisdictions for a decrease in tax base when property is acquired and becomes exempt.

HF4109-Demmer (R) Education Policy & Reform

Agriculture education option included in social studies graduation requirements and agriculture science defined as fulfilling science credit requirements.

Thursday, April 6

HF4110-Abrams (R) Transportation Finance

Motor vehicle sales tax exemption provided for lessees who donate the leased vehicle to a charitable organization within 30 days of the date of purchase.

HF4111-Hackbarth (R) Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs

Baseball stadium funding provided, Minnesota Ballpark Authority established, community ownership option provided, Hennepin County bonding and local sales and use taxes authorized and football stadium and authority in Anoka County provided.

HF4112-Eastlund (R) Public Safety Policy & Finance

Address confidentiality program established for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking; voting method and mail forwarding system provided to participants; criminal penalties imposed and money appropriated.

HF4113-Peterson, A. (DFL) Transportation

National Guard-related signs authorized on highways.

HF4114-Krinkie (R) Taxes

Public finance obligations terms and conditions provided and inter-fund loans authorized.

HF4115-Brod (R) Taxes

Estate tax federal exemption conformity provided.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Loons and eagles

Estimated number of loons that call Minnesota home.....	12,000
States with more loons.....	1 (Alaska)
Percent of loons that reside on lakes that are 10-49 acres in size.....	32
50-149 acres.....	26
150-499 acres.....	27
Length of a common loon from head to tail, in inches.....	30
Weight, in pounds.....	8-12
Wingspan, in feet.....	5
Estimated millions of years ago that the loon's first relative appeared.....	25
Length, in feet, of that relative, from head to tail.....	6
Approximate pounds of fish that a loon eats each day.....	2
Depth, in feet, loons can dive underwater for food.....	250
Minutes a loon can stay underwater.....	5
Feet, on average, of a "runway" that a loon needs in order to take off from a lake.....	100-600
Approximate number of times a loon flaps its wings per minute when in flight.....	200
Speed loons can reach in flight.....	75 mph
Average lifespan for a loon, in years.....	25-30
Number of calls that a common loon has.....	4
Number of eggs typically laid by a loon.....	2
Months after a loon egg is laid that it hatches.....	1
Typical age of a loon when it first flies.....	2 months
Number of lead sinkers or jigs a loon must swallow to be poisoned.....	1
Of the 650 eagles treated by the Raptor Center from 1980-1996, number that had lead poisoning.....	138
Additional eagles treated for toxicity from 1996-1999.....	43
Pairs of bald eagles that nest in Minnesota, as estimate.....	680
Age eagles begin to get the adult coloring (white heads and tails).....	4-6 years
Percent larger that female eagles are compared to males.....	25-30
Weight of female eagle, in pounds.....	10-14
Weight of male, in pounds.....	8-10
To maintain its weight, pounds of fish an eagle needs to consume daily, if fish are all it eats.....	1-1.5
Reproductive life, in years, of a healthy, well-fed eagle in the wild.....	20-30
Feet across and feet deep of most eagle nests.....	4, 3
Estimated percent of eaglets hatched in a season that make it through their first year.....	50
Miles per hour an eagle can fly.....	50
Maximum fine for killing an eagle.....	\$10,000

Sources: **Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**; **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**; **Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute**, **National Eagle Center**.

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